

Anita Desai: Cry The Peacock “A SERIES OF SITUATIONS ARISE IN MAN WOMAN RELATIONSHIP”

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ABSTRACT

One needs a lot of patience and time on hand to read Anita Desai’s books. Not because they are difficult reads, but because they make you ponder, mull, stop in between and reflect on your state of mind and heart, and just make you come back to the book/s in bits and parts.

Anita Mazumdar Desai (born 24 June 1937) is an Indian novelist and the Emerita John E. Burchard Professor of Humanities at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. As a writer she has been shortlisted for the Booker Prize three times; she received a Sahitya Akademi Award in 1978 for her novel *Fire on the Mountain*, from the Sahitya Akademi, India's National Academy of Letters; [1] she won the British Guardian Prize for *The Village by the Sea*.

INTRODUCTION

Anita Desai writes with candor – the feelings are stark and need no explanation. Her characters are often cocooned, living in their own selves, comfortable in their skin and at times restless like any other character/s would be.

Sometimes that is the truth about human nature – there is also the unknown kindness that makes itself visible in her works – from the relationship of the poet and his fan in “*In Custody*” to the delicate balance between a great-grandmother and her great-granddaughter in “*Fire on the Mountain*”, which gets maintained over the course of the book. Desai’s characters are but human. They are awkward, shy, and boisterous and often just want to live their lives cocooned without any interference from the world. Maybe that is the reason why her novels most of the time seem out of place in today’s times. That is the reason I read them. They

somehow provide the necessary calm and quiet which is needed. – The slowness, the quiet and then suddenly a series of events occur that change the course of the characters' lives.

Some outstanding work of Anita Desia:-

- Fasting, Feasting (1999)
- Journey to Ithaca (1995)
- Baumgartner's Bombay (1988)
- In Custody (1984)
- The Village By The Sea (1982)
- Clear Light of Day (1980)
- Games at Twilight (1978)
- Fire on the Mountain (1977)
- Cat on a Houseboat (1976)
- Where Shall We Go This Summer? (1975)
- The Peacock Garden (1974)
- Bye-bye Blackbird (1971)
- Cry, The Peacock (1963)

CRY THE PEACOCK “A SERIES OF SITUATIONS ARISE IN MAN WOMAN RELATIONSHIP”

Desai published her first novel, *Cry The Peacock*, in 1963, in which she explains concept of man woman relationship, means how relation grow up, where are expectation, what are findings in the relationship. *Cry, the Peacock* is the story of a young girl, Maya, obsessed by a childhood prophecy of disaster. The author builds up an atmosphere of tension as torrid and oppressive as a stifling Indian summer, both in the crowded, colorful cities and the strangely beautiful countryside. Maya suffers psychologically due to prophecy made in her childhood and disharmony in her married life. Her husband, Gautama also ignores her psychological imbalance. This leads her to end her life and the novel finishes on tragic note.

As novel some what explains that throughout history, societies have used gender classification to separate Male and Female roles. Men as a group have continued to be the dominant gender in every society. Males are seen as aggressive, strong, a provider and the decision maker, while females are nurturing, submissive, gentle, delicate and not needed to make decisions. However, in western society things have improved with females now working more, providing for their families and are making decisions as well. However, it is still noticeable that men are still the dominant figure. Though this is true, many other forms of classification are used to categorize men and women, from their ethnicity, age, religion and education. The stereotypes created by these categories are used to separate males from other males as well as females from other females. This is how the unfavorable stratification of women is formed. Maya's other causes of suffering are her marriage to Gautama, a man of her father's age who is detached and reserved even to an extent of not fulfilling her physical and emotional needs. Also the indifferent behavior of the members of her husband's family, the solitude and silence of the house after her marriage and the death of her pet dog accentuate her sense of loneliness which gradually develops into an actual sense of alienation. The void between her father's love and her husband's love make her conscious of the isolation that she lives in. She tries to gain respite from her loneliness by continually thinking about her childhood memories with her father. In her own eyes she is as one doomed already and throughout her life there hovers an uncanny oppressive sense of fatality.

Maya suffers from headaches and experiences rages of rebellion and terror. As she moves towards insanity, she sees the visions of rats, snakes, lizards and iguanas creeping over her, slipping their club-like tongues in and out. Her dark house appears to her like her tomb and she contemplates in it over the horror of all that is to come. Then suddenly, during her interval of sanity, an idea hopefully dawns in her mind that since the albino had predicted death to either of them, it may be Gautama and not she whose life is threatened. She thus transfers her death wish to Gautama and thinks that as he is detached and indifferent to life, it will not matter for him if he misses life. In her perversity she is even haunted by the word 'murder'. Gautama remains so much lost in his work that Maya finds him even oblivious of the dust storm that has raged earlier in the afternoon. When she asks him to accompany her to the roof of the house to enjoy cool air, he accompanies her, lost in his own thoughts. Passing out of the room, Maya catches sight of bronze Shiva dancing and prays to the Lord of Dance to protect them.

Climbing the stairs she finds her cat suddenly speeding past them in a state of great alarm. They walk towards the terraced end, Maya looking enraptured at the pale hushed glow of the rising moon. As Gautama move in front of her, hiding the moon from her view, she in a fit of frenzy pushes him over the parapet to “pass through an immensity of air, down to the very bottom”. It remains in the end for Gautama’s mother and sister to take away completely insane Maya from the scene of tragedy of the house of her father.

Today, discrimination and intolerance has lessened since the mid 50’s. However, it is still very evident, it’s just “invisible,” no one really pays attention to it anymore. And males throughout all of history, no matter what society an individual was from, dominated over the female figure. Males are aggressive, leaders, strong, in control, don’t cry, proud and the financial provider. Females are submissive, nurturing, domestic, delicate, and thin and they don’t have to be responsible with any decision-making. These are the gender roles played on throughout society whether it be in the workplace, home, society or media.

Desai's treatment of women characters and her comments about them also indicate that feminist analyses of gender, sexuality, subjectivity, and colonialism could amplify Bande's analysis. Although Bande applies Karen Horney's model of female development, she dismisses, as irrelevant, the insights of other unnamed feminist critics, and her bibliography omits any reference to the extensive feminist scholarship on these topics. Finally, Bande's analysis was apparently very poorly copyedited; the frequent transposed letters, missing articles, grammatical errors, and stylistic infelicities diminish the power of this otherwise original and important study of the novels of Anita Desai.

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