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“Alienation And Frustration In Anita Desai's Novel Cry The Peacock”

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Abstract: Anita Desai published her novel "Cry the Peacock" in 1963. Themes of alienation, seclusion, and dissatisfaction are the focus of the work. Maya, a young woman, is entangled in an unfulfilling marriage to Gautama, a wealthy attorney, in the narrative. Her spouse disregards her. She is of the opinion that material possessions may provide her with pleasure. This article examines the protagonist of the novel, Maya, with a particular emphasis on her internal conflict, conjugal discord, and cultural pressures. Maya experiences a sense of isolation and alienation from her spouse and society as a consequence of the neglect of her emotional needs. This article examines the topic, narrative technique, and symbolic framework.

Keywords: Feminine Sensibility, Patriarchal Norms, Alienation, Inequality, Marital Disharmony

Introduction: The novel commences with Maya's dream, in which she is convinced that her spouse, Gautama, is the forerunner of her imminent demise. These visions function as a recurring motif that leads to her psyche. Maya is the daughter of Rai Sahib, a prominent advocate in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. She is a member of a wealthy family. Maya's mother passed away a considerable amount of time ago. Due to the fact that her father is crucial to her. Gautama is a devoted companion of Maya's father. Maya's father wedded her to Gautama, despite the significant age gap between the two. Gautama is a spiritual individual, while Maya is a materialistic woman. He was unable to gratify her due to his age. She was extremely joyful and enthusiastic prior to her marriage; however, her life was transformed into an absolute torment as a result of her husband's neglect of her. The issue arises as a result of the passing of her beloved companion dog, Toto. This causes her to feel melancholy. Gautama experiences no sensations. He is of the opinion that the dog has been substituted with another. Afterward, Maya experiences melancholy. Every peacock weeps and dances in the rain as the season of monsoon approaches. Maya perceived herself as a peacock who yearns for its companion whenever she

observed a peacock dancing. Prior to her marriage, an astrologer foresaw that one of her spouses would pass away within four years of their union. This is the reason she believes she will perish. Ultimately, she expels her spouse from the roof, resulting in Gautama's immediate death. Consequently, the novel delves into her peculiar behavior, insecurity, and dread.

Themes:

1) Alienation and Isolation: The novel explores Maya's detachment and loneliness. It also exposes her emotional isolation and disconnection from society and her spouse, Gautama. Desai embodies the distant relationship between Maya and Gautama in this novel. The novel demonstrates that Maya's descent into lunacy is the result of societal expectations and emotional neglect. Maya's spouse is distant and dispassionate, which causes her to feel invisible and disconnected. She experiences a mental collapse as a result of this emotional neglect.

2) Marital Discord: The novel illustrates the challenges of marriage and the repercussions of emotional neglect. It illustrates Maya's urgent endeavors to satisfy the absence in her life. Maya yearns for love and compassion from her spouse, Gautama, but his emotional detachment plunges her into a profound state of despondency.

3) Feminine Sensibility: Desai exposes the intricacies of human relationships and the unfortunate plight of women.

4) Psychological Realism: The novel explores the intricacies of the human psyche, unmet emotional demands, and psychoanalytical realism.

5) Materialistic Longings: Maya's materialistic longings are characterized by her strong aspirations for material possessions and prosperity. These longings result in her frustration and alienation. The desire for a luxurious lifestyle is the driving force behind Maya's materialistic longings. She believes that the acquisition of material possessions will provide her with pleasure and satisfaction. Maya's possessions result in her alienation from herself and others. She experiences a sense of estrangement from her emotions and desires. Her preoccupation with material possessions induces feelings of isolation and loneliness. Maya becomes irritated when she fails to achieve the pleasure and fulfilment she anticipates. She experiences a sense of emptiness and unhappiness. This frustration is a result of societal expectations and pressures. Maya's narrative prompts enquiries regarding the essence of identity and the manner in which it is influenced by societal norms.

Subjectivity and Patriarchy:

Maya represents the oppression of women in Indian society due to patriarchal norms and expectations. Gautama's rationalism and detachment are in stark contrast to Maya's aspirations for material possessions. Desai critiques the societal pressures and inequality that women encounter through Maya's character.

Nature and Symbolism:

Maya's interior turmoil and her sense of self within the constraints of her marriage and societal expectations are symbolized by Peacock's lament in this novel. It symbolizes her sentiments of emotional isolation, alienation, and disconnection from others. It symbolizes the contrast between the external beauty of the

peacock and the internal anguish of Maya. Desai employs nature imagery to illuminate the intricacies of Maya's emotions and experiences.

Narrative Technique:

Desai has employed the stream of consciousness technique and interior monologue, which have been influenced by contemporary writers, to depict Maya's inner thoughts and emotions in this novel. Maya's emotional voyage is effectively conveyed through the narrative structure, which establishes a sense of intimacy.

Critical Study of this Novel:

- 1) Feminist Perspective: Feminist texts reveal the alienation and frustration that Maya experiences in her marriage. It highlights the patriarchal norms and societal expectations that contribute to her distress.
- 2) The Psychological Study: The novel is about the intricacies of Maya's emotional state, inspired by Freudian psychoanalysis.
- 3) Symbolist Novel: The narrative is enhanced by the use of the peacock image, which is imbued with concealed significance.

Conclusion: This novel explores the themes of alienation, loneliness, and frustration that are inherent in the marital experience. It pertains to the human psyche. It discloses Maya's voyage, gender expectations, and existential apprehensions. The novel is a critically acclaimed work due to its symbolic richness and psychological realism. Anita Desai's novel "Cry the Peacock" is a thought-provoking work. It delves into the intricacies of human relationships and alienation. It also addresses the challenges faced by women in a patriarchal society. The novel exposes Maya's emotional anguish, interior turmoil, and devastating story. It addresses the existential crises that women encounter in a society. It is a psychological novel. Maya is emotionally and psychologically unstable at the conclusion of the novel. She is troubled by a childhood prophecy that an astrologer made, predicting that she or her spouse would perish in the fourth year of their marriage. She develops an obsession with fate and mortality. Therefore, she is of the opinion that the prophecy must be fulfilled. Maya's marriage is characterized by a rational and distant relationship. Gautama is ultimately killed by Maya, who propels him off a terrace. In the aftermath of that incident, Maya experiences a mental collapse. Maya's descent into lunacy is revealed in the conclusion. It pertains to the vulnerability of the human psyche. The challenges of isolation in marriage and society are exemplified by Maya's inability to establish a connection with her spouse. The peacock's lament is a representation of the profound anguish that existed within the Maya. The novel concludes with Gautama's mortality, and Maya's mental state is indicative of societal expectations and emotional neglect.

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