

# **WOMAN SENSIBILITY IN ANITA DESAI NOVELS**

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## **Contends**

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## PREFACE

The literary voyage of this genre begin in 1864 with the publication of Raj Mohan's wife by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. Since then, In clarification in English has acquired universal acceptability and now it is read and reviewed by English-speaking world. Many novelists contributed to its growth and maturity.

Some of these luminaries are : Romesh Chandar Dutt, Rabindra nath Tagore, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayanan, Raja Rao, Bhabani Bahattacharya, Kamala Markandya, B. Rajan, Kushawanth Singh, Monohar Malgonkar, G.V. Desani, Nayantara Sehgal, Anita Desai, Arun Joshi, Solman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, and host of other novelists who have been contributing to the further maturity.

Anita Desai Indian novelist, Known for her colourful and touching studies of Indian life. Anita

Desai's Work. Written in English, is characterized by its gentleness and path with its other poignant and amusing characters, struggling to active their personal dreams in a complicated and un-sympathetic world.

Anita Desai deeply rooted in her native and national culture and it is evident from her themes, style, landscape, images and of course, in her successful experimentation with English novel.

The novel raises Many issues of universal relevance and its beauty lies in the fact that it can be interpreted from various angles. Though the novel deserves a comparehensive review, the aim and intent of the present paper it show Anita's woman sensibility as reflected in her novel.

First, the local, Indian land scape has inspring not only the Indian English poets but novelists also.

Indian society is partriarchal one. Male dominance in every sphere of life has made women the most vulnerable section of our society. Society not only does grave injustice to them but also tries, Through man-made institutions, to legitimatize their interior and secondary status in the society. She is assigned relative position through the process of continuous social and cultural conditioning. The process begins right from the day of her berath this affect her whole being.

“Indian half” deals with an orthodox family in a small provincial town. A partly successful, proud father, who goes through life, with set patterns and who passion. A mother who goes along with her husband,

doing what is supposedly right and expected of her, curbing and killing all her innate desires.

Prior to the rise of the novel. Many Indian women composed poetry and short stories in Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali, Urdu, Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada. Women were the chief upholders of a rich oral tradition of Story – telling, through myths, legends, songs and fables. Once literary began transformed into poetry and drama. The novel was not at first a common form, perhaps access to education than men. It was not until prose began to be used in the late nine teeth century by Bengali writers culture that the novel form took hold in India.

## **ANITA DESAI'S EDUCATION AND CAREER**

Anita Desai was born on 24<sup>th</sup> June 1937 in India. Daughter of a German mother and an Indian father she grew up during World War II and could see the anxiety her German mother was experiencing about the traumatic situation in Germany. After the war she found her known Germany devastated. Her mother never returned there. Anita herself did not visit until she was an adult. She has taught at Mt. Holyoke and Smith Colleges and is a member of the Advisory Board for English in New Delhi. She is married and has four children. She is known as a novelist, short story writer and also children author Presently she is working as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Girton College, Cambridge and Clare Hall, Cambridge. The author has won the Winifred Holt by Memorial Prize for her novel

'Fire on the Mountain' and her children's book. 'The Village by the Sea' in the year of 1982. She has also won the Guardian Children's Fiction Award.

Anita Desai, in her Psychological novels, presents the image of a suffering woman preoccupied with her inner world, her sulking frustration and the storm within: The existential predicament of a woman in a male dominated society. Through such characters, she makes a plea for a better way of life for women. Her novels have Indians as central character and she alternate between female centered and male centered narrative .

Her later novels, written since she moved to the U.S.A, reveal all the characteristics of diasporic fiction, that is a concern with the fate of immigrants, and a growing, distance from reality of India, which is view from the outside:

The volume of Indian literature written in English is smaller than that written in the various regional languages, and spans a smaller range of time, having only commenced with the spread of the English languages and education. But in the last – two decades there has been an astonishing flowering of Indian women writing in English the literature of this period being published both in India and else where. The authors are mostly western educated, Middle class women who express in their writing their discontent with the plight of upper caste and class traditional Hindu Woman trapped in repressive institutions such as child – marriage, dowry, prohibition on women's education, arranged married suffice and enforced widowhood.

