



Feminist Consciousness in Anita Desai's Voices in the City

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Introduction:

Mrs. Anita Desai is the pioneer psychological novels in modern Indo -Anglian literature. She is not a novelist whose main interests are social or psychological. She is also not pleased with the achievements of Indian women novelists for the simple reason. In her review of Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason* shows her disfavor for the novelists who take interests in the outer rather than the inner world, preferring the social to the psychological novels. It is noteworthy that very few novelists have surpassed Anita Desai in psychological delineation of the protagonist. Early Indo -Anglian novelists like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao etc. concentrated themselves on the theme of the struggle for independence. In the second phase the focus shifted to the East - West confrontation, with the western educated hero facing the problem of accommodation in a oriental culture. Recently the trend has turned more and more inward. The novelists deal with individuals problems, mostly of an existential nature. Desai's novels fall within this last category. We can take the example of *Cry*. Here the main character Maya goes through this problem. Here is an example: He was blind, blind --not even my father, to save me. Desai's dark complexioned mother used to claim that her ancestors had come from France. Her first name was also very French -Antoinette, late shortened to Tani. She had romantic opinion of India. When Toni (Desai's Mother) and Dhiren Mazumdar (Father) returned to India, they decided to live in Delhi rather than in Dhiren Muzumdar's native place Dacca. Thus they were cut off from their family in Bengal and Bengali background. Probably Muzumdar's family in Bengal was not willing to accept his firanghi wife. When Desai was quite young the family moved nearby. Muzumdar has also spent many years in Germany studying Engineering and he spoke German very well. At home, Anita Desai also spoke with her mother in German very well. The family conversations thus were often in German, though Hindi and English were also used by them.

The death of Mrs. Desai's mother in the mid-seventies put an end to Anita's link with Germany but the urge to her German past and appreciation for it were present in her mind. Mrs. Desai herself accepts that this mixed ' parentage gave her an unusual advantage. "They created for me a synthesis which is the base of work and I did not have striven for --- I am sure this is what makes my writing whatever it is, I see India through the eyes of my mother, as an outsider, but my feelings for India are my fathers of someone born here." Thus the congenial environment at home contributed a great deal to fertilize her creative imagination and her personal experiences helped in sharpening her vision. In an interview; Anita Desai acknowledge that writing for her "--is an effort to discover, and then to underling and finally to convey the true significance of thing." [Anita Desai, Interview with Yeashodara Dalmia. *The Time of India* 29th April, 1979]. Her novels contain evidence of her experience of various problems pertaining to women, which she has tried to tackle from a psychological View point. She has presented in her novels the predicament of sensitive women characters who find it very difficult adjust in the

present urbanized set up. Thus the inner psychological world of her characters, various social issues, problems caused by disbalance of age in matrimonial field, difference of nature, gap of communication, strange behavior and a strange kind of love - hate relationship between husband and wife gain dept and meaning in her novels. Her own words throw sufficient light on her dealing with various psychological problems of women and women writers: "The line mostly in such confined spheres and therefore their field of observation is at the same time more restricted and more intense. This leads to their placing their emphasis differently from men, on having a very different sense of values. Whereas a man is concerned with action, experience and achievement, a woman writer is more concerned with thought emotion and sensation." [Atma Ram, An Interview with Anita Desai: *World Literature Written in English* 16: 1 August 1977 p. 100]

Simultaneously, we can also trace out the influence of abroad upon Mrs. Anita Desai and her way of life. She was influenced by English and Russian authors, especially Saul Bellow, Malraux, Emily Bronte, George Eliot and DH. Lawrence. All

her male characters are learned and like westerns. They prefer the life of change. Desai develops a new Era of psychological realism with her novel *Cry The Peacock*. The main theme is the agony of existence in a hostile and male - dominated society. Husband wife alienation in her novels is the outcome of the hypersensitive nature of her women characters and their inability to establish a balanced contact with their partners. Desai Says: "It has been my personal luck that my temperament and circumstances have combined to give me the shelter, privacy and solitude required for the writing of such novels." [Ram 100] Her heroines are in search of a meaningful life. This truth can be confirmed through the novel, *Where Shall We go This Summer?* "The everyday world had grown so insufferable to her that she could think of the magic island again as of release." (WSWGTS 10)

