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Fatal Consequence of Trauma in Anita Desai's *Cry, The Peacock*

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Letter of Recommendation

This is to certify that Sujata Dahal has completed her thesis entitled "Fatal Consequence of Trauma in Anita Desai's *Cry, The Peacock*" under my guidance. I recommend this thesis to be submitted to the Research Committee for viva voce.

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Raj Kumar Baral

Supervisor

Date:.....

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## Abstract

*The major thrust of this thesis is to probe plenty of factors that rendered Maya psychologically traumatized in Anita Desai's novel, Cry, The Peacock. This study delves deep into the traumatic onslaught that befell Maya; a neurotic, hypersensitive childless woman. It examines the causes and long term effect of traumatic event. It revolves around finding the reason behind the pathetic and unhappy relationship of the protagonist. It attempts to analyze the inner world of Maya and to find out the hidden factors of her neurosis. It has been done through the extensive study of relevant literature using Cathy Caruth notion of trauma and Dominic LaCapra notion of psychological trauma as a tool. Repeated repressed desire is always harmful. Once it is irrupted, the result is unbearable and lack of communication is one of the reasons of downfall of Maya. Maya's repressed desire and its painful experiences are the main causes of her tragedy. Maya is an example of father fixated girl. Her husband is unable to understand his wife's feeling, wants and desire. This research has shown the picture of the entire social life of contemporary Indian male dominated society and the position of women. It also identifies the hidden but true nature of the mind of a woman which cannot be understood on the surface level.*

Key words: psychology, trauma, prophesy, communication gap, alienation, suppression, desire, murder

### Fatal Consequences of Trauma in Anita Desai's *Cry, The Peacock*

Anita Desai is a significant and prolific woman novelist of the Indian fiction. She deals with the psychology of the women in her novels. In the novel, *Cry, The Peacock*, Maya is a character who lives with the recurrent onslaught of traumatic experience. She is now oppressed by the hidden fear of being confined in a claustrophobic space due to her husband's extreme indifference and loveless attitude. Her own inability to adapt to the changing scenario is accountable for her traumatic life and tragic end. The sort of love, affection and care she enjoyed at her father's hand remained absent in the house of her husband, Gautama.

Maya is a central character who is psychologically affected by the childhood prophesy of disaster, kills her husband, and goes mad and commits suicide. She is a lonely, childless, hypersensitive and young married woman. She is married to Gautama who is a busy advocate and he is a friend of her father. The excessive love Maya gets from her father makes her have a balanced sided view of life. Having lived a carefree life under the indulgent attentions of her loving father, Maya desires to have similar attentions from her husband Gautama, a father surrogate. When Gautama, a busy, prosperous lawyer, too much engrossed in his own vocational affairs, fails to meet her demands, she feels neglected and miserable. This behavior leads her to the psychological trauma.

Gautama's cold, rude and inhuman treatment pushed Maya to the corner of traumatic suffering. In addition, her firm faith in the astrological prophecy continued to rock the conjugal harmony and expectation of Maya. The much more practicality of Gautama and extreme sentimentalism of Maya never enter the zone of reconciliation and negotiation. As the result, Maya continued to turn to the world of agony, isolation, alienation, revenge, murderous instinct and suicidal end. Gautama's

inability to understand Maya's true nature and Maya's inability to adapt to the changing marital scenario landed her in an atmosphere in which she developed phobic fear, suicidal urge and insanity.

Maya is increasingly tormented by fear, sinister premonition, false charge of murder and Gautama's pugnacity. She is psychologically disordered, mentally lacerated and psychologically weakened. She had repressed the traumatic memory of being pampered by her father though she never got the affection from her mother. The repressed traumatic memories come out sporadically, ruining the happiness and harmony of Maya's life. Maya is psychically divided. She has dissociative identity. She is the manifestation of her traumatized personality.

Gautama never tried to know that concerned Maya. He could not know her misery, nor did he know how to comfort her. Maya rightly tells that he knew nothing that concerned me. He did not notice that translucent skin beneath, the blue flashing veins that ran under the bridge of gold and jolted me into smiling with pleasure. Maya says that it is Gautama hardness and the distance he coldly keeps from her. His coldness and incessant talk make her feel irritation. She is obsessed with the childhood prophesy. The fear of death is so deep rooted in her mind that she relates each and every activities with prophesy. Such thinking leads her towards loneliness and mental trauma

Her obsession of life drives her crazy. To justify this urge, she kills Gautama which becomes the consequence of fate created by prophesy and fear. She is regarded as worthless of equal respect and value from the very childhood. She is even smashed to have and share the human feelings. She has managed to discover the effect of the fear in the psyche of the woman which finally leads to the hater and disaster. Maya has been alienated through and through and slowly she moves towards insanity.