Toru Dutt was First Indian women poet to write in English, and her work depicts archetypes of Indian

womanhood, such as Sita and Savitri, showing women in suffering, Self – Sacrificing roles, reinforcing conventional myths in a patriotic manner. Her first book published, when she was twenty, was a book of verse translations from French, A sheaf gleaned in French Fields, Verse translations and poem (1876). Kamala Das originated a Vigorous and poignant feminine confessional poetry in which a common theme is the expiration of the man-woman relationship. This style was subsequently taken up by other women poets suchas Gauri Deshpande, Suniti Namjoshi, and Chitra Narendran.

The predicament of a single women, spinster or separated has also been a prominent theme in women's poetry. Tara patel shows in single women (1991) that in the harsh reality of the world, the quest for companionship without strings is a difficult one.

Anna Sujata Matha in *Attic of Night* (1991) writes of the trauma of separation and the travails of a separated woman. Poetry for her seems to be an act of transender of agony, in the name of survival. But the image of women she projects is strong and determined, and she argues for a sense of community, Justice and companionship while in women's poetry we hear the voice of the new women's definition of herself and a quest for her own identify we hear the conventional male voice and see a conventional, often negative portrayal of women, in man's poetry. An example is the six volume of Nissim Ezekiel's *Poems*, which depict women as Mother, Wife, whore, sex object or seductress.

## INDIAN WOMEN NOVELISTS

Many Indian Women novelists have explored female subjectivity in order to establish an identity that is not imposed by a patriarchal Society. Thus, the theme of growing up from childhood to women hood, that is, Bildungsroman, are current strategy. Santha Romu Rau's **Remember the house** (1956). Ruth prewar Jhabvala's first novel to **whom she will** (1955) and her later **Heat and dust** (1975) which was awarded the Booker prize, and Kamala Markandaya's **Two Virgins** (1973) are good examples.

Anita Desai solely concerned with the inner weather of the characters. Desai is a painter of their kaleidoscopic moods, their wills and conflicting choices. Her predecessors deal with political turmoil's and social evils. Desai discusses the problems of temperamental incompatibility, conjugal chaos and

inharmonious man – woman relationship. In her novels, most protagonists alienated from the world, society, families, parents and even from their own selves, because they are not average people but individuals who are unable to communicate with the people but individuals who are unable to communicate with the people around, unable to relate themselves with this setup, they drift into their own sequestered world where they spin their dreams, which never materialize.

Anita Desai's predominant concern is not with society or social forces but the individual psyche and its interaction with social values. She is more interested in the psychological aspect of her characters.

Desai is considered as a psychological novelist as her concern is mainly with the nocturnal and nebulous atmosphere of the female psyche. The motivations, the

conscience and the psychic tension of the feminine psyche are Desai's main themes. Creates an opulent gallery of characters, though dominated by the female. Most of her protagonists are hypertensive females. Each is presented as an inscrutable individual. They are not chosen from the common rung of the society. Their problems are not related to food, clothing and shelter. They are rebels and their rebellion is not so much directed against society as against individuals. Their problems are neither physical nor social. They are psychical and emotional.

In dealing with psychic maladies, Anita Desai strikes a new note. Her character suffers from various complexes and mental diseases, which obstruct the healthy growth of their personality. A particular trait in the character, a tragic flaw develops into a psychic

malady making the character neurotic and hysterical as Maya suffers from father – fixation.

Desai builds her novels round the struggle within the self, the dismal and morbid moods of men and women. To her, writing is a means of discovering one's identity. Desai's novels are auto biographical, in the sense they reflect her 'quiet' temperament. Her novels exude the felling of gentle isolation. In the words of Dr. Atma Ram, "Whereas a man is concerned with action experience and achievement, a woman writer is more concerned with thought, emotion and sensation" Prof. Jasbir Jain rightly points out that,

"The world of Anita Desai's novels an ambivalent one; it is a world where the central harmony is aspired to but not arrived at, and the desire to withdraw and achieve harmony. Involvement and

stillness are incompatibility by their nature, yet they strive to exist together'.

