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TO CRY OR NOT TO CRY: UNFATHOMABLE MAYA

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ABSTRACT

Problems of women from the past to present in the periphery have shifted to the centre. Through the eyes of women writers, one gets a glimpse of a different world which provides new representation in literature. Women who were then treated as second class citizens are still attaining the same in their novels. The joy of writing lies in discovering truths that are otherwise elusive. Anita Desai, the mother of psychological novels seeks the truth that lies behind the fragile hearts of her Women. Her women are in a quandary whether to cry or not to cry. This attitude makes them unfathomable.

Desai sets herself to voice the mute miseries and helplessness of married women tormented by existentialism problems and predicaments. Her characters, mainly undergo stream of consciousness. Maya is apt for it. Her beloved dog Toto is dead. She is not able to come out of it. The loss of Toto makes her to suffer to the extend. Maya continuously has a flow of thoughts in her conscious mind. She longs for the past and she cries for love. The contribution of women novelists in English is significant in terms of their choice of characters and their typical issues. Desai offers a tragic vision of life and dealing with the Indian family life she is both selective and evocative. In the novel *Cry, the Peacock*, the emotional turbulence and chaos of Maya is picturised. Stress plays a vital role in the novel. Maya is the personification of stress. She withdraws into a world of isolation and solitude. This compact introductory states Desai's Maya and her cry of life and love which leads to an entirely implausible out-turn.

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Anita Desai's works are hailed as a landmark in Indian English Literature as she brings into limelight the psychic odyssey of her characters. Desai recklessly pictures a dominating society. She is truly a painter of moods, of will, of conflicting choices and inner experiences. Her fiction not only voices the inner experience of her characters but also with their unheard unconscious life. It is apt to quote from the book *Perspectives on Anita Desai*:

Most of her novels represent the uninterrupted, ceaseless, disordered and chaotic flow of consciousness of its

characters, including their varied sensations, disjointed thoughts, memories, associations and reflections which find expression in a stream of words, symbols and images corresponding to the pre-speech, non-verbalized, disjointed illogical level of mental-emotional life. (Srivastava 22).

The contribution of women novelists in English is significant in terms of their choice of character and their typical issues. Desai offers a tragic vision of life and dealing with the Indian family life. She is both selective and evocative. In the novel *Cry, the*

*Peacock*, the emotional turbulence and chaos of Maya is pictured. Stress plays a vital role in the novel. Maya is the personification of stress. She withdraws into a world of isolation and solitude.

Maya, her very name suggests the quality of her character. In India, according to Hindu mythology the word "Maya" has one of the meanings "full of love". There is a spontaneous overflow of love, emotions and feelings in Maya the protagonist of the novel "*Cry, the Peacock*".

Anita Desai sets herself to voice the mute miseries and helplessness of millions of married women tormented by existentialism problems and predicaments. Her characters mostly under go stream of consciousness. Maya is apt for it. Her beloved dog Toto is dead. She is not able to come out of it. The loss makes her to suffer a lot. Maya continuously has a flow of thoughts in her conscious mind. She longs for the past and cries for love. Here, the other meaning of "Maya" that is "illusion" is revealed.

In Maya's narrative stream of consciousness is employed to chronicle the progressive deterioration of both Maya's relationship with her husband, Gautama and her own mental poise and sanity. Maya with her sensitiveness and love of beauty suffers the agony in the worst manner. On the other hand, her husband is insensitive and concerned with the absolute. Maya's predicament can be linked to the failure to find a refuge either in marriage or in the family. The split in her personality results in her loss of belief in herself. In their search for a sense of fulfillment women continue to rely on the house. When it becomes clear that the house cannot fill their emotional, spiritual vacuum they choose to withdraw. This is a typical Indian visualization of women.

On Maya's planet, there is strained family relationship at various levels. She finds no euphoria mood with Gautama. There is a long gap between them. Gautama is the friend of Maya's father. Maya is a highly protected child. She is a princess in her father's home. Maya is very much attached to the world of pleasures whereas her husband Gautama is totally detached from everything. Maya is an over sensitive soul, could not cope with the pure intellectual like Gautama. So, she cages herself into

the past memories of her childhood. Throughout the novel, there is always a cry of mental loneliness. The poor soul of Maya craves, that "I am alone, I was alone". (CTP 22) This solitary makes her neurotic.

The working of the mind of Maya is clearly reflected in these lines

"Sickened, I shut my eyes, but tenuous eyelids were no protection against the leer of the sun that morning. The light merely turned red, tinged with my own blood that crept through the hair-fine veins across my lids. I saw the world through my own blood that morning, and it was red. (CTP 152)

Maya is not a victim of exploitation, but falls a prey to her own morbid fears. The death of Toto symbolizes the spiritual death of Maya and some critics call it psychic death the idea of death that the prediction of the astrologer plants in her mind is neither completely excluded from her consciousness nor assimilated in her conscious behaviour. The albino is but a manifestation of Maya's hidden fear. He predicts an early death of one of them by unnatural causes. He tells Maya to be wary, worship God and make sacrifices as one cannot escape one's fate. The shadow of the albino symbolizing death haunts Maya throughout her life and the sound of drums of destiny echoes in her ears. The identification with the peacocks makes Maya tragically aware of her own predicament: "I am dying and am in love with living. God let me sleep, forget, rest. But no, I'll never sleep again. There is no rest anymore, only death and waiting." (p.98)

The cry of the peacock is the cry of Maya for love and for death. It is also the perspective of Maya's sexual frustration. Maya and Gautama fail to achieve sexual fulfillment. It is one of the causes of her misery and the feeling of her unrealized motherhood adds to her sufferings. She feels that the dance of the peacocks is like the dance of Siva, the dance of death. Before they mate, they fight.

Maya is unable to win over the psychic strain finally becomes a murderess kills her husband and then commits suicide. She is provided with all material comforts but she can never make others understand her agony particularly her insensitive husband. By embracing the above discussed points the author of the present paper sees Maya as a

complex woman. She is difficult to read as her mind is orchestrated in different tangents simultaneously. A deviant thought occurs to her before her previous thought ends and the result is a cold recipe served with carefully laid out garnishes that changes the taste completely.

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