Loneliness kills human because we cannot escape from the truth that we are social. We need people around us to share our grief and happiness. Here, Maya is alone confined inside the house of Gautama. So she has a lot of time to think and go back to prophesy which is the main reason of the disaster. Love has many colors like deep affection, tenderness, fondness, pamper, attachment and so on. We don't need to pay to exchange these feelings. There is nothing to be rigid to give these love, because life is nothing after all. If Gautama was able to show love and care, Maya would never go that insane. So human feelings and emotions are crucial in life to be happy.

Anita Desai is the most outstanding name in the modern Bengali literature. Her fiction depicts the contemporary Indian patriarchal culture and the personal conflict of identity of Indian women that have taken the new shape. Desai clearly portrays family and society in her fiction which brings both people and place luminously alive. She completely illustrates the real picture of Indian society in the subtlest way. She focuses in chaotic incidents, experiences and images of human life into fictional form. Bilquees Dar, the leading critics of Anita Desai, makes the following critical remarks about the projection of feminist sensibility in the novel:

Anita Desai is a prolific living writer churning out fiction with consummate skill who has brought out ten full-length novels of varied length, innumerable short stories and couple of write ups. In a short period of time, she aroused a lot of critical attention. She dealt her fiction with feminine sensibility and her themes are innovative, mostly about miserable plight of women suffering under their insensitive and inconsiderate husbands, fathers and brothers. (88)

Anita Desai is a significant woman novelist who has raised the complexities of modern Indian culture and societies. Most of her novels deal with the psychology and

mental struggle of women. Throughout the novel she focuses on the personal struggle of middleclass women who are imposed by the tradition, norms and culture. She values women to maintain self-identity. She has depicted affect in the psyche of individual through Man- Woman relationship, culture, tradition, dominance, alienation and superstition.

Trauma is the emotional response caused by the deeply distressing or disturbing events that haunt in the present life of the victim. This causes the feeling of helplessness, diminishes the sense of self and their ability to cope up with. Where psychological trauma is the harm to the mind through the distressing event. A single disturbing experience can lead the one in the traumatic stage which results serious and long term negative consequences. Traumatic memories are always caused by some unexpected past occurrences that have harmed the subject who desires to get out of the situation through the prescribed therapy.

Trauma includes both psychological and cultural. The displeasing moment that influence negatively within the psyche of self is psychological trauma. But cultural trauma occurs when the mass or the members collectively feel they have been affected marking in their memories forever. This can often results in the shift of society's culture and identity. So, *Cry, The Peacock* deals with all these aspects in terms of psychoanalysis as a trauma where Maya is subjected. This project is all about how the situation and behavioral stuffs make her go mentally hunted.

This research deals with the psychological effects of a woman who is alienated from her husband as well as her family member in search of her self-identity. To analyze this novel, I have employed Freudian theory of psychoanalysis, Cathy Caurth's notion of Trauma and Dominic LaCpra's view on psychology and trauma as lenses to analyze. Freudian theory deals with human personality and argues



that the structure and the conflict of human mind shape personality. His study emphasizes that childhood events influence the mental functioning. The genetic and then development aspects are the crucial factors for the psychology of human. His theory deals with the interaction between conscious and unconscious process for the functioning of mind. Freud's theory of Oedipus complex and Electra complex deal about the desire of sexual involvement with the parent of opposite sex and rivalry sense with the parent of similar sex. In *Cry, The Peacock*, Maya is father fixated. The climax of the story lies when Maya's attachment with her father develops into an Electra complex. According to psychologist Jon Allen, there are two components to a traumatic experiences: the objective and the subjective. A traumatic event or situation creates psychological trauma when it overwhelms the individual's ability to cope and leaves that person fearing death, annihilation, mutilation, or psychosis. The individual may feel emotionally, cognitively, and physically overwhelmed. Here Maya's isolation and alienation become the main reason of traumatic situation. The research revolves round to these major issues of the novel.

Manu Verma says that Desai's literary forte is to depict psychological conflict. In the face of psychological conflict, the pressures on the integrity of family are mounting day by day. In this regard, Verma delivers the following view:

Perhaps, she is the one whose main foothold is the exploration of the deep recesses of human psyche, going beyond the skin into the constant struggle raging the soul of human beings at the conscious and subconscious level and describing the atmosphere of the mind. The fictional world of Anita Desai is strictly private. She is more concerned with the inner reality than the outside world around. (91)

It is obviously clear that Anita Desai possesses remarkable sensibility. Apart from her poetic sensibility, it is her keen perception of reality and her powerful imagination that have made her distinct writer. With this power, she dramatizes psychological conflict. She has gone a long way to shape and fashion the nature and extent of her theme of pessimism within the limits of life in India. Though Anita Desai attempts to analyze feminine consciousness in her fiction however, she has been particularly cautious of labels and refuses to see herself as a feminist. She is the painter of the moods and wills, of desires and dreams and of inner experiences.

