

FEMINISM IN THE NOVELS OF ANITA DESAI'S CRY THE PEACOCK

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Abstract:- Anita Desai, one of the best known contemporary women writers of Indian fiction in English has added a new dimension and flavor to the contemporary Indian English fiction and has a significant place due to her innovative thematic concerns and deals in her fiction with feminine sensibility. She is a keen observer of the society. The Cry, the peacock (1963) is faithful description of psychosomatic growth of a female character, which cannot cope up with the practical world of the husband and feels dejected.

Feminism refers to any ideology that seeks equality and rights for women, usually through improving their status. Feminism is rooted in ending men's historical power over women. Feminism is a range of political movements, ideologies, and social movements that share a common goal: to define, establish, and achieve political, economic, personal and social equality of sexes. This includes seeking to establish educational and professional opportunities for women that are equal to those for men. The present paper attempts to probe Desai's expression for her pre occupation with the modern ideal of building the society free from male domination. The study also means to investigate the role and contribution of patriarchal values towards the misery, suffering, loneliness and unhappiness of women or other psychological, social and economic problems experienced by them. The present research work will undertake a study of feminist awareness in Anita Desai's novel 'CRY THE PEACOCK', with the objective to highlight the place and plight of women in a world governed by patriarchy.

Feminism used to describe a political, cultural or economic movement to establish equal right and legal protection for women. The paper analyses feminine awakening in the words of Anita Desai. She shows the women who is oppressed, suppressed and self determining with their spatial existence. She tries to explore the psychological state of her women characters. In the novel, CRY, THE PEACOCK she represents the theme of consciousness and sensibility of women in contract with the men and their sufferings on their basis of emotional and physical repression. By the role Maya, Anita carries a new aspect of feminist publishing. Maya is an enthusiastic young lady who experiences both the expectation and the reality of her material life which is faced by every woman in the world.

Keywords: Feminine, self determined, sensibility, awareness, patriarchy, expectation and martial life.

INTRODUCTION:

Anita Desai was born in Missouri on June 24, 1937. She spent most of her time in New Delhi. She first learned English when she went to Queen Mary's School at Delhi. Desai had her colligate education at Miranda house, Delhi University, where she took bachelor's honour's with English Literature in 1957. She worked for a year in Max Muller Bhavan, Calcutta and was then married to Ashvin Desai on December 13, 1958. She started publishing her work shortly

after her marriage. She is the pioneer of psychological novel in modern Indian English Literature. Some of her famous novels are Cry, The peacock (1963), Voice in the city (1965), Bye Bye Blackboard (1971), where shall we go this summer (1975), Fire on the mountain (1977), Clear Light Of The Day (1980), The Village By the sea (1982), Journey to Ithaca (1995) and Fasting, Feasting(2000).

Anita Desai is more involved in depicting the mental rather than the physical experience of her characters. Female characters are more dominant in her novel Anita' cry' the

peacock externalizes the interior of Maya's psyche. It is the series of episodes unified by the character Maya. All her female characters—Maya, Monisha, and Sita—are obsessed with the idea of death. Anita Desai is not interested in portraying every day, average characters but peculiar and eccentric ones.

Maya is the protagonist of the play *Cry, The Peacock* and she is oversensitive, solitary, and lost in thought. She is alone in a wide, wide world; for Anita Desai, Gautama's detachment is depicted in contrast with Maya's involvement. Her narrow, ingrown vision blinds her on the confrontation between the two realities—inner and outer. Her suffering is the outcome of her actions and will. Maya is not a victim of exploitation but falls prey to her own morbid fears.

Maya represents the extremities of feminine principles. She feels established and depotentiated even after four years of marriage. Maya's relationship with her husband, father, brother, and reflects archetypal feminism. Married life of Maya results in rupture because the two are not only temperamentally different but mutually opposed. Maya is full of life and wants to enjoy life to the utmost. To her, sexual satisfaction is a must and total denial of it makes her a victim of neurosis. Generally, neurosis is guided by fear, guilt, jealousy, aggression, and their psyche loses grip of their own central position.

