



# The Image Of Women In The Novels Of Anita Desai

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## Abstract

Anita Desai is one of those couple of Indian writers in English who have attempted to see personally the quandary of their female characters. The world of Anita Desai's books is the internal universe of her characters. She does not appear any preference for the political and social issues that win around her characters. She is more inspired by her characters than in making the condition which is utilized to characterize the persona. Making characters is more imperative to her than recounting a story.

Key Words: Character, Female, Identity, Self, Life

Anita Desai is, clearly, not satisfied with the accomplishments of Indian women authors for the reason that "they have been substance to record and document"(Dalmia 65) the earth around the characters and mishaps and episodes throughout their lives. She is not an author whose prevalent interests are social or sociological. She has admitted to a questioner:

I am keen on characters who are not average but rather have withdrawn or have been crashed into a few furthest points of sadness and betray or persevere against the general current. It is anything but difficult to stream with the current, it makes no requests, it costs no endeavors, in any case, the individuals who can't tail it ... know recognize what the requests are, what it expenses to them (67).

Anita Desai's first novel, *Cry, the Peacock*, delineates the passionate, mental and profound clashes of Maya, an exceptionally hung and delicate youthful wedded woman. Both in *Cry, the Peacock* and *Voices in the City*, Anita Desai portrays the strife in the psyches of overly sensitive, weak and inhibitive women.

Furthermore, there is Monisha, who thinks that it is hard to modify in the present mechanical and urbanized set up. *Voices in the City* exhibits a record of the odyssey of the two world-tired young women, Monisha and Amla, who are bound to dwell in Calcutta.

In *Journey to Ithaca* Desai depicts the experiences of Sophie and Laila. Laila comes to India from Egypt looking for awesome light and Sophie comes to India from Italy to occupy her significant other Matteo from the otherworldly way furthermore, to take him back to their nation.

Nanda in *Fire on the Mountain* exhibits an unconventional way to adapt to unhappy situations of life and surrenders herself to self-imposed isolation.

Maya in *Cry, the Peacock* and Monisha in *Voices in the City* confront the dissatisfaction and difficulty of taught Indian women who have no vocation, and are hitched to egocentric and rude spouses. Maya and Monisha are easily affected women experiencing psychotic feelings of dread and conjugal disharmony. Both Maya and Monisha are refined, having been raised in a way that makes it troublesome for them to alter themselves to the austere existence of their spouses. Amla, Monisha's more youthful sister,

frequently depicts Monisha as the lost princess of the fantasy. Maya has a charming youth. Maya is raised like a toy princess in a toy world, by her dad Rai sahib. She frequently remembers her great young days in the organization of her father.

It is another spring - an undeniably progressively untainted one, for it is at home, in Lucknow. I have been walking around and collecting the vegetables with dad - he appreciates tomatoes of a remote assortment, and I snack at a radish, at that point a spring of dill ... all the world is tinted like sweet sherbet ... I watch a little butterfly glint among the blossoms: it has white wings, each with an orange bit. Splendid and vacillating, it is as quite a bit of a gay paper-cut as the blooms. The world resembles a toy extraordinarily made for me, painted in my top choice hues, set moving to my most loved tunes (Desai, *Cry The Peacock* 34).

Maya is not exposed to the mechanical and commonplace life in her youth. At whatever point Maya thinks that it is hard to comprehend the methods in the world her dad would essentially disjoin her contacts with whatever remains of the world. He assembles pretty stories for her which would like to create her fantasies for the night:

For it is the specialist's requests that I should be allowed no nerves, no energies. However, when I nod off, the fantasy breaks up rapidly into a bad dream, in which a line of delicate, shaggy, fragile footed bears ruin through a move routine to the dry shake of the coach's tambourine ... By an abnormal change, the bears are rendered into a forlorn, dogged crowd of delicate, astute guests from an overlooked mountain arrive and the gibbering, cutting loose people are viewed as beasts from a few ancient age ... turning their backs and raising their tails, with franticness in their countenances ... The specialist must be called, at long last, to give me a little morphine with the goal that I may rest in harmony, and, by my dad's requests, no all the more performing animals are permitted in at our gate (49).

