

IMPORTUNATE SEARCH FOR LIBERTY IN THE NOVEL, *CRY, THE PEACOCK* BY ANITA DESAI

B. S. Arun

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Erode Arts and Science College, Erode, Tamil Nadu, India

ABSTRACT

Anita Desai presents a new wideness to English fiction through the journeying of troubled sensibility, a typical neo-Indian observable fact. Anita Desai's chief distress seems to be the quest for liberty, which her characters require for. She has successfully portrayed this aspect nearly in all her novels. The men and women in her novels are hunted by the desire to attain emancipation from the ordinary routine of duties, family responsibilities and social commitments. Narrating the mental suffering of a very complex aspect, there is forceful yearning for liberty in character's life. Their main concern of this paper is the importunate search for liberty of the character Maya in the novel, *Cry, The Peacock*.

KEYWORDS: *Liberty, Desire, Duties, Family Responsibilities, Social Obligations, Importunate Search for Liberty in the Novel, Cry, the Peacock by Anita Desai*

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INTRODUCTION

Anita Desai presents a new wideness to English fiction through the exploration of troubled receptivity, a typical neo-Indian observable fact. Desai has been identified with a new literary routine of Indian writing in English, which is stylistically different and less hesitant than colonial Indian literature and trepidation; such issues as hybridism, broken up identity and "imaginary homelands," a phrase invent by Indian novelist Salman Rushdie.

Anita Desai stands individually from other female Indian writers due to her connection with the life of young men and women in Indian cities. She is concerned with telepathic life of her characters. She discards all social distress and avow with the intention that she is interested in individual and not in social issues. Her strong point is that the mind and soul travels around and not the body. While dealing with the psychic problems of her characters, she finds thirst her liberty in them.

Anita Desai's chief apprehension seems to be the expedition for liberty, which her characters yearn for. She has successfully portrayed this aspect nearly in all her novels. The men and women in her novels are hunted by the craving to attain liberty from the ordinary routine of duties, family responsibilities and social prerequisite. Desai stands apart from other women novelists for she throws brightness on the inner mental argument which her character undergoes. Narrating the mental misery of a very complex dimension, there is forceful craving for liberty in character's life. Their main unease is the importunate search for liberty.

Her maiden novel, *Cry, the Peacock* evinces Maya's chase for liberation from reality, loneliness and anxiety of death, which do not let her to be at tranquility with herself. In order to assert liberty from present mayhem, she takes the help, of course, to go back to her childhood. Thirst for liberty preoccupy her so much that she becomes disparaging to such an tremendous point that she takes the most unusual and appalling step of doing away with her husband, which is rarely taken by a female. When the characters in the novels are unable to bracket together themselves with the superficial world in which they live to tell the tale, they get engaged in some methods to attain liberty from it.

Cry, The Peacock is her first novel. She has explored the theme of conjugal relationships and dissension in it. This novel shows the real cause of disrupter in marriage of Maya and Gautama. The novel is about Maya's cry for love and relationship in her loveless wedding with Gautama. The peacock's cry is allegorical of Maya's cry for love and understanding. The marital discord results from the temperamental disproportion between Gautama and Maya. Even Maya's childlessness embellishes her agony of loneliness which she feels in spite of being married. She becomes highly insightful as a result of it. Maya wants to enjoy life to the utmost. She loves life in all its forms. She enjoys beautiful sights and sounds. She is a gastronome to the core. In contrast, she is married to Gautama, a friend of her father, very senior to her age and a comfortable middle aged lawyer. He is a kindly, cultured, cogent, practical and busy with his own situation of business. He looks upon her love for good things as nothing more than sentimentalism and once makes a disparaging remark about her that she that she has a mind of third rate poetess. Maya longs for companionship which to her torment, she never finds in her marriage. The novel echoes in the cry of Maya, the desire of a married woman to be loved with passion which few tend to get.

Because when you are away from me, I want you. Because I insist on being with you and being allowed to touch you and know you. You can't bear it, can you? No, you are afraid, you might perish. (113)

There is gratitude of Maya with the Peacocks that represent for her cries of love, which all together invite their death. Like her, they are the human being of exotic wild and will not rest, till, they have danced to their death. For her, they represent the evolutionary nature of thrash about for survival. She describes how they dance and the remarkable collision produced on her mind:

peacocks searching for mates, peacocks tearing themselves to bleeding shreds in the act of love, peacocks screaming with – agony at the death of love. The night sky turned to a flurry of peacocks' tails each star a staring eye. (87)

Maya's fixation with death had been actually planted long ago in her childhood by the albino astrologer's divination foretelling of the death of either of the couple after the marriage. She being extremely in love with life turns hysteric over the creeping fear of death.

Am I gone insane. Father, Brother, Husband. Who is my saviour? I am in need one. I am dying, God, let me sleep, forget, rest. But no¹¹¹ never sleep again. There is no rest anymore. Only death and waiting.(98)

In the first novel, *Cry, The Peacock*, Anita Desai has tried to unveil the inner truth of the post-modern age through the female protagonist cum heroine, Maya with a view to awakening the neglected, tormented, poor quality women of the Indian Bourgeois society. In the male dominated society, Maya hardly enables to get accustomed with her family, her husband, Gautama, misogynistic lawyer who is much older than she.

Through Maya, Desai wants to expose the psychological discrepancy and agonies, alienations and abnormal treatment and mannerism of the protagonist along with the dreadful fright, terminate outrageous traits and the suicidal act.

