

A Strategy Of Maya's Inner Dilemma: Anita Desai's Cry The Peacock

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Abstract

Anita Desai's novel "Cry, the Peacock" explores into the intricate depths of the human psyche, particularly through the character of Maya, whose inner turmoil and psychological complexity serve as a microcosm of the broader themes explored in the book. This paper employs a psychoanalytical lens to analyze Maya's inner dilemma, shedding light on the multifaceted layers of her personality and the factors that contribute to her psychological disintegration. Through a close examination of Maya's relationships, traumas, and her surreal visions, this paper elucidates the strategies employed by Desai to depict the intricate web of Maya's inner world. Furthermore, it explores the socio-cultural context of the novel and its impact on Maya's mental state, highlighting how her predicament reflects the larger issues of gender, identity, and societal expectations in post-colonial India. Ultimately, this paper aims to provide a nuanced understanding of Maya's inner turmoil and its broader implications, offering valuable insights into Desai's literary craftsmanship and her portrayal of the human psyche in the face of existential crisis. Maya's relationships play a significant role in shaping her character and contributing to her inner dilemma in Anita Desai's novel "Cry, the Peacock." The central relationship in the novel is Maya's marriage to Gautama, a significantly older man. Maya marries Gautama not out of love but due to family pressures and societal expectations. This loveless and arranged marriage becomes a source of great inner conflict for Maya. She feels trapped in a stifling, loveless relationship with a man who is emotionally distant and absorbed in his work. Maya's isolation within her marriage intensifies her inner turmoil. She is often left alone in their sprawling mansion, which adds to her sense of loneliness and abandonment. The physical and emotional distance between her and Gautama amplifies her feelings of alienation.

Maya has a strained relationship with her father. She resents the way he dominates her life and makes decisions on her behalf, including arranging her marriage.

Keywords: Human psyche, relationships, loveless marriage, societal expectations, gender roles, identity, socio-cultural context

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I. Introduction

Many people credit Anita Desai with creating the subgenre of Indian psychological fiction. She is a sixteen-time Sahitya Academy Award winner for literature. Her works are praiseworthy due to her creative and distinctive style, her lifelike and realistic characters, and her topic. Anita Desai is actively interested in teaching in addition to writing. She still serves as an inspiration to many aspiring authors who are young today. A fascinating psychological examination of the book's protagonist, Maya, may be found in Desai's Cry, the Peacock. The book is regarded as a pioneer in the field of English literature. It is frequently referred to be superb psychological work. Anita Desai has done a good job of delving into Maya's inner thoughts and feelings in this book. She also did a great job of capturing the protagonist's unease, peculiar behavior, and anxiety. She has captured the mentality of a Maya who is on the point of lunacy or craziness. Additionally, to the numerous causes of her madness, nearly every page of the piece shows her anxiety for Maya's liberation. The misery, loneliness, and alienation in the heroine's

environment are skillfully depicted by the author. She has discussed the actual circumstance and status of women in India using her protagonist. According to Cixous, "Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven as violently away as from their bodies." (Cixous78)

The author paints Maya, the protagonist of the book, as a neurotic, introverted individual. She is an extremely sensitive person. She is the overindulged daughter of a wealthy, aristocratic man. She was raised in a wealthy, religious home. She lived life to the fullest in her parents' home. She obsesses over her father. As the narrative goes on, we find out that Maya's mother has died and that her brother has immigrated to the United States in order to build a better and more secure life for himself. Still by her side is her father. The majority of the time, she is with her father. She receives his undivided attention and pampering. She tells herself that her dad loves her more than everyone else in the world since he has indulged her so much. Her father shows her excessive affection and care, which subsequently ruins her marriage and ultimately her own life. Because of her father's excessive devotion for her, she develops her own lopsided perspective on life in her head. She gets the impression that she is the only person in the universe and that everything else is merely a toy or puppet in her hands. She feels completely free to choose her preferred colors when painting it. She is able to dance to her own music and beat.