Mrs. Desai writes on the basis of her own personal experience which she has had in her own life. Her personal experience, childhood factors, ups and downs in life and different colours marked with Joy and sorrow, melancholy and serenity can easily be observed through her novels. Some critics have tried to relate the character of Sita in *Where Shall We go This Summer?* to that of Anita Desai. Who see Anita as a quester in search of perfection and truth. Similarly Desai opts the 1947 partition as the central episode in her novel *Clear Light of Day*. Though she does not hint anywhere. *Clear Light of Day* to be autobiographical. We definitely have a glimpse of her own experience from her sensitive and clear portrayal of childhood. Mrs. Desai has been the hardships of city life where struggle for survival is so difficult that there is no scope for good human feelings. Moreover, the condition. of man and woman living together in a city is not good because of the complexities of city life. Mrs. Desai has finely portrayed the mental condition of husband and wife together in big cities. Their mental condition, their frustrations and their relationship with each other with numerous sexual frustrations are finely projected in her novels. Mrs. Desai realized that city life is full of hypocrisy. It is a place where humanity and human values are dead and people prey on each other like cultures. It is also a place where people have to suffer psychic torture and distortions. Moreover life in cities puts certain pressures on the inhabitants, who struggle against some life denying forces. Isolation and alienation have become distinctive features of metropolitan life. Calcutta has special place in Desai's life. It is the city where she was married.

Mrs. Desai went to Calcutta from Delhi at the age of 20 in 1957. She left the city in 1962. Calcutta is in the heart of *Voices in The City*. In this novel, she sketches the life of Calcutta, she projects her own personal experiences in this novel and prepares the reader for the type of atmosphere that

prevails in the city of Calcutta. The city is full of voices but it is a useless character. In her. Baumgarthey's *Bombay* also, Desai highlights the emptiness of Calcutta. She takes *Bombay* life as the focal point of the novel. In the city, where loneliness and alienation is a dominant feature of life, it is only from the animals that one can expect company and affection. Baumgarther's cats keep company with him and give him live in a city where he feels isolation. In the same way, Maya in *Cry The Peacock* feels loneliness and isolation where her pet dog Toto dies. "Small white Toto, small white corpse in the blaze of sun, abandoned. I shall miss him so Terribly, Gautama; I cried to myself. What is the use? I am alone." [CTP 101] Mrs. Desai also felt loneliness and isolation in every city wherever she went and she depicts this aspect in all her novels *Baumgarther's Bombay* is important for the View point of some family influences. In this, novel Mrs. Desai felt a need to write about her family, especially the peculiar relationship that her mother had with India who had come here in 1920s. *Bombay*, *Calcutta* and *Germany* are well described in this novel. We can also trace out the influence of nature upon Mrs. Desai. She is cultivated by the charm of nature and believes that one can find peace in the lap of nature only. The heroine of Desai's novel *Where Shall we go This Summer?* Sita considers the island as the only peace providing place in the midst of the torments of city life. The striking thing about Mrs. Desai is that she is not only influenced by the city life but also she describes the village life with great gusto. The genuine problems of men and women whose backs are bent with hard work in rural areas affect very few novelists and most of the novelist did not take pain to project their real problems. But this is not so with Mrs. Desai as she represents a realistic picture of the rural life in the novel, *The Village By the Sea*. In a special introductory note, Desai states that the story is based entirely on facts. She says that Thul is real Village on the western coast of India and all the characters in this novel are based on people who live in this village only their names have been changed. Desai has visited this Village and talked to the people of this village. She narrates the real story of its residents in this novel. Desai's novels from *Cry the Peacock* to *Clear Light of Day*:

Anita Desai: A Psychological Novelist:

Anita Desai's higher education has given her a deep insight into the human psyche and a clear critical perspective to re-examine tradition. She has shed her inhibitions in a marvelous fashion in order to show surprising frankness, boldness and honesty in the fictional treatment of the workings of the human psyche. Her novels throw light on inner climate, the climate of sensibility. Her primary intention as a novelist is to depict the psyche and emotional states of her protagonists. Anita Desai has

