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PORTRAYAL OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS IN ANITA DESAI'S *CRY THE PEACOCK*

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Abstract

The present paper attempts to focus that Anita Desai has made the theme of familial relationships basic and central in her novels and her first novel 'Cry, the Peacock' is concerned with failure of the central character Maya to have a meaningful and sustaining relationship with any other member of the family in general and her husband Gautama. Anita Desai holds a significant place as modern Indian English novelist. Most of her critics have focused their attention on the psychological and existentialist approach in her novels. It is an attempt to explore the predicament of Maya in a dehumanized society. It is an attempt to explore how she gets a release from a life of gloom and despair. Maya, the protagonist of the novel, cries for love and understanding in her loveless marriage with Gautama. This is the reason for the tragedy that has happened in the life of Maya. Gautama's lack of understanding and dominant nature does not yield to the desires of Maya.

Keywords: Dilemma, Alienation, neurotic, frustrations, astrologer's prediction,

Anita Desai has championed in the field of fiction writing. She has earned a unique place for herself among the best novelists of the world. Desai's contribution to Indian writing in English is praiseworthy. Desai's vocation is the womenfolk in general. She takes interest in the life and problems of women; basically women living in different cities of India. Desai focuses on the predicament of town-women. Desai is a writer of Indian origin. She was born in Mussorie, India on the 24th of June, 1932. She has studied in the Delhi University and started her professional career here in India before joining different. Anita Desai has showed her interest in writing since her childhood and her literary excellence has been established with the publication of *Cry, the Peacock* in 1963. She has continued gifting one after another award winning novels. Some of her novels are: *Voices in the City* (1965), *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (1971), *Where Shall We Go This*

Summer? (1975), *Fire on the Mountain* (1977), *Clear Light of Day* (1980), *In Custody* (1984), *Fasting, Feasting* (1999) etc. Desai has been thrice short-listed for the Booker Prize also.

Man is essentially a social animal. He came alone in this world but during his course of stay here he makes many relationships that determine the essence of his existence. Relationships are like thin threads that bind one human being to other fellow human beings. Much of the interaction that inspires in life happens to involve one relationship or another. These relationships endow with an interesting study of human behaviour. They while acting as a binding factor for some become a stifling sentence for others. Few relationships are an outcome of cultivation while some other are even beyond questioning. These relationships when viewed under moments of stress bring forth an

altogether new picture of how people react to and interact with other existence at the societal study.

Since literature is the mirror of the society these relationship opens new avenue of the study for the novelist. Anita Desai in her novels built the theme of human relationship particularly that of man and woman alienations and lack of communication between male and female. What is so innovative in the treatment of this theme by Anita Desai is that she explores so minutely the depth of her characters and analysis of some more topics that they were unimaginable among earlier Indo Anglian novelist.

Anita Desai in her first novel *Cry the Peacock* describes the psychological tumult of a Young and sensitive married girl named Maya who is haunted by a childhood prophecy of a fatal disaster. It gives expression to the long smothered tale of blunted human relationship being told by the chief protagonist herself. She is the daughter of a rich advocate in Lucknow. Being alone in the family and her mother had died much earlier and brother having gone to America to shape his own independent destiny. She gets the most of a father affection and attention and in her moments of afflictions exclaims to herself: "No one no one else loves me as my father does" (*Cry the Peacock* 78). The expressive love Maya gates from her father makes her have a lop sided view of life. She feels the world to be toy made especially for her painted in her favourite colours and set moving according to her tunes. Having lived thus a careless life under the attention of her loving father, Maya desires to have a similar attention from her husband Gautama a father surrogate.