II. Maya's Inner Dilemma:

Maya is trapped in an unhappy marriage with her husband, Gautama. Their marriage lacks emotional intimacy, and Gautama is often emotionally distant and neglectful. This dissatisfaction in her marriage contributes to her inner turmoil. Maya is isolated from the world around her. She lives in a secluded house, away from the town, which exacerbates her feelings of loneliness and detachment from society. Her isolation intensifies her inner dilemma as she struggles to find meaning and purpose in her life. Maya is plagued by irrational fears and paranoia. She is haunted by premonitions of death and believes that she possesses the power to foresee and influence the future. These fears contribute to her mental instability. Maya yearns for independence and freedom from the constraints of her oppressive marriage and societal expectations. She wants to break free from the suffocating influence of her husband and find her own identity. Maya's inner dilemma also takes a spiritual dimension. She is drawn towards mysticism and spirituality, seeking solace and answers to her existential questions in Eastern philosophy and mysticism. This quest for spiritual enlightenment adds complexity to her inner turmoil. Maya's strained relationship with her family, particularly her mother, further isolates her. She feels misunderstood and unsupported by her family, intensifying her feelings of alienation. To cope with her inner turmoil, Maya indulges in escapist fantasies and daydreams. These fantasies provide temporary relief but also disconnect her from reality, blurring the line between her imagination and the real world.

Maya's inner dilemma is a portrayal of her psychological disintegration and descent into madness. The novel explores her struggles with mental illness, her inability to communicate her feelings effectively, and her desperate search for meaning and connection in a world that seems indifferent to her suffering. Maya's inner turmoil intensifies, leading to a tragic and dramatic climax. "Cry, the Peacock" is a powerful exploration of the human psyche and the consequences of unresolved inner conflicts. Maya's character serves as a poignant representation of the fragility of the human mind and the complexities of human emotions.

Maya anticipates receiving the same level of love, care, and attention from her husband as she had from her father once they are married. After her marriage, she hopes to continue living a carefree and happy life. She has a hope that her spouse will show her the same level of love and care that her father did before their wedding. For Maya, though, things take a very different turn. The polar opposite of her father is her spouse. He is a successful, active attorney who is focused on his career. He's a mature man. The union she has with Gautam is not one of love, but rather one of convenience. Her husband's father and Maya's father were good friends. Their fathers had comparable intellectual levels and philosophies. To meet Maya's father, Gautam used to visit her home with his father. Maya's father thinks Gautam is the perfect match for her daughter and a decent bachelor. He then makes the suggestion that her daughter wed Gautam. The proposition is accepted by the entire family. As a result, Maya marries Gautam, her father's preferred match. Realistically, Maya and Gautam's relationship is based more on their dads' friendship than on true love. Their friendship is the sole foundation of their marriage. After their marriage, Gautam falls short of Maya's needs and expectations. She thus feels unimportant and abandoned. Her spouse cautions her that she is rapidly turning neurotic after observing her unhealthy state. He believes that Maya's father is quite involved in spoiling his daughter.

Maya looks for her own father in her spouse throughout the entire book. She is not at all content with her ageing and unromantic husband. She has cultivated or grown a fixation on her father in her thoughts and heart. She becomes aware of her being shunned and ignored. After her marriage, her

sentiments and emotions are no longer accorded the respect they deserve. Her spouse does not value and care for her as much as he should. In her home, she feels secluded and out of place. This has a significant effect on Maya. She is gravely troubled. She feels completely shunned, alone, and abandoned. Maya feels even more alone and alone as a result of the passing of her beloved pet Toto. When she realizes that her husband had nothing to do with her pet's passing, she becomes even more distressed. She finds his lack of concern for Toto's passing to be more unsettling. She is occupied at this moment with comparing her father and her spouse. And she consistently notices a significant difference between their personalities. As a result, her marriage to her husband is totally destroyed. She becomes upset when she sees that her spouse does not express any sorrow at the loss of her devoted pet.

