

# Husband - Wife Relationship in Anita Desai's novel 'Cry the Peacock'

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## Abstract

Anita Desai is one of the strongest voices of Indian women writers in English. Her novels are unique in it. This paper is an analysis of the husband wife relationship in her famous novel *Cry the Peacock*. This novel, is dealing with relationship between Maya and Gautama a lack of genuine understanding and emotional bond, here Maya is sensitive and imaginative woman while Gautama is a practical and rational man. In this novel there is description of Maya's internal quarrels and feeling of loneliness. Maya is Central character in this novel. Anita Desai depicted there is Marital dissonance amid husband wife relationship.

## Keywords

Husband-Wife Relationship , Anita Desai ,Cry The Peacock , Maya ,Gautama , Marital dissonance , Alienation , Isolation, Psychological struggles ,Feminist writer ,Patriarchal society

## Introduction

Anita Desai is one of the best women novelists. She is a feminist writer. She described women's struggle for freedom from social and orthodox bondages in the patriarchal society. Her first and outstanding novel *Cry the Peacock* (1963) focuses on the agonies of women. The novel reveals Maya's super-sensibility and her profound urge to live life. Anita Desai's *Cry the Peacock* is the story of a young and married woman Maya. She is always hungry for love. In childhood she lost her mother so she is nourished by her father. Basic theme of *The Cry the Peacock* is alienation, isolation and the psychological struggles. This novel is dealing with Maya's inner world. Anita Desai focuses on the personal struggles of middle class women in contemporary Indian society. She tries to understand very closely the predicament of female character. Her mastery is the quest for writing exposes inner realities. This novel delves into identity, loss, love and the nature of reality. The description of husband - wife relationship in her novels shows accomplished craftsmanship. Anita Desai successfully discloses the inner world for her female protagonist through their relations with family members. In her novels, most marriages are proved to be mismatch.

She made her beginning with the projection of agonizing psychological trauma and the exploration of deep human psyche. She shows that life is one type of journey and to pass this journey successfully men as well as women are equally important but in reality it never happens. In patriarchy woman is supposed to be less important and has got secondary place in society. As a result woman suffers in her life. She is not cared and treated as equal to men. Being a sensitive woman novelist and gifted with good observation, sensitiveness, a penetrating analysis and a skill to point out with words: "Anita Desai creates a rich gallery of characters, both male and female, though dominated by the later. (Srivastav: 1984 p: 58) Anita Desai has very boldly presented the problems of women in her novels. Reconciliation, compromise, helpless resignation is depicted in her novels. There is no happiness in the life of her female protagonists. As *Cry the Peacock* is also simply a description of a married woman Maya's internal struggle and her feelings of isolation. The novel explores alienation, isolation and complexities. Maya is a groundbreaking character for Indian English literature. She is depicted with a deep exploration of her psychological issue. Anita Desai constantly studies on problem of interactions between husband and wife. Novel is an elaboration of Maya and her practical lawyer husband Gautama.

Gautama is portrayed as a practical rational and philosophical contrary with Maya as an emotional and sensitive by nature. Gautama believes in detachment and important of karma. In fact Maya's marriage with Gautama man double of her age takes place out of Maya's wish to satisfy her father. So she line in her husband Gautama house.

Gautama is not sensitive and whereas Maya is emotional lady. She is extremely sensitive, imaginative, and passionate and her husband is pragmatic practical unresponsive. The wife is the creature of instinct. Thus their marriage is more or learn marriage convince. Gautama love is merely an attachment. It is insufficient and too little Gautama is very choosy in the matter like love. There is Martial dissonance amid husband and wife. The novel is a family drama. It deals with disharmony between husband and wife Gautama and Maya. Maya's relationship is unhappy wedding with Gautama. So the peacock cry is a suggestion of Maya anguished cry for love and life of participation. Maya's conflict arise martial bonds which are characterized by a lack of contact relationship and communication. Maya believes in involvement where Gautama is preacher detachment. They are couple for many years but they are like strangers to each other. Maya considers love as an ecstatic feeling. Maya talks of life and death like peacock. She wants to take pleasure the ecstasy of life. But suddenly Maya is unable to achieve the interpersonal. Her agony is evident in the lines. The Martial bonds between Gautama and Maya are very weak for Maya passion revenge, murder things like love there are basic and important things. Things are not important in connection with the incompatible temperament of Maya and Gautama.

In Anita Desai's novel *Cry the Peacock*, peacock is related to failure of marriage between Maya and Gautama her practical lawyer husband, who is quite senior in age. Two persons are entirely opposed to each other in their temperament and emotional response. Maya is fanciful while Gautama is realistic. Maya is soft while Gautama is warm. The novel is completely dealing with Maya's cries for love and understanding in her loveless marriage with Gautama. She is neither able to get company from him nor physical, sexual satisfaction. The novel *Cry the Peacock* is symbol of Maya's agonized cry for love and life of involvement. According to novelist marriage prove to be union of incompatibility. Maya is sensitive and emotional she is hurt to the core when Gautama dismisses her grief at the death of her dog Toto. To Gautama dog's death is not a serious thing. He thinks that she should not take it to her heart but this misunderstanding arises as a result of Gautama's lack of emotions. Maya suffers a lot due to his indifference towards her and her feelings for the dead dog. As a result of this their married life also is at the brink of destruction.

