

## A Study of Alienation in Anita Desai's Selected Novels

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### Abstract

This paper aims to draw the theme of alienation in the novels of Anita Desai. The words of Desai elucidate the anxieties between family members and the isolation and alienation of the middle class female protagonists, owing to which it becomes marital disharmony in their life. The precise notion that females need something more than just food, clothes and accommodation is rightly represented in her novels. The patriarchal culture, the personal encounter of uniqueness of the Anglicized women of the Indian society advances a dimension in the hands of Anita Desai. She is absolutely one of the Indian writers who with her pen tried to alter the clichéd dogmas of the contemporary society.

**Key Words:** alienation, anxieties, disharmony, dimension, dogmas

### 1. Introduction

The theme which slices across the novels of Anita Desai is alienation. In Desai's fiction, Female alienation stands out in heroic relief. Her protagonists are a study in female psyche alienated due to a lack of comradeship. Their dilemma is all the more poignant as these female protagonists long for the human trace, sensitivity and companionship of their husband. Though Desai's characters are uncomfortable of the reality among them, they care with them a sense of isolation, alienation and pessimism.

### 2. Alienation in *Cry, the Peacock*

Anita Desai holds a significant place in modern Indian English Novel. Being a novelist of significant merit, she has enhanced the Indian novel in English in more ways than one. Anita Desai in *Cry, the Peacock* deals with the philosophy of dispassion and the psyche of her characters. It reveals the innermost conflict of a woman

in disaster, by dealing with the theme of marital maladjustment and the resultant estrangement in the life of neglected wife. The novel, *Cry, the Peacock* is a remarkable effort to wrath fantasy with perceptual contribution. It is the truthful representation of psychosomatic evolution of a woman character, which is unable to accomplish up with the applied world of the spouse and impressions depressed, deserted and disheartened. It is primarily concerned with the theme of conflict in the relationship between husband and wife. Desai appearances into the explanations for marital discord and illustrates how such discord distresses the domestic. Occasionally, the incapability of an individual to be approachable to the behavior patterns of her partner leads to anxiety and strain in the relationship, while sometimes it is on interpretation of dissimilar levels of sensitivity, that relationships become stressed.

In this novel, Maya and Gautama have been proposed to live in sharp contrast. Maya, the vital character, is alive through all she senses and exists intensely for each moment. Her spouse Gautama is isolated, intellectual and somewhat disconcerted by his wife's hyper-sensitiveness. Both of them are, as a matter of fact, poles apart in their nature. Maya is dreamy, sensitive and emotional, while Gautama is realistic, insensitive and rational. Maya is Poetic and high-strung while Gautama is detached, philosophical and remote. Maya has sensitivity, quietness and warmth while Gautama is hard and cold. In this way they are plagued with the illness of strained relationship because of their mismatched temperaments and temperatures. Maya was pampered by her doting father, but nobody speaks a word of love in Gautama's family. They discuss things which are related with the society in general, but never a personal or private matter. She is a father-obsessed child; she feels that no one else loves her as her father did. She pursues alternative father in her husband. But he does not reply to her consequently. Profound Maya is appallingly upset at the death of her dog that she loses her mental calm and Gautama neglects the emotional yearnings of Maya and says that he would fetch alternative dog for her. This mechanical behavior brands Maya brood over.

The marital oaths that bind the two are very delicate and become fractured. And the growing stiffness between them influences its climax when Maya kills Gautama in an adequate of insane rage and then obligates suicide. At the final estimation, the novel efforts to discover the tempestuous emotional world of the neurotic

protagonist Maya who lived a light hearted life beneath the permissive attention of her loving father, and requests to increase similar attention from her husband; but she totally bombs in her marital journey.

### 3. Alienation in Voices in the City

The novel, *Voices in the City* has been alienated into four parts. It originates with the story of a brother, two sisters and their mother. But all over the novel Nirode, the protagonist of the novel, remnants the leading figure. After the beginning, the theme of isolation, alienation and impairment of recognize of the characters, is frequently overwrought by the novelist to spawn an atmosphere of dramatic stiffness and happenstance.

Anita Desai's vision, in the novel, is principally with human relationships and how in the lack of a significant relationship the individuals hurt. She analyses the cognitive compulsion that may infect an individual in forging long term and momentous relationships and how an individual is exaggerated if he is unable to forge such relationships. Nirode who is one of the central characters, is obsessed with the relationship of his mother with Major Chadha and ruminates her mother as a she-cannibal. She gets an affair in Kalimpong which itself is a significance of discord in husband-wife relationship. Nirode's relationship with his mother is a love-hate relationship. We have veiled suggestions of his mother-fixation and according to psychologists' abhorrence often is a resistance mechanism of the psyche to break one from constraining incest. In Desai's view, If Maya's tragedy in *Cry, the Peacock* stems from her fascination with a father figure, Nirode's tragedy deceits in his love-

hate relationship with the mother.