Kajal Thakur discloses plenty of important facts and findings about man and woman relationship in Desai's voice *Cry, The Peacock*. Some voices are discordant whereas other voices are mellifluous. Irreconcilable experiences need to be reconciled at any cost. This is the core conviction of Anita Desai. Her view is presented below:

There is an identification of Maya with the peacocks that represent for her cries of love which simultaneously invite their death. Like her, they are the creature of exotic wild and will not rest till they have danced to their death. For her, they represent the evolutionary instinct of struggle for survival. She describes how they dance and the remarkable impact produced on her mind.

(226)

Maya's cry is the cry for love and relationship in her loveless wedding with Gautama. The peacock's cry is symbolic of Maya's cry for love and understanding as peacock cries and invites peahen to make love. They cry, they dance and they make love. But Maya's cry is unheard so it invited their death.

Disparity between masculine and feminine nature lies at the heart of the novel. Conflicting viewpoints constitute the main essence of the text. It is the sensitivity of the characters that brings them face to face with the gravity of changing situations.

For Desai anything that is beautiful in nature, the poet feels shuddering of her own self in it and then we see him trying to write down his feeling with the help of the nature.

K. Chitrakanya is of the view that Desai's *Cry, The Peacock* chronicles the morbid dread, descent into madness and suicide of Maya. She is a young Delhi housewife who is trapped in a loveless arranged marriage to the much older Gautama, a misogynistic lawyer. Dwelling on this aspect of the tragic subject, Chitrakanya argues:

Maya, the central female protagonist of the novel, is at once the expression of the romantic yearning for love and life, as also a distressed cry for help that is not heard in time. Even as her moods and moments crystallize under the conflicting pulls of desire and despair, fulfillment and frustration, the novel quietly unfolds the instincts and emotion that color her stunningly subjective sensibility. (7)

Women are strong believer of fate if compared to man. This fact is included in the novel. Since Maya is portrayed as a stereotyped Indian woman, with some hallucination. The pertinent elements in the text justify the case in point. It is because she seldom goes out. Peacock searching for mates, peacock tearing themselves to bleeding shreds in the act of love, peacock screaming with agony at the death of love justify the mood of Maya.

Ann Lowry Weir maintains that *Cry, The Peacock* is restricted in terms of its thematic coherence. Maya leads the life of a pampered recluse. She and her husband, Gautama, live alone. He requires little interaction with his wife. The major action of the novel, therefore, takes place in the protagonist mind. Addressing this issue, Weir produces an incisive review certain extract of which is presented below:

The variety of characters portrayed in *Cry, The Peacock* is not great. Maya and Gautama and their relatives are all well to do, educated people, except for the rebellious brother Arjuna. The only other people mentioned seems unrefined or even tawdry; they serve to indicate a type of external world for which Maya has distaste. While the reason for Maya's insanity lie in her own nature, they might not have overcome her saner side were it not for her milieu of wealth and leisure. (150)

Maya takes for granted a pampered way of life. She seems not to view it as related to modernity or to the West. Gautama has his family but they are also different to her. When they meet, they never talk about nature, colors, love and relationship. They talk about wealth, money, power, laws, parliament, war etc. which are not in the menu of Maya's taste. She likes natural beauty, dance, party, gossips, friends and enjoyment. But these things are away from the life of Gautama and the family. The extract below clarifies the point:

In Gautama's family one did not speak of love, more or less of affection. One spoke- they spoke- of discussions in parliament, of cases of bribery and corruption revealed in government, of newspaper editors accused of libel, and the trails that followed, of trade pacts made with countries across the seas, of political treaties with those across the mountains, of distant revolutions, of rice scarcity and grain harvests. (43)

Gautama has never shown an understanding towards and been attentive to Maya, he would have saved her from the haunting fears of shadow and drums and drums of shadows. The gap of communication between them leaves her lonely to brood over the morbid thoughts of albino astrologer's prophecy. In terms of attention and love, Gautama lags behind. This weakness of his lands Maya in a traumatic plight.

