



Jyoti

ALIENATION IN THE NOVELS OF ANITA DESAI

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Abstract: *Every literary artist has his own vision of life. His vision is largely shaped by the currents and cross-currents of life to which he is frequently exposed. In her novels she has tried to present the fever and fret, despair and hope, exultation and frustration, and rising and sagging spirits of her characters in lively and poetical manners. Her characters feel that the intrinsic reality of life is "the terror of facing single handed the ferocious assaults of existence". She feels that man should be quiet careful and alert while trying to tide over the worrying situation he is in, their search for alternatives and solutions should be befitting to the situations. In Anita Desai's novels, the term alienation has been used in a broader perspective. Generally it is used in the sense of loneliness, absence of relationship and the feeling of dissatisfaction. Desai has also used this term to express existential craving and desires of an individual.*

Key Words: literary artist, largely shaped, cross-currents, frequently, exposed, despair, exultation.

When it is used to convey existential meaning, it means alienation from the self. The Indian society looks upon women as a source of immense strength and courage, always capable of meeting any adverse situations in life. Desai's women protagonists are acutely aware of their gender and consequential discrimination meted out to them by the male dominated society. Monisha loves books more than new clothes and jewellery. She asserts her intellectual independence by taking up a teaching profession. As a woman writer Desai is more sensitive to the quests and tensions faced by these women and their delicate nervous responses to these situations. Most of Desai's female protagonists face the dilemma of self alienation.

Cry, the Peacock is Desai's first novel. The story is told by Maya, the protagonist, herself, revealing the "grim psychological battle" she fights in her mind. Maya, an introverted favourite daughter of a rich father is married to Gautama, an older man, detached, sober and industrious. They are temperamentally incompatible. Due to temperamental polarities, Maya cannot find satisfaction and happiness with Gautama. Consequently their union ultimately ends in tragedy.

Maya wants to enjoy the ecstasy of life like peacocks. But she is unable to achieve the interpersonal fusion - the union of body and mind - with her husband. Maya's conflict stems from her ungratifying matrimonial bonds characterized by a lack of contact, communion, and relatedness. Maya believes in involvement, a passionate not only with Gautama, but with the entire pulsating world around her - from the stars above to the owls in the fig tree - and all that suggested life. But Gautama preaches the philosophy of the Gita - "detachment on every count". Maya's reaction to the untimely death of her pet dog reveals her hypersensitivity and her disturbed state of mind.

Maya falls prey to the solitude and silence of the house, musing over Gautama's lack of love and understanding. Having been an over-pampered child, Maya feels neglected by the philosophically detached and practical Gautama. She had lived in a world of affluence, idealism and fantasy. It was a fairy-world. The theme of cultural alienation has been treated by Desai in her another famous novel *Bye, Bye Black Bird*. It deals with the life of Indian immigrants in England.

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Sarah is the product of a traditional English home with set principles and norms. Now she has to operate in two different worlds where she does not enjoy reciprocal relationship.

Marriage is not only the unification of two different entities but also of two souls. In view of this compatibility and mutual understanding of the marrying partners are taken into account before finalizing their marriage with each other.

Desai's *Where Shall We Go This Summer*⁹ deals with the theme of alienation and lack of communication in married life. Sita and her husband Raman represent two irreconcilable temperaments and diametrically opposite view points. The marital discord is chiefly the result of these opposite view points.

The dull, dreary and drab routine existence exerts pressure on her mind. The normal everyday life becomes so intolerable to her that she wants to run away from it, from a life of "subhuman placidity, calmness and sluggishness" in her husband's family.

Like Maya, Sita fails to adopt a positive view of life and hence cannot relate herself positively to the people and environment around her. castigates them in very explicit terms: "They are nothing - nothing but appetite and sex. Only food, sex and money matter, Animals". Though her marriage largely fulfils her needs for security, affection and company, she gradually starts feeling "bored, dull, unhappy.

She realizes that her life with Raman is as meaningless as it has been on the island; and she tells Raman that her life has become "harder than ever before" for her. Sita wants to retain her wholeness and individuality on a psychic plane.

Explaining her position, she tells her husband hesitantly: "I think perhaps that is the urge my mother felt when she ran away to Banaras. I wonder, Raman, I had to run away, too to the island". She takes the final decision to accompany her husband to Bombay which is a crucial turning point in her mental journey.

Fire on the Mountain portrays the alienation, loneliness, isolation and agony in the life of a deserted widow, Nanda Kaul and her great-grand daughter, Raka. Throughout her life, Nanda Kaul "suffered from the nimety, the disorder, the fluctuating and unpredictable the fluctuating and unpredictable excess".. The problem she has to wrestle with is rooted in reality and is not her own making of a stable and successful marriage. She experiences a strange feeling of being snapped into two halves. She has been living in this lonely house all these years all alone, and strongly desires to be away from the world of "bags and letters, messages and demands, requests, promises and queries". After her husband's death, she gets the long awaited opportunity to retire to Carignano. Her life at the Vice-chancellor's house has been a frustrating one.

Being a betrayed wife - her "husband carried on a lifelong affair with Miss David" and left lonely as her children had gone away to tend their families and employments, Nanda Kaul has nothing worth keeping except the preservation of her individuality. Her withdrawal stands for "an emotional staticity, a kind of psychic frigidity" that refuse to take note of any movement around. Loneliness is now her creed. She struggles to suppress her anger, her disappointment and her total loathing of her daughter's meddling busybody ways. She feels relieved



after the death of her husband.

In fact, her escape to the mountainous retreat at Carignano does not help her much to forget her past. She succeeds in physically running away from the past. Nanda kaul is free from her past.

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