*The novel Voices in the City* similarly contracts with the mismatched marriage of Monisha and Jiban. Monisha's spouse is the prisoner of foreseeable culture. He reflects that a female's greatest important roles besides child bearing are cutting vegetables, cooking, serving food and brushing small children's hair beneath the authority of a stern mother-in-law. Monisha intellects that her concealment is denied to her and also her spouse is too busy with his middle rank government job without having time for Monisha and no desire to share her feelings.

The theme of alienation is fresh-looking in terms of mother-children rapport which itself is a significance of discord in husband-wife rapport. Monisha leads an equally disjointed as well as insatiable life. She is alienated from her husband as well as his mother. The graph of her mental life can be constructed from her long-searching and self-provoking entry in the diary. Her relationship with her spouse is painstaking only by isolation and lack of communication. Jib an determines his spouse as worth nothing in value. He does not concern to ask his spouse, even when he arises to know some money missing from his pocket. Monisha's ill-matched marriage, her isolation, unfruitfulness and anxiety of living in a joint family with an unaffected spouse push her to breaking point. The constituent of love is missing in her life and finally she commits suicide.

#### **4. Alienation in Where Shall We Go This Summer**

The novel, *Where Shall We Go This Summer* has been much-admired as an

exciting addition to Anita Desai's success as an Indian novelist writing in English. In this novel, Desai isolates a real and miserable representation of a charming married woman and intentions to inaugurate victory over the chaos and sufferings of her rather unusual presence. She offerings her preferred theme of examining the perception of a timorous and sensitive woman who is bored and unfulfilled by her commonplace and hum-drum life and efforts to escape into pointless and infertile loneliness. She picks marital discord as the subject matter and highpoints how the inability to lay bare one's soul and one's fear and distress results in the cracking of communication between husband and wife. Different approaches, individual complexes and fears enhance to this isolation between the husband Raman and the wife Sita causing in marital disharmony.

By this novel, Desai marks a trustworthy effort to go deeper into the strange inner life of its Protagonist, Sita. Here Desai discloses the character of Sita through the stream of consciousness method, with the coatings of thought in her observance. Sita and Raman like Mrs. and Mr. Ramsay who stand poles apart from each other, have incompatible characters and attitudes to life. The mismatched couple is provoked with the same problem of husband-wife discord. Sita symbolizes a world of emotion and feminine sensibility while Raman is a man with an energetic view of life and the sense of the practical. Sita is an anxious, sensitive middle-aged woman with quick-tempered and sensitive reactions to many things that happen to her; she constantly feels to escape from realities, she even hesitates to accomplish the

ordinary responsibilities of life. Sita discovers her very existence threatened with monotony because her husband keeps himself busy in his profession and the children growing self-governing.

On the conflicting, Raman embodies the prose of life. He designs testability, rationality and an acceptance of the customs and ethics of society. He is not able to recognize the ferocity and desire with which Sita responds against every case. Raman's response to his spouse's regular outbursts is a mixture of puzzlement, exhaustion, fear and finally a resigned acceptance of her abnormality. He is unable to understand her boredom, her frustration with her presence.

In this novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer*, again, the theme of alienation and lack of communication in married life has been nattered and re-assessed by Anita Desai. Sita finds herself alienated from her spouse and children. She remains as a disregarded nature since childhood. She is the creation of a broken family. She longs to have the attention and love of others. Even after her marriage, she remains lonely. Her spouse also is busy. He fails to report her expectations. Since this is a result, there is

marital discord, a widening gulf and swelling strain between husband and wife.

## 5. Conclusion

The existential alienation and despair of Anita Desai's characters turn into an insistent longing for death as a possible exit out of their hollowness and is sought to be overcome by the inner awareness of protagonists. They try to search within the meaning of life, but ultimately they fail in this search and they are reconciled to the mental disorders. There is a dominant motif of death in Anita Desai's novels as her characters caught in the mire of existential alienation and ennui turn into a compulsive longing for death as an outlet. The theme of exile occupies the major part of Desai's novels. Most of her characters feel alienated and exiled. Though they visit in crowd, they not ever texture the lack of culture around them. Her novels deal with cruel assault of existence. Her protagonists are persons for whom alienation is the ultimate reality. They are mostly women comprising school-girls to grandmothers. They are fragile, introverts longing for their existence. Thus, in most of her novels Anita Desai deals alienation with her own craftsmanship.

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