Rai sahib has a place with superstitious hidebound Brahmin family. They wed as indicated by the counsel of intellectuals and appropriateness of their horoscope. Maya's horoscope is discussed with the pale skinned person crystal gazer. As per the horoscope of Maya, it is anticipated that in the fourth year of her marriage either Maya or her spouse would kick the bucket by unnatural causes. Rai sahib expels the entire thing as negligible extortion. He sends the pale skinned person out of the town and requests hirelings and other individuals from the family not to discuss the world and destiny with Maya. From that day:

The word had not been articulated in my essence nor 'soothsaying' nor 'palmistry'. Quiet, he had conveyed in any such issues were mentioned. On Maya's accomplishing eligible age her dad makes what appear to be perfect conditions for Maya to create delicate emotions towards Gautama, his protégé. Gautama is maybe just the other soul that Maya is presented to, for any noteworthy timeframe and permitted to get physically involved with. She without a doubt finds in him the absolute best characteristics - insight, understanding that her dad has in plentitude separated from the

likeness in age. She acknowledges her dad's proposition to wed Gautama (67).

Anita Desai again and again underlines the issue of dejection, of absolute separation from one's kindred individuality, of absence of genuine correspondence which each individual faces all through the life. In the initial segment of *Cry, the Peacock* Desai depicts the strained relation between Gautama and Maya.

Maya is overwhelmed in view of the passing of her pet, Toto, to whom she is colossally joined: "Childless woman do create devotee connections to their pets"(19). She reacts candidly and madly to the demise of Toto. She cannot endure the sight of the cadaver. She goes to the tap to wash the vision from her eyes. She needs cuddling urgently from her significant other to arrange for the dead body and wipe her tears.

At the point when Gautama arrives "he did every one of that should have been done"(19) however with finish absence of worry for Maya. Maya needs some tea and nothing more but as she reflects: "And Gautama raised quickly requesting tea to be sent, to consider, overlooking her troubles altogether" (22).

Maya views the passing of Toto as calamitous; for Gautama it is a characteristic occurring. Maya, sickened by the memory of the pet's late battle with death, emblematically distinguishes dread of death. She reviews a youth prescience of either her passing or her husband's, four years after her marriage.

Step by step Maya's offence towards her significant other increases. Endeavors by Gautama to recuperate up her psychological and inside injuries flop as her awareness gives it an emotional turn. Her persistent yearning for something shuns her to build up proper correspondence with reality throughout in her everyday life. Maya keeps on experiencing the feeling of suffocation and disassociation of her actual identity, even after the sugar covered pills of alleviation given to her by Gautama.

To flee from realities, from the universe of her significant other, Maya dives into the past, into a fantastic world of folktales and fantasies:

At the point when with my dad, even breakfast in the garden - for, on brilliant winter mornings, we have the workers bring it out into the blossom beds - turns into a gathering, on a par with a delight of mythical people and pixies who devour melons and syrups by twilight. As a kid, I delighted in, princess-like, a rich toll of the dreams of the Arabian Nights, the wonders and swagger of Indian folklore, long and bewildering stories of costs and magnificent rulers ... that were perused out to me by my dad, that deep rooted peruse so anyone might hear, so that a doll wearing pink I named Rose as opposed to Gulab(54).

Gautama blames Maya for being her dad's pet, and her marriage of being the aftereffect of her dad's fixation. Gautama as well as alternate individuals from the family are keen for their general surroundings but not relied much in the convictions, feelings, internal sentiments of people. Maya needs "contact, relationship, communion"(11) to alleviate her irritated and disturbed personality. She discovers none to share her inclination in Gautama's home.

In Gautama's family:

One didn't discuss love, far less of warmth. One talked - they talked - of discourses in parliament, of instances of remuneration and defilement uncovered in government, of paper editors blamed for criticism, what's more, the insignificant that pursued... They had multitudinous subjects to talk on (32).

Be that as it may, they will not have sufficient energy to talk on adoration, warmth and on relations. Life for Maya in Gautama's home is desolate restriction to a tomb: "I sat down as in a tomb. Running endlessly is relatively outlandish" (32). Maya, encounters her significant other's impassion and absence of delicate emotions:

Instructing me to rest while he worked at his papers, he didn't give another idea to me, to either the delicate, willing body or the forlorn, needing mind that held up close to his bed. 'Being gone out Maya gives herself "up to an attack of irate pad beating, kicking, everything except for crying (36).

