

Chapter One

Introduction

Feminine Sensibility

Feminine sensibility generally refers to the females and their tender and delicate feelings around the environment of their family, society or the world where they exist. It is an idea, thought and a concept on the subject to express the world of women and their values and dignity. The terms 'feminine sensibility' come under the topic of the study of feminism which discusses on the values of women. It is one of the most discussed theoretical discourses advocating women's rights based on belief in the equality of the sexes. This thesis will deal with female protagonist, Maya and other female characters in the novels. In *Cry, The Peacock*, Maya is married to Gautama and her marriage fails to achieve her dream life. And she is isolated in patriarchal society and her mind is disturbed to live her life. The world around her is very sensitive. Her pathetic world and her dream of true life impressed me to do this research.

Feminine sensibility, in general, also indicates the emotional and intellectual thoughts of women through the discourse to discover the true values of the women in the patriarchal society. Most of the women of the world are limited in the domestic walls of the patriarchal society and they have been the victims of their husbands. But they can't do anything against it, just they cry and experience it and live their emotional and sad life. It is their fate given by the patriarchal society since many centuries in the world. In recent times there have been many sensitive writers

who have taken a humanist approach to the situation. They have a holistic approach to view the issues of exposing feminine sensibility to find out the women's problems and their desires and their roles in the society. They are forced to live their sad and bad, alienated and dominated life that has pushed them far away from their responsibilities towards their society. They are not understood well by the patriarchal society that they have also their own desires and values. They openly argue and discuss on the topic of male chauvinism and feminine sensibility. They want to advocate of women's rights for the better world for humanity.

Feminist critic and novelist Virginia Woolf in her celebrated essay "*A Room of One's Own*" aptly depicts the feminine sensibility:

Millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine and millions are in silent revolt against their lot. Nobody knows how many rebellions ferment in the masses of life which people earth. Women are supposed to be very calm generally; but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as brothers do; they suffer from too rigid restraints, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting, stockings, to playing on the piano, and embroidering bags. (822)

The first scientific society for women was founded in Middleburgh, a city in the south of the Dutch republic, in 1785. Journals for women, which focused on the

issues like female and their sensibility, became very popular during this period. Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) is the first work to discuss about women and their rights. Later many feminists appeared to advocate the women's rights and their sensibility. The Women's Liberation Movement of 1960's in America also brought a great change for women's rights for freedom. One by one is spread all over the world and women have become very powerful to express their voices against the male chauvinism which dominates and forces them to live poor and meaningless life. Many women writers have appeared in the world to focus the women and their sensibility to give them equal opportunity and equal rights to upgrade the status of their life.

Feminine sensibility expresses the views and news of the females of the world and it makes us easier to understand them through the study of discourse of feminism. And the feminists want to change the status of women for humanity by showing the problems of women as well as feminine sensibility to understand them well in the patriarchal society. It is very essential to study on feminine sensibility to recognize the women of the world and their values, norms and their dignity. They want to find out their lost identity and their own world for the sake of humanity.

Anita Desai (born in 1937) has long proved herself as one of the most accomplished and admitted chroniclers of middle- class of India. She is one of those few Indian novelists in English who have tried to understand closely the predicaments of their female characters. She represents the welcome "creative release of the feminine sensibility" (Rao 50), which began to emerge perceptibly on the literary horizons after the Second World War. Being a novelist of celebrity and

celestial order, Desai is not pleased with the prevalent mode of novel writing. She candidly analyses the creative urge and energy of woman writing in her frameworks. She suggested that ‘with all richness of materials at hand, Indian woman writers have stopped short- form a lack of imagination, courage, nerve or gusto-of the satirical edge, the ironic tone, the inspired criticism or the lyric response that alone might have brought their novels to life”(650).

She attempts to portray her in her works the complexity of themes Indian sensibility, the quest of self-assertion, and the status of women in this patriarchal social set-up. Her theme is the existential predicament embedded in the social milieu where males and females shown in contrastive terms-males being ruler, females being ruled over. Her protagonists get swayed by problems of loneliness, alienation, and pessimism. But existential concerns are quite different in Desai; she weaves her web which includes only, “the mad or bad [. . .], the shocking, the sordid or the obscure” (Greene: 1). Her chief concern is human relationship.

In her works existential conflict spouts from self’s craving for fulfillment. Moreover, her female characters are beleaguered by males as well as the norms of the society finalized by them. The struggle of her characters gets a distorted shape because of this shift in focus. In her very first novel, *Cry, The Peacock* Anita Desai astounds the readers by the neurotic behaviors of her heroine Maya whose integrity is fast dissolving under the pressures of so many things, specially because of her marriage with a person of not emotional but intellectual sensivity. Crumbles of the dilapidated relationship are brought to the fore with the incident of death of her dog, Toto:

And I thought of the long journey of the dead from birth into another, the brave traversing of mute darkness, the blind search for another realm of lucidity in the midst of chaos. And I looked down again, and fingered one soft petal red flower, a white one, small white Toto's whining a little out of fear, his futile barks dying away into a hopeless silence. Small white corpse into the blaze of the sun abandoned. 'I shall miss him so Gautam' I cried then, the confession tearing out of me in a stormy rush and even as I wiped away my quick tears, and wept more, I cried myself, what is the use? I am alone (Desai: 24-25).

Maya regards this incident as cataclysmic whereas for Gautam it's a natural incident because death is an intrinsic part of life. For Maya the line between reality and illusion gets extenuated; she feels to put the blame on her husband for all the vicissitudes. She feels the pangs of isolation pushing her towards defunct part of life, which she does not lead. This distressing conflict between external and internal forces accentuate her suffering. Anita Desai holds a prominent among younger group of India-English novelists. Her work is a part of a new style of writing to come out of India which is not nearly as conservative as Indian writing has been in the past through. Desai's fiction is colored by her personal views; influence of her parental heritage has been a key to the social biases in her fiction. One encounters in her novels the western disdain for Indian social customs. In her novels she depicts various changes, which have been affected lives since independence. The post-colonial Indian women have been radically affected by such matters as the

increase of the western style education, choice in marriage partner, career expectations and the loosening of the joint family. Desai, being an educated woman of half European descent, is sensitively situated to record the crisis of the India colonial bourgeoisie after independence. This leads to drifting lives, a general alienation and nostalgia. Each of her novels are set in a social context and focuses on a life at a particular stage. Her characters strive to achieve their goals in a complicated and unsympathetic world; one of her recurring theme is the struggle of women to assert their independence in a restrictive Indian society.

The Desai's fictional range is wide and she had treated different aspects of life-social, political, cultural, as a subject matter of her novels, to achieve the goal of this dissertation, her novels will be studied by dividing into two different categories: novels that explore women's quest for selfhood and the novels that brings interracial and inter cultural relationships. In fact, she presents a world in which wronged women are desperate to assert their liberty and individuality. They want to establish themselves as individuals without any support from males rather they consider only males the root cause of their plight. Her female protagonists strongly react against chauvinistic males as well as patriarchal society – in which they exist. Whatever injustice is meted out to them, they shout very loudly in rather harsh terms; in their endeavor they fail to present a convincing portrayal of the affairs. The dilemma of identity crisis becomes a hollow cry in her works because the treatment given to her characters is somewhat short of conviction. The world she aspires for in her work is hazy and the harmony though desired desperately is

seldom achieved as Suman and D.K Pabby (2002) in their introduction to The Fiction of Anita Desai expresses similar views:

The world of Anita Desai's novels is an ambivalent one; it is a world where harmony is aspired but often not achieved, and the desire to live life fully with proper zeal and love, clashes, at times violently, with the desire to withdraw and keep inwards. Instinct, emotion and passion appear to be strangers in the world of sordid daily routine.

Cry, The Peacock (1963) is Desai's maiden novel which can be considered as a trendsetting novel as it deals with the mental rather than physical aspects of its characters. It deals with the complete alienation of its protagonist Maya – a hypersensitive creature of pure instinct-from her surroundings – she is married to Gautam, an insensitive, pragmatic, and rational advocate with who she is unable to reconcile all her life. The alienation between Maya and Gautam is because of Maya's intense involvement in her own inner world of phantasm. She is deeply attached to past, lives almost in the world of memories while Gautam values the importance of action because rational creature.

She has been synonymous only with the masculine experience. Female experience has been rather ignored, what Michael Foucault calls 'discontinuity' or 'rupture' in history. Alex Comfort is also of the view that in order to have "the ideology of the world human being' (170), the female experience must also be given.