a great significance to achieve and handle the nuances of human inner psyche beautifully. In her novels we do not find political and philosophical or social idea of characters but only characters with their observations, motivations, their consciences and their tensions. Desai is blessed with good observations, sensitiveness and penetrating analysis of the characters, the qualities necessary for a psychological novelist. It becomes natural for her to make each work of hers a haunting discovery of the inner-self. As it is incumbent for an author who wants to point out the psychological aspects of characters to employ a certain design by which the interior working of the protagonist's mind is unfolded gradually with the progress of the narration, therefore Desai's endeavor is to discover the significance of reality by plunging below the surface and plumbing the depths, illuminating those depths till they become a more lucid, brilliant and explicable reflection of the apparent world. Anita Desai is primarily a novelist of moods, of persistent states of mind or psyche. She is interested in the psychic life of her characters and her novels reveal that her real concern is with the exploration of human psyche. Her contribution to fiction writing has been quite commendable and substantial. She comes face to face with intangible realities of life, the innermost depths of the human psyche and the chaotic underworld of human mind through her novels. Her distinctive stature as a novelist derives primarily from the fact that she has made extensive use of the stream-of-consciousness technique in her novels. Her achievement lies in the fact that she employs a relatively new technique in Indian English fiction with a remarkable consummate skill. The fiction of Anita Desai has become self-analytical and introspective and the individual's quest for a personal meaning in life has become a theme of unavoidable interest for her. Her primary emphasis is thus on sights and sounds, on movements and patterns both physical and mental as they impinge on the consciousness of her protagonist. Her protagonists have usually sensitive sense of doom and withdraw into a sequestered world of their own. Anita Desai has presented in her novels the predicament of sensitive women characters, who find it very difficult to adjust in the present mechanical and urbanised set-up. She sincerely broods over the fate and future of modern woman. She has explored different aspects of feminine psyche like man-woman dichotomy, their very personal relations, presentation of neurotic characters, etc. In fact, most of her novels are a study of feminine psyche, which comprises women of all ages. Images and symbols are employed freely to reveal the inner psyche of the characters and illuminated their obsession changing and contrasting moods, and psychic deviation besides emphasizing the obscure and weird atmosphere of her tale.

Desai portrays her female characters on the verge of psychological breakdown with a view to capture the prismatic quality of life in her fiction. She uses the stream of consciousness technique, flashbacks and interior monologues. Her female characters are educated, well to do and hypersensitive ladies burdened by chaotic milieu. Desai reflect the inner struggle of such characters, their desire to break the shackles and come out of their shells and assert themselves as human beings. Desai can be considered as the innovator of psychological study of alienated women in India. She deals with the problems of meaninglessness in life and lack of communication not from the philosophical or sociological but entirely from psychological point of view. As a psychological novelist she tries to delve deep into the emotional built-up and crevices of her characters. She employs very beautifully all techniques of psychological novel like zigsaw puzzle, diary entries, self-analysis along with stream of consciousness and flashback. She makes each work of hers an accelerating exploration of the psychic self. The psychological turmoil creates psychic imbalances, which in turn, handicap them in establishing harmonious and gratifying inter-personal relationships. There is a complete compatibility between her theme and technique. With the help of colour and symbols she reveals the hypersensitive nature of her heroines. Her language has three major characteristics—love of words, sensuous richness and sensitivity, which suit her expression of personal vision. She is much interested in life with its hopes, frustrations, negations, rejections and chaotic flow of events as she is concerned with the art of giving shape, purpose and wholeness to life.

The novelist's language and theme also reveal the meaningful correlations between the psychic conditions of the characters. Her deft handling of language, imagery and syntax in order to convey an acquainted expression of the interior psyche of her characters is superb and unique. She presents with a keen view that how moral values of women are conveniently altered to suit the demands of men who treat them as their objects of possession to be ruled and controlled by psychological insecurity nurtured in them through myths, customs and-social discourse. Desai's use of various linguistic devices in order to present the submerged psychic truth is unique in itself. Clusters of images, symbols, myths, fresh collocations, parallelisms, alliteration, consonance, rhyme, different levels of semantic interpretation are some of the devices used by her. From the very beginning, her first novel *Cry, The Peacock* shows her interest in the psychology of her characters. Maya's psychic disintegration is presented and to do this Desai moulds images in such a way that the objects get increasingly blurred and confused. In the beginning only the edges of the

images are mixed, e.g. the tail of the rat gets merged with father and father's voice becomes the voice of the peacock, yet they are recognizable. Later they all get mixed up leading to an imagistic disorder which sets forth effectively the chaos of Maya's psyche. Desai uses the stream of consciousness technique to explain the causes and growth of her despair. The second section of the novel reveals the gradual stages by which Maya moves from sanity to insanity. The final section which acts as the epilogue provides a powerful picture of the effect of the calamity on the important characters. Maya's heart craves for love and understanding, solaces and support from her husband. Gautama is a normal gentleman interested in his profession of an advocate, perhaps too practical and materialistic to allot time for expressing his love. Maya does not tell him about the albino's prophecy for fear of hurting him. At the same time she is unable to bear the oppressive burden of the secret.

Because of Gautama's age and cold attitude to sex, Maya remains a much disappointed woman. The image of fighting and mating peacocks, apart from being the central motif of the novel, underlines Maya's sexual frustration too. Psychologists suggest that a healthy emotional and sexual life would have given Maya a sense of security and stopped her psyche from decaying. Freud attributes neurosis of women to sexual dissatisfaction resulting from the rigours of civilized sexual morality. Various incidents representing her longing for outdoor life in which she bears frustration mainly by Gautama also affect her psyche. The neurotic defence mechanisms such as sleep rituals, hallucinatory visions and nightmares, experience of split personality, adverse somatic symptoms and religious avoidance of violence woefully fail to blunt the edge of her unconscious wish. At most places she appears to reel under the pressure and break to pieces as a result of the struggle within. And it resulted in psychosis which progressively moves towards a psychotic solution to Maya's neurotic struggle.