Maya is especially controlled by the vision of pale skinned person stargazer. The ground-breaking picture which flashes in Maya's psyche with an unnerving normality is the vision of the ominous pale skinned person who had thrown:

his shadow like a net crosswise over me as I had fled down the passageway of years, from the grasp of assurance to grasp of adoration, yet getting me as unquestionably as a monster fisher man striding through the shallows of twilight oceans, tosses fine net with one brief, master movement furthermore, knows, as it settles with a falling murmur upon the still water, that he will discover in a catch: I had not gotten away. The years had gotten up to speed, and now the last, the conclusive one held me in its sweating catch from which discharge appeared impossible (54).

As the dread turns into a fixation, Maya is less and less ready to control herself. An outer occasion, anyway trifling, anyway disconnected, takes her psyche back to her fixation, to looming demise. She rehashes it once in a while:



We had been hitched four years; I knew the time had come. It

was currently to be either Gautama, or I (129).

She is influenced by schizophrenia and her fanatic dread of death. She encounters stupor like state of death, emblematically spoken to by the peacock's cry of satisfaction and agony, and its move of life and passing. Eventually the entire development of the novel goes up against a representative frame that offers centrality to the whole dramatization of human presence. Desai uses the nature to express the strained enthusiastic human relationship that quickly goes to the limit in a symbolical and figurative way:

Pia, Pia," they cry. "Darling, sweetheart. Mio, Mio, - I kick the bucket. Go out into the wildernesses previously storm comes - when the primary mists cross the skyline, dark as the Kohl in your grave eyes. How they adore the rain - these peacocks. They spread out their magnificent tails and start to move, be that as it may, similar to Shiva's their move of happiness is the move of death, and they move, realizing that they and their darlings are all to bite the dust, maybe even before the storms went to an end

... Before they mate, they battle ... when they have depleted themselves in fight, they will mate (94).

Peacocks are insightful. The hundred eyes upon their tails have seen reality of life and demise, and know them to be one in the loop of living while knowing about death. Passing on, they are infatuated with life. Maya fears demise. She envisions that Gautama will live on the earth for longer time and that she has to meet the demise. She feels that they as of now have a place in discrete universes:

His appeared the earth I cherished along these lines, scented with jasmine, shaded with alcohol, reverberating with verse and warmed by affability. It was mine that was hellfire. Torment, blame, fear, and detainment - these were the four dividers of my private heck, one that no one could make due in long. Passing was certain (64).

Maya feels that she will be demolished by Gautama. Maya, crashed into detachment and dissatisfaction and a frantic look to modify her sense of self that differentiates her from being ordinary. Overwhelmed by a dark rage, she executes the last demonstration of retribution by pushing Gautama off the patio:

'Gautama!' I shouted in rage, and push out my arms towards him, out at him, into him, saw him fall at that point, go through a massiveness of air, down to the extremely bottom (108).

Anita Desai's female character Maya is a splendidly reported figure depicting a troubled psyche tormented by her own fears and neuroses. She demonstrates every thread of the distresses of a distanced being in the modern society.

In *Voices in the City*, Monisha too faces the comparative problem as that of Maya. The character of Monisha exhibits how the experiences and interactions formed and shaped while facing life situations in a chaotic, harsh environment of city life leads to the development of a negative self-image for a sensitive persona. It results in neurotic conditions of fear, anger, guilt, anxiety, helplessness and depression. Monisha is feeling alienated within a patriarchal family system and struggles in vain to reconcile her desire for independence. The dilemma becomes even more poignant due to Monisha's longing for her husband's human trace and positive vibes from his side.