For ages the human experience is an equal importance. Carl Jung considers a woman the prime mover of the psychic activity which transcends the limit of

consciousness. But it is a sad commentary on the existing affairs of events that female experiences have been either dubbed as inconsequential or ignored absolutely, which is certainly a prejudiced view. Latest advances stating facts, female sex is as powerful, to be precise, as the male sex in the domain of romantics and syntax. As such female semantics and syntax has been a distinct category of its own and the feminine sensibility is also a distinct difference with those of male sensibility. Anita Desai's novels offer us a rewarding study not only in the domain of socio-psychological activities but also in semiotics and syntax. Her novels, synoptically speaking, after a view of the long-smothered wait of a lacerated psyche of a female. That of course, tells us the harrowing tale of blunted human relationships. The fate of Maya, Manisha, Sita, and Nanda Kaul remind us Virginia Wolf's *To the House*, Maya in *Cry*, *The Peacock* is married 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 telling predicament of the likes of Maya and the total disregard for little existence:

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

The above passage shows that Maya wants sexual desires from her husband but it remains unfulfilled and she becomes very sensitive. Desai has a master place technique to create such a product where the most of the characters are females and the world they occupy and the feminine sensibility that is product of patriarchal

society. The voice of the female protagonists is very strong and powerful to react against the male. It is a heroic deed of Anita Desai that females want in their society to protest male chauvinism. They want freedom, love, care etc from their husbands but they are not able to understand them because of their stability and ignorance. The world that is occupied by the female characters of Anita Desai is very deplorable for women where they miss their lives, freedom, love and care. The female characters of Anita Desai have the capacity to expose but they are weak like Maya in *Cry, The Peacock* and they turn towards the violent activities to sense the world where they are forced to enter.

Clear Light of Day, like other novels, projects the woman's quest for selfhood through the story of a family, the Das home which has its own unique problems, where Tara, Bim, Lara and Baba occupy a small world. Bimla is the eldest of the four children who suffers various psychological strains. Though as enlightened and emancipated heroine of the fiction, Bimla is weakened by the violent conflict both within and without. Desai is less concerned with the political turmoil followed by the partition, of India, the horrendous events of the Hindu - Muslim enmity serves rhetorically to externalize the traumas of the characters. Bimla is highly individualized. She believes in her self- sufficiency and to attain that sufficiency. She denies the help from her brother, her sister Tara and her husband, who is in Foreign Service. Here the concern of the novelist is with the discovery an identity that emerges out of the seemingly rootless and meaningless life in a small Hindu family. In this ability to see meaning in an apparently absurd existence, Desai offers the strong note of hope and affirmation.

Desai's female characters are highly individualistic and sensitive; they never surrender but react against it. However, Desai is excellent in depicting the inner furies of women and their rising tone for emancipation and empowerment. She also pays much attention to form and technique in writing. Ramachandra is truly acceptable when he says, "Each novels of Mrs. Desai is a masterpiece of technical skill." (Rao: 62). To her characterization is as equally important as plot-construction or story –telling. In this way, we find her novels acquire the depth, the 'dimension' and attraction.

Many critics believe that Anita Desai is a feminist. Shuva Tiwari says:

Anita Desai, I feel, is one of the most misread novelists. Her being a woman has worked as a deterrent in her correct and accurate estimation as a novelist. But then, this is nothing new – this keeps happening with so many women in so many fields. The male teacher-critic, while assessing a woman, will not let Desai go out of feminine sensibility. And many (less aware?) Female teacher critics follow suit. Skeptical, cynical of the lesser gender's capacities, the big brothers, with their circus watching approach to feminine psyche, have imprisoned this genius in terms of 'female, feminine, feminist' syndrome, foolishly ignoring the fact that whatever is feminine is at once human and universal. Tragically served from their own feminine impulses, their quiet, resting, accepting selves, they have distorted the vision of the gifted novelist. Such injustice has not been meted out to gifted male

novelists like Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth and others; their works have been analyzed in totality. Such is the ghastliness of gender discrimination (2).

In an interview with Atma Rama, Anita Desai admitted, “Of course I do write of the contemporary scene and therefore the characters must contain the modern sensibility” (24-25). And, in fact, in all her major novels, Anita Desai has dealt with the feminine sensibility more emphatically than the description of the man his exploits. Where consequently, Desai’s *Cry*, *The Peacock*, *Voices in the city*, *Clear Light of Day*, *Shall We Go This Summer?* *Fire on The Mountain and Custody* are the replete with a powerful description of feminine sensibility. Not only is this, even in her short stories, the central theme certainly the theme of feminine sensibility.

Cry, *The Peacock* is a tale of Maya’s love for Gautam, her husband. Deeply devoted and affectionate in nature, over sensitive in mental proclivities, Maya requires a love partner who can sympathize commensurably with her sensibilities. But the tragedy begins in her life because her husband Gautam does not possess those wide-ranging sympathies.

In the cultural firm anent of India which is undergoing vast changes now one finds that there one good, bad, monstrous and erratic specimens of women-ranging from film-actresses, models, and house-wives to the fallen sisters of Gandhiji. In this background, a woman like Maya occupies a unique place. Being sensitive and having spent her childhood in comfortable conditions of parental care, it was

expected that her marital life should be wholesome and happy ; but it could not come about, mainly, on account of her extra-sensitiveness , and also account of the death of her pet dog , Toto with whom she had come to establish motherly circuit. Besides, it is equally reasonable to say that had she not gone with her ayah to astrologer with albino eyes, she would not have been doom haunted for this gnome like astrologer had prophesied to Maya in her girlhood an unnatural death four years of marriage to either husband or wife. Suddenly, she undergoes a hallucinating experience of ‘remembrance of things of the past’ and gets terrified and panic-ridden. This is important component of female psyche.

It is unbearable turmoil in a haunted woman who suffers more than a man in a similar condition. It is primarily because women are more emotional than men. While men can counterbalance the emotional surge by reason women find it well-high impossible to tame the uncontrollable emotions on the strength of their psychic resources. And when the surge of emotions has to pass under the shadow of an ominous prophesy, then, a woman like Maya is left with no other alternative but to behave a maddening sigh.

The sublimatory parameters also hold true for Maya, who was extremely sensitive, educated having been brought up care and understanding of her father who remembers with gratitude; so far few lines may be recited to show that Maya was more spiritually indebted to her father than anybody else including her gentle husband. The way she off and on spoke of her father’ s kindly acts shows that her father had an elevated sense of life and wisdom; and that Maya as daughter was

grateful to him. In Shakespeare's view, thanklessness is the worst form of sin and has been fittingly expressed by King Lear to his thankless daughter, Goneril:

How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is!
To have thankless child Away away! (110-11).

Maya stood on a different plank together. She had a positive approach towards human life and its values. One can have faith in a meaningful life only when one defends the values underlying human existence. Maya affirms her existence with womanly dignity. As a sensitive woman, she could see through the sinister game of the astrologer and castigate him for his slobbering conduct towards Maya and her ayah when they had gone to him in day's long back. Here, it may be borne in mind that as this is the 'stream-of-consciousness' in novel, in which every happening of the past passes through the discriminating sieve of Maya's mind and one gets to know the true worth of her character as a woman. She is conscious of her womanly dignity and susceptibility. She weighs different values of life; and stands on the side of humanity and morality. There is no hesitation as far as this concerned. In this way she is life-affirmation. As a married woman, her motherly instincts remain unfulfilled; and so she saw in her pet dog, Toto- a transferred love-object. Since love is an overwhelming powerful element of life in women, it must get instinctual outlet. As the novel begins, the scavenging arrangements are being made to carry away Maya's pet dog; and then, she begins to cry-a sigh of her motherly attachment for the dead do:

"Tea?" she cried, looking up 'But...And she stopped still to see that, as every other evening, the tea-tray had been brought to the table beside her, nearly decked with the grandmotherly silver tea-

pot, the biscuit tin and sliced lemon, and the curtains had drawn as the sun had gone down now, leaving a livid orange glow behind the trees and all was quiet, formal waiting [. . .] just as on every other evening before this. 'oh' she cried, helplessly, and ran to the door to see if the bed were not there, under the limes, but found it gone, and stood, not knowing where to run text.(8-9).

The above extract shows that Maya wants love, care, sex, motherhood etc. but remains unfulfilled because her husband, Gautam cannot understand her desires. She wants to live true life and at last she turns to kill him. The female characters of Anita Desai are very strong and sensitive, turn to violet act.

Mama in *Fasting, Feasting* is again a mother devoid of motherly softness. Here Anita Desai shows direct affinity with latest trends in sociological research in India. These researches emphasize that grandiose; larger than life, all pervading mother-consciousness in Indian mind where selfless love, sacrifice, and negation of self are attributed to women is a cunning societal construct to limit and control women. This has been going on for centuries. With this burdening of sickening ideals, the innate self of the woman, which is as pleasure – seeking, as woman, as selfish, as loving and caring as men, has been over ruled, Ashis Nandy writes:

The most socially valued attributes of the male are a result of the natural selection imposed upon him by the female's original power to instinctively sense which mate was biologically fitter. This preeminence arouses in man insecurity, jealousy and hostility towards women. He has been trying to work through this basic

hostility by limiting, the full possibilities of women through sheer oppression (35). This results the creation of feminine principal in nature. By imposing mother role in an idealized form on Indian women, the society has decidedly trapped her true self. The importance of .conjugally has been sidelined by again; the challenge is nothing less than redefinition of her. The first task that faces her to device means of de-emphasizing some aspects of her role so that she may widen her identity in India it may invoice transcending the partial identity imposed by motherhood (42-43).

Desai's female characters want to be free from their burdens created by patriarchal society and they react against it like Maya. She is not happy in her marriage. Desai depicts the attitudes and voices of desperate women in her novels. Maya's marriage with Gautam was imposed from out side and hence, neither true her lasting, Gautam's family had innumerable subjects to speak on, nor did they speak incessantly. But they never spoke of love, far less of affection. Maya and Gautam had different family-backgrounds. This accounts for Maya's state of de trap existence in Gautam's family." I knew I was one of these outsiders who could be used this purpose and were, therefore, necessary, though not necessarily loved." (49).She is their "pretty plaything" (49); one of those doomed, forsaken individuals who find no security and response in a harsh, bitter, pitiless world. Gautam's temperamental apathy is hereditary and biological. He has inherited the dry, callous nature of his father and the rational, calculative and mathematical mind of his mother. "Gautam," says Maya, "was very far away from any world of

mine” (201). And between them is the “impassable desert” that isolates them.