Monisha in *Voices in the City* seeks loneliness and privacy in order to be her ownself. She is oppressed by a sense of claustrophobia and longs to be free. Even her most private self is not spared by the members of the joint family. Love has no place in her relationship with her husband, Jiban. What she means by love is only a condition of conscience. She feels desperate and finds her life a conundrum that she shall brood for ever with passion and pain, never to arrive at a solution. She desires to be complete and fulfilled. Confronted by unconducive atmosphere, she turns inward and realizes that alone she can feel better. The gulf between expectations and reality throttles Monisha with the result that her bruised self withdraws into her private world where darkness is the natural element. She feels like a caged bird.

Meenakshi Mukherjee rightly observes, "Monisha's claustrophobia and exasperation culminate in suicide and appropriately enough the style and imagery in the pages from Monisha's diary come closest to the language of the heroine of *Cry, The Peacock*, another desperate woman". (Mukharji 190) Sleep cannot comfort her. The loneliness and the rejection of the uncongenial external world are the characteristic features of Monisha's life. In a sudden frenzy to experience desire and to experience feeling, she rushes to her room with a tin of kerosene, pours it over herself and sets fire. It is true, "Monisha's suicide is as much the result of her morbid nature and emotional insufficiency as the result of her uncongenial surroundings. "Thus, through this novel Desai portrays the agony, a sensitive soul experiences, in its quest for meaning and fulfillment in a hostile world. In *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* the problem of Sita is again more a psychological problem than being external, that resulted from unfulfilled wishes. The husband-wife relationship is dragged into difficulties as they are opposite to each other. Raman is an extrovert and Sita is an introvert personality. She hates Raman for being cold. Her reactions like she starts smoking, abusing her children for trifles and her becoming extremely angry when the servants talk in the kitchen shows her hypersensitivity. Desai views her as a psychologist. Sita suffers from nervous disorders, a void in her life, emptiness, even in her married life resulting in her loss of identity. Her alienation from her surroundings, from the world around her forces her to live in a dream like world of fantasy which is the outcome of a serious psychological confusion. At a deeper psychological level Sita's quest for her identity is an outcome of the husband-wife conflict. Raman's insensitive nature causes serious libidinous problems to the mental life of Sita. Desai achieves the cohesive design of content and form in her psychological novels and bridges a thought-provoking harmony over different streams of feelings and sensibility, found in different settings of human society. On many places, she delves deeper and deeper in the inner world of her characters and brings out many realistic truths of psychological interest. For Desai, the inner climate, the climate of sensibility that lovers or dears or rumbles like thunder on suddenly blazes forth like lightning, is more compelling than the outer weather, the physical geography or the visible action.

The psychological cosmos of Sita's life moves around the island and her father's fantasy. In the core of her heart, she believes that the magic of the island will wipe out the evil spell and her unborn child will remain within her womb forever. Sita appears a bit abnormal and introvert. She wants to escape from the brutal realities and harsh facts of human life. She also thinks that no one cares for her.

She becomes defiant in her words and deeds in the fit of depression. Sita has travelled along distance from Maya and Monisha though she is yet to achieve perfection. She identifies herself with the jelly fish stranded on the shore. She becomes aware of the need to be related in -order to gain protection. Her escape to Manori island symbolizes her need to acquire a 'place' for her 'self' both in the real and metaphorical sense of the term in order to maintain her mental equilibrium. Her urgent desire to leave the 'madness' of domesticity and the degree of triviality the outside world attaches to it sums up the traditional concept of the place destined for married women. In this novel Anita Desai follows the track of Bronte sisters, who chose to study the heart and mind of women from women's point of view. The next novel *Fire on the Mountain* explores the inner emotional world of Nanda Kaul and Raka. Desai draws a picture of the tragedy of Nanda leading a segregated life like a recluse in lonely hill hut. In *Clear Light of Day*, again heroine prefers to lead a solitary life in a decaying house. We find that Desai penetrates into the hidden depth of mind of her characters, who are obsessed by nostalgic reminiscences of their past life and events. In this way Desai heralded a new era of psychological exploration of inner, mind in her novels. We find that most of Desai's protagonists pass through a psychological crisis which damages their value system. Some of them are lost, whereas some get out of their alienation. The psychological turmoil creates psychic imbalances, which in turn, handicap them in establishing harmonious and gratifying inter-personal relationships.

