



Exclusion' in the novel, Cry, the Peacock by Anetha Dasai

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Abstract:

'Exclusion' is an instance of leaving something or someone. The social and gender-related exclusions are rampant even in this quick-witted and electronic era. Active and passive exclusions impede the augmentation of the women in all the fields. As per the census, the most of the girls are excluded from the employment opportunities, basic education and land ownership. Some of the girls are drop-outs due to the parental restrictions on the basis of the gender. Exclusionary consequences are the sexual abuse, molestation, suppression and alienation.

Key Words: Exclusion, gender-related exclusions, Active Exclusion, Passive Exclusion, Sexual abuse, Molestation, Suppression and Alienation.

Narration

Anetha Mazumber Desai was born on 24th June 1937. She is an Indian novelist and a professor of Humanities at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. As a writer she has been shortlisted for the Booker Prize three times. She received a Sahitya Academy Award in 1978 for her novel 'Fire on the Mountain' and she won the British Guardian Prize for 'The Village by Sea'. She received Padma Bhushan in 2014. Thus Anetha Desai has made an indelible mark in the history of Indian Writing in English. Anetha Desai, in her novel, Cry, the Peacock, she adroitly expatiates the 'exclusion' through one of the characters Maya. Maya in the novel is more akin to the father as her mother dies in her childhood and her brother leaves for America for independent life. 'Maya' husband is a busy, prosperous lawyer who is very much engrossed in his own vocational affairs and the demands of Maya remain unmet. She feels neglected and miserable.

As Maya here is the embodiment of all the excluded women globally who confront the psychologically storms, her

husband mirrors the most of the unresponsive and irresponsible husband globally. In Cry, the Peacock, the symbol of the Peacock's cry fits into the negative aspects of Albino prophecy. Peacock not only represents an emotional and ideal love but it is symbolic of life in death and death in life. The images and symbols in this novel are traditional but they are functional. In this novel, the theme of marital relationships and dissonance are present. This novel shows the real cause of disruption in marriage of Maya and Gautama.

The novel is about Maya's cry for love and relationship in her loveless wedding with Gautama. The peacock's cry is the symbolic of Maya's cry for love and understanding. The marital discord results from the temperamental disparity between Gautama and Maya. Even Maya's childlessness exaggerates her agony of loneliness, which she feels in spite of being married. She becomes highly sensitive as a result of it. Maya wants to enjoy life to utmost. The dance of the peacock has an intimate personal significance for Maya as the peacock destroys each other though madly in love. Her longing for love forces her to kill her



husband first and then herself. Maya's other causes of sufferings are her marriage to Gautama, a man of her father's age, who is detached and reserved even to an extent of not fulfilling her physical and emotional needs.

The reason for Maya's 'neurosis' is the apprehension of the future as the Albino Astrologer predicts about the deaths either of her or of the husband. Maya feels bored for she lacks the love of the husband. Gautama's name on the other hand symbolizes asceticism, agnosticism and detachment from life. When she listens to the cries of Peacock in the rainy season, she realizes that she would never sleep in peace. She is caught in the net of inescapable fears. Finally she moves towards insanity. She is unfreedomed in all the angles. Thus Anetha Desai has highlighted the female predicament in various aspects. She particularly excels in elaborating the miserable position of highly sensitive and emotional women tortured by negligence and loneliness.

Binod Mishra in her article 'Resurrection of self: A study of Anitha Nair's Ladies Coupe' says, "*Desai novels depicts the mental conflicts coiling their heroins*"¹ Maya is the sensitive, poetic, intuitive and unstable type of personality that appears consistently in Desai's fiction. She is extremely sensitive to the beauty around her- the flowers and fruits in the garden, the trees and plants, the sky and the seasons, her pets and other animals whereas her husband ,Gautama is her opposite. He is insensitive to transient beauty, a pure rationalist and is only concerned with absolutes. The characters' names themselves epitomize their irreconcilability. Maya means 'illusion' and Gautama is the name of the Buddha, who was able to rend the veil of

Maya. As Maya revels in the world of the senses but Gautama rejects it entirely.

Maya is a destitute as mother dies. She is abandoned as the brother leaves for America to study. She is more akin to father. After she marries Gautama, she feels alienated within the house. Gautama, the husband busies himself with his own work, he does not spend time with her though she forces him to speak lovingly. He does not like to speak with her at all. Maya's pathetic condition is the condition of the many women in Indian subcontinent. Recently I was an eye witness to one of the families where I could find that the husband ceased conversing with the wife for years. It truly makes nonplussed by knowing that the family has been without exchange of talks living in the same roof with reconciliation.

KR Srinivas Iyengar says, "*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, even to justify herself to herself, over the whole narrative there hovers an uncannily oppressive sense of fatality*"². In India apprehensions of women have the vein of conventionality. In our country, the superstitious beliefs are a dime's a dozen like vain enchantments; the multitude of sorceries; astrology; stargazers and monthly prognostications etc. It is indeed humiliation to pause and resume while travelling when a widow is confronted. If the widow is confronted, it is believed that some bad omen will befall but in case of the widower, it is ignored. In all the auspicious occasions, the widows are actively ignored. Thus we see active exclusion in general in India and in particular in rural India.



'Sati' practice is one of the highest kind of exclusion in 4th century B.C. Sati is an obsolete Indian funeral custom where a widow immolated herself on her husband's pyre. Though this physical brutal practice was proscribed, irony is that psychological exclusion of women still persists with its pace. In India women believe by perambulating round Tulasi plant that it works out for the longevity of the husband. Though she thus does a lot in favour of her husband, she is treated as thing and is kept at a distance in financial matters as Maya. One of other reasons for exclusion is child marriages. Child marriage is an informal union entered into by an individual before reaching 18. Maya's marriage is not a child marriage but she weds a man of her father's age at the behest of her father at which her husband, Gautama angers blaming that she is more akin to father, without whom this marriage is impossible, than she is to him

Gautama here reflects the life of Gautama Budha, who has detached himself from the ties of the family. Budha feels that the union of the family is the entanglement, which in fact is a wrong notion. Had the family not been constituted in the genesis of the universe, the whole world would have been at chaos. Budha himself claims to have been enlightened, having deserted his wife as

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Gautama deserts his wife in the Cry, the Peacock. The true enlightenment unites the family but does not strain it. If all the husbands like Gautama leave the wives with the guise of the absolutes, the world would be meaningless and end in gutter. Thus any family that has an ideological separation merely puts on the outward ornamentation and inward clumsiness.

Conclusion: Maya, the representative of all suffering women is excluded from all benefits thereby she develops a sense of antagonism, a recondite evil and kills the husband and kills herself. Killing oneself [suicide] and killing others [homicide] is not a solution but let us hope for finding a solution for the emancipation of women from the exclusion.

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- 2) KR Srinivasa Iyengar: Indian writing in English, 2005, Sterling publishers Pvt. Ltd; P. 465.