Meena Beliappa observes:

It is against a background of frosted married life that the haunting sense of death observes her. The fatal distance between Gautam and Maya is basis to the theme of psychic disintegration (Beliappa, 1971:10).

Thus, Anita Desai has established the world of women in which her female characters have to struggle the problems created by males to live their own life like marriage, freedom, sexual desires and motherhood. Her female protagonists are very strong and sensitive to react against males like Maya, Sita. They never turn back and they are ready to turn to violation to be free. The worlds of her female characters in her novels are full of feminine sensibility. In this regard, the dissertation would attempt to analyze of the following questions: Does Maya advocate the rights of women? Are the female characters of Anita Desai sensitive and isolated in patriarchal society? Do they react against the patriarchal society? Why does Maya kill her husband?

Chapter Two

Feminist Discourse

Feminism generally refers to a theoretical discourse advocating women's rights on belief in the equality of the sexes. It is a doctrine redefining women's activities and goals from a women-centered point of view and refusing to accept the cult of masculine chauvinism and superiority that reproduces women to a sex object, a second sex, and a submissive other. It seeks to eliminate the subordination, oppression, inequalities and injustices women suffer because of their sex, and defend equal rights for women in a political, economic, social, psychological, personal and aesthetic sense.

Though there exist centuries of struggle for women's rights behind it, feminism and feminist criticism did not emerge as a self-aware movement until 1960s. Working in the society dominated by male values and ideologies, females have always had to sail upstream. Feminists feel that females are in fact made inferior not by nature, but by social mechanism. Most thinkers, philosophers, scientists, leaders and prophets, including gods being male, they have always given undue advantage to males over females.

Aristotle said, "The female is female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities." St. Thomas Aquinas thought that a woman is "an imperfect man". The pre-Mendelian men considered their sperm as the active seeds which give form to the passively waiting ovum. Freud defined the female child in terms of 'penis envy'. (Upon seeing their brothers possessing the male sexual organ which they lack, they envy their brothers!).

Feminism questions such long-standing dominant, male, phallogocentric ideologies, patriarchal attitudes and male interpretations in literature. It attacks the male notions of value in literature and criticism. To

subvert the complacent certainties of patriarchal culture, it offers critiques of male authors and representations of men in literature, and also privileges women writers.

Though feminism became a dominant force in the literary studies only late in the 1960's. It had its origin from two centuries earlier by the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), which is considered to be the first formal enhancement of feminist writing though many others had tried their hands before her too. Wollstonecraft, in her book, advocates for the political and social rights of women and argues that society never can retain women only in the role of convenient domestic slaves and alluring mistresses by denying their economic independence and encouraging them to be docile and attentive to their looks to the exclusion of else.

The feminist revolutionary spirit implanted by Wollstonecraft, however, could not accelerate so speedily for more than coming century. *Women in the Nineteenth Century* (1845) by Margaret Fuller and *The Subjection of Women* (1809) by John Stuart Mill were only two major works on feminism in whole nineteenth century.

Virginia Woolf, by writing *A Room of One's Own* (1929), and Simone de Beauvoir *The Second Sex* (1949), contributed to the worldwide emergence of feminism in the first half of the twentieth century. Woolf focuses on situation of women authors throughout the history and their cultural, economic and educational disabilities within the patriarchal society which had prevented from them realizing their creative possibilities.

The feminist trend of her time was concerned for 'absolute equality' and the 'the erasure of difference' between two sexes. But Woolf voiced for radical change as women's freedom and for their suppressed values affecting the concept of power, family and social life that had shaped by men in the past.

Beauvoir, on the other hand, insists against the cultural identification of women as merely the negative object, or 'other' to man as the defining and dominating subject' who is assured to represent humanity in

general. She argues that one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. It is civilization as a whole that produces the creative which is described as feminine. She also attacks the patriarchal myths of women presuming the female essence prior to individual existence in the work of many male writers.

Feminism itself draws and shares a great deal from schools of thoughts as Marxism, Psychoanalysis and Deconstruction: the theories that tend to destabilize the center and subvert the hierarchy. Feminism, thus, has never been a well-concerted movement, in that feminist voices ranges widely from utter denial of male voices to reconciliation between the two sexes as proposed by Virginia Woolf in her celebrated term 'androgyny'.

Elaine Showalter's *A Literary of Their Own: British Women Novelist From Bronte to Lessing* (1977) is a prominent master piece of the theoretical work of feminism. It describes the female literary tradition in England from the Brontes onward as a development of subculture by arguing that since in general constitute a kind of subculture within the frame work of a large society, their work would demonstrate a unity of values, conventions, experiences, and behaviors encroaching on each individual. Showalter divides feminist criticism into two distinct modes.

The first mode of feminist criticism is ideological which she thinks terms 'feminist critique'. It is concerned with the feminist as reader and it offers feminist of texts which considers the images and stereotypes of women in literature, the exclusion and misconception about women in criticism, and women-assign in semiotic systems. The second mode of feminist criticism, according to Showaler, is the study of women as writers. She calls it 'gynocritics' which provides the subjects, the history, styles, themes, genres, and structure of writing by women; psychodynamics of female creativity; trajectory of the individual or collective female career; and the devolution laws of a female literary tradition. Showalter, likewise, in her analysis of historical development of feminism presents three important stages of women writing; feminine, feminist and female. First is the female imitation of mainstream

(male) literary tradition dated from 1840 to 1880 and includes the writers like George Eliot and Bronte Sisters. The second mode of feminist criticism is the protest against standards of this dominant tradition concerning social values and rights. It is dated from 1880 to 1920 and it includes the writers like Elizabeth Gaskell, Frances Trollope and Oliver Schveiner. The third stage is self- discovery which aims at search for independent identity. It is dated from 1920 onwards and it includes the writers like Dorothy Richardson, Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf.

Kristeva challenges the rigidity of the symbolic order and suggests that women can work in a different more fluid open space. She challenges the Lacanian symbolic order of language and culture based upon phallogocentric idea. She claims that kind of order of symbolic view of phallus as the centre is an inappropriate idea. Helen Cixous attempts to establish female superiority over males of Derridian philosophy. In an essay “*The Laugh of Medusa*” (1976), she is celebrated manifesto of women’s writing, which calls for women to put their bodies into their writing. In fact, the projection of writing the body by French feminists is a revolutionary effort to provide authority to women’s writing based on the genital and libidinal difference from men.

The British model feminism is often called social feminism or liberal feminism. It was most popular in the 1950’s and 1960’s, when movements for different kinds of rights including to vote, property ownership, job holding etc.were taking place. The main tenet of liberal feminism is that all people are created equal by the God and deserve the equal status in the society. It is based on the concept that the text is the part of the process of the social construction of meaning and subjectivity, and literature is one of the ways in which gender relations and gender ideology are produced and reproduced. Susie Tharu and K. Lalita write in introduction part of *Women Writing in India*:

Though early work of the ‘Marxist Feminist Literature Collective’ and critic Cora Kalpana are exceptions, British feminist criticism , which is broadly speaking, more

Marxist and more theoretical in inclination that it's American with women's writing possibility because it was difficult to reconcile the prevailing of women's 'voices', which underwrote the early initiatives with the idea,

Which several British theories have explored, of female subjectivity of selfhood as also ideological constructed (2).

This approach is politically productive and theoretically sound. This concept of feminism argues that women are also human beings equal to men and it is only when both stand, their hands joined together, lay foundation of natural law and custom.

A famous American critic Stand ford Pinsker in *Academic Question* (1995) argues feminism is currently dominated by a group of women who seeks to persuade the public that women are not free creatures they think they are. She also criticizes leaders and theories of unjustly trying to prove that the males dominate women:

The leaders and theories of the women's movement believe that our society is best described as a patriarchy, a male hegemony, and a sex| gender system in which the dominant gender work to keep women cowering and submissive. Such women become specialists in the pinched face and an uncompromising indignation (Pinsker 80).

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) is another brilliantly written massive book on historical study of feminism which stresses especially the psychodynamics of women writers in the nineteenth century. Gilbert and Gubar in this book, M. H. Abrams,

Propose that the 'anxiety of authorship' that resulted from the stereotype that literary creativity is an exclusively male prerogative effected in women writers a psychological publicity that projected a monstrous counter figure to the heroine [.

. .] ; such a figure is usually in some sense the author's double, an image of her own anxiety and rage(91).

Proves by example that a revolt against patriarchal authority is possible.

Gilbert and Gubar 's main argument is that artistic creativity of the nineteenth century tradition which is perceived basically as a male equality, is in fact patriarchal superimposition upon the women writer who are imprisoned within it. In the image 'Divine creator' the male author fathers his text. But taking the same masculine cosmic author as their model, women end up copying or identifying with the dominant literary images of femininity which comes out of the phallogocentric myth of creativity. They suggest the female writers first to struggle against the effect of socialization that becomes struggle against men's oppressive reading of women. But they further argue that the women can begin such struggle only by activity seeking a female precursor who, far from representing a threatening force to be denied or killed.