Due to their marriage relationship alone, she is obligated to her husband. They are not connected by anything in their marriage other than their marital connections. She experiences several irregularities in her marriage. She makes an effort to flee and bury herself in an altogether different world of fantasy and imagination in an effort to avoid the differences in her life after marriage. Everything in her life has changed. The life she had at her father's home is very different from the present. As soon as Maya marries Gautam, she realizes that her life has completely changed. It is very different from her old life. The couple's personalities and ways of thinking are very different. Maya feels a strong connection to her prior existence and early years. Gautama, on the other hand, places greater emphasis on action since he is a man of reason. She is unable to behave maturely because of her father's overly protective affection. Maya perceives Gautama as being emotionless, cold, and unfeeling. He ignores her and is constantly engaged with his office duties. He is an entirely pragmatic individual. She is completely the polar opposite of him.

According to another author, the writer did a great job of exposing the effect or imprint of Maya and her husband Gautam's terrible marriage in the book *Cry, the Peacock*.

A close reading of the novel reveals that Maya frequently felt miserable and absolutely helpless. She requires a confidant in whom she may express her inner sorrow. She asks her father, brother, and spouse for assistance. In sobs, she begs for their assistance. She needs assistance breaking free from her psychological impasse. She yells out, "Father, brother, where are you?" as she turns to face her father, brother, and husband. "Father! Brother! Husband! Who is my savior? I am in need of one. I am dying, and I am in love with living. I am in love and I am dying." (Desai 84)

Maya accepts astrology as true. She is tormented and pursued throughout the entire book by the thought of an astrologer's prophesied early death. The astrologer foretold that one of the pair will pass away in an odd and unexpected manner. He warned Maya that a death would occur when her marriage reached its fourth year. Either she or her spouse may own it. She is unable to escape the astrologer's prediction. She is so upset that she quickly becomes insane. She is constrained in a fictitious realm of superstition. Her father dismisses the prophecy as erroneous belief and refuses to believe it. On the other hand, Maya finds it difficult to break free from her superstition and her dread. Maya's thoughts and emotions have been indelible with this terror. The fourth year of marriage is when she reaches such an extreme and high degree of dread and superstition that it manifests as a sudden and terrible eruption.

She travels back in time to relieve herself of her burdens and begins daydreaming about the happy and loving memories she has of her early years. Living in the realm of imagination gives her joy. She is unable to relate to or connect with the realities around her in the actual world. The role of fantasy in the entire book is significant. The actual world is typically displayed alongside it as well as in opposition to it.

Maya struggles to accept her depressing circumstances and condition of being. She attempts to mentally relax by picturing how a peacock stamps its foot before striking any nearby rock with its beak or nibs. She then imagines how it reaches out to grip or capture the snake in an effort to snap its body. The peacock carries out the action to ease discomfort. She really needs a way to express her sentiments and emotions. She falls prey to the cruelest illusion or phantasm and doesn't waste any time killing her own spouse. He subsequently advances to murder her as well. The only reason Maya has an unconscious urge to kill her spouse is as a result of her own frustrations and loneliness. Because of her husband's chilly and inattentive behavior, her unmet needs and longings, as well as their sad and loveless marriage, she was irritated. She feels delighted after killing her spouse and then committing suicide. She no longer has to deal with the unpredictability, fury, and disregard of her past and present.

The tale is rife with internal struggle, physical violence, loneliness, and solitude. And Maya, the book's main character, experiences all of these things. It is a fascinating examination of the alienated and damaged mind and spirit of the protagonist. Her sad defect is that she is very sensitive. Problems arise when her sensitivities and her diverse situations mix. The basis of Maya's unhappiness and discord in her marriage to Gautam is a result of a confluence of her circumstances and sensitivities. Dr. Sanjay Kumar makes observations about the psychological suffering and anguish experienced by the novel's protagonist. Maya's depression and insanity are caused by her own mistaken belief. She is unable to accept life's realities. The character of Maya does a great job of exposing an Indian woman's psychological issues.

Maya's misery and insanity are caused by a mistaken idea she holds about herself. She finds it difficult to accept life's realities. The psychological issues that face Indian women are very well exposed by the character of Maya.