The very beginning of the novel highlights the husband wife Alienation theme by unfolding the relationship of Maya and Gautama. Their fate reminds one of that of Mr and Mrs Ramsay in Virginia Woolf's novel *To the Lighthouse*. Evening for Maya is hardly more than a "a quite formal waiting" (7) The married life is punctuated all along by matrimonial silences and Gautama hardness his coldness and incessant talk of cups and tea and philosophy" (12). What pains Maya most is her utter loneliness in this house. I was alone she complains

yes I whimpered it is that I am alone .She fails to understand the total lack of communication on the part of Gautama:

how little he knew of my suffering or of how to comfort me telling me to go to sleep while worked at his papers he did not give another thought to me to either the soft willing body or the Lonely wanting mind that waited near his bed (*Cry the Peacock* 10)

We become fully aware of Maya hypersensitive and highly disturbed state of mind when we see her in the very beginning of the novel reacting to the untimely death of her pet dog. She rushes to the garden tap to wash the vision from her eyes but her husband remains undisturbed. His attitude agonies her. An ever widening gap in communication between the husband and wife is held throughout the novel. She muses: "had there been a bond between us they Would have felt it pull but of course there was none there was no Bond no love hardly any love." (*Cry the Peacock* 78)

Restlessness always boils within her and the strangeness hold them apart. She feels defenseless and utterly alone in the company of the bleak comfortless figure passing as her husband. The Reader cannot help but here the Echoes of the voice of T.S. Eliot's protagonist in the *Wasteland*: "Stay with me. Speak to me. Why do you never speak? What are you thinking of? What thinking what? I never know what you are thinking? Think" The alienation of Maya is rooted essentially in Gautama's philosophical silence and lack of communication to his wife. It seems as if the two wife and husband are likely to ruin each other's life and happiness. Maya's rootlessness keeps on increasing everyday. Maya said: "I am going insane. She further said that I shall should be mad if I am not able to solve that problem." (*Cry the Peacock* ,129).

Anita Desai in her another novel *Bye Bye Blackbird* is again an excellent study of human relationship although in a totally different scenario. While the earlier novel talks of relationship crisis between individual of a family. The present one focuses on the relationship between individual and Society. It is an authentic description of human relationship believed by cultural Encounters .Of all

novels of Desai this one is most intimately related to her own experience. She told in an interview “of all my novels it is most rooted in experience and the least literary derivation”. The novel captures the confusion and conflict of another set of alienated person. It has rightly been maintained that the immigrant Blackbird involves issue of alienation and accommodation that the immigrant has to confront in an alien and yet familiar world.

Although none of the characters in this novel has been taken to depict degeneration character like Monisha in *Cry The Peacock* and Maya but they are still facing discomfort picture of faded relationship. The basic relationship that man has to be is found missing in the present time. English men are non receptive towards black man and hence the bond of human brotherhood is never formed between them. Anita Desai has very nicely woven this missing link in the present novel. Relationship as intimate as that of husband and wife has abandoned its earlier meaning and signification. Sarah is Adit's wife only for the namesake. The bonds of love freedom and togetherness that mark any man woman relationship is seen missing in their marriage. This marriage instead of giving her a name has in fact snatched away her entire identity. She is caught between two words both of which she cannot fully accept without killing something inside her.

Therefore, in this novel she has perfectly handled alienation, frustration miss understanding of human relationship in modern scenario. The novel truly presents the decaying face of women relationship as evident in this world. The relationship between human beings has been dried in the relationship of daughter and father mother and son sister and sister and even of husband and wife has come under the dark Shadow of suspicion, distrust, lack of communication and above all silence. The thread of relationship has lost its tenacity just like Anita Desai's character Maya Adit and Sarah. Modern men and women are living a dead life. Here one is reminded of T.S.Eliot's words in the Wasteland:

We are in rat's alley. This lack of communication and mournful silence has piloted large modern man to a strange place

where they are surrounded by strange people whose language and dialect they cannot understand. Thus, Maya feels rejected and remains lonely even at the presence of her husband.

Anita Desai has very beautifully explored this strange place in her novel and lay open a new word in front of us . Anita Desai has effectively conveyed Maya's journey within as well as her existential problems. Desai has used soliloquy, monologue and stream of consciousness technique to expose the troubled psyche of Maya. Her above. novel is indeed and excellent study of not only in human relation but also present thesis on human Psychology.

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