Although all these critics and reviewers examined *Cry, The Peacock* from different point of view and then arrived at several findings and conclusion, none of them noticed the issues of the psychological trauma on the part of Maya. The frequent reference to women trapped in the cage and confine of superstition and prejudice and Desai's emphasis on the need to free women are enough proofs to endorse the fact that there is the projection of anxiety as to liberating women from psychological trauma and other types of lacerations. The complex process in which Maya is traumatized appears to be mysterious and puzzling. Only the subtle and tactful nuance of diagnosing the inner traumatic agony of the major characters brings into light the root cause of the trauma.

Maya is prone to loneliness and fear of death, which do not let her to be at peace with herself. In order to assert liberty from present turmoil she takes the help of route to go back to her childhood. Thirst for liberty haunts her so much that she becomes aggressive to such an extreme point that she takes the most unusual and ghastly step of doing away with her husband which is rarely taken by a female.

At the center of the novel lies the psychic confusion of a young and sensitive married girl Maya who is haunted by a childhood prophecy of a fatal disaster. She is the daughter of a rich advocate in Lucknow. Being alone in the family, her mother being dead and brother having gone to America to carve his own independent destiny, she gets the most of her father's affection and attention and in her moments of affliction exclaims to herself. The excessive love Maya gets from her have a lop-sided view of life. She feels the world to be made especially for her painted in her favorite colors and set moving according to her tunes. Repeatedly, she recall "the world is like a toy specially made for me, painted in my favorite colors, set moving to my favorite"

(35).The following extract is indicative of how a childless woman turns out to be frenzied and restlessness takes the form of traumatizing parameter:

Childless women do develop fanatic attachment to their pets, they say. It is no less a relationship than that of a woman and her child, no less worthy of reverence, and agonized remembrance. I shall never forget, I promised, with parted lips and clasped hands, never, and was immediately made aware of the moments trickling past. There was no such thing as ever. Only now. And yesterday. Tomorrow? Did I need to think of that? I twisted away from tomorrow, because I knew how closely linked to the chain of time. (15)

Maya, a childless woman is so closed to her pet Toto. She is emotionally attached with it. She loves it as her child. She breaks down after its death. She feels like she lost her child. But Gautama doesn't respect her feelings at all. His harsh words add more fuel of hatred towards Gautama; a loveless man. Having lived a carefree life under the indulgent attentions of her father, Maya desires to have similar attentions from her husband Gautama, a busy, prosperous lawyer, too much engrossed in his own vocational affairs, fails to meet her demands, she feels neglected and miserable.

The researcher goes on to analyze the text by using the theoretical concept of trauma. Caruth proposes that "trauma compels us to imagine that traumatic events do not simply occur in time. Rather they fracture the very experience of time for the person whom they happen. She states, the pathology cannot be defined either by the event itself" (*Unclaimed Experience* 121). Caruth makes the following point about trauma:

Trauma is generally understood as wound or external bodily injury in general. It is also defined as a mental condition caused by severe shock, especially when the harmful effect last for a long time. In its later uses, particularly in

the psychiatric literature, the term ‘trauma’ is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind. (124)

Trauma is often the result of an overwhelming amount of stress that exceeds one’s ability to cope, or integrate the emotions involved with that experience. It has the long term effect in the psyche of the individual. It cannot be assimilated by usual mental processes. For those who suffer violence trauma is what Herman Judith calls “devastating and often long lasting wound” (37). The definition recognizes two types of trauma – physical wounds that an emergency room might treat after an accident, and emotional or psychic wounds. The other aspect is emotional trauma which is not confined to the single shock that comes with an assault. The form of trauma that the researcher addresses is emotional injury, sometimes sudden and unexpected, sometimes taking place during a prolonged time.

Maya muses over her husband’s lack of love for her and once, in a fit of intense despair and agony, tells him straight to his face. Temperamentally there is no compatibility between Maya and Gautama. Maya has romantic love for the beautiful, colorful and the sensuous. Gautama is not romantic and has no use of flowers in his entire life. The rigidity and coldness in her husband’s temperament implants fear and anxiety attack which is captured in the following dialogic part:

Ah! Gautama, I carried, tearfully, and rose from my pillows to hold and draw him into my own orbit thought and feelings, yet not darling to make you the bold, physical move. You do not imagine I would go without you? Leaving you behind in the heat? Why not? He said, snapping open his cigarette case with a metallic click that matched his voice. I daresay I can manage, considering I did so for a great many years before I married you. (39)

Maya is creature of instincts or a wayward and high stung child. As symbolizes by her name she stands for the world of sensations. Gautama's name on the other hand, symbolizes asceticism, detachment from life. He is realistic and rational. He fails to understand his wife. He has philosophical detachment towards life as preached in the Bhagwad Gita. Such irreconcilably different temperaments are bound to have marital disharmony.