Anita Desai represents the finest portrayal of feminine sensibility by experimenting the inner world of her protagonists. Writing is a process through which Anita Desai explores reality. Her writing is an attempt to discover the complexities of existence and the thing that makes it possible:

"writing to me is a process of discovering the truth-the truth that is mine-tenth of the ice berg that lies submerged beneath the one-tenth visible portion we call reality. Writing in my way of plunging to the depths and exploring this underlying truth. All my writing is an effort to discover, to underline and convey the true significance of things".

Anita Desai is gifted with a sensibility which suits her aesthetic goals. Her three major novels *Cry*, *The Peacock*, *Where shall we go this Summer?* and *Fire on the Mountain* reflect the sensibility of females through the protagonists Maya, Sita and Nanda Kaul.

## **ANITA DESAI'S NOVELS**

Anita Desai's first novel *Cry*, the *Peacock* appeared in her flowery-poetic language and with her mastery of domestic themes. The heroine of the novel Maya is a young woman, This novel reveals the sensibility of Maya. She is married to Gautama, who is older than her. He is a detached and indifferent man. The novel presents the characteristic contract between the two and it shows a vivid portrayal of the sensibility of Maya. However, Desai does not give more details about the persona of them. But the sketches enable us to draw the differences that persist between the ill matched couples. In *Cry*, the *Peacock* there are three parts. The first part gives a background about the death of Toto. The second chapter consists of seventeen chapters. In these chapters we see the bewildering story of Maya. In the final part, the

novelist's authorial comment is given. The language used by Desai in this novel is poetic, full of images and fascination. Throughout the novel Desai explores the yearning of the protagonist Maya for the usual things which are denied to her. This novel is an exploration of the sensibility by Maya.

Where shall we go this Summer? is Desai's another major work in which once again importance has been given for the feminine sensibility by revealing the inner psyche of the protagonist Sita. The protagonist Sita is a woman of aggressive and un adjusting Character. She is married to Raman. Though Raman and Sita remind us of Rama and Sita of **The Ramayana**, they are ironical names.

They are mentally separated beings in the same shelter. If Raman goes Eastward, Sita opt for west. She is reserved and emotionally active. She does not

like the family dominating over her. Ever her husband's advice irritates her. She is not even affectionate towards her own children. She wants to be isolated and happy. This novel is Desai's portraiture of an Indian woman who rebels against the tradition – bound old mode of life in the life of the western liberty. In transforming her experience in the form of art, Desai uses visual Details and an impressionistic style in an attempt to convey a sense of meaning underlying everyday behavior and objects.

Fire on the Mountain is Desai's another important and popular novel. This novel pictures the sensibility of an Indian house wife and her sufferings. Nanda Kaul is the protagonist of this novel. It presents the study of the sensibility of a house wife and the trauma of a house wife which takes her towards seclusion. In this novel, Desai has disclosed the true

picture of the affected sensibility of a female through her protagonist Nanda Kaul. Most of the wives can find themselves in the character of Nanda Kaul.

In all her novels, Desai has proved herself as a novelist who gives importance to the sensibility of her female protagonists. Through these protagonists she has given life to her theme. Exploration of the inner psyche of the female is her main theme. Desai is an explorer of the feminine sensibility.

Desai is excellent in depicting the inner feelings of women and their rising tone for emancipation and empowerment. B. Ramachandra Rao is truly acceptable when he says, "Each novel of Mrs. Desai is a masterpiece of technical skill." Her characterization is as equally important as plot – construction. Therefore, K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, calls her an "original tale" and

admires her skills in both inventing and narrating the stories.

Desai has used some techniques which have been used by D.H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf in order to deal with thoughts, emotions and sensations at various levels of consciousness. The techniques such as stream of consciousness and flashback methodology have been used in her novels. Desai's first novel *Cry, the Peacock* these techniques have been used widely. Very few Indo – Anglian novelists have paid so much attention to form and technique. Prof. Srinivasa Iyengar rightly observes,

"Since her pre-occupation is with the inner world of sensibility rather than the outer world of action, she has tried to forge a style supple and suggestive enough to convey the fever and fretfulness

of the stream of consciousness of her principal character”.

The inner world of sensibility through poetic prose gives a peculiar poetic quality to Desai’s novels.