But it is wrong to say that Desai deals only with the female psyche. Her successfully probing into the male psyche establishes her as a psychological novelist whose interest is in human psychology. In her novel *In Custody* the main focus is shifted towards the male psychology. The major protagonist, Deven is the representation of male psyche. Deven comes from a lower-middle class family and his consciousness is directed towards a wide world beyond himself and his family. At thirty- five Deven feels already having spent all the empty years waiting for a break, waiting to do something worthwhile, something great. Deven is presented as 'a romantic and an escapist, a weak person incapable of facing crisis. A chanced visit by Murad brings about a dramatic change into the monotonous and purposeless existence of Deven. Murad's offer to take an interview of Nur appears the very summon, Deven has been waiting all these years. Deven felt another warm, moist tide of jubilation rise and increase inside him at being recognized, named and invited into the presence of a man so clearly a threshold into the house. To be successful has always been an anxiety with Deven. Nur in this sense is Deven's alter ego. In this novel

there is a different category of psyche in the sense that here Desai attempts to study the helpless nature of male protagonists due to poverty, helplessness and lack of initiative. The diverse trends that affect the contemporary middle class Indian are unified into the sensibility of the protagonist, Deven. He undergoes experiences of various shades and complexities and eventually emerges as a wise man with a more mature and complete knowledge of being in this world. During the period of undergoing shades of various experiences, he suffers from the problem of marital dissonance. He is also disappointed with the atmosphere of the institution, Deven's psyche is probed. He is aware of his personal incompetency to fulfill his wife's desires and dreams. He lives with a sense of defeat and failure. The sense of defeat and failure bring disappointment in the lives of Sarla and Deven but it had not brought them any closer. The motif of despair, failure and mediocrity that underlines the lives of each of these people is repeated in several situations in the novel in the kind of homes, D-II types, that Deven a low paid employee in the same grade live in the phenomenon of 'brain drain' and migration to more prosperous countries for lucrative jobs. The prime characteristics of Deven that attract our attention are his helplessness, humility, suffering and nobility. Socio-economic factors colour his personality and mould his psyche. Desai uses some colour, bird, and animal images, relating to the character's despair, death and suffering. Except in the end, when Deven feels his epiphany that instills in him a new courage and clarity of vision. The novel by and large offers only negative images of characters and situations.

As a psychological novelist Desai has symbolically used the town of Mirpore. It symbolizes the basic nature of the entire class of society, to which the hero Deven belongs. Deven regards Mirpore as a prison where he is sentenced forever to live a gloomy and empty life. *In Custody* is important as a psychological novel as it is recreation of the problems and the agonies of the wounded self. It is primarily about the functioning of human psyche. It is different from other novels as here we find neither a sensitive and highly strong woman protagonist nor any violent neurotic woman. It explores the psyche of male character whose problems are social. Similar kind of portrayal we find in Baumgartner's *Bombay*. Anita Desai, an expert in delineating the lacerated psyche portrays the ontological insecurity, alienation and anguish of uprooted individuals, in this novel too. It narrates the story of Hugo from his affluent childhood days in Germany to the horror of his murder in India by another German. This series of calamities losing his home, business and finally his mother makes him mute and accepting. When his frantic attempts to get connected to his mother fails, he withdraws into his

own world, disinterested in the way of the world, in his own physical appearance, in anything except the company of his feline friends. Peer group experience is essential for the proper growth of child psyche. His complete schooling denied Hugo this opportunity, cultural uprooting, geographical displacement and failure to connect, torment his psyche. Frustrated with the world, with himself, having nowhere to go, not getting recognition for his simplicity and honesty the 'pagalfiranghi' is saved out of his unpleasant past and unknown future by the German youth who murders him. He lived in doubt and distractions in his quest for identity, but he died in faith. The novelist peeps deeper into Baumgartner's mind and brings the inner fibers out of it. To force a way into the inside of human psyche is indeed an arduous work, but it fits into the narrative skill of Anita Desai. Thus Desai's fiction is symbolic, sensitive and psychological. Her fictional word reflects her concerns with psyche of her characters. We come to the conclusion after a close survey of her novels, that her novels are psychological dramas, surfacing an inner conflict through aesthetic objectivity. She has adopted a controlled method of stream of consciousness. Internal narration, a point of view within a character's consciousness, manifesting character's feelings about and evaluations of the events and characters of the story. In the novels of her first twenty years of writing, Desai has used a uniform structural pattern with marked features of a modern psychological novel. Meena Belliappa rightly says, "What is new in Anita Desai is the effort to delineate a sensitivity to locale, as it operates within the consciousness of her characters.... The nature of the central character is crucial to a fictional technique which places the centre of the novel within a single consciousness. Perceiver, whose thoughts and feelings constitute the story, is also the instrument for registering the values of the objective world. "(Bulliappa 51) 'Free Indirect Thought' and 'Narrative Report of Thought Acts', dominate the writings of Anita Desai. The psychological nature of her novels makes it a natural choice. From the Spatio temporal point of view, the novels of Anita Desai give the impression of slow motion pictures with sharpness and perspicacity. The movement is in full control by the recurring monologues and implicit dialogue very frequent in her novels. Desai's writing gains in depth and intensity mainly due to her psychological perspective. The various kinds of discourses at different levels is a result of the combination of internal and external perspectives. The technique of 'Free Indirect Discourse', which has been freely used in these novels, is a distinctive feature of her psychological novels. Madhusudan Prasad gives voices to our feelings when he says,; She has added to Indian English fiction an existentialist dimension, a