The victims of trauma are miserably haunted by depressive inclination, identity problem, guilt and shame. In this connection, Caruth argues:

A traumatic event is an event which threatens injury, death, or the physical body of a child or adolescent while also causing shocks, terror or helplessness. Trauma refers to both the experience of being harmed by an external agent as well as the response to that experience. Youth who experience trauma may also experience emotional harm or psychic trauma which, if left untreated, can have a significant impact. Trauma typically exists along a spectrum which ranges from global, when event may affect individuals, to individuals, when that trauma impacts only that individual. (13)

The depthless trauma involves repeated traumatic events occurring over a period of time. Trauma usually refers to a single event, such as a rape or a shooting. It is more likely to lead to posttraumatic stress disorder. It also consists of patterns of dysfunctional interpersonal relationships. Exposure to trauma may lead to feeling of anxiety, helplessness, dissociation and behavior. These symptoms may be consequences of trauma.

Maya is so much possessed by the vision of albino astrologer that she recalls his talk about the myth surrounding the peacock's cry. Listening to the cries of peacock in the rainy season, she realizes that she should never sleep in peace. She is



caught in the net of inescapable. Being intensely in love with life she turns hysteric over the creeping fear of death. Maya suffers from headaches and experiences rages of rebellion and terror. Harsh instruction and chronic warning ruin psychically a delicate and oversensitive woman like Maya. Her exposure to her husband's callousness and dreadful sense of indifference traumatize her irreparably. The following extract is a case in point:

You are grownup now, Maya, no light-headed child. You must not allow yourself to grow so upset about these things. What if they do live in a grubby house? What if she is pregnant again? What if they were so dull? Why should you allow it to affect you in this manner? There is nothing constructive in your misery, after all. Besides, your life is your own, so different from theirs. Your world completely separate, tell me, is any part of your life as drab, or as depressing as theirs? (60)

Maya tries to console herself. She is hopeful that she will be pregnant one day. She will be mother once day. She will be loved one day. She is quite sure that everything will be all right very soon. But this thought is changes suddenly when she sees Gautama and his behavior.

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's negligence and killing sense of indifference implants dreadful sense of hostility. The more she expects him to pay her attention, the more far he turns away making her

thirsty for recognition. The following extract is illustrative of this inner hostility that weakens and harms Maya inwardly:

Gautama had ceased to pay attention, to express surprise. He finished his toilet in silent exasperation, knowing that I stood there, longing for him to question me, so that I could break forth, and holding myself back out of an instinctive dread. I squeezed the cat tightly, and with a little yell of petulance she freed herself and drooped to the floor, shook herself a little but did not rush off like an angry kitten instead, she stood her ground with dignity, and began licking her tousled fur as though I had sullied it with my hot grabbing hands. (50)

Gautama remains so much lost in his own work that Maya finds him even oblivious of the dust storm that has raged earlier in the afternoon. It must be the ego that doesn't let him to go with his wife. He is a human being but denies to show the emotions. He knows the wants and desires of his wife but ego comes in between. When she asks him to accompany her to the roof of the house to enjoy cool air, he accompanies her but loses in his own thoughts.

Trauma bears certain resemblance with historical trauma as well. Thus it becomes imperative to quote Dominick LaCapra. The theorist is pinpointed the difficulties faced by the interpreters of trauma. He maintains that it is not possible to gain an insight into the disastrous event by just applying theory like psychoanalysis or any other postmodern theories. Even the psychological trauma of camp inmates has socio- cultural implications. Trauma has to be worked through. LaCapra mentions the following view on psychological trauma:

Defying comprehension, the tragic history has been alternately repressed and canonized in postmodern west culture. Recently our interpretation of the trauma has been the center of bitter controversies. From debates over Paul de

Man's collaborationist journalism and Martin Heidegger's Nazi past to attempts by some historians to downplay the trauma's significance. Many of our efforts to comprehend the fatal effect of trauma, he shows, continue to suffer from the traumatizing effects of its events and require a working thought of trauma if we are to gain a more profound understanding of the meaning of the Holocaust. (54)

LaCapra is a major voice in the domain of historiographical discussions. Dominick LaCapra projects a new clarity to the issue of trauma as he examines the intersections between historical events and the theory through which we struggle to understand them. LaCapra dwells upon the problematic that we are involved in the historical mood of understanding trauma. He explores the problems faced by historians, critics, and thinkers. According to them, the efforts of theorists to understand holocaust trauma is vain and fruitless. He considers the role of canon formation and the dynamic of revisionist historiography, throughout, LaCapra demonstrates that psychoanalysis is not merely a psychology of the individual, but that its concepts have socio-cultural dimensions. It can help us perceive the relationship between the present and the past.