Anita Desai has rendered a new dimension to Indo Anglian fiction by handling the pitiable and awful plight of the alienated self, especially of housewives facing single-handedly by the torments and fortunes of their insensitive and temperamentally callous husbands. This is further enlivened by her unconventional concern with the inner reality of the characters and the shaping of artistic imagination. To her, a work of art should grow from within, from the writer’s inner beckoning and compulsion:

“I think theories of the novel are held by those of an academic or critical turn of mind, not the creative. A writer does not create a novel by observing a given set

of theories..... he follows flashes of individual visions, and relies on a kind of instinct that tells him....not any theories.

Anita Desai is concerned with the delineation of psychological reality. Hence she prefers the characters who are peculiar and eccentric rather than general and common place. She conceives each character as a mystery and riddle. She believes that it is a duty of a novelist to solve this riddle. Her characters are almost sick of life and listless plaything of their morbid psychic longings. Most of her female protagonist are abnormally sensitive and usually solitary to the point of being neurotic. Maya in *Cry, the Peacock*, Sita in *Where shall we go this Summer?* and Nanda in *Fire on the Mountain*. In dealing with the psyche of the characters and their motivations she moves deeply and dwells in the inner reality of her characters.

Anita Desai eschews traditional practices and gives free reins to her individual vision. Most of the Indo-Anglian novels are the novelist, they are instinctive outcome of her inner motivations and compulsions. It is a natural growth. Desai's protagonists are socio-psychic rebels alienated selves who find it difficult to compromise with this milieu. Her characters reflect the mythic reality of our life through the complex interaction of the self and the society.

The Indo-Anglian novels till 1970s treated themes of political and social import. They have handled their stories based on the princes and paupers, saints and sinners, farmers and labors, untouchables and coolies, cities, and villages. The more impressive and sophisticated themes like the country's independence movement,

East – West encounter, tradition and modernity, materialism and spiritualism have been dealt 18 great writers like Raja Rao, Kamal Markandaya and Kushwant Singh. The very notion of the exploration of the human mind was alien to them. It is only with the arrival of Anita Desai that such long neglected themes were given an emotionally poetic treatment. She took them in sophisticated poetic cut – outs. Thus by shifting the realms of the human psyche, she brought the Indo-Anglian novel into the main stream of European and American fiction. The gradual growth of fiction in India is made by the gradual shifting of focus from the external world to the inner world of the individual.

The English novelists before Anita Desai have studied man and his world in relation to the objective social reality. They used their art as a powerful

instrument to present social problems. She is not ready to follow the same traditional approach. She writes neither for providing entertainment nor for the propagation of social issues. Her main Pre-occupation is to study human existence and human predicament, her exploration being a quest for self. She is the novelist of psycho-emotional situation and her theme is the individual against himself and against this milieu.

Anita Desai as a novelist occupies a distinctive place in the realm of contemporary Indian English Fiction. The World of Anita Desai is the inner world of her characters. Desai has been observed totally by the turmoils of the minds of her characters. So Desai presents a kaleidoscopic image of the minds of her characters. Existential predicament of her protagonist by various factors is her main issue in her novel. She makes known to us the unconscious motives of human

psyche, the problem of human relationship, the protagonist's quest for identity almost in all her novels from the Cry, the Peacock. In an interview she has admitted that:

“I am interested in characters who are not average but have retreated, or have driven into some extremity of despair and turn against or make a stand against the general current. It is easy to flow with the current, it makes no demands, it costs no effort, but those who cannot follow it.....know what the demands are, what it costs to meet them”.

### **DESAI'S PROTAGONISTS - WOMEN**

Desai has made this statement true in her first novel *Cry, the Peacock* itself. All the protagonists of Anita Desai are different sort. They are unable to mingle with this real world. They are unable to walk the oft – trodden path which is accepted as the suitable one for the Indian Woman. Desai's protagonists as introspective, hypersensitive and eccentric woman. Her characters Sita, Maya and Nanda Kaul are the true examples for this statement. These women are peculiar who are unable to realize the reality and who live in the world of imagination and fantasy. These peculiar traits of the women characters in the novels of Anita Desai provide the basic idea for her novels.