lyrical splendor and a technical richness that were hitherto lacking.

Cry, the Peacock (1963):

This is a maiden novel of Anita Desai. It portrays Maya, the most sensitive woman suffering from neurotic fears and marital disharmony. Maya intends to live life to its full but as soon as she moves away from her father, the harsh realities of life baffle her. The novel presents the story of a young hypersensitive and neurotic woman named, Maya. The novel begins with a gloomy atmosphere with a description of Toto's death, the favourite dog of Maya. This incident upsets her so much that she finds it impossible to bear the psychological strain. The sad demise of Toto produces a frightening sense of doomsday in her. She suffers from insight. The novel is thus, a psychological study of this hypersensitive, obsessive young lady, suffering from a father-fixation. She is obsessed by a childhood prophesy of disaster, kills her husband in a frenzy, turns mad and finally commits suicide. There is something in the theme of the novel which connects it with the hidden aspects of Indian life and reality. Maya's relationship with reality passes through three phases: the first is that of her childhood where she is protected within a limited world; the second is of her life with Gautama when she makes unsuccessful attempts to go back into her past and equally unsuccessful attempts to reach out to others; the third and final phase is her total surrender to the world of her fears and insanity.

Maya who was brought up tenderly by an affectionate father's house was 'bliss of solitude'. She is the most sensitive woman suffering from neurotic fears. The memories of her past are always acting as a comforting relief to her wounded psyche. She has been so protected and loved that her husband later on accuses her of living her life as a fairytale, and not being above to deal with the harsh realities of life. A protected daughter of a wealthy Brahmin, Maya is the most sensitive woman suffering from marital disharmony and acute father-fixation. As a result, even after her marriage, she looks for the father image in her husband. Maya's marriage to Gautama is more or less a marriage of convenience. Maya, a pampered child of Rai Sahib, is brought up in an atmosphere of luxury. Gautama and Maya's father were friends. They have similar way of thinking, Gautama evermore used to come to Maya's father. He used to come to her house every day and one day her father proposes that she should marry him. So we come to know that their marriage is based on the friendship between her father and Gautama. Thus, it "was grounded upon the friendship of the two men and the mutual respect in which they held each other, rather than anything else". (CTP 32-33). Maya fails to grow out of childhood. Her neurotic growth, development and crisis are painted throughout the novel. Her life is

linked with her father's individual attention and affection and consequently, she is incapable of leading an independent existence. She has developed a father-fixation and after her marriage she finds Gautama a poor substitute. Her thoughts are solely fixed on her father. Gautama is not a loving husband, but merely a father substitute. He proves a medium to reach her father in her unconscious mind. As R.S. Sharma holds: "Maya's tragedy psychologically lies in this inadequate transference from the father to the husband." (Sharma 66-67). The sole cause of Maya's tragedy and depression is her too much attachment with her father. Maya's father could give her everything in the form of attention and protection but not real love. No wonder that Maya's childhood world of fantasies and adult world of realities clash, producing more imbalances in life. Her tragedy is that she wants to continue the captivated atmosphere and, at the same time, she is aware of the demands of a mature world of a woman. The novel opens with the death of her pet dog, Toto, on whom she has been lavishing all her affection. Here we observe a glimpse of her irreparably shaken sensitivity. Since she is a childless woman she loves her pet just like a mother. To lessen her suffering, she needs the assuring warmth of Gautama's company which she does not get. She rushes to the garden tap to wash the vision from her eyes. This hysterical and whimsical response is in total contrast to Gautama's casual attitude. Such incidents showing the lack of communication between the two characters and references to the steadily recurrent theme of unable to get along relations between Maya and Gautama, a prosperous practitioner of Law, are repeated many times in the novel. Gautama fails to respond to the feelings of Maya's young heart and to remove her father-fixation. Maya's tendency to depend on her father and then on her husband in a clinging relationship shows that she constantly needs a psychological support. Her intense longing for contact, relationship, and communion expresses her spiritual need which remains unfulfilled most of the time.