Marriage is merely an adjustment rather than an involvement. It becomes a necessary bond in everyone's life, which has its foundation in understanding between man and woman. Maya is emotional, whereas Gautama is rational.

Maya was born in an unorthodox family and enjoyed her life in her parents' house. Maya was a young girl while Gautama was a middle-aged lawyer; she marries on her parents' wish. Maya's life is structured between her father's love and her husband's love. Gautama is a prosperous lawyer and he was always busy at his work and so he doesn't have much time for his life. But Maya always longs for Gautama's love and care. She finds difficulty in her husband's house. And later Maya judges her husband to her intellect and finds him adequate and takes her own path.

Feminism is a collection of movements and ideologies aimed at defining, establishing, and defending equal political, economic, and social rights for women. In addition,

feminism seeks to establish equal opportunities for women and employment. A feminist is "an advocate or supporter of the rights and equality of women". Feminism refers to any ideology that seeks equality in rights for women, usually through improving their status. Feminism is rooted in ending men's historical power over women. Recrudescence's in feminist theory particularly focus on issues that disproportionately hurt females, such as ending gender pay gaps, enacting female voting and political rights, and reassessing what is considered "female" and "male". While modern feminist thought is largely rooted in the western intellectual tradition, the ideology is gaining currency throughout the whole world. In many cases the feminist goal of equality for women has helped push movements around the whole world to change the entire way private society.

This paper has been interpreted by the critics from different perspectives. Her work reveals another dimension she had added to her fiction: the importance to women, a neglected class of society. True picture of women is also given by Ruth Praver Jhabvala, "Beat them, starve them, how you like them, they will sit and look with animal eyes and never raise a head to defend themselves." P. Sharma and Kamal N. Awasthi point out that Maya, despite her over-protective childhood friends, the indulgence of a doting father, and clamorous demand of her lawyer husband who often withdrew in asking her for a cup of tea; Maya feels destabilised even after four years of marriage. Gautama had failed to fecundate, "no you are too young" perhaps of the bareness Maya had developed a slightly greater capacity for philosophy that she was born with. She blames Gautama for his grossness, for his concern with the fundamental and basic prosaic life in terms of money. Desai, by powerful search light of her observation dives deep down and presents the world with her findings which include her prime concern to bare the hard covering of emotions to bring out sheer womanliness in them, to prove that they are actually devoid of feeling but in search of a bit of love and life.

Cry the peacock is a story of a highly emotional, sensitive, and imaginative woman told by a woman novelist. Maya is shown to be fast disintegrating under the pressures of marital discord. Married to an unresponsive and insensitive husband, Gautama, she is driven from emotional instability in the beginning to madness, insanity, and murder towards the

end. Even through Anita Desai owes no explicit allegiance to feminist cause, she is pre occupied with the plight of woman in the male dominated oppressive order. Her *Cry the peacock* is a unique example of or an illusion of the feminist point of view. The novel has almost all the feature of women's writing. Anita Desai defines the uniqueness of feminine sensibility through the reactions and responses of the heroine to the events and situation in the novel. A highly emotional, sensitive and sensuous woman, Maya has obsessive love for life. Anita Desai is a prolific living writer churning out fiction with consummate skill who has brought out ten full length novels of varied length, innumerable short stories and couple of writer ups. In a short period of time, she aroused a lot of critical attention. She is considered the writer who introduced the psychological novel to India and is pioneer of writing on feminist issues.