*Cry, the Peacock* is the anguished loneliness of a fairy –tale princess Maya. Maya's life with her father was a continuously fantastic party. After marrying

Gautama who is much older to her, Maya fails to get rid of her father – obsession. She strives hard to forget her memories with the past. The death of her pet dog Toto brings intolerable pain in her life and it once again brings back to her mind the albino astrologer's prediction about the fourth year of her marriage.

*Where shall we Go This Summer?* is a novel which pictures the inner world of the protagonist Sita. Sita is physically unimpressive and over – sensitive. Her over sensitiveness does not allow her to mingle with an ordinary life. It compels her to go away from this burdensome and crowded area. Sita decides to flee to Manori where there is no crowd except natural scenery. Her over – sensitiveness does not allow her to give birth to her fifth child. She wishes to say a positive 'No'. But her stay at Manori helps her to understand that she cannot live forever on a make

believe stage and that she has to accept her existence as a whole.

In *Fire on the Mountain*, Anita Desai has searched the inner world of her protagonist, the elderly Nanda Kaul. After having completed all her duties towards her family, now “She asked to left the pines and cicadas alone. She wanted no one and nothing else” Her great – grand – daughter Raka arrives to Carignano to recover from an attack of Typhoid. Nanda’ world of self – exile is disturbed by her arrival. Raka also lives in a make believe world of her own with a violent father and suffering mother. She demands no attention and surprises even Nanda by her reticence and aloofness.

The greatest tragedies of modern man and woman is to be alienated from self and society. Most of Desai’s protagonists face this problem of alienation.

They find themselves as an incapable beings who cannot fulfill the expectations of society or the roles given to them. So, they fell a sense of rootlessness, and can thwart the individual’s mental psychic development in an alarming manner” Anita Desai’s novels examine thoroughly the dark interiors of the human psyche and a description of various forms of loneliness and isolation which alienates these characters. Maya is totally differ from the rational and logical Gautama by her sensitive, sentimental and imaginative psyche. But her isolation is end when she realizes that he is not able to empathies with her reactions to events around her. Even her friends do not provide any solace to her. Maya admits, “there was not one of my friends who could act as an anchor anymore” and even Gautama “Could never join me”. This existential anguish troubles Maya often. “But

those were the times when I admitted to the loneliness of the human soul, and would keep silent. The things we leave unsaid would fill great volumes”. The distance between Maya and Gautama keeps widening and gradually Maya begins to accept it:

I longed to.....touch his temples and sooth the pain with caresses and words. But, of course, did not do so, could not dream of doing so. And yet the alienation, the strain of remaining aloof did not hurt. This was as if should be .

Maya need “contact, relationship, communion” to console her disturbed mind. Yet, she and Gautama were often just parallel lines which could never meet among Desai’s protagonists, “Maya is a brilliantly documented figure portraying an alienated consciousness, tortured by her own phobias and neurosis. In her earnest appeal for love, her child – like

responses to life’s problems and her hypersensitivity.....” (Usha Bande 69). Anita Desai has brought forth all the sorrows of an alienated being in modern society.

Sita also feel totally isolated from her family : her son’s physical energy, Menaka’s destructive tendency and many things like this induces Sita to believe that “the creative impulse had no chance against the over powering desire to destroy”. Her husband was cool in nature. He was neither an introvert nor an extrovert but “a middling kind of a man.....dedicated unconsciously to the middle way”. All these various types of behaviour of her children and her husband make her totally alienated. To Sita, “her children seemed rigid, encased in their separate silences, like larvae in stiff spun cocoons”. So she

forces Raman to move to a small flat where they lived by themselves. Yet, Sita continued to feel alienated.

But living by themselves was little better. People continued to come and be unacceptable to her. She their insularity and complacency as well as the aggression and violence of others as affronts upon her own living nerves. She spent almost all her time on the balcony, smoking, looking at the sea.