The theme of alienation, loss of identity creates an atmosphere of dramatic tension and conflict in the novel which explores how the absence of a meaningful relationship can compel an individual to suffer badly and constantly. Monisha wants to escape from sheer monotonous life but later accepts her defeat and surrenders to the vicious cycle of evil mental development. She accepts that it is easy to choose between death and mean presence and she embraces to end her worthless existence. Monisha proves to be a misfit in a family with a more matter of fact approach and fails to adjust with her imperceivable life without any individuality. Monisha comes to live with her significant other's family in Calcutta, which has to all appearances the air of jail, abandoning her own lovely home in Kalimpong. She is compelled to live with her dull and boring spouse. Her more youthful sister Amla ponders:

How and why, it was that Monisha had been hitched to this exhausting nothing worth mentioning, this visually impaired moralist, this careless quoter of Edmund Burke and Wordsworth, Mahatma Gandhi, and Tagore, this stout, minute-disapproved and constrained official (Desai, *Voices In The City*198).

Amla and her close relative Lila talk about the conditions which prompted the marriage of Monisha and Jiban:

Did you meet him before they were hitched?

Indeed. Your dad requesting that I visit his family and report, so I did. I met Jiban and his family previously your folks did.

What's more, what did you report?

That they were good, working-class congress family, totally unsatisfactory to Monisha's preferences furthermore, tendencies. So your dad chose he was the right man, that it was the correct family Why? Amla detonated on the twilit veranda. How out of line, how criminally out of line (199).

The elderly person shrugged:

I suspected as much as well, however maybe he thought, he was being sensible - that Monisha should not to be energized in her sullen tendencies, and that it would be something to be thankful for her to be sunk into such a stolid, unoriginal family as that, just adequately taught to acknowledge her with resistance (200). That is how the family has given justification for this happening. Monisha feels completely ignored, disengaged and desolate even in a joint family, in the crowded Calcutta. Nobody appears to comprehend her emotions or her needs. Monisha, who faces dejection and void of opportunity, feels caught in Jiban's house. The deplorable condition in Calcutta continually hurts her. She soon understands that something progressively substantial isolates her from the family, as Monisha says:

I believe that what isolates me from this family, hurling and moving underneath me in its fantasies of account books, benefits, examination results, storerooms, births, relational unions, ovaries, bellies, endowments ... I believe that what isolates me from this family is the reality not one of them ever rests out under the stars around evening time. They have indoor personalities, black and darkles (139).

Monisha depicts strikingly how they uncover even her inner parts:

My ovaries, my cylinders, every one of my breaks wet with blood, washed in blood, exposed, revealed to their scrutiny (113).

Rationally segregated, despite everything she yearns for physical isolation, which is not accessible indeed, even inside the security of her own room:

Indeed, even my very own room, which they viewed at first as still marriage, presently never again is so (the cylinders are blocked, it is a whole lot of nothing), and sister-in-law lie over of the four-blurb, examining my ovaries and theirs (116).

The banned windows which offer her no look at the outside world compound her feeling of segregation. Indeed, even a straightforward visit to zoo, with her niece and nephews appears to her like a discharge, a passage into free space. She enthusiastically hangs tight for her sibling, Nirode to remove her from that house, at least for quite a while.

Monisha has an uncommon scholarly affinity, yet at the appropriate time her still, small voice shrinks and withers away. She considers on her life and presence:

Is this what life is at that point, my life? Just a problem that I will brood over everlastingly with enthusiasm and torment, never to touch base at an answer? Just a problem - is that, at that point, life? (125)

The crisis of identity that Monisha faces is extremely despicable. As she herself says, she develops:

Littler consistently, recoil and lose increasingly more of my weight, my appurtenances, and the image of

my presence that used to set up me according to this world. I am now too little to even think about being respected much by anybody. I will be imperceptible yet (139).

She at last decreases herself to a woman who keeps a diary. She trusts in the journal that she keeps:

To put on a show to have overlooked, to put on a show to put stock in these details, these negligibility of our mean presence - is that right? To sort the husk from the rice, to wash and press and to talk and rest, when this isn't what one has faith in by any means? What compel does it required to shed ... On the off chance that I had religious confidence; I could without much of a stretch enough revoke this. In any case, I have no confidence, no option in contrast to my befuddled sadness, there is nothing I can offer myself to thus I should remain. The family here, and their environment, disclose to me such a life can't be lived - an actual existence devoted to nothing - that this husk is insurance from death. Ok indeed, truly, at that point it is a decision among death and mean presence, and that, without a doubt, is definitely not a troublesome choice (140).