Anita Desai dealt her fiction with feminine sensibility and her are innovative, mostly about miserable of plight of women suffering under their insensitive and in considered husband, father and father. Though Anita Desai attempts to analyse Feminine consciousness in her fiction however, she has been particularly cautious of labels and refuses to see herself as a feminist. Mostly she portrays a world of a dissatisfied woman who is lonely protagonist. She challenges the prevalent version of Indian women stereo type by subverting their quest for fulfillment with an intense dissatisfaction with the family system hence a resultant unsatisfied ego. Desai's women are mostly in self search and in search of fulfillment of the emptiness they feel even in ties between parents, siblings, friends and yet incomplete. Desai has created a feminist discourse of literary writings showing signs of a seething discontentment, hatred for the patriarchal norms of human existence, aspirations for liberation from societal and traditional family norms made compulsory for their acceptable existence in the mainstream male dominated society. Her family characters are mostly in search of self authenticity, independent of the identity that has been dumped on her. Desai has a typical style of her own to register protest against patriarchal norms. Her characters are usually women, haunted by peculiar sense of doom, so withdraw themselves into a sequestered world of their own, become neurotic, self destructive and unhappy.

Anita Desai's *Cry the peacock* is a unique example or an illusion of the feminist point of view. 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 women. Her only sin is that she is sensitive, imaginative, passionate and sensuous and thus represents the disturbed psyche of modern Indian women. She tries to strike balance between institutional needs and intellectual aspirations and is deeply bewildered when the existential absurdity of life is brought to her. When she experiences loneliness and lack of communication, she feels herself in mental crises.

Anita Desai is seen to share a very affectionate relationship with her father and is at pain to leave her home at marriage. Her problem upbringing caused by her mother's death makes her detached from the world outside. Thus she wrote, "my childhood was one in which much was excluded, which grew steadily more restricted, unnatural even, in which I leave as a toy princess in a toy world. But it was pretty one .The expectation that she had at her marriage on her husband, who is much older than her are not fulfilled. As a result, she becomes stultifying. She funds her husband Gautama, as a man in whom understanding was scant love was meager. But as one read through the novel, one funds that her husband's loves and cherishes her, but does not take her seriously and that too because she is a women. He identifies her with "Maya" which repulses her and to which she objects. As time passes, she becomes more and more restless, starts brooding over the feeling of emptiness in her heart.

Anita Desai in this novel *Cry the peacock* has given the portrait of a highly sensitive and cultured woman, Maya, and has gone into a deep psyche from childhood through youth and to death. Besides Maya, there are other woman character in the novel other facets of female psyche. Meena Belliappa considers this novel "a remarkable attempt to fuse fantasy with perceptual eperiences" Darshan singh Maini considers *Cry, the peacock* a typical feminine novel because it is a story of woman told by a woman, but because it is the fruit of feminine sensibility.

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 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 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 practices 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.

CONCLUSION:

In this paper, Anita Desai shows the expectations, reality and the suffering of Maya which every feminine experience. Desai depicts Maya as an unfortunate woman who lives on the borrowed optimism before marriage. However after her marriage she seems to have lost way and identify. In place of a considerate soul, she finds in Gautama a symbol of flinty wisdom that neither comforts her nor induces her.

What sounds notable is that Maya's feminist consciousness protests against society which devalues women and forces her to realize that her socialization is not typical. Maya is a heroine from the feminist perspective: she defines her signifying self as separate and distinctive (as marginal) she struggles to maintain the identity even though at odds with the society around her (patriarchy, religion, female stereotype) and she finds validation in her own voice (life affirming) Maya's feminism is her struggle for personal fulfillment in countering the female stereo type of her friends and expectation and criticism of her husband. As a heroine with feminine sensibility, Maya dares to maintain her "aesthetically and morally coherent unique" individualism despite lack of support from friends, family or religion. In fact, Maya is energized to action in order to maintain her individualism, her "signifying self". Labeling Maya, insane as a result of killing her husband thereby marginalized her resistance to subservience and her effort for self identification. In short, in cry the peacock, Anita Desai is found presenting female fighting against three traditional forces in her life; male

authority expressed by her husband; her female friends playing stereotypical submissive wife roles; and her religion's beliefs in karma and detachment.

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