Brooding sense of contemplation on the utter futility of her life puts Maya in the catch-22 situation. Often, she ruminates "in a sudden, impulsive longing to be with him, to be close to him, I leapt up, full of decisions to make haste in undressing preparing myself, then joining him at last; so that we could go out into the garden, together" (80). When Maya gets married, she desires the same love and attention from her husband Gautama, a father surrogate. She dreams of human love and her dream links her conscious and unconscious levels of the mind. Her dreams fill her mind with imagination, fantasy and nostalgia.

Fatality is also the cause of Maya's traumatization. Maya wants her fulfillment as a woman and as a wife. Deprived of the deep sense of alienation, she incurs inner agony which has no instant cure. The following lines throw light on this aspect of her traumatization:

Fatality- fate. Fate- fatality. I fingered the flowers sadly, and felt much like myself- bruised and tired, not quite alive, not quite of today. Throwing them down on the floor where they lay soft and limp, I remembered how, as we had driven home down a dark street, I had seen a dark young woman in a crimson sari, holding a white dog on a leash, walk into a shuttered house, followed by a dark young man in white. (81)

Sex is not intensely pleasurable experience but it can act to sterile life. If Maya was married to a younger man and has been sexually satisfied, her psychological condition would have been different. But Gautama's attitude and age made her more disappointment. The birth of a child would give her a name and identity. This would have given her a sense of achievement and would have love towards life. She would forgotten the prophecy and would live a happy life challenging the superstition. But it is again Gautama's egoism that lead her to insanity. Maya always hope of fulfillment and when she fails to have it, she feels loneliness, isolation and desertion. She tries to fulfill her incomplete desires through her husband but Gautama fails to satisfy her. He fails to distinguish between the fact and fancy.

The gap of communication between them leaves her lonely to brood over the morbid thoughts of albino astrologer's prophecy. She visits her friends in restaurant to divert herself from the thoughts. The visit of Gautama's mother and Sister Lila adds a little happiness in her life. She enjoys with their busy life. But once they are gone, she finds the house empty and herself alone with horrors and nightmares:

Am I gone insane? Father! Brother! Husband! Who is my savior? I am in a need of one of them. I am dying, and I am in a love with living. I am in love and I am dying. God let me live and sleep, forget, rest. But no, I will never sleep again. There is no real anymore only death and I am waiting. (84)

Maya is so much tired of the dominance of her husband. Although she was motherless child, her father grew up her as princess of toy. Her father gave her all the love and attention. But after she is married to a prosperous lawyer, all her happiness ended. He doesn't understand the emotions of his wife. As a consequence she has been psychologically affected. But despite of these all sufferings she needs the help of father, brother or husband. She wants to live the life. The sadness has engulfed her in such a way that she wants to escape out of it. For this what she needs is love, love and love. So she laments and begs for the help to come out of it. But her voice is unheard and unseen.

A trauma visits Maya's unconscious mind, leading to an obsession in her psyche. Utter sense of nothingness and haunting sense of being confined in a claustrophobic space fuels her traumatic agony. The following extract complements the claim that Maya's traumatic agony achieves accretion one after the other:

I knew nothing that I merely wondered at their strange colors, their many eyed feathers, and covered my ears when they shrieked. But, later, after the astrologer entered my life, on soundless feet, I would lie in bed in my sleeping home, and listen for those calls from rock and jungle lands, even after I had forgotten why listen for them. When I heard one cry in the stillness of night, its hoarse, heart- torn voice pierced my white flesh and plunged its knife to the hilt in my palpitating heart. (84)

Another important traumatic effect upon her is the one and only prophecy of an astrologer about her future which was made in her childhood. The prophecy is that one of husband or wife would die after four years of their marriage. The prophecy becomes troublesome to her unconscious mind.

Harmful sense of entrapment in the hallucinatory world of fantasy adds further dread and terror to her traumatic agony. Maya's unconscious mind never reconciles with her conscious mind. Her conscious level of mind signifies the associative approach to human behavior whereas her unconscious mind forces her to realize how her life ruined. The following extract turns light toward this aspect of her entrapment in an inescapable world:

This net was no hallucination, no. in the day- time, amidst companions, I could force myself into believing that it was only a nightmare, no more. But, in the night under the stark gaze of the moon, in that waiting silence, my memories came to life, were so vivid, so detailed, I knew them to be real, too real. Or is it madness? (84)

The increasing insanity and hallucinatory condition contributed to Maya's psychological trauma. When her husband was unable to soothe her burning heart, at that point, anxiety enters her mind. In psychological findings, if the level of anxiety enters the unconscious level of human psyche, it makes a person to keep apart what actually belongs to him together. Thus, this constant anxiety in Maya makes her to develop a separation of idea and emotion.