Monisha's distracted scan for delicate sentiments, genuine romance, and significance of her reality leads her to suicide. Both Maya and Monisha look for a discharge from their conjugal strife by an extraordinary advance.

Amla, Monisha's more youthful sister, comes to Calcutta from Bombay, brimming with certainty, in a condition of high energy for the new life that she is going to live in Calcutta. Even though Amla and Monisha are sisters, there are striking contrasts between them. Amla's Bohemian way of life is in sharp contrast to Monisha's virtual internment in her in-law's home. Amla feels eager to live fully, grows as a business craftsman in Calcutta. She pronounces on landing:

Calcutta doesn't abuse me at all - you can't envision that it is so energizing to touch base, to drive through Dalhousie Square with all its red gingerbread houses ... It energizes me, aunt (122).

In any case, soon the awful city of Calcutta immerses her fervor and excitement in its horrible aspects and despair. The remoteness of Monisha fills her with premonition. Nirode's upheavals against their mom from whom he feels distanced and his deriding frame of mind harms her and makes her rational. She who used to take long hours of her work as a business craftsman now shuns this routine. The situation is like: The spoil emit into her working hours, and even the security and the pleasantness she had at first delighted in her office, as an expansion of school days that had compassionately pursued her into this brutal city, presently abandoned her and left her a pariah in the gathering of partners that accumulated about a triful of espresso Mugs, wreathing the blue smoke of one cigarette with the white smoke of another (142).

Amla's association with the painter, Dharma, a companion of Nirode's, has a deep ramification for both Amla and Dharma. In Amla, Dharma sees an energizing new model, and he develops a likeness for her and starts spending lengthy timespan in her company. His choice to ask Amla to be a model for his artistic creations on her first visit to his studio and Amla's assent to this renders Nirode stunned.

A glimmer of brilliance and change comes into Amla's life when she turns into a model for the craftsman Dharma. In the hours she spends in the studio, she turns into another Amla-

"A blooming Amla, translucent with euphoria and flooding with a feeling of adoration and reward. Here she could talk as, throughout the day about things to which she hardly gave an idea previously, simply because she realized Dharma might want to hear these subtleties, and their specific circumstance, and in light of the fact that Dharma would make an interpretation of them into something that had both means and form" (154).

To Dharma she seems like a pixie:

Who jumped under that wily, incredible city of yours, furthermore, unearthed my lost black market. She made contact with my quiet, mystery dream-animals and they guided her on to me. I never figured I ought to so much appreciate meeting a person again in my green existence where I never permitted to such an extent as a stride. Be that as it may, I did, I did ... I delighted in it so much, I feel very arranged to come back to the world she came from on her brilliant visit (173).

Dharma's home and his organization filled Amla with an echo of harmony in the enervating and tedious



life in the city. She builds up a close connection with him. At the point when Dharma looks at Amla as his repelled girl, Amla understands that it is her blame for having attempted to enter his reality as a sweetheart.

Amla's auntie Lila causes her to recapture her psychological and passionate harmony, when her delicate emotions are aggravated by Dharma. Rather than tormenting herself with the past she searches forward for brilliant future. Amla's favorable luck is striking up a working association with her work that empowers her to discover an outlet for her aesthetic motivation. Borne on the high tide of this action-packed novel, when Amla goes to visit Dharma once again,

Dharma remarks:

You've come at the opportune time - this is the respite previously the tempest. Your senses are as strangely exact as a butterfly's ... How completes a butterfly sitting on a leaf, know when a dreadful kid crawls up with his fingers settled to get a handle on its wings? Some way or another it knows, and flies giggling ceaselessly the brief instant before the fingers close over it. You have the bug's senses yourself, you know when you should fly, when you can rest, where you are going and how to return (142)

Not at all like her sister Monisha and her sibling Nirode, she progresses toward becoming prey to the grimness of the city of Calcutta. Monisha's suicide makes Amla see her future obviously. She realizes that:

Monisha's demise had pointed the path for her and could never enable her to lose herself. She knew she would experience existence with her feet solidly shod, including herself with her illustrations ... unequivocally in light of the fact that Monisha had given her a look at what lay on the opposite side of this obvious, uncompromising margin (226).