Indo – Anglian fiction has received serve criticism and some critics have accused it as “a mimicry of the West”. After reading the novels by genuine Indian novelists we come to understand that the accusations are baseless G.D. Narasimaiah has rightly pointed out that the Indian’s gift of story telling goes back to the period of the Vedas and the Upanishads. The Indo- Anglian novelists have by their wide range of interest proved the capacity of Indo-Anglian fiction to

accommodate variety of concerns. There are novels presenting the purely “Indian” problems like the disintegration of the old hierarchical and agrarian society and the splitting up of the joint family, which would be familiar to the heterogeneous Indian population with its enormous regional and cultural difference. Mulk Raj Anand goes beyond the economic determinism’ and projects the problems faced by Cry, the peacock is a tale of Maya’s love for Gautam, her husband. She is over sensitive, deeply devoted and affectionate in nature. Maya requires a love partner who can sympathize proportionately with her sensibilities. But tragedy begins in her life because her husband Gautam does possess those wide-ranging sympathies.

For ages the human experience has been synonymous only with the masculine experience.

Female experience has been rather ignored as 'discontinuity' or 'rupture'. Alex comfort also has the same view that in order to have the ideology of whole human being the female experience must also be given as equal importance. But some says that it is a sad commentary on the existing affairs of events that female experiences have been either conferred as inconsequential or ignored absolutely which is certainly a prejudiced law. Latest advances in psycholinguistics and social linguistics have revealed many startling facts. Female sex is as powerful as the male sex in the domain of romantics. As such, the feminine sensibility is a distinct category of its own having very distinct differences with those of male sensibility.

Anita Desai's novels offer us a rewarding study of socio-psychological activities. Her novels offer a view of the long smothered wail of lacerated psyche of

a female. They, of course, tell us the harrowing tale of blunted human relationships. The fate of Maya, Site and Nanda Kaul remind us of Mrs. and Mr Ramsay in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*.

Maya in *cry, the Peacock* is married to an older man, a detached, solar industrious lawyer, who is unable to recognize and understand the female sensibility. The following passage in the novel is a telling predicament of the likes of Maya and the total disregard for their existence.

How little he know my suffering, or of how to comfort me telling me to go to sleep while worked at his papers, he did not give thought to me. To either the soft willing body, or the lonely wanting mind that waited near his bet.

## **FEMININE SENSIBILITY**

As Anita Desai is a perfect artist, her novels naturally offer a wide variety of social, Cultural and psychological interpretations. However, here my concern is to show feminine sensibilities and other related issues concerned to them.

Anita Desai has been widely treated many issues related to the feminine sensibility. The issues which have been treated largely in her novels are love, marriage, divorce, social taboos and inhibitions, cruelty and violence towards the female sex, problem of rehabilitation after divorce, extent of liberty and freedom to the female sex, recognition to the female sex and crisis of conscience and values.

The he-man approach has been completely ignored by Desai in her novels. When the novels of Anita Desai is deeply analyzed from the standpoint of

feminine sensibility, we shall arrive at a stage where all the issue of crisis of conscience and values, this is the only one to which all other issues get connected. Other issues are automatically revealed one after another when we approach Desai's novels with the issue.

In all her novels Anita Desai seems to be under the spell of existentialism. In this novel too the central character Sita is a free but isolated individual who is solely responsible for her own actions and reactions. This way, where shall we Go This Summer? Deals with the facts of the life and explores the sensibility of sita.

The Portrayal of feminine sensibility is a pervading strain in all Anita Desai's monumental works. Maya, the heroine of Cry, the Peacock is a love sick and love-impooverished woman. She is affected by

her husband's detachment with her. She demands her rightful live from Gautama, "I live my life for you You are untouched you shall never help me. It is all true one of us will win, the other must lose" .

Maya, in *Cry, the peacock* is a delicate housewife unable to cope with the apathy of the in-laws and the dehumanized and depersonalized urban set up. But she is not a 'haunted protagonist' who flees from reality. She is an existential predilections and predicaments. She records the memory of her life with her father and with her husband Gautam and his family. Being a sensitive daughter of a well-to-do father, her impressions are impulses borne, reacting to human reality and environment according to her likes and dislikes.

There is also an element of tragic pathos in her expressions varying from one moment to another

according to her anxiety-ridden moods. Thus there is dreaminess in what she expresses and to what she reacts. The portrayal of Maya is projected in a sympathetic vein. Maya needs the benefit of sympathy and understanding from readers. Her life is shadowed by the three-fold effect of death; doom and destiny. Though her mind is at times highly confused and anxiety-hidden, she does not lose her discriminating sense. In this way, one is able to appreciate her womanly impulses. Maya Strives for a meaningful life throughout the novel.

