

TECHNIQUES USED BY ANITA DESAI IN CRY, THE PEACOCK

Abstract

Anita Desai is a weaver of the inner self of the plot. She knits the story of attire for the readers with striking colours of wool, symbolism, imagery, poetry, and stream of consciousness. She gives prominence to eye-popping, poetical, lyrical language composing a musical effect to the audience. She is an artist who paints a picture of words to bring the situations of all the scenes in front of the readers' eyes. She is a sculptor who shapes, carves, and moulds the characterizations to explore their inner state. It is evident through her novels that she is a poet who relishes the beauty of nature, animals, plants, trees, birds, and pets. The author sets a great store for colours in her novel, *Cry, the Peacock*. The colours, birds, animals, flowers, plants, and trees in the novel, *Cry, the Peacock* are the signs that symbolize various situations and emotions. Black symbolizes negative emotions like fear, horror, and death, and white signifies purity, chastity, and virginity. The readers hold high esteem for her narration, plot, and characterization. The title is chiselled by the author matching the cry of the peacock that epitomizes the longingness for sexual love to the cry of the protagonist's longingness for emotional and sexual love.

Keywords: symbolism, weaver, consciousness, esteem, longingness.

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I. DESCRIPTIVE LANGUAGE

Desai brings detailed and vivid descriptions to bear her settings, and she proffers life to her characters. She is the master of playing words to win the game of language. Using imagery and metaphors, she paints a spectacular rainbow, creating an interesting, enthusiastic, thrilling feel and unique experience for the readers. The author is top-notch at using imagery. Rich, rhyming, rhythmical lyrics in all her novels make her reach the peak of success.

Anita Desai is an admirer of nature. She adores the beauty of flora and fauna in all her novels. Her novels are delineations of the garden with her plants, trees, and flowers. The author has a natural affinity for animals and pets.

In *Cry, the Peacock*, when Maya and Gautama sit on the verandah, the description of the author makes the readers sit with them and visualize the environs of the garden.

“Rangoon creeper entwined these pillars and climbed the walls, spread trembling tendrils towards the roof and wrapped themselves around the gargoyle heads of the drain-pipes, choking their grinning mouths with dry leaves, and crowning them with clusters of small, star-like flowers that had been pink and red in daylight, and now were white and strongly scented. They hung in long bunches, like those of white grapes”. (pg no- 13)

In *Cry, the Peacock*, the incompatible emotions that crop up from two different characters form the backdrop of the novel. Maya represents a common woman who longs for love, care, and concern from her husband. But her husband, Gautama, is a practical man who sails with the tide to march towards progress and prosperity. Maya was the crown jewel of her father. She was considered a treasured possession by her father. She was accorded affectionate attention and enamored by her father.

Gautama thinks that the reason for the suffering and agony of the protagonist is the way she has been raised up by her father. The pampering attitude of her father had mollycoddled her. She lived in an ivory tower where her father treated her as a fairy. She misses the mark to avow the harsh realities of life. Gautama condemns Maya’s father, who is responsible for making her believe that the most important aspects of life are to possess riches, comforts, dollies, etc., all the luxuries of the fairy tales she was brought up on. The harsh, bitter reality of human life is not love and romance but the life of an ordinary man consisting of living, dying, and working. The author uses the stream of consciousness to address the inner state of the protagonist and she uses the flashback technique to spell out the imprisoned childhood of Maya.

“Life is a fairy tale to you still. What have you learnt of the realities? The realities of common human existence, not love and romance, but living and dying and working, all that constitutes life for the ordinary man. You won’t find it in picture- books.” (Pg.No 102)

II. PSYCHOLOGICAL INSIGHT

Maya loves the pet dog, and the death of it makes her neurotic state even worse. Evocation of her experience with her pet dog was

- a good companion which drove away the darkness of fear in her
- an escort who had expelled alienation in exile
- a consociate to shower boundless love and kindness

An albino astrologer forebodes the death of one of the partners four years after her marriage. The fear of death brings her out in cold sweat. Death peals the alarm of fear and horror in her ears. The contemplation of these thoughts adorns her life room with trinkets of fright, terror, and trepidation. She is perturbed by the visitors, dismay, distress, and abhor. Alienation, estrangement, and desolation claim space in her heart and mind.

The author plummets into the inner self of the protagonist, Maya, and flips through their pages and brings the enduring spatter of torment upfront of the eyes of the readers. Sleeplessness, restlessness, and discomposure derange her, and she craves a chink of light to secure the release from her inner world of insanity. Love, Care, kindness, and concern are the master keys to set the seal on the clemency of unsoundness of mind. Her state of lunacy is intensified by pushing her husband from the parapet of the roof of their house, and she murders him. He was bitten the dust, which he would never have imagined or guessed. Her state of neurosis and guilt drags her to commit suicide.

III. SYMBOLISM

The author masters the use of colour symbolism, “a ruby red as blood,” “red pimple of disapproval,” “pointed pink tongue,” “a single majestic peacock trailing over a bronze boulder its long, burdensome tail, glittering and gleaming in a thousand shades of carbon – blue and green and lamp -black.”

Maya’s happy, sweet, memorable memories and pleasant incidents are incorporated with birds, flowers, plants, and trees. She uses animals as a tool for expressing her fright and acrimony. The cry of a peacock in the stillness of the night in a hoarse heart-torn voice expressing “Lover, I die” is the voice of Maya, who longs for a hug with love and embrace with the care that would heal her pain. She compares her life to rubies, butterflies, and the moon. The short life span of butterflies is compared to the life of human beings. The rising, falling, waning, and waxing of the moon are compared to the temporary stay of human beings on Earth. The protagonist relishes and takes the thrill of jubilating the maddening fragrance of jasmine buds that are collected from the garden in a damp white handkerchief. She paints a word picture of jasmine buds. The jasmine buds palpitate with the living breath, open, white, virginal. She kisses those blossoms that sparkle with unimpeachable, immaculate chastity of whiteness.

Maya compares the dance of the peacock to the dance of Shiva, the Dance of joy, the dance of creation, and the dance of destruction. Peacocks rip each other’s breasts to strips, bleeding with their beaks open and panting. After they get exhausted, they mate. The perception of Maya about peacocks is that they have experienced the fringes of the truth of life and death. They live with the awareness that they will perish soon. Though they live with the threat and alarm of death, they are in love with life. The cry of the peacock is compared to Maya’s cry for both emotional and sexual desire.

Maya is occupied with thoughts of perishing. The repeated question that visits her mind is, “Who will perish?” Even in dreams, the question makes her blood run cold. Gautama wakes up by Maya’s phrase, “Who will perish?” and tries to soothe her by giving her water and trying to make her sleep. But Maya is persistent that sleep would request the company of the horror of death. The death seems to be real, imminent, certain, guaranteed, and not in question to her. She implores Gautama to help her remain awake since she feels that sleeping is dangerous since it would invite dreams that chaperone the thoughts of death.

Moonlight is used as symbolism. Moonlight is described as vast, pure surface, touched only faintly with petals of shadow, as though brushed by a luna moth’s wings, so that it appeared a great multifoliate rose, waxen white, virginal, chaste and white, casting a light that was holy in its purity, a soft suffusing glow of its chastity, casting its reflections upon the night with a vast, tender mother love. (Pg No 183-184).

Anita Desai is the queen of the kingdom of her story and she rules the inner world of the protagonists.

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