Maya's excessive father-obsession is responsible for her turning to childhood memories and lapsing into childhood behavior. Moreover, her neurotic condition has worsened by her recollection of a prediction by an albino astrologer in her childhood. When she was unmarried, an astrologer had predicted the death of either herself or her husband in the fourth year of their marital life. She is all the time haunted by the prediction. It even affects her pleasant marital life. On the other hand, Gautama has no faith in astrological prediction. Maya never establishes effective rapport with Gautama, as he is unsentimental. She wants to escape from reality whereas Gautama desires to live in it. She considers Gautama's theory of detachment

as the negation of life and consequently feels miserable. Gradually when Gautama devotes more and more time to his work, Maya becomes a complete introvert. Gautama has hardly any time for her being extremely wrapped up in his professional preoccupations. He is detached, sober and industrious. Maya, because of her introvert nature, cannot be one with her in-laws. Her consciousness takes her back to the time spent her father's house. Gautama feels that she is neurotic, petulant, immature, a small pampered child, unable to cope with hard facts of life. They are quite opposite to each other. Temperamentally there is no compatibility between the two. Such irreconcilably different temperaments are bound to have marital disharmony. The gap between the two intensifies Maya's neurosis especially as they have entered the fourth year of marriage. This communication gap between them leaves her lonely to brood over the morbid thoughts of the albino astrologer's prophecy. It is her her obsession with death which had been planted long ago in her childhood by the albino astrologer's prophecy foretelling of the death of either of the couple after four years of their marriage. The terrifying words of the prediction ring in her ears and upset her:

"And four years it was now, we had been married four years..."

I know the time had come. It was now to be either Gautama or I." (CTP 32-33)

Maya's attempts to divert herself by visits to her friend Leila and Pom, or Mrs. Lal's party, or the restaurant and the cabaret, prove powerless to dispel the creeping terror. Likewise, the visit of Gautama's mother and sister Nila brings respite to her and she enjoys her busy life in their company. But once they are gone, she finds the "house empty" and herself alone with "horrors and nightmares." (CTP 162) Besides the prophecy of the astrologer another factor that influenced the psyche of Maya is the myth about the peacock's cry:

And now I recalled that old-slick, sibilant tongue

Whispering poetry to me in the bat-tortured dark.

"Do you not hear the peacocks call in the wilds?

Are they not blood-chilling, their shrieks of pain?

'Pia, Pia' they cry. 'Lover, lover. Mio-mio...I die" (CTP 162)

The novel is about Maya's cry for love and relationship in her loveless wedding with Gautama. The peacock's cry is symbolic of Maya's cry for love and understanding. Like her, the peacocks are the creatures of exotic wild and will not rest till they have danced to their death. For her, they represent the evolutionary instinct of struggle for survival. The marital discord results from the temperamental

disparity between Gautama and Maya. It was a match between two different temperaments and there was not a single link in the physical or mental outlooks to bring them to a close tie. "The matrimonial bonds that bind the two are very fragile and tenuous 'neither true nor lasting' but broken repeatedly; and repeatedly the pieces were picked and put together again as of a sacred icon with which, out of the pettiest superstition, we could not bear to part." (CTP 95) The cry of peacock symbolizes Maya's agony for love and life. The repeated cries of the peacock and the cries of the neurotic Maya are symbols to denote the inner self of the protagonist. She weeps for them as well as for herself. Like the peacocks she loves intensely and her love is unreciprocated. The peacocks are creatures of an exotic world and will not rest till they had danced the dance of death. Their cries assimilate in Maya's mind with her own anguish.

The peacock's dance is associated with the rainy season. It is observed that when dark clouds come over the sky, the Peacocks start spreading their colorful feathers ready to dance and mate. However, this dance of the Peacock merges with the colour of the Albino astrologer and the dance becomes somewhat the dance of the death. The Peacock's dance acquires a personal significance for Maya's life and it shows to her future course of life as she views her marriage with Gautam as a deadly struggle. As an astrologer had predicted that one of them would die after four years of marriage, Maya was haunted by the prophecy and also by the myth of peacocks. As she broods over her inner despair, she wonders if she was growing insane:

"Am I going insane? Father! Brother! Husband! Who is my savior? I am in need of one. I am in love with living. I am in love, and I am dying . . . There is no rest anymore - only death and waiting." (CTP 98) The prophecy and the myth are juxtaposed in the mind of Maya causing a nightmarish uncertainty in her life. Pushing Gautama from the rooftop is unleashing the volcanic content of her repressed psyche. Of course, the act also destroys her. She suffers mental breakdown and regresses in the world of childhood at her father's home. Desai's fictional world consists of the inner conflicts, visions of the characters, particularly female characters. In her approach she is influenced Emily Bronte, D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, and Henry James. The novel is all the way concerned with the aspect of the marital discord and its impact on women. Maya and Gautama, and all the other couples around them, are the victims of the poignant problem of maladjustment in marriage. Desai has explored man woman relationship in the novel. She has mastered the technique of telling the untold, mute, mental miseries of women particularly of married women. Maya was very much in love with Gautama and needed his companionship and understanding; but

these were very much missing in their marriage. Again and again we find Maya turning towards her husband for support and love but to no avail. Their tastes, likings, thinking are different: "I tried to explain this to Gautama, stammering with anxiety for now, when his companionship was a necessity. I required his closest understanding. How was I to gain it? We did not even agree on which points, on what grounds this closeness of mind was necessary. 'Yes, yes'; he said, already thinking of something else, having shrugged my words off as superfluous, trivial and there was no way I could make him believe that this, night filled with these several scents, their effects on me, on us, were all important, the very core of the night, of our moods tonight." (CTP 19-20)

Even Maya's childlessness exaggerates her agony of loneliness which she feels in spite of being married. She becomes highly sensitive 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 an epicurean to the core. In contrast, she is married to Gautama, a friend of her father very senior to her age and a prosperous middle aged lawyer. He is a kindly, cultured, rational, practical and busy with his own affair of business. He looks upon her love for good things as nothing more than sentimentalism. He once makes a disparaging remark about her that she has a mind of third rate poetess. Maya longs for companionship which to her despair 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." (CTP 113) Maya remains dissatisfied not only emotionally but physically too. Once in the course of the novel, in spite of her seductive postures, Gautama remains rigid and cold. Maya herself describes her predicament in these words: "I turned upon my side, close to him, conscious of the swell of my hip that rose under the white sheet which fell in sculptured folds about my rounded forms" (CTP 41-42). The meaninglessness of their relationship again and again dawns on Maya. She realizes that: "We belonged to two different worlds; his seemed the earth that I loved so, scented with jasmine, coloured with liquor, resounding with poetry and warmed by amiability. It was mine that was hell." (CTP 102)

Conclusion:

Whatever human relationships presented in this novel doesn't represent harmony. Maya is deeply scattered by the hypocrisy and disgust exposed through other marriages around her. Maya's mother has not been mentioned in the novel. She is not found anywhere discussing about her mother.

There is faint hint that her father's marriage was no good. Gautama's parents also lived an unnatural married life. They keep themselves busy with their own vocations. Leila, Maya's friend marries a tubercular man against her parents' wishes. If Maya is obsessed with Albino's prediction, Leila has accepted her fate as she says "it was all written in my fate long ago" (CTP 59) Even Mrs. and Mr. Lall's marriage is no good. Mrs. Lall denounces her husband as opportunistic and quack revealing the deep-seated antipathy of a maladjusted wedding. Gautama's sister Nila, a divorcee, declares: "After ten years with that rabbit I married, I have learnt to do everything myself. (CTP 162) The title of the novel, 'Cry, The Peacock' suggests Maya's cry for love and understanding in her loveless marriage. Maya rejoiced in the world of sounds, sense, movement, odours, colours etc. She was in love with living contact, relationship and communion, which were the warm tender sensations in which she wanted to relax. Unfortunately, this involvement is opposed to Gautama's philosophy of detachment. Gautama could see no value in anything less than the ideas and theories born of human, preferably male brains. She hungered for his companionship and spent sleepless nights. She could not accept this unsatisfactory life, as taught by her father, because it told upon her nerves. She would be awake at night, stifled by the hunger she felt, not only for Gautama but for all that life represented.

As a motherless lady, Maya becomes more and more sensitive. As a result, she develops much attachment for her pet Toto. Her husband hardly realizes the emotional bond that existed in her heart for the pet. He is cold and too practical to

understand her grief. He considers it replaceable just like any other furniture item. He is detached and takes the incident as a matter of fact: It is all over, he had said as calmly as the mediator beneath the sal tree. You need a cup of tea, he had said, showing how little he knew of my misery or of how to comfort me. (Pathania 9)

Maya's agony is quiet perceptible when she "saw its eyes open and staring still, screamed and rushed to the garden tap to wash the vision from her eyes, continued to cry and ran defeated into the house" (Pathania 7) The death of a pet dog would be simply mourned but she says that a relationship with a dog, "is not no less a relationship than that of a woman and her child." (Pathania 9) The dog's death reminds her of her loneliness which had been suppressed by her

"It was not pets death alone that I mourned today, but another sorrow, unremembered perhaps, as yet not even experienced, and filled me with despair" (Pathania 13)

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