Maya develops a negative approach towards life and finds its entire essence as useless and meaningless. It is unfulfilled and oppressive longing that cripples Maya traumatically. The following paragraph exemplifies the point:

Spreading my arms out before me, I felt a stormy longing to rush out and join them, fling myself upon the dew- wet grass and bet them to continue, to roll out, breaker, this ocean of rich, thick red wine, perhaps also, perhaps most of all, for my father's presence amongst them, his hand placed gracefully on the chair's arm, his voice, gentlest and deepest of all. But I also knew that nothing would have angered Gautama more. (87)

After Gautama's insult and invective, Maya plunges into lamentation and feeling of futility. All these hurdles and hindrances, which patriarchal society sets for women, affect her. But she acts as though she is endowed with indomitable will. She does not know clearly in concrete terms whether she is on the right track or wrong.

Maya continues to think upon this possibility of being interfered and intruded by a monstrous man with evil intention. Soon she comes to guess different truth. She says to herself that it is she who might have mixed those things. Her fear dwindles down for some time. She is mentally divided. She does not know what to do and what not to do. She thinks about keeping a gun for protection. Soon she alters her decision to keep the gun beside her bed. How lost she is in the thought that clash persistently. In this way, she is divided between conflicting thoughts due to the traumatic traces that lingered in her mind.

Self-hatred is the chronic problem which Maya has been suffering since she reaches into adolescence. When she stands in front of the mirror, she could not help being affected by the sudden onrush of self- hatred. In the beginning of the novel the novelist has not mentioned the root cause behind Maya's growing self- hatred. When the real reason is revealed, it becomes quite clear about the reason behind her growing self- hatred. The following lines throw illustrates the mysterious victimization of Maya by the sudden irruption of traumatic trace:

In the flashing darkness of eyeballs pressed upon by wet fingers, I relived the horror of those awesome realizations that had followed, sometimes, a moment of union, and taught me how hopeless, how important is sex- where not union but communion is concerned. Gautama, I had whispered then, torn to shreds by the dragon- like dark, and my worn body had made a movement towards him. (90)

At any time, fear can overtake Maya. She spends a great of time preparing breakfast. By the time she sits on the table to eat, fear attacks her. In the sudden onrush of fear over her, she loses her appetite. She fails to eat the breakfast as ravenously as she could have done if fear had not come. But the most puzzling and ironic fact is that she herself does not know why fear has overpowered her. In a moment of extreme exhaustion and insanity, she inculcates the idea of murdering her husband. This sudden idea of murder further traumatizes her. The following extract is expressive of the fact:

Was it an arrow? A coffin?A cross?A cross?A star? Was it between the eyes? At the temple? Was it dark? Was it pale? And what made gods reach out and touch it with their cold fingers, as they considered the prospect of a murder? Murder. Shocked as though I had truly found a blemish in my unscarred skin, I drew away from the mirror with a shudder. I could no longer bear to see that clear, ignorant and insane face, and looked away, down at the rows of little gleaming crystal bottles of perfume. (91)

Without knowing the reason of her fearfulness, she yields to the fit of fear.

Traumatized mind can hardly sustain and prolong the moment of happiness and comfort. Even a momentary extension of the gesture of happiness and tranquility is challenging to those who are traumatized.



Lopsided upbringing and singular focus on love that Maya got from her childhood are traceable to her traumatic vulnerability. Consequently, she is haunted and tormented by the sporadic and unexpected irruption of fear and anxiety attack. The pugnacity of Gautama pushes Maya to the matrix of misery and desperation. She could not help remembering how he callously and aggressively treated her husband. Surrounded by misery, she turns to reflecting on the increasing emptiness. Her proneness to the emptiness is presented here:

Otherwise life will remain emptiness to you and you will continue to reach out and grasp for everything- every desirable thing in view, and imagine you have filled your life and given meaning to your existence by doing so. He took my arm, he urged me forward, and in a little while we were pacing the lawn, sedately, as though we were speaking of vegetables and the weather. His voice pattered on, the fall of cool leaves upon my burning self. (99)

The tragic perception that someone is going to kill her has weakened Maya tremendously. All of a sudden, Maya gets frightened because the dots combine digitally to constitute her own image on the screen. The image is too horrible to frighten her. She screams and yells at the looming image of computer screen. She tells him that a horrible image of her looms threateningly from the screen to kill her which are the enactment of her traumatic agony and experience. The boorish and brutal temperament goes on haunting Maya. In a flatly brutal tone Gautama insists of being rude and audacious in plumbing the depth of his wife's misery and sickness. Gautama's rudeness and inability to plumb the depth of his wife's descent into traumatic laceration is transparent in the following extract:

But to perish? Who? Tell me who. Gautama woke up. What is it? He said, and held me in his arms. What is it? He said, and held me in his arms. What is it,

Maya? What are you dreaming of? After I had let myself be soothed by his fleshly presence, I turned away from him. He was hot, unbearably hot. So was my bed. The sprinkled earth has dried even in the moonlight. My tongue was thick with thirst. It seemed to me that death, after all, very real, very probable.