Feminist discourse is one of the most common terms in modern criticism. It is used in literature to study about feminism and discuss on the perspective of women. It is widely used all over the world now.

Feminist Discourse in *Cry, The Peacock*

Among the Indian feminists, Anita Desai holds a prominent place. The novel, *Cry, The Peacock* (1963) is one of the most popular novels having the theme of feminine sensibility, which presents the world of worries and sadness of the women. The heroine of the novel, Maya holds the position of crying peacock in the cage. The novel is very symbolic to represent the pathetic world of the women who suffer much from the patriarchal society and they never get freedom for sexual desire, motherhood, love..., just they become the victims of their husbands and they are forced to live where they are. But Desai's female characters react against the suppression of the males for their rights for happiness and freedom.

According to French feminist theorist Helen Cixous, "female body and sexuality have been negated and repressed by centuries of male power" (Howthorn 117). For her, a recuperation of the female body

is, in fact, the main source of *écriture féminine*. She argues that the relationship between female writing and female body in the heterogeneity and multiplicity of female sexuality.

Freedom is central issue for Maya, who struggles against the social conventions of an age that regards it, is as the primary role through which a woman defines herself. Maya's attempt to kill her husband that shows she wants to be free from the world where her desires, love, sexual desire, motherhood are discarded. Her husband, Gautama is not able to understand her desires and values that lead her to murder him. Regarding this impact of this prophesy upon hypersensitive Maya, Iyengar remarks:

Over the whole narrative in *Cry, The Peacock*, which is really Maya's effort to tell her story to herself, to discover some meaning in her life, and even justify herself, there hovers an uncunningly oppressive sense of fatality(456).

The protagonist of the novel, Maya suffers much and still she waits for a long time to the world where the females are respected but not acquired. She stands in place of Indian women are still waiting to be free to get their liberty for their happiness. The publication of the novel, *Cry, The Peacock* has brought a great impact in India for women's freedom. And Anita Desai has been very popular among the women in India and they consider her one of the Indian feminists. Bruce King quotes in *Contemporary Novelists* Desai Says:

I search for a style that will bring it to vivid, surging life. Story, action and drama mean little to me except insofar as they emanate directly from the personalities I have chosen to write about, born of their dreams and wills – one must find a way to unite inner and the outer rhythms, to obtain a certain integrity and to impose order on chaos(Henderson 238-39).

Primarily interested in exploring the psychic depths of her female characters, Desai may be said to be doing something unique among the contemporary Indian English novelists. She sketches not her private dreams but of female's dreams.

The novel, *Cry, The Peacock* begins with the death of the dog of Maya which 'serves a functional correlative of her own impending pre-mature demise that has been forecast by a temple official' (Clement 218). The peacock serves as symbol signifying 'psychic dissolution' of the heroine. Married to a clever and successful lawyer Gautama, Maya is convinced that her husband has little in common with her. In the relation of husband and wife there is always a sense of lack. They represent the two poles -the one is excessively emotional while the other is coldly detached from human affairs. Maya and Gautama are the 'two opposing selves who, given their adamant natures, refuse to come into a productive and dialectical relationship and together comes to term with a complex reality' (218). In order to be free or to preserve her respect she murders her husband and undergoes inner psychic turmoil.

Critics have often tried to imprison this genius in terms of female, feminine, feminist syndrome, foolishly ignoring the fact that whatever feminine is at once human and universal. Tragically served from their own feminine impulse, their quiet resting, accepting selves, they have distorted the vision of this gifted novelist. In fact, Desai is an astonishingly 'male – female complex' free artist. Supporting a critic Shuva Tiwari notes:

Anita Desai, I feel, is one of the most misread novelists. Her being a woman has worked as a deterrent in her correct and accurate estimation as a novelist. Then, this is nothing new –this keeps happening with so many women in so many fields! The male teacher-critic, while assessing a woman, will not let Desai go out of feminine sensibility. In addition, many (less aware) female –teacher critics follow suit (Tiwari 2).

Desai as a true feminist, advocates the case of the women, can't go beyond the females or feminine sensibility. According to Shuva Tiwari, in *Critical Responses to Anita Desai, Cry, The Peacock* is interesting note that the first novel of Anita Desai continues to enjoy a prime position for critics and holds their interests. The paper, somewhat circumscribing women's area of happiness, nevertheless, gives insight into heightened sensivity and thereby intensified, agonized self of the protagonist, Maya in the name of feminine sensibility. Her major works are centered on females and their problems in the middle class in India in the twentieth century. Desai portrays the women in her fiction from the middle class families that shows women in agony and they become victims of the patriarchal society. Love and passion, marriage and independence, freedom and restraint and the like are the main themes of Anita Desai's work. Maya's husband, Gautama fails to understand Maya's appetite for living. Susan Singh observes:

A young wife left alone the whole day, ignored in the evening and worse, not even allowed to speak, to open her, and reveal her agony of alienation and isolation: all this leaves Maya agitated, disturbed (1995:41).

Most of Anita Desai's novels deal with the problems of females or freedom of women in the patriarchal society. Her female characters are very sensitive and they are forced to live the life of misery. *Clear Light of Day* focuses on shifts to the various roles, problems, and disillusionments of women. *Custody* (1984), *Fasting, Feasting*, *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*, *Voices in the city*, *Fire on the Mountains* are the other novels on women's problems.

Anita Desai's most of the oeuvre confronts the female experiences of the twentieth century, its double standards, its limitations and possibilities specially in India. Her texts are especially rich because its female author explores and negotiates the gendered roles of male and female. Anita Desai as an author, like Maya as a character, is a woman caught in the borderlands between the literary and traditions assigned to her as a twentieth female writer in India and the mores of a new era. As a writer, Anita Desai grapples with feministic

subjects such as female desire, male dominance, patriarchy, failing marriages and sexual liaisons and gives a new treatment to an old theme.

Here decade long career as a writer was marked by the events and consequences surrounding time of significant upheaval. The dominant themes of Anita Desai's writings: 'solitude', 'alienation', and 'separation' were her own bitter experiences of one after another heart-breaking tragedies and irreparable losses in her life. Possibly, guided and inspired by her upbringing she has brought many female characters into her fictional canvas. In a nutshell, her works are mostly peopled with female characters who long social, sexual and spiritual freedom.

Anita Desai's fictional world is very wide to represent the women of the world like Maya who is presented in the novel very artistically. She symbolizes the women in the domestic walls of the patriarchal society and they can not have their freedom and rights to live peace and happy life. Desai has captured the sad and bad world of the women for exposing the pathetic and sensitive world of women who are suffering from the hands of their husbands. The world around the female characters of Anita Desai is very sensitive and limited where women are forced to have bad world. Desai has been able to touch the hearts of many women of the patriarchal society who are waiting to be free from their world. Being a woman writer, Desai wants to depict the women in problems and their solution. And she pushes her female characters to the heightened world to protest against the male chauvinism. They also have their own desires and values of life in the patriarchal society. They want freedom and rights to contribute a lot to their society but their fate is determined by males. Anita Desai always advocates on the rights and freedom of women. She explores the problems of women in her fictional world and their solution as a true feminist in India and others. She has a master piece idea of exposing the women and the world in her writings to find out the inner voices against male chauvinism for the betterment of the women. Her best idea is to dig out hidden problems of the women in the patriarchal society.

Bruce King in his book *Contemporary Novelists* identifies two types of Desai novels: those about “what men do”, and those about “what women feel” (41). The Bloomsbury Guide further supports this by defining Desai’s fiction as novels that “frequently depict the attempts of urban-class women to harmonize the needs of the self with the demands traditionally made of Indian women by the family, caste, and society” (43). The connection between family members, and the cultural experience of Indian in particular affects those connections emerge as a recurring theme in Desai’s work as she deals with contemporary Indian life, culture clashes between the east and the west, generational differences, and practical and emotional exile.

Marriage, divorce, alienation, loneliness, sexual desire and tension are the main themes of Desai in her fiction. In *Cry, The Peacock*, we find the same theme to denote the world of Maya who is in despair. She dreams a beautiful world after her marriage but it is impossible in her life because of her husband. She is trapped in the world of loneliness and anxiety and she cries in the rooms of her house where males don’t understand her desires and problems. And she is imposed to live her sentimental life.

The setting of *Cry, The Peacock* itself suggests the discrimination between male and female. In each part of the, respective sets of values and sensitivity associated with its main character can be observed. Mainly in the novel, Maya and her married life around the environment of the patriarchal society. Maya is an Indian woman who is very sensitive and the world around her is very bitter and alienated. She can not be happy in the family of her husband because she is not recognized well that she has also her own desires for love, sex and motherhood. Her husband can not identify the inner world of Maya and her desires that every married woman wants to have from the husband.

Critic Tara Roth Madden argues that women want to achieve power in their family “... [w]oman wants sons. Sons give their men power, women are the source of that power, and this enhances their power over their husband (Madden 110).” The female protagonist, Maya wants to be a mother but her husband ignores her sexual desires and her motherly instinct is not fulfilled in her married life. She is

separated from her family and husband living in the same home. She always passes her days and nights in her loneliness and anxiety. She is living like a caged bird who cries a lot to express her sorrows and fate. She represents the world of women that is not understood by males in the society.

