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## THE PSYCHO- SOCI-CULTURAL ISSUES IN ANITA DESAI'S *CRY, THE PEACOCK*

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### ABSTRACT:

In "Cry, the Peacock", Anita Desai masterfully explores the complexities of human relationships, gender roles, and the oppressive nature of patriarchy. The novel delves into the inner world of Maya, a young woman trapped in a loveless marriage with her husband, Gautama. Through Maya's dreams, fantasies, and interactions, Desai reveals the suffocating effects of societal expectations and the longing for individual freedom. The peacock, a recurring symbol, represents the elusive and unattainable aspects of love and beauty. As Maya's story unfolds, Desai raises important questions about identity, autonomy, and the human need for connection and understanding. With lyrical prose and nuanced characterization, "Cry, the Peacock" is a powerful critique of gender roles and patriarchy in Indian society with psycho-soci-cultural issues, offering a haunting and evocative portrayal of the human condition.

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Cry, the Peacock, published in 1963, is Anita Desai's debut novel. Set in India, this psychological novel delves into themes of loneliness, emotional turmoil, marital discord, and existential dread. The story centers on Maya, a sensitive and fragile young woman, and her deteriorating mental state, which is exacerbated by her complex relationship with her husband, Gautama, and her fear of an old prophecy that foretells death.

Social health, cultural satisfaction and psychological hygiene seriously carry significance in modern time, along with scientific and practical development. For any nation's development, what matters the most is social cultural and psychological health. However, as we are improving financially and scientifically, the socio-cultural and psychological problems are increasing. The

assessment of these problems may provide the solution to healthy life- socially, culturally and psychologically. The issues like gender, race, class, prejudice, non-communication and on, although many social media application are available, create hindrances to the development of nation. In addition to this; mental disorder, stress, emotional imbalance, traumatic condition, alienation, detachment, relationship crisis cause hazards to individual in particular and to society in general.

Anita Desai, being an Indian by birth, analyses the Indian social, cultural and psychological issues. Her novels seriously probe into issues of the female which nearly covers fifty percent of total population in India. Assessment of woman characters and their troubles may resolve the fifty percent problems in society. Many critics have admired Anita Desai for attempts to disclose various issues related to women. Her commanding talent to use satire to attack the society for whatever wrong is really appreciative. Whatever she has written is honest and frank.

Irrespective of profession, business and financial success; psychological hygiene gains much significance in recent time of haste. Anita Desai's first novel *Cry, the Peacock* which is published in 1963 discusses the protagonist Maya's mental disturbances and traumatic conditions because of scarcity of love and affection from her husband. Her father's care taking attitude convinces her that she is the most loved person in life. She expects the same love and affection from her husband, Gautama. However, in pursue of professional success Gautama's negligence turns into psychic character. She feels her fear dream may come true.

Anita Desai's novel *Cry, the Peacock* is a poignant and powerful exploration of the human condition, delving into themes of love, loss, and the complexities of relationships. Published in 1963, this debut novel marked the beginning of Desai's illustrious literary career.

The story revolves around the protagonist, Maya, a young woman trapped in a loveless marriage with her husband, Gautama. The couple's relationship is devoid of emotional connection, and Maya's desperate attempts to rekindle the flame only lead to further estrangement. As the narrative unfolds, Maya's inner world is revealed through her dreams, fantasies, and interactions with others.

Desai masterfully employs symbolism, imagery, and lyrical prose to convey Maya's inner turmoil and the oppressive nature of her marriage. The peacock, a recurring motif, represents the elusive and unattainable aspects of love and beauty.

Through Maya's journey, Desai explores the societal expectations placed on women, particularly in the context of marriage and family. The novel raises important questions about identity, autonomy, and the human need for connection and understanding.

*Cry, the Peacock* is a haunting and evocative novel that showcases Desai's mastery of language and her ability to craft complex, nuanced characters. This thought-provoking work continues to resonate with readers today, offering insights into the universal human experiences of love, loss, and the quest for meaning.

Maya feels deeply alienated from her husband Gautama, who is practical and emotionally detached. Her sensitivity and craving for love clash with his indifference, leaving her isolated and psychologically disturbed. Therefore the issue of psychological alienation is analyzed in the novel by the author through the characters.

Existential Dread and Prophecy are the aspects of the novel. Maya is haunted by a prophecy from her childhood, predicting that either she or her husband will die within four years of marriage. This foreboding sense of doom intensifies her mental instability and drives her toward obsessive, destructive thoughts.