Terrible, I sighed, pushing and pushing my hair from my face. (106)

The idea of self-destruction or perishing by one's own hand takes upper hand in Maya's mind. Her distraught mind, her mental agony, her fear of fate and her eventual fall into of insanity contribute to her trauma. Maya is at once the center and the circumference of this world.

The feeling of sexual inferiority on the part of Maya is extremely unimaginable. She does not have any rational control over her life which is badly hampered by the monstrous situations. Extremely disillusioned, she lies on her bed and cherishes monologues. She lay in bed that night, too drained to sleep, her thoughts chaotic.

Maya in her pessimistic condition reads the omens of ill fortune and separation. She is exasperated by doves, in a mood for mating, until she was distracted. She goes on saying "Nothing. Dreams mean nothing. Why were my only memories of Arjuna those of the distance between us?"(114). She found the atmosphere charged with restlessness. Her hair suddenly grew drier and finer. The following outburst of insanity endorses her complete immersion in the world of insanity:

Amused? Human beings? What are you talking about? They are my brother and my father. I shouted, rushing to the window to let down the bamboo screen. Once more a cloud of sculpture dust arose from it, choking me. It might have been morning. Gautama might never have left, the letter never

arrived. But no, the evening light on orange, pink, and the letter opened. I had read it; I had found what so far I had hopefully doubted. (121)

Maya and Gautama had innumerable subjects to speak on. They spoke incessantly. Gautama's mother, sister too had nothing to say to console Maya. They, on the contrary, are indifferent to her life. Naturally, Maya had to fall back on what astrologer had told once.

Maya is alone and she does not have any friends to share her feelings and any shoulders to hold her tears of grief. She is confined within the four walls of Gautama's house of emptiness and hollow. She feels even the air she breathe is not her own. This sadness and pathetic condition of Maya is all about the loneliness which take her to the phase of psychologically ill. The following lines evoke her conclusive decision:

Therefore, I ceased to hunt then, ceased to plan, and merely laid my face into those cool clothes, odorous with camphor and lavender that recalled mountain waters to me ferns, and nights full of stars, for I found myself alone with them after, all. There was not one of my friends who could act as an anchor any more, and to whomsoever I turned for assurance, betrayed me now. (60)

Since then she has been haunted by the invincible fear, her agony knows no bound. Her mind is tight with questions whose answers are difficult to find. Even in the midst of her happy and harmonious moments, she grows anxious. She could not control her shipwrecked life. Finally she ends her husband's life violently and dies herself by her own hand.

Lack of communication was the main reason of all the disasters that Maya went through. She suffered due to the neglecting behavior of her husband Gautama. The wide gap between Maya's father and Gautama in the upbringing was the cause of

their failure to strike on attitude of reconciliation. Repressed desire is always harmful. Once it is irrupted, the result is unbearable. Repeated repressed desire appears in different forms at a different levels of mental state either in disguised or in manifested form. Desire effects in individual personality or characters. Psychological consequences of sublimated desire may be transformed into suicidal melancholy. Our desire never dies in our sublimation. Therefore death is not only a medium to escape from present but also in a form of sublimated desires. Thus, endless repetition of desire ultimately leads to the fantasy of death and to the realm of absolute pleasure.

Marriage is the social institution that unites the soul mates and allows to copulate and continue the natural phenomena. Physical intimacy is very important part of marriage and is also the necessity. Being young and romantic Maya always wanted that warmth and pleasure from her husband. But he always ignored her and never understood the love, romance, thrust and needs of his wife. This behavior added fuel to Maya's hatred towards him. She has to subject her wishes and joys according to the tune of Gautama. Desai advocates that in marriage a couple is constituted by two individuals and they have entities of their own and each should understand and should learn to respect the otherness of the other. The novel evokes the importance of incompatibility between husband and wife for the harmonious conjugal life.

To conclude, the repressed traumatic memories, if not tactfully and properly handled, can lead the lives of the victims to unanticipated level of misery. Maya is desperately anxious. She wants to work for delight and for independence. But her husband's ruthless and pugnacious behavior tortures her immeasurably. She struggled to overcome the traumatic jolts of her life. But her efforts end in vain. So she chooses the absolute pleasure of death.

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