The marriage of Maya and Gautama is mismatched. So there is no harmonious sexual relationship between the two. Maya being the more sensitive of the two is unable to bear the strain of her husband's dry attitude towards her. This results in Maya's madness and Gautama's death:

In this world there were vast areas in which he would never permit me. And he could not understand that. I could ever wish to enter them, foreign as they were to me. (Desai: 1988:p. 104)

The married life of Maya and Gautama results in separation because the two are temperamentally different. Maya is full of life. She wants to enjoy life a lot. To her, sexual satisfaction is must and total denial of it makes her a victim of abnormal mental disease as neurosis and schizophrenia. It happened only because she married Gautama who was a friend of her father. Maya is interested in all the beautiful things of life, in nature, in beauty, life of birds and animals, in flowers, in poetry and in dance. Gautama is not interested in all these things and has a prosaic personality. Maya's love for the good things of life is looked upon by him as nothing more than sentimentalism. While Maya loses herself in the enjoyment of beautiful sights and sounds, the cries of birds evoke a sympathetic cord in her. Gautama is awfully indifferent towards these beautiful and delightful things around him. Gautama looks down upon Maya's thoughts and musing as trivial and describes the cultural atmosphere of her father's home as decadent.

Maya is the most beautiful girl, has a seductive posture in spite of her initiative in love making. Gautama remained cold and dull. The major part of the novel is in the first person narrative, Maya tells about her predicament in the following words: I turned upon my side, close to him conscious as a swell of my hip that rose under the white sheet which fell in sculptured folds about my rounded form. His eyes remained blank of appraisal of any response. It was as though he had seen only what he had expected to see, nothing less and nothing more.(Ibid: p.141-42).There is a moment in the novel in which Gautama makes disparaging remarks about Maya that she has a third rate poetess mind. Maya in her answer confesses to him: Because when you are away from me, I want you because I insist on being with you being allowed to touch you and I know you. You can't bear it. Can you? No, you are afraid. You might perish. (Ibid: p.113).

Santa Krishnaswamy describes the relation of Maya and Gautama as:

Her needs for nurturance and for being nurtured are left unfulfilled by her own husband who is incapable husbanding her in his traditional masculine role. (Home in Indian fiction in English, New Delhi 1982 p, 250) and sexuality. Gautama always failed to satisfy Maya's expectations and fulfillment. Maya wanted to be with her partner to share love but Gautama fails to provide it. Whenever Maya is in romantic mood Gautama remains detached and upset. Maya is not able to sleep throughout the night. She tries to sleep but she couldn't. Maya is

suffering from sense of father fixation and therefore compares Gautama with her father. She finds no tenderness, no satisfaction of her father in him. Maya expresses her feelings in the concern words " I longed with the fiercest desire, Not even for Gautama, but for my gentle father who would have said to me with assured and reassuring calm " The failure of Maya and Gautama's relationship is the nature of their sexual relationship. Maya and Gautama was more or less a marriage of comfort and suitability. Gautama was a friend of Maya's father. Both of them were sharing same thought. Gautama comes always to meet Maya's father.

There is no attachment between Maya and Gautama. They represent the modern way of life where there is complete detachment. Women are suffering from the loneliness and alienation. Sex is the need of any human being if it is not fulfilled one can suffer and in course can find a substitute. Anita Desai's heroines never cross the thresholds of their houses but meet the tragic end without fulfilling their desires. In the modern period women if unsatisfied find someone else who can satisfy them mentally and physically. This is the harsh reality of the society; uncared and unloved they can take any drastic step. *Cry, the peacock* has been described by B. Ram Chandra Rao as something of a technical triumph: Cry, the peacock thus is something of a technical triumph. Desai's ability to use the English language in a uniquely individual fashion is amply demonstrated in her novel. Her careful artistry is illustrated by her intelligent mixing of the first person narrative, with third person rendering the story for the purpose of contrast. And although Desai's sympathies as a writer are with Maya she maintains a distance from her characters so that the reader is able to see the character in all its complexity and richness. (Nair: 1989:p.85).

### Conclusion

Maya loves life where as Gautama unmanned by earthly pleasures. Gautama's definition of love and life is based on the principle of detachment. So he is against of Maya's conception of life. Maya completely failed to understand Gautama's principles. Maya and Gautama could never match each other because of their mental differences. If the marriage is not successful then nothing remains good for a person in cry the peacock marriage is an adjustment and nothing else, women of Indian society has to live in a frustrated married relationship. Its patriarchy which is responsible for her futile married life somewhere the voices against this should be raised and justice to the exploited women should be given. Anita Desai's novel is the real depiction of all the harsh realities of Indian woman's struggle and tragedy. Her novel gives us an idea about the misery of Indian women.

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### Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

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