Amla is portrayed as a character navigating Calcutta's bustling environment, marked by a desire of independence and a contrasting perspective as compared to her sibling Monisha. She is overjoyed embracing the city's energy through her newfound career as a commercial artist seeking to carve her own path outside traditional family structures. Amla represents a hope for a new generation of women who seek to redefine their roles and embrace their individual identities while also acknowledging the limitations imposed by traditional norms. Amla's ultimate choice is tilted towards balance between resistance and adaptation. This is the redefinition of the female self, of individuality within the offered social system framework without radical change or violent neurotic reaction. Monisha's death, experiences with Dharma compel Amla to rethink with a shifting perspective while facing harsh realities and she decides to adapt and not to give up like her sister. Amla is more future looking female character who is not stuck in the fancies of past life and also, she is not obsessed with what type of life she desires rather she accepts and modifies her stance.

*Fire on the Mountain* is a study of loneliness that leads the female protagonist Nanda Kaul to be a fragmented personality who withdraws from all contacts. The novel projects marital discord, alienation substantiating the novelist's conviction that all human relationship is inadequate and that loneliness is an inescapable human predicament.

Nanda Kaul enters in the process of self-quest during mature years of her life and chooses Kasauli Hills as her peaceful abode embracing graceful detachment. This is a self-imposed exile as she says, "Discharge me. I've discharged all my duties, discharge" (30).

This is withdrawal from real human experience and from the social milieu to a vacant life and a vacant house to forget a hopeless past- a past of rejection and sacrifice.

Nanda Kaul lives under compulsion all through her life wearing a fake persona enacting the role of a part of happily married couple which later results in her bold decision to shun all calls from a so-called normal social life and escape to a self-imposed solitude.

Her marriage renders her to face identity crisis due to infidelity of her husband a highly educated and socially respectable person who compels Nanda to be a trophy wife in social milieu. Nanda's association with her other half all through her life was nothing but obligations and commitments which she was compelled to enact wearing a persona doing a job which was forced on her. This conjugal maladjustment for years

snatching all her liveliness and rosy hue of her young age leads her to a fanciful isolated existence in hills of Kasuali which has to face an unwelcome intrusion in the form of Raka her great granddaughter who has come there due to the marital stress in the life of her mother Tara.

Raka's presence becomes a connection for Nanda to the outer world one more time and she starts becoming affectionate for her. Gradually Nanda is amazed to realize how Raka is different from any other child as solitude never bothers her and she never seeks her attention. She is just like Nanda who likes to live alone amid nature. Unpleasant events in the novel in form of Nanda's friend violent harassment and murder snatches the peace of Nanda's self-imposed fanciful exile and brings her consciousness back on real ground from where she chooses to escape and asserts male dominance in the real world.

Ironical enough Nanda's life lies in between her make believe world and cruel real world which she tries to compensate but finally has to succumb to the reality, has to suspend her living with 'self'.

*Where Shall We Go this Summer* is a woman-oriented novel where the female protagonist Sita is fed up of metropolitan life and also feels suffocated due to disharmonious marriage with Raman.

The concept of self emerges from the interaction within the family fold but this may shatter due to mundane routine and social environment. The fractured self and the sense of inferiority and inadequacy due to socialization are problematic for clear self-perception.

The psychological stress of Sita has driven her crazy to such an extent that she has started considering the world as a cruel place. She behaves in a hyper sensitive manner that may be an outcome of fatigue of her meaningless existence in the family.

The gradual rejection of her ways by her children is a trigger for psychological violence at mental level which is bound to come out as a neurotic imbalance in her personality. A middle-aged woman Sita is shown as grappling with marital and maternal anxieties having four children and is pregnant with the fifth. Her saturation point and prenatal neurosis crosses the limit and she tries to save her 'self' by retreating back to her childhood home—her woman home.

The universe of Anita Desai is not exceptionally constrained and her range is not thin. She has introduced all sorts of women in her books. Maya and Monisha, who think that it is exceptionally hard to balance themselves in the present mechanical and urbanized set up submit suicide. Amla, even in the presence of such a large number of issues in this harsh world, decides to modify her existence with zeal. Nanda shows the courage to follow a unique path to pacify her needs for serenity. Desai has really investigated well the clairvoyant profundities of her female characters in her novels.

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