The cries of Maya within the house of her husband are significant to focus the inner world of women that is very sensitive and dangerous. Gautama's family members ignore her life and her desires. Maya, the central character of the novel, has no power to do anything in the patriarchal society. Just she cries and dies. The desired world by Maya is not possible in her married life and she says,

'Impossible, yes!' I cried. Impossible! Such things are impossible, and I rushed away into the bedroom, slamming the doors that the blood jolted to a standstill in my veins as the bang echoed through that deathly house. As I threw myself on chair before the dressing table, crushing bottles and posies between my fingers, that echo was transformed into the rhythm of drummers that grew in strength and volume, grew and did not diminish. This is not natural, I told myself, and this can not be natural. This is something. Weird above me now, wherever I go, whatever I see, whatever I listen to has this unnaturalness to it. This is insanity, but who, what is insane? I myself? Or world around me? (121-22).

The novel clearly shows that Desai puts the blame on men who don't understand the females and their world. The male chauvinist that acts as the antagonistic force and harms the life of woman like Maya. She has to bear a lot of problems in her married life. But her husband does not response her anything well. She suffers silently and cries in the death home. The home provided by Gautama to Maya remains unhappy and danger.

The novel is certainly the story of Maya who is a helpless member of an orthodox family that is set in the patriarchal society and that can't fulfill her desires. The role of Gautama represents the power

of the patriarchal society. Maya waits for a long time to get love and affection from her husband but her attempts are useless. Then she has decided to murder him and finish her loneliness and anxiety. She can not have peace mind to think and live her life in this family. She wants to taste the real world of happy.

Anita Desai explores human psyche and feminism through her study of motives and actions. The novel captures Maya's dreams and desires as well as frustration and despairs. Maya is a woman who becomes a victim of the patriarchal society where women are not respected and understood that they have their own responsibilities and duties towards their families and society. Maya's marriage brings horror and disaster in her life. She is oppressed by the patriarchal society. No protection is given to her except tensions and torture.

It was true that a woman's voice in the past often disregarded. The voices of Maya in the novel are neglected by the family of Gautama. It is very significant that women react against the male chauvinism. She is focused in the novel to bring the voices of women for their rights and freedom of life. It encourages the women to protest against the male chauvinism for bringing changes in the society. Elizabeth Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Elizabeth Black Well were very famous for their courage and persistence in bringing changes. A century ago, women were concerned with the issues, such as rights to own property and vote:

Somehow between then and now, feminist's grasps turned their agenda issues that offended many males. They crossed the line of personal and moral decisions and made ridiculous accusations, towards men. The feminists were necessary. However, modern feminists have lost touch with women and unconscious under mired genuine equality between males and females (Genovese 40).

Anita Desai has taken seriously the main issues of women like Maya and focused on their voices against the male chauvinism. In her novels, she has tried to analyze the women and their problems in the

Indian society and others. She has brought a new dimension in the study of women in the patriarchal society in literature. She is one of the Indian feminists who brings out the Indian women and their world in her fiction. Her clear visions can bring many changes through the perspective of the study of feminism.

Chapter Three

Textual Analysis

Desai's Fictional World

Anita Desai is a remarkable Indian- woman novelist who began her literary career quite early and wrote many novels. Born at Mussoorie in 1937 of a German mother and a Bengali father and brought up in India. The novel, *Cry, The Peacock* was the first novel of Anita Desai, written in the stream of consciousness method with very little conversational episodes. Maya, the protagonist of the novel, records the memory of her life with her father, and with her husband Gautama and his family. Being sensitive daughter of well to do father, her impressions are impulses-borne; reacting to human reality and environment according to her likes and dislikes. The novel is essentially a dream stuff of the doom-haunted Maya. There is an element of tragic pathos in her expressions, varying from one moment to another according to her anxiety-riddle moods.

Most of protagonists of Anita Desai are females and the world which they occupy is domestic. Her fiction depicts women in their traditional roles; woman as grandmother, as granddaughter, as daughter, as wife, as mother [. . .]. Her novels have the capacity of expressing of feminine sensibility through her female characters. She has been very popular among the females because of technique in writing that carry the message of feminism that women expect in the society. The most prominent of Anita Desai's art is the delineation of the characters. She is primarily interested in the portrayal of female protagonists as living in separate, closed worlds of existential problems and passion, loves and hate, fears and aspirations. They are dynamic, always growing and changing, variable and mutable. They are portrayed as engrossed with the present, look backward in time, and visualize future as well. Her novels are peopled by women who are in perpetual quest for meaning and value of life. The existential struggle of women who refuse to float along

refuse to surrender their individual selves. The inevitably to compromise and surrender inevitably result in isolation and loneliness. Her women are 'hypersensitive and highly individualistic'. "Though they do not voice their protest against uncongenial surroundings and insensitive people, their bruised selves let out a silent cry. They refuse to yield and compromise and prefer death and miserable life" (Bai 30). In their existential struggle they suffer intensely but refuse to be crushed. *Cry, The Peacock* is about love of life. The protagonist, Maya's effort to tell her story to herself, to discover some meanings in her life. The novel begins with the death of Maya's pet dog which "serves a functional correlative of her own impending pre-mature demise that has been forecast by a temple official" (Clement 218). The peacock serves as a symbol signifying 'psychic dissolution' of the heroine. Married to a clever and successful lawyer Gautama, Maya is convinced that her husband has little in common with her. In the relation of her husband and wife there is a sense of lack. They represent the two poles-the one is excessively emotional while other is coldly detached from human affairs. Maya and Gautama are the "two opposing selves who, given their adamant natures, refuse to come into a productive and dialectical relationship and together comes to term with a complex reality" (218). In order to be free or to preserve her self-respect she murders her husband and undergoes inner psychic turmoil herself.

Feminist critics have assessed psychological development of Desai's female characters in terms of the patriarchal Indian family structure while evaluating Desai's representation of the Indian feminine within the context of other Indian literature written by women. Although most of these critics have praised the complexities of the family relationships depicted in Desai's novels, several have objected to their resolutions as either too simplistic or perpetuating patriarchal values.

The Desai's fictional range is wide and she had treated different aspects of life-social, political, cultural, as subject matter of her novels, to achieve the goals of this dissertation, her novels will be studied by dividing into two different categories: the novels that explore women's quest for selfhood and

the novels that brings interracial and inter cultural relationships. In fact, she presents a world in which wronged women are desperate to assert their liberty and individuality. They want to establish themselves as individuals without any support from males rather than they consider only males the root cause of their plight. Her female protagonists strongly react against chauvinistic males as well as patriarchal society in which they exist. Whatever injustice is meted out to them, they shout very loudly in rather harsh terms; in their endeavor they fail to present a convincing portrayal of the affairs. The dilemma of identity crisis becomes a hollow cry in her works because the treatment given to her characters is somewhat short of conviction. The world she aspires for her work is hazy and harmony through desired desperately is seldom achieved.

Best known for studies of Indian life, Desai has written exclusively in English since she debuted in the mid-1960s. Throughout her novels and short stories, Desai focuses on the personal struggles of Anglicized, middle-class women in contemporary India as they attempt to overcome the societal limitations imposed by a tradition-bound patriarchal culture. Set amid the cultural and social changes that have swept India since its independence from Britain in 1947.

Her novel has a charming poetic language with her mastery of domestic themes. Most of her characters are females from the middle class of Indian society in domestic environment. The main theme of her novel is the feminine sensibility that evokes the freedom of women in the patriarchal society in which the women are forced to live for poor life. Desai focuses on the problems of women like marriage, sexual desire, motherhood etc. She presents the female protagonists to represent the poor conditions of women in India. Desai's fiction undoubtedly adds a new dimension to the Indian-English novel. Turning inward, her fiction grapples with the intangible realities of life, plunging into the innermost depths of human psyche to fathom its mysteries the inner turmoil, the chaos inside the mind. Desai transmutes authentically her cultures (India), uncertainties, its complexities, its paradoxes. Her

imagination is horrified by the 'emptiness of modern life'. The purpose of her entire writing is to discover herself and then describe and convey the truth.

The novel, *Cry, The Peacock* has been developed in mainly three parts. Each part of the novel is written very technically with conversational episodes and charming poetic language. The female protagonist of the novel, Maya looks very sensitive, loneliness, deserted and serious in the every episode of the novel. Even as there may be minor shortcomings here and there in the structure of the novel. The portrayal of Maya's projected in a sympathetic vein. Maya needs the benefit of sympathy and understanding from readers. Her life is shadowed by the three-fold effort of death; doom and destiny. Even as, her mind is at times highly chaotic and anxiety-ridden, she doesn't lose her discriminating sense. In this ways one is able to appreciate her womanly impulses. In assessing Maya's agonizing struggle to wrestle within herself for a meaningful.