Anita Desai believed the "literature should deal with the most enduring matters' What matters is the psychic and the existential reality of the characters. Their obsessions, eccentricities, tremors and traumas. The enduring human conditions and the emotional life of the women characters are her chief concern.

Moving on the plane of subjective existence, Cry, the peacock reveals Desai's ability to focus on the sensibility of her protagonist.

The novel opens with Maya's Sickly obsession with death. Toto the family dog is dead. Maya's neurotic condition is brought about by a variety of factors including marital discord and barrenness and psychic disorder. Married at an early age to Gautama, a friend of her father and leading lawyer, who is of twice her age Maya seems destined to suffer from emotional starvation especially since she is childless.

The first emotional crisis she faces arise at the death of her pet dog. Toto on whom she has been lavishing all her affection, The dog so dear to her heart, is dead.

No, She cried and fled to the bedroom to fling herself on to the bed and lie there, thinking of the small, still body stiffened into the panic-stricken posture of the moment of death.

## CONCLUSION

The opening chapter dealing it reports how Maya could not stand the sight of her beloved dead dog and that she rushed to “the garden tap to wash the vision from her eyes” Maya thinks and grows hysterical and finds the setting sun “Swelling visibly like a purulent boil” Her Condition is aggravated by Gautma’s casual and unfeeling remarks : it is all over come and drink your tea and stop crying You mustn’t cry Further, instead of consoling her in her grief at the loss of her Toto, he leaves her to meet a visitor who has come to see him and forgets all about the dead dog.

This incident brings out the contrast between Maya, who us highly sensitive and imaginative and of a neurotic sensibility, and Gautama who is unimaginitive and practical and unsentimental. This contrast is

accentuated by communication gap on account of his being wrapped up in his professional pre-occupations.

The death of Toto symbolizes the psychic death of Maya. Maya realizes her crisis of conscience by Gautama’s different reaction for the death of her dog. Gautama’s indifference upon her destroys her confidence upon life and its values. She wants to make love to Gautama. But Gautama stands apart. And now Tota’s death has created a spiritual vacuum in her. The death of the dog distances her from the animal. It distances her from Gautama also.

Toto was a child to her. something incrutable distresses her after the death of her pet dog, Toto. She feels as if she doesn’t have any meaning in her life as she is childless. Though it is inscrutable it is real, very real. She wants to evade it but she cannot.

Unwillingly she encounters it. But it ends in despair. Maya explains her emotions.

There remained a certain unease, hesitation in the air, which kept the tears swimming in my eyes, and prevented their release. I was not allowed the healing passion of a fit of crying that would have left me exhausted, sleep washed becalmed. Something and filled with this despair.

She attempts to drawback from the fear of it, but fails. She tries to escape from it, but finds no way. She struggles to overcome her ethical self. She wants to realize reality,

The distance between Maya and Gautama widens with the death of Toto, Therefore, it is not surprising that they have been constantly quarreling with each other even for trifles. Maya reflecting on her unhappy marriage, observes:

It was discouraging to reflect on how much in her marriage was based upon a nobility forced upon us from outside and therefore neither true nor lasting. It was broken repeatedly, and repeatedly the pieces were picked up and put together again, as of a icon with which out of the pettiest superstition, we could not bear to part.

Although they continue to live together, the husband and wife do not share anything between them not even the sensibility that can differentiate between “half-sweet”, “half-sad fragrance of petunias” and some astringent smell of lemon.

They find their temperaments irreconcilable and their sensibilities marked by divergence. Surprised by Gautama’s inability to differentiate the smell of lemons and petunias Maya muses:

The blossoms of the lemon tree were different, quite different, of much stronger, crisper characters, they seemed cut out hard moon shells, by a sharp knife of mother of pearl, into curving, scimitar petals that guarded the heart of fragrance. Their scent, too, was more vivid-a sour, astringent scent, refreshing as that of ground lemon peel, a crushed lemon leaf. I tried to explain this to Gautama, stammering with anxiety, for now when his companionship was necessary, I required his closest understanding.

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