As we continue to read the book, it becomes clear that Maya alone is to blame for the misery she experiences. Only she is accountable for her own fall from grace. She feels alone and alienated throughout the entire book since she doesn't try to explain her concerns and grievances to her spouse. She doesn't make an effort to explain herself to him. She always feels that her dread of dying is following her around. She feels bad about the astrologer's death prognosis. She has a number of psychological and emotional difficulties on a daily basis. But she never talks to her spouse or shares anything with him. She starts to gradually lose mental control. She makes the decision to murder her own spouse after falling under the influence of the astrologer's prediction that one of them will undoubtedly pass away after marriage. According to her, her spouse has ruined her life. He is already dead in Maya's eyes since she believes he has disregarded all the factors and feelings that make life worthwhile. She ultimately makes the horrific decision to kill her spouse and has the audacity to do it. He dies after being pushed over a terrace by his wife. She is unable to live a calm life because of the remorse she feels for killing her own spouse. She is forced to commit suicide by her guilt. At the book's conclusion, Maya kills herself because of her remorse.

III. Conclusion

Maya grapples with the haunting premonition of her husband's death, and this dark foreboding becomes a central force in her life. Her struggle to balance her desire for love and freedom with the weight of societal expectations and traditional norms is a universal theme that resonates with readers. Maya's inner turmoil and her eventual descent into madness are portrayed with a remarkable depth of insight, inviting readers to contemplate the fragility of the human psyche when faced with overwhelming existential questions. Desai's narrative style, characterized by rich symbolism and lyrical prose, adds to the novel's depth and complexity. The recurring motif of the peacock, symbolizing Maya's inner turmoil and her longing for a life of beauty and freedom, serves as a powerful literary device that enhances the reader's understanding of Maya's inner world. "Cry, the Peacock" leaves us with a haunting and poignant portrayal of Maya's inner dilemma, a reminder of the profound impact that inner conflicts and societal pressures can have on an individual's mental and emotional well-being. It serves as a timeless exploration of the human condition, inviting readers to reflect on the choices we make and the consequences they bear on our inner lives. Anita Desai's novel stands as a literary masterpiece that continues to resonate with readers, compelling us to confront our own inner dilemmas and the complexities of the human experience.

Desai has conveyed the whole transformation of a hypersensitive personality into a neurotic person very well through the character portrayal of Maya. In terms of character characterization, Anita Desai is comparable to Jane Austen and Virginia Woolf. The author is more interested in examining the internal climate of her characters than she is in the outward weather or happenings. Because her external world is worthless, she focuses more on the internal struggles or inner problems of her character. She has done a fantastic job of examining Maya's genuine psychological makeup and inner workings. She has also included her responses. Desai has depicted the psychological strains and terrible events that Maya goes through in her life in this story. The protagonist's neurotic world has been expertly explored by the author. She has put pressure on herself and concentrates on the delicate, minute pictures of a frustrated, pained, labored Maya.

Desai has attempted to reveal the true inner or internal reality of the post-modern era via the female heroine in her works. In a nation like India, she aspires to awaken the oppressed, subordinate, and unappreciated women. The protagonist of the book is unable to adjust to her family, spouse, and other people in her life. Maya is snatched up by violence and murder due to isolation, alienation, and unwelcome love. The writer has highlighted via her the unusual treatment, psychological problems, alienation, and isolation that women typically experience in real life.

According to the writer, unsuccessful marriages are currently the primary cause of Indian women's loneliness and estrangement. Desai attempted to highlight those Indian women through the portrayal of Maya who, for the most part, are unable to function within the traditional patriarchal society and order and who subsequently rebel silently and pathetically, acting like pitiful and inferior human beings. The existential dilemma or predicament of Desai's female heroine is the key concern in this book. In order to raise awareness to the underrepresented group of women in Indian culture, the novel's author developed Maya. Alternatively, we may claim that the story's protagonist represents the downtrodden group of women who frequently face injustice at the hands of the dominant culture's male members. Desai has depicted Maya's inner essence in a multicolored picture that reveals its depth and intensity. Alternately, we can come to the conclusion that Maya's psychological state was well-explained by the author.

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