In cultural firmament of India which undergoing vast changes now one finds that there are good, bad, monstrous and erotic specimens of women-ranging from film actresses, models, house-wives to the fallen sisters of Gandhi. In this background, a woman likes Maya occupies a unique place. Being sensitive and having spent her childhood in comfortable conditions of parental care, her married life could be happy but it was not possible because of her husband who could not understand her values and desires. In the first chapter of the novel the death of her pet dog Toto causes of her unhappy life and her nightmare life begins, here it is very symbolic to the readers. The heroine of the novel, Maya is very sensitive and emotional and she has to bear a lot of problems. Maya, the frightened woman, recapitulates the shadowy presence of the albino-eyed astrologer. She is terrified of him and feels the repulsiveness. Had Maya woman given to heightened sexuality? She would have allowed becoming a victim of the astrologer. Being a Hindu woman Maya could get all the things from her husband Gautama but her life has become meaningless and remains incomplete. Her husband was half of her age who couldn't

understand her dignity and her desires for freedom of sex, love and motherhood. She is totally isolated from her husband and family. Generally in Anita Desai's fiction, most of her female characters are alienated from the society, from families, from parents from their culture. The women of fictional world are compelled to have miserable life and they suffer from their patriarchal society. It may be the message of feminine sensibility and feminism of Anita Desai.

In *Cry, The Peacock*, Maya married to a lawyer who talks the laws of the country but he forgets to respect the values and norms of the women. Strongly the female characters of Anita Desai react against it and symbolize the women of the world who are limited in the patriarchal society and where they have forgotten to live happy life like Maya. As far as Maya concerned, her husband Gautama's practice of entering his own thoughts exclusively without any note of communication was disorienting to her. This made her fidgety; and her feelings in an abridged form and she said, "Poor Gautama. Not to be able to notice the adour of limes, not to hear the melancholy voice singing somewhere behind the plantains, not to have time to count the stars as they come out one by one –poor Gautama, my poor, poor husband."

Maya is a caged bird like a parrot who is crying but nobody listens to her. But she has positive views towards life, wants to see dance and enjoys the nature. She is conscious of her womanly dignity and susceptibility. She weighs different values of life; and stands on the side of humanity and true morality. She feels sad when her dog dies and she begins to cry, it is a sign of her motherly attachment for the dead dog but her desire to a mother remains unfulfilled in her married life because of her husband Gautama who can not understand it. Her married life fails to achieve its goals and she is still searching for meaningful life. Maya's struggle for a meaningful life is a part of the sublimatory drama in the world one form or another.

Feminist critics have assessed psychological department of Desai's female characters in terms of the patriarchal Indian family structure while evaluating Desai's representation of Indian feminine within the context of other Indian literature written by women. Although most of these critics have praised the complexities of the family relationships depicted in Desai's novels, several objected to their resolution as either too simplistic or perpetuating patriarchal values.

In *Cry, The Peacock*, Desai depicts the dissolution and disintegration of the feminine sensibility in marriage. Marriage, which denotes union of two hearts, simultaneously connotes the split of the feminine self and the consequent alienation of the wife from her husband. Gautama and Maya end up as two facets of the same coin. Maya can't bear all the problems and she is ready to kill her husband but has no intention of his murder, her compulsive fear and obsessive death-wish manifests in her suicide. They bring about disorder in her marital life. Her identity as a house-wife is disturbed. Maya's quest for identity is an eternal quest for meaning and value, freedom and truth, in this sad and bad, mad world. It denotes the true identity of women in male dominated patriarchal society. Her quest thus assumes a universal dimension. It is the alienated self's frantic and frenetic struggle for socio-psychic releases from the drab reality of existence in order to find a voice of women.

Cry, The Peacock is Desai's maiden novel which can be considered as a trend setting novel as it deals with mental rather than physical aspect of the characters. Maya, the heroine of the novel alienated in the novel. Her mind is always disturbed because of her husband's ignorance who does not think about the women's desires. She expresses all the feelings herself. She is very hypersensitive. Iyenger remarks:

Over the whole narrative in *Cry, The Peacock*, which is really Maya's effort to tell her story herself, to discover some meaning in her life, and even to justify herself, there hovers an unchangingly oppressive sense of fatality (456).

Maya spends her whole day and night in her loneliness having anxiety and pains and sometimes she cries a lot. This novel is a pioneering effort of Desai exposing the psychological problems of an alienated woman. Through Maya, Desai demonstrates how even the noblest impulses like love when persuaded and pushed to the extreme can be disastrous and catastrophic. But, as already stated, it is not lack of love but love itself that tears them apart:

[. . .] there were countless nights when I had been tortured by a humiliating sense of neglect or of loneliness, of desperation that would never have existed had I not loved him so much [. . .] (201).

Maya is desirous of leading a contented life, taking in her stride all the pleasures that marriage can offer. Her longing for all those pleasures remain unfulfilled because of her husband – be it physical pleasures or the desire to see a dance because she thinks that it's the job of her husband to provide her all the pleasures. Despite her frustrations she rarely finds herself blessed with even an iota of any realization that could bring her any satisfaction; she remains tethered to the fragmentary life with her husband. She expects her husband to do the things for her whereas she does not exhibit the composure of her friend Leila who selflessly serves her tuberculosis-affected husband. Her life becomes grimy and grubby. Harassed by her unfulfilled desires she continues roaming directionless filled with all the negative emotion reading nowhere.

She feels angry to realize that she is dying in bits and pieces. First her father has shown her path and now it's the turn of her husband to treat her like a kid and lead her ahead. No doubt, she is stupefied when Gautama tries to tell her: “you are a grown woman now Maya, no light-hearted child. You must not allow yourself to grow so upset about these things [...] There is nothing constructive in your misery, after all. Besides, your life is your own, so different from theirs-your world completely separate” (76-77).

Though Maya is given a mythological name, she hardly stands as the incarnation of those glorified values; she is shown as a common human beings is caught in the labyrinth of life. And she is not totally secluded from the social or familial ties of her life. Instead of she is entangled into perplexity of affairs so much that she finds it hard to snap these ties and helplessly continues to be smothered. The injustice and humiliation she faces sound vague because except accusing her husband and longing for her father's company, she does nothing creative that could lead her ahead on the path of realization. Instead she plunges deep into gum abyss to accuse males and the society set by their whims and norms. Finally Maya turns to finish her agony by killing her husband because he can't realize that females also have their desires that only males can fulfill. She kills her husband so that she can't meddle with her life any more:

And Gautama made a mistake-his last, decisive one. In talking, gesturing, he moved in front of me, thus coming between me and the worshipped moon, his figure an ugly, crooked grey shadow that transgressed its sorrowing chastity. Gautama; I screamed in fury, and thrust out my arms towards him, out at him, into him and part him, saw him fall then, pass through an immensity pf air, down to the very bottom.

The heroine of the novel, *Cry, The Peacock* expresses the feminine sensibility. When her pet dog Toto dies, she cries a lot and her mind is disturbed. The death of the dog in the novel and her cry over it shows her motherly instincts towards the child. Maya says:

There is struck, was dammed, and I continued to repeat to myself, meaninglessly, the fond names I had had for my pet. Childless women do develop fanatic attachments to their pets, they say. It is no less a relationship that of a woman and her child, no less worthy of reverence, and recognized 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, yesterday. Tomorrow? Did I need to think of other? I twisted away from tomorrow because I knew how closely linked to the chain of the time was the inevitable order of attachment, its disintegration, and then the deluge (15).

Maya's desire to be a mother always remains unfulfilled in her married life that every woman wants in her life. But her husband Gautama can't understand the meaning of motherhood. As a woman writer Desai with her sensitive perception of the human relationship handles the situations from the perspective of the relationship between man and woman. She speaks the emotional and sensitive stages of her female characters in her fiction. After achieving independence in India, Indian women can't get equal justice from the nation made by males and Desai presents her female characters strongly as the voice of women for equality and freedom for the perspective of women.

Best known for her studies of Indian life Desai has written exclusively in English since she debuted in the mid-1960. Through out her novels short stories, Desai focuses on the personal struggles of Anglicized, middle-class women in contemporary India as they attempt to overcome the societal limitations imposed by a tradition –bond patriarchal culture. Set amid the cultural and social challenges that have swept India since it's independence from British in 1947, most of Desai's narratives validate the importance of familial bonds and explore the tensions that exist between different generations. Born to a German mother and an Indian(Bengali) father, Desai in her later works, has addressed such themes as German anti-Semitism, the dissolution of traditional Indian values western stereotypes of India. As a contemporary Indian female author, Desai has been identified with a new literary of Indian writing in English, which is stylistically different and less conservative than colonial Indian literature and concerns such issues as hybridity, shifting identity, and

“imaginary homeland,” a phrase by Indian novelist Salman Rushdie. In the *Cry, The Peacock*, Desai gives a story of women in the contemporary Indian society.