Through her novel, Desai focuses on the fears, sufferings, isolation, inner dejected mode, censored confidence of the Post-modern feminism of India. It is observed that the serious reasons of marital discord and loneliness of Indian women in age-difference, difference in maturation, Indian philosophy of segregations and mental relationship between husband and wife. The very mindset of Indian female community that they are supposed to be weak, other, low-grade and unassuming and so on adds to their vacuity.

Maya shares a deep affectionate relationship with her father and is pained to leave the parental home at marriage. Her unnoticed mental agonies and suffering upbringing caused by her mother's death makes her alienated from outer world. The aspiration and potential she had at married life are not fulfilled, and as a result, she becomes scrappy, fuzzy and upset mentally.

Thus, Maya is highlighted as an enormously hypersensitive figure; Desai represents a turbulent and neurotic woman who fails to cope with the patriarchal order and system, where her insurgence silently and helplessly likes a substandard being. It seems to us that Maya fails to accept natural truth and realistic issues in the cocoon. She adopts an escapist path and becomes a "nature child" wherein, she tries to find out comfort in the realistic environment and landscapes. She wants to get rid of her nothingness through getting mixed with birds, animals and a space that humans fail to pay compensation in Maya's storming life. Maya may be regarded as a different being from conventional and humdrum norms and principles. Actually, she never supports the idealistic sense of an ideal wife in a middle class family of Gautama. Her economic reliance upon her husband makes her feel uncertain, helpless and powerless because she regards herself as the ruled to the ruler's gaze. The novelist wants to focus on Maya as a post-modernist female with a view to unchaining the iron of gate of her introverted life; Maya wants to search out a purified world where she will get equity without having any difference between male and female.

Desai's *Cry, The Peacock* deals with the conjugal discord between Gautama and Maya. The novel is based on the metaphysical prays of a distasteful woman who lacks in romantic feelings and emotions. She categorizes herself with the peacock in the divergence of the unwarranted joy and ecstasy of their dreadful inner experiences of love and affection. We are told of her cruel past and her opposition with the astrologer Albino who had once predicted to her that, either she or her husband would die impulsively within the four years of their connubial life. The anxiety caused by this prediction had moderate with the passage of time but with the demise of their pet dog Totto. All these unexpected frequency and unpleasant memories haunt her frequently. The cruelty of the past of her childhood, the unvarying fear of termination, her expectation to exist, her deterioration, all these are closely related with her recollection of the oracles of Albino astrologer. The tale of Maya's subsistence seems to be one of the three-fold patterns of facts that may be concluded as deficiency, estrangement and elimination gradually.

Firstly, Maya is deprived of brotherly as well as parental care and affection. Secondly, she is alienated from her father figure husband and at last, she brings about the elimination from life and her own self from familial responsibility and duty.

Anita Desai's *Cry, The Peacock* portrays the hard work life of her female protagonist Maya who seems to suffer since she is married to the male, who fails to realize the cracked identities. Regarding the psychological agonies of Maya, Dr. Sanjay Kumar's comment may be accepted in this regard:

Maya's fear is aggravated as she fails to relate to Gautama her husband. Between the husband and wife; there exists a terrible communication gap as both of them seem to live in different worlds. (Kumar 22)

Maya is an inactive woman of passions and emotions on the other hand, Gautama as a psychological academic. One of the crucial remarks in the novel is the problem of her continuation in her case. She longs to realize where she stands in unfriendliness of time, the unfeasible vastness of space. Her desperate struggle to have a self-existence of her own being is threatened by the presence of her husband. Consequently, she imagines him as an adversary and her psychic problem becomes an existential one. Maya's disappointment at Gautama's lack of contemplation and understanding is hardly realized. She never confides in her anxieties, but her husband tries to help her to tackle the situations. He fails to mollify her, because she does not alter. The novel, *Cry, The Peacock* exposes an intuition of marital inappropriateness and unhappy conjugal life. According to Suresh Kohli: "No other writer is so much concerned with the life of young men and women in Indian cities as Anita Desai is" (Suresh 34).

For a woman, the customary stereotype is one that cares and gives to others, even to the point of neglecting herself. The feminist encouragement has produced women characters that do not lose their identity, but assert the specification for an independent identity. In the feminist fiction, we find women who are highlighted to be making efforts to mould their lives to be themselves, even to the point of disrupting their convention, bond relationship in a traditional society.

But, in portraying Maya as a character born of feminist inspiration, Desai it appears that uncertain of her own because Maya fails both in creating an identity for herself and in leading a stable life. The psychological problem and the torture of Maya's life are precisely impacted in the significant fable of the peacock's mating ritual. The cry of the peacock is the cry of the natural sixth sense of a woman, who is not mentally satisfied. Maya realizes that she wants Gautama's physical presence, his love and a normal life.

She is capable of understanding which enables her to experience what the peacock and peahen are experiencing, but this makes her feel all the more extremely that although there is an emotional arousal, there is no physical satisfaction which is the chief reason of her agony against Gautama. A sense of lack of fulfillment leads Maya's psychology to threatening and deterioration. Being a recluse, Maya does not like socializing, nor she is able to face realism, and remains at home brooding.

In the novel, *Cry, The Peacock*, Anita Desai has given the feminist message of the post-modernist female generation through creating the protagonist cum heroine Maya. Through a small world of wife and husband, Desai has drawn a universal feminism, where, she also has pictured a basic difference between the patriarchy and matriarchy. But in the post-modern period, we may find the situation little better. In fact, the Indian authors have tried to abbreviate the ever growing feminist questions through the form of literature. We seem that Desai has tried to equalize the difference between male and female through her characters. According to many critics of Desai, Maya is the embodiment of the Post-modernist feminism of the Indian Bourgeois community, culture and society.

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