The novel uses various symbols, such as the peacock's cry, to reflect Maya's internal conflict. The peacock's cry represents unfulfilled desire and spiritual agony, mirroring Maya's despair and her longing for a connection that she cannot find. The author justifies the psychological condition of the characters through the use of symbols.

Anita Desai's novel "*Cry, the Peacock*" is rich in symbolism, with several motifs and images recurring throughout the narrative.

The Peacock: The peacock is a symbol of beauty, pride, and elusive happiness. Maya's obsession with the peacock represents her longing for love,

beauty, and transcendence. **The Garden:** The garden is a symbol of Maya's inner world, reflecting her emotions and psychological state. The overgrown and neglected garden mirrors Maya's own feelings of neglect and abandonment. **The House:** The house is a symbol of confinement, representing Maya's trapped existence in her loveless marriage. **The River:** The river is a symbol of change, flux, and liberation. Maya's fascination with the river represents her desire for escape and transformation. **The Moon:** The moon is a symbol of cyclical time, fate, and the feminine principle. Maya's association with the moon reflects her connection to the natural world and the rhythms of life. **The Butterfly:** The butterfly is a symbol of transformation, renewal, and the soul. Maya's identification with the butterfly represents her longing for spiritual growth and transcendence. **The Colors:** Desai uses colors symbolically, with red representing passion, yellow symbolizing decay, and green signifying growth and harmony. **The Dreams:** Maya's dreams are symbolic of her subconscious mind, revealing her deep-seated fears, desires, and anxieties. **The Fantasies:** Maya's fantasies are symbolic of her desire for escape, love, and connection, highlighting the disconnect between her reality and her inner world. These symbols and motifs enrich the narrative, inviting readers to interpret and reflect on the themes and emotions explored in the novel.

The novel critiques societal expectations for women, especially in marriage, where women like Maya feel trapped within traditional gender roles and silenced by patriarchal norms. Anita Desai's "Cry, the Peacock" critiques gender roles and patriarchy in Indian society, particularly in the context of marriage and family.

Maya's confinement is seen through the actions. Maya's husband, Gautama, restricts her freedom, symbolizing the patriarchal control over women's lives. **Gender expectations:** Maya is expected to fulfill traditional gender roles, such as being a submissive wife and mother, while Gautama embodies masculine dominance. **Marriage as a prison:** The novel portrays marriage as a confining institution, stifling Maya's individuality and creativity. **Patriarchal oppression:** Gautama's family represents the oppressive nature of patriarchy, perpetuating gender-based violence and controlling women's bodies. **Female**

resistance: Maya's fantasies and dreams serve as a form of resistance against patriarchal oppression, highlighting the tension between societal expectations and individual desires. Motherhood and femininity: The novel explores the societal pressure on women to become mothers, reinforcing gender roles and limiting women's autonomy. Gendered spaces: The novel highlights the gendered division of spaces, with men occupying public spaces and women confined to domestic spheres. Silence and voice: Maya's silence and later, her voice, symbolize the struggle for women's empowerment and the need to challenge patriarchal norms. Body politics: The novel critiques the objectification of women's bodies, particularly in the context of marriage and family. Subversion of gender norms: Through Maya's character, Desai subverts traditional gender norms, suggesting the possibility of female agency and autonomy. By exploring these themes, "Cry, the Peacock" offers a powerful critique of gender roles and patriarchy in Indian society, highlighting the need for gender equality and challenging oppressive norms.

The protagonist, Maya is sensitive, introspective, and prone to emotional extremes. Her relationship with Gautama and her preoccupation with the prophecy contribute to her mental breakdown. Maya's husband, Gautama is a rational and stoic lawyer who is often oblivious to Maya's emotional needs. His detachment is both a cause of Maya's loneliness and a representation of patriarchal stoicism.

Anita Desai employs a stream-of-consciousness style to illustrate Maya's inner turmoil, capturing her fragmented thoughts and emotional upheaval. This narrative technique allows readers to experience Maya's intense emotions directly, making her isolation and anguish more palpable.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Cry, the Peacock is an exploration of psychological isolation, gendered expectations, and existential anxiety. Anita Desai's lyrical language and symbolic imagery bring Maya's inner world vividly to life, making the novel a powerful study of a woman's mental collapse within the confines of an unfeeling

marriage. Through Maya's journey, Desai reveals the deep psychological costs of loneliness, misunderstood desires, and societal repression.

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