Desai has a marvelous mastery over language and style, fit to delineate a feminine sensibility. Her diction is highly sensitive, responsive, sensuous, but also nervous. Her style is fit for all modes of thought and tension. As in her novel, *Cry, The Peacock* the subtle nuances and shades have been nicely presented. The thoughts, the modes and the tension have excellently been narrated with force and loftiness of a being creative writer. Her range of vision is certainly limited; for, most of her plots are sleek and airy dealing with the life of cities, and the voices of the alienated women like Maya, the heroine of the novel. The whole novel is set in the Indian city and expresses the voices of the women through the dialogues of Maya. The world around is very sensitive and full of agony and tensions. The fate of Maya is indeed the fate of the anguished self craving for companionship and harmony in an emotionally chaotic milieu. It is the fate of hysterical mind of an Indian house-wife. Prediction and fatalism is a fact to Maya. The mournful cry of the brain-fever bird, with the intellectual sickness and uneasiness born of emotional and spiritual atrophy. The spiritual crisis in Maya issues from her struggle between desires and recognition of loss. She yearns for love and affection. Gautama's family had innumerable subjects to speak on, and they spoke incessantly. But they never spoke of love, far less of affection- Maya and Gautama different family backgrounds. These accounts for Maya's state of de trap of existence in Gautama's family: “I knew I was one of those outsiders who could be used for this purpose and were, therefore, necessary, though not necessarily loved [...]” She is their “pretty plaything” (49), one of those doomed, forsaken individuals who find no security and no repose in a harsh, bitter, pitiless world. Maya's emotions lead her in very different paths that torture the world of the freedom of women. Even she never gets consolation from her family members. She lives lonely life within the boundary of her family but it is meaningless life. She remembers her friend's happy

married life and her happy childhood with her father that pushes her into the emotional world that is very bitter in her life. She lives both mentally and physically in a world of contrasts: world of illusion and the world of reality. Her marriage with Gautama is imposed from outside and hence neither true nor lasting:

Coming slowly up on his bicycle, in the evening it was my father Gautama used to come to call upon, and had it not been for the quickening passion with which I met half way, my father's proposal that I marry this tall, stooped and knowledgeable friend of his, one night have said that our marriage was grounded upon the friendship of the two men and the mutual respect in which they held each other, rather than anything else. (40).

Her married life always remains incomplete like dream stuff. There is lack of emotional rapport between Maya and Gautama. She says, "Were I to force him to follow me, he would follow unseeing [. . .]" (91). She wants to get touched with him that every woman wants from the husband but it is unfulfilled. This made Maya again more emotional and sensitive. There is a vast difference between the world of Maya and her husband Gautama.

Maya's anguish reaches its climax with the heart-rending wistful vail of the peacocks. In a way, she symbolizes the panting and heaving peacocks. They are crying in the cages and waiting for the opening door of freedom, but it is not certain:

I felt their thirst as they gazed at the rain-clouds, their passion, as they hunted for their mates. With them, I trembled and panted and paced the burning rocks [...] and panted and paced the burning rocks [. . .] (46).

Maya's happy days have gone away and nightmare life has begun after her marriage with Gautama. And she always contemplates with life and she is flooded by in the tears of her pains. Her

existential predicament is akin to the plight of the love-born peacocks whose shrieks in the stillness of the night penetrate her heart and leave it palpitating. She reckons her identity in them; “Now that I understand their call, I wept for them, and wept for myself, knowing their words to be mine” (97). The discovery of such kinship stifles her sensibility:

Am I gone insane? 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. God, let me sleep, forget, rest. But no, I will never sleep again. There is no rest any more—only death and waiting (98).

Even in very first novel, *Cry, The Peacock* Anita Desai attempts to portray the turbulent inner world of its protagonist, Maya, whose neurotic condition is brought about by a variety of factors including marital discard and barrenness and psychic disorder. Using a tripartite structure and third person narration, which affords opportunities for authorial comment, Anita Desai traces Maya’s gradual descent into a state of madness, impelled by her responses to the developments in her outer life. Further, Maya’s neurotic condition has worsened by her recollection of a prediction by an albino astrologer in her childhood:

My child, I would not speak of it if I saw it on your face alone. But look at the horoscope. Stars do not lie. And it is best to warn you, prepare you [. . .]. Death to you. When you married and you shall be married young [. . .]. Death—an early me by unnatural causes (33).

Further, she is aware of her being confined to her private hell: “Torture, guilt, dread, imprisonment—these were the four walls of my private hell, one that no one could survive in long. Death was certain” (117). Her obsession with death reinforced by the death of her pet plunges she into

a state of insanity of which is uncannily conscious and that haunts her mind and soul. Her insanity which drives her to recognize her desires and fulfill them.

In fact, there has been a long debate as to how do women exist in society and find their spaces. Critics, in many, argue that it is the male domination that determines the status, power and roles of women in the society. *In Cry, The Peacock*, Desai presents a world of women who are alienated, imprisoned, tortured and dominated by patriarchal society. Every woman has a sweet dream of having a happy and good married life but it is not achieved in Maya's married life. It is very significant in the novel that Anita Desai presents well through Maya. She holds the prominent place to show the feminine sensibility to represent the true world of women who are still waiting to be free for their happy from their husbands. Really the world Maya occupies in the novel is very bitter where she can't enjoy her life with her husband.

Anita Desai too has treated this complex issue in her novels through her vivid character portrayal against the male chauvinism. The female protagonists of Desai are common people from the middle class in Indian society; carry the message of feminine sensibility. They struggle for their identity and liberty for happiness. They drift into their own sequestered world where they spin their dreams which never materialize. It is their sense of alienation and a haunting past that motivates them in their quest for identity, and for a meaningful life. The novel, *Cry, The Peacock* is analyzed keeping in mind various modes of females or feminine sensibility. And finally the main issue is here 'Feminine Sensibility', is associated with the female desires and their identity in the patriarchal society through the novel, *Cry, The Peacock*, Maya and her inner and outer world give the clear picture of the women and their status in the patriarchal society. The novel is full of feminine sensibility.

Superstition and Psyche

The term 'superstition' refers to a belief which is not based on reasons or fact but on association of ideas and the next term 'psyche' denotes to the human mind at all its levels as being a person's self. Anita Desai not only focuses on the female psyche but also on the superstition.

Maya, the central character of Desai's *Cry, The Peacock*, is obsessed almost from the beginning of the novel with the gloomy prophecy of an albino astrologer. According to the prophecy she or her husband would die during the fourth year of her marriage. Her father dismisses the prophecy as nonsense and orders that it should be forgotten. Obeying his wish Maya keeps the prophecy rigorously repressed in her unconscious until her marriage with Gautama enters the fourth. Now triggered off by the death of her dog, Toto, it assumes during the course of the novel shape of an obsessional neurosis and keeps gnawing at the core of her being like an oversized pest feeding on a tender leaf.

It is strange that Maya should so superstitiously believe in the veracity of the prophecy although she knows that Gautama and his family "hoot with derision at the mention of superstition" (75-76). In the beginning of her neurotic affliction she frequently tells herself that it was herself who was fated to die. But she is in ardent love with life and so she soon begins to wonder whether it was not "Gautama's life that was threatened" (164). Talking this line of reasoning further fears for her life and would keep the secret for herself at any cost.

He must not know, not even guess. Never, never, never. If he guessed, new dangers would arise like sudden fires out of the cracked earth [. . .]. Ah, if Gautama found out, would he, might he not put me in peril of my life? Did he not love life too [. . .] (151).

Not very long after she is almost convinced that Gautama is certainly fated to die and the thought makes her more and more secretive:

I glanced at him now, slowly, for sky I had grown with such a load of secrets that had to be hidden from him, such evil and awful secrets (165).

It has been suggested in the novel and later harped on by critics that Maya is obsessed with prophecy because of the romance involved in it. But knowledge of depth psychology holds the promise of examining her irrational and superstitious belief from an entirely new angle. Freud attributes superstitious beliefs to suppressed hostility:

It can be recognized most clearly in neurotics suffering from obsessional thinking [. . .] that superstition derives from suppressed hostile and cruel impulses. Superstition is in large part expectation of trouble; and a person who has harbored frequent evil wishes against others, but has been brought up to be good and has therefore repressed such wishes into the unconscious, will be especially ready to expect punishment for his unconscious wickedness in the form of trouble threatening him from without (232).

Does Maya's superstition too originate in her suppressed hostile and cruel impulses? To all submissive appearances she has been an absolutely submissive and obedient daughter, sister and wife and so it may sound outrageous to accuse her of harboring cruel impulses. But probing into her unconscious would reveal that there is immense suppressed hostility in her unconscious against her husband and to an extent against her father. Being a "creature of instinct" she seems to hold Gautama responsible for her unfulfilled instinctuality in the marital relationship. She is also angry with him because after four years of life together she is compelled to come to the sad conclusion that she would lose her already rudimentary self. She grows anxious on account of the threats to her self-preservation and neurotically perceives Gautama's death as a solution. The prophecy comes as a convenient external justification to her unconscious wish and for that reason she tenaciously clings to it. I will dwell at some length of Maya's reasons for wishing Gautama dead and then return to her superstitious belief.

Maya is extremely faithful to her instincts which, as is their nature, crave for unqualified and wild satisfaction. According to Freudian tenets normal people in the circumstances would have affected a withdrawal by influencing the instinctual urges at the psychic level. But tragically for Maya, her very life appears to be intricately woven with and highly dependent on her instincts. Given her instinctuality Maya expects some emotional and physical satisfaction in married life but both of them are denied her, one by Gautama's cold intellectuality and the other by his age. Maya's longing for sensuous enjoyment of life is dampened. Her effusive emotionality is always counterbalanced by Gautama's analytical mind. While he views "nothing subjectively, nothing with passion" (150). Her husband fails to fulfill her sexual desire that pushes her to the emotional world.

Sex is only an intensely and intrinsically pleasurable experience but it can act as a revitalizing force in an otherwise sterile life. Freud, in fact, views sex as the prototype of all pleasurable experiences of life. Maya's earth-bound nature makes her well-inclined to derive the fullest satisfaction from this intimate experience. It is difficult to conjecture what course her psyche would have taken if she were married to a much younger man and has been satisfied sexually. But because of Gautama's age and attitude to sex she remains a much disappointed woman. Even when they do love the act is utterly devoid of passion. Several passages in the novel have been devoted to the portrayal of her disillusionment in sex. At the beginning of the novel itself Maya makes a frank admission of her sexual dissatisfaction born of Gautama's unpardonable negligence:

Telling me to go to bed while he worked at his paper, he did not give another thought to me, to either the soft, willing body or the lonely, wanting mind that waited near his bed (9).

Frustrated by his coldness she gives herself up to a fit of pillow-beating! As her disillusionment becomes a routine experience she increasingly sexualizes her surrounding, perhaps by way of

displacement. The papaya trees in the courtyard, for example, assume a new sexual significance for her.

I contemplated that, smiling with pleasure at the thought of those long streamers of bridal flowers that flow out of the core of the female papaya tree and twine about her slim trunk, and the firm, wax-petalled blossoms that leap directly out of the solid trunk of the male [. . .] (92).

As her grip over herself begins to slacken she begins to experience hallucinatory visions and birds copulating in weird settings.

Of lizards, the lizards that come upon you, stalking you silently, upon clawed toes, slipping their club like tongues in and out, in and out with an audible hiss [. . .] they have struck you to a pillar of salt which, when it is motionless they will mount and lash with their slime-dripping tongues, lash and lash again, as they grip you with curled claws, rubbing their cold bellies upon yours, rubbing and grinding, rubbing and grinding (127).

What Maya experiences here seems to be a symbolic gratification of the sexual desire which remains unfulfilled in actual life.

The images of fighting and mating peacocks, apart from being the central motif of the novel, underlines Maya's sexual frustration too. The memory of her innocent enjoyment of their call in her childhood becomes a foil to her present overcrowded mind, full of bird and animal imagery. In spite of her total frustration, Maya's moral scrupulosity does not allow her to cross the bounds of marital morality. Nor is she able to sublimate this powerful biological urge in the manner of her friend who selflessly serves her tuberculosis husband. Her married life ends up being emotionally and socially sterile.

A continuous frustration of the body sexual needs can be disastrous to somebody like Maya, given her fierce instinctuality. A healthy emotional and sexual life would have her sense of security and stopped her psyche from decaying. This view requires validation from Freud's observation:

experience shows [. . .] that woman, who, as being the actual vehicles of the sexual interests of mankind, are only endowed in a small measure, with the gift of sublimating their instincts, and who [...] when they are subjected to the disillusionments of marriage, neuroses which permanently darken their lives (47).

Freud attributes neurosis of women to sexual dissatisfaction resulting from the rigours of civilized sexual morality. Biologically speaking, marital unfaithfulness could be a viable cure for the ailment. However, such a thing entails perhaps the most severe indictment in the rigidity organized Indian society. Freud continues:

the more strictly a woman has been brought up and the more sternly she has submitted to the demands of civilization, the more she is afraid of taking this way out; and in the conflict between her desires and her sense of duty, she once more seeks refuge in a neurosis. Nothing protects her virtue as security as illness (47).

Maya too seeks a neurotic solution but only to find it inadequate. Something more drastic than neurosis needs to be considered by her psyche.

Secondly, Maya perceives that eventually she will lose herself as a result of a long experience of eventlessness. Her life appears to her as endless tedium with nothing significant taking place at any time. She is never the centre of importance nor is she instrumental in any event. The sphere of her social activities is so severely restricted that she seems to feel suffocated within it. But by Indian standards her life situation appears to be ideal. She has a secure home, earning husband and well-

defined future. These seemingly ideal external conditions are however not acceptable to her unconsciousness where her desire for unbridled freedom is hidden.

The novel abounds in incidents that show how her longing for outdoor life is constantly frustrated mainly by Gautama. As a child she had enjoyed the scenic beauty and cool weather of Darjeeling and how she longs to go there with Gautama. When she timidly suggests the possibility to him he replies, Why don't you? [. . .] Your father would take you wherever you wanted to go. He can" (40). The Kathakali ballets performed at night in the parts of south India hold great attention to Maya. But her husband can not understand her and her desires in her life that she wants from her Gautama.

To add to her problems stemming from inactivity she remains childless. The birth of a child would have given her a sense of achievement and her creative urge would have got on a helplessly dependent human being instead of getting diffused over nature and spread outside human interest. Her life has been very sad and bad because of her husband and she gets angry with her husband. She believes in the prophecy of an astrologer and turns to kill her husband to finish her problems and anxiety. It may be her madness which pushes her to murder him. Her transition from neurosis to psychosis is powerfully understood in the scene of the dust-storm in which she is shown as running "on and on, from room to room, laughing as maniacs laugh once the world gives them up and surrenders them to freedom" (190). Maya's shutting herself in as a measure of protection from the raging dust-storm is symbolic of her total withdrawal from the world of purposeful action and meaningful relationship.

Thus, the above evidences show that Anita Desai has shown passions and psyche of her female characters like Maya in *Cry, The Peacock*. The burden life of woman may cause the madness. And the passion of woman should be understood.

Significance of Peacock Image

An image signifies an object or mental picture. It has been special meaning in the text. It is one of the most common terms in modern criticism. The novel, *Cry, The Peacock* has many images like dust-storm, banana tree, peacock etc. Here, the peacock is an image used to refer the married woman called Maya, the female protagonist of the novel who symbolizes the woman who has been trapped in the domestic walls of the patriarchal society like a caged parrot. She is married to the lawyer of her half aged man. She always dreams to have beautiful and happy life in her married life but it remains unfulfilled in her real life. She wants love, sexual desire, care and protection from her husband Gautama but he can not understand her desires. She is limited in the house of her husband and she wants to come out of it but it is not possible because of the restriction of the patriarchal society that always haunts and bars her coming out of the cage. The male society can not identify her problems and desires. Maya can not do anything; just she stays inside of her husband's house and cries a lot to express her sorrows. She has lost her identity for selfhood in the limitation of her husband that every woman expects it from her husband. Desai has used her as a caged parrot to signify the world of women in the world. She wants to get out of the walls of her home which can not secure her identity, values and dignity of her life. She dreams to fly away out of Gautama's world to have life of freedom and happiness. This caged bird is treated very badly and isolated. She moves from one room to another room frequently in that house which is very difficult to break.

The image of fighting and mating peacocks symbolize the struggles of the women against male chauvinism. Maya's dissatisfaction has been the centre of the novel that has pushed her into the world of cries. She says, "peacocks searching for mates, peacocks tearing themselves to bleeding shreds in the act of love, peacocks screaming with agony at the death of love. The night sky turned to a flurry of peacocks' tails each star a staring eye" (175).

Maya, the crying peacock has endured a lot of pains in her married life. Her childhood with her father is far better than her married life. Her married life gives her frustration, anxiety, loneliness and tensions like a caged bird. She longs to escape out it. Her life presents the pathetic world of women in the fiction of Anita Desai.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

Cry, The Peacock's final scene can be seen as Maya's ultimate gesture in trying to grasp the essence of the being. Maya's eventual realizations that lead her to final swim in the novel can be read as a woman's quest for freedom, independence, love, sexual desire, and motherhood. Her fate can be read symbolically as her attempt to achieve her desires that every woman expects in life.

Most of Anita Desai's female characters in her novel are very sensitive and strong to react against male chauvinism to get their rights for their freedom of sex, love, motherhood etc like the heroine of *Cry, The Peacock* Maya. She is married to the lawyer but her married life turns to her tragic because of her husband Gautama who could not understand her desires from him as the women want in their life to happen. She is specially noted for her sensitive portrayal of female characters and the alienation of the middle class women and feminine sensibility in India and praised as one of the finest of her generation of Indian-woman novelists. Her female protagonists always pass through the world of the alienation, loneliness, destruction, senility and sadness. Primarily exploring the psychic depths of her female characters, they suffer from their husbands and go through the world of tension, torrid and oppressive like Maya who always cries a lot in her whole life. She feels as a caged bird and stays inside home and expects her desires to come in her life from her husband but it's like a dream that is impossible in her real life. The world of Maya in the novel is very difficult to the women to live their married life that they do not expect to happen. During all the nightmare of animated and induced suffering, she moves further and further away from reality, descending into the hideous well of whininess and unreality where the only echoes are these of the albino's dread prophesies and of the peacocks' cries of death in the moments of love and organism. The imagery here of pit, corridor of and ell would suggest her dread, alienation and darkness.

Thus Desai has been able to portray family structures in the society, especially the family with heavy domination of patriarchy. She puts forward an argument that women are more forced to live in poor life because of male chauvinism. They are not understood that they have also their own desires that are only fulfilled by the males. Desai is considered as one of the Indian feminists who is able to dig out the feminine sensibility in Indian society. She is an advocate of the females and she is in favour of the women. Through her novels Desai suggests that a comprehensive and meaningful understanding of life means the genuine attempts and heroic struggles of the individuals and through the community and humanity. She has a masterpiece technique to present the characters and their world. Her female protagonists are emotionally too incapacitated to encounter the hazards of life-social, ethical and spiritual. Their emotional sterility is at once the cause and consequence of their failure to achieve an authentic and integral selfhood. Her female characters have the capacities of expressing feminine sensibility that is expected to out in the society by the women. The heroine of the novel Maya expresses her feelings and sensibility to react the male chauvinism.

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