

The Application of Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic Approach in Cry the Peacock by Anita Desai and Wife by Bharti Mukherjee

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Abstract

Immigration, exile, and expatriation are all associated with home, identity, nostalgia, memory, and solitude in the modern period. Anita Desai and Bharati Mukherjee are two contemporary Indian English writers in the twenty-first century; they also talked about their psyche through the wife protagonist Dimple and Cry the Peacock protagonist Maya. They are dealing with mental conditions and a feeling of suffrage. Maya's psychological situation is manifested in Cry, the Peacock. Desai's heroine has very well examined the inner world of a woman, her rage, frustration, and the storm raging inside her head and heart. The novelist's interest in Maya's freedom is evident on nearly every page of the narrative. Instead of focusing solely on the exterior, she frequently delves into her primary characters' interior or inner psychology. She is an expert at writing psychological novels. She understands how to delve into the psychic depths of her primary characters, as well as analyze and study their motivations in depth. The novelist is widely regarded as a forerunner in the field of psychoanalytic research. This paper analyses Bharati Mukherjee's novel 'Wife' and Anita Desai's Cry, the peacock as a tragedy caused by unfulfilled dreams. Dimple, the protagonist of "Wife," appears from the beginning as a person who lives in an imaginary world, beyond reality; she dreams of a perfect husband and a perfect life, but when her dreams are not fulfilled, she murders her husband, believing that no one will catch her for murder, as she has seen in most serials. The paper focuses on psychoanalysis study of Dimple and Maya.

Keywords – Immigration, Alienation, Phantasy world, Patriarchal society, Identity crisis, Cultural displacement and Detachment.

Introduction:

The exploration of psychological themes within the realm of literature provides a unique opportunity to delve into the complexities of the human psyche, examining how characters grapple with their inner struggles, desires, and emotional states. In this analysis, we embark on a journey through the works of two distinguished authors, Anita Desai's "Cry, the Peacock" and Bharati Mukherjee's "Wife," as we unravel the intricate psychological landscapes of their protagonists. These novels offer a profound exploration of the characters' emotional turmoil, their desires, and the impact of societal and cultural contexts on their psychological experiences.

Anita Desai's "Cry, the Peacock" immerses us in the unsettling world of Maya, a character besieged by paranoia, existential crisis, and unresolved traumas. Her psychological journey through the pages of the novel provides a compelling study of the human mind in the throes of emotional turmoil. This analysis

will dissect Maya's psychological struggles, exploring her mental instability, the impact of societal expectations on her mental state, and her search for identity and meaning in a world filled with dread.

Bharati Mukherjee's "Wife" offers a contrasting yet equally captivating narrative, focusing on Dimple's psychological transformation as an immigrant in the United States. Her journey is marked by an identity crisis, the desire for independence, and the challenge of reconciling traditional values with a new cultural environment. Within this narrative, we will analyse Dimple's psychological evolution, examining her struggle to adapt to American society, assert her autonomy, and navigate the complex intersection of societal and cultural expectations.

As we explore the psychological dimensions of these novels, we will delve deep into the characters' minds, considering the impact of societal norms, cultural contexts, and personal desires on their psychological experiences. Through this analysis, we aim to shed light on the intricacies of the human psyche, as brought to life by two accomplished authors in the realm of English literature.

Maya's Psychological Turmoil in "Cry, the Peacock"

Maya's psychological turmoil in Anita Desai's "Cry, the Peacock" is a central aspect of the novel, and it provides a rich opportunity for psychological analysis. Maya's character is intricately woven with complex emotions, fears, and a deteriorating mental state. Here are some key elements of Maya's psychological turmoil:

- Mental Instability and Paranoia:** Maya's mental instability is a hallmark of her character. She is plagued by irrational fears and an overwhelming sense of paranoia. She becomes convinced that her husband, Gautama, is plotting to kill her. Her paranoia is a significant psychological element, and it's an essential driver of the plot. Her conviction that she is in imminent danger is a clear manifestation of her deteriorating mental state.
- Fear of Abandonment:** One of the fundamental psychological aspects of Maya's character is her deep-seated fear of abandonment. She constantly fears that her husband will leave her, and this fear is rooted in the abandonment she experienced when her mother died. This fear influences her relationships and contributes to her psychological turmoil.
- Repressed Emotions and Trauma:** Maya's psychological struggles are closely linked to repressed emotions and unresolved trauma. Her past experiences, particularly the death of her mother, are never properly processed, and these unresolved issues fester in her psyche. Her inability to cope with this trauma contributes to her mental instability.
- Existential Crisis:** Maya's existential crisis is another critical psychological element in the novel. She grapples with questions about the meaning of life, the inevitability of death, and her place in the world. Her obsession with peacocks, which are symbolic of both beauty and death, reflects her existential angst. Her deep contemplation of life and death adds a layer of philosophical depth to her psychological turmoil.
- Isolation and Alienation:** Maya's isolation from the outside world and her alienation from her husband further compound her psychological struggles. She is detached from the external reality, and her inner world becomes increasingly vivid and distorted. Her isolation intensifies her paranoia and psychological distress.
- Freudian Analysis:** Applying a Freudian lens to Maya's character, one can see that her psychological turmoil can be attributed to the unconscious mind. Her irrational fears, paranoia, and obsession with

death may be rooted in repressed desires and traumas from her past. Her fear of abandonment by her husband is a manifestation of deeply buried insecurities.

Maya's psychological turmoil is a central theme in "Cry, the Peacock." It showcases the profound impact of unresolved trauma, fear, and existential questions on an individual's mental state. Her character serves as a poignant exploration of the human psyche under the weight of unaddressed emotional and psychological issues, and it is a testament to Anita Desai's skill in delving into the complexities of the human mind.

Dimple's Psychological Journey in "Wife"

Dimple's psychological journey in Bharati Mukherjee's "Wife" is a fascinating exploration of identity, cultural adaptation, and personal growth. The novel portrays Dimple's transformation from a traditional Indian woman into an assertive, independent individual in the United States. Her psychological journey is marked by several key elements:

Cultural Adaptation and Identity Crisis: Dimple's move to the United States signifies a significant cultural shift. She finds herself in an environment vastly different from her upbringing in India. This abrupt transition causes an identity crisis as she struggles to reconcile her traditional Indian values with the Western values she encounters in America. Her confusion and inner turmoil are evident as she grapples with who she is and how she fits into this new cultural context.

1. **Desire for Independence and Autonomy:** One of the central psychological elements in Dimple's character is her strong desire for independence and autonomy. She rejects the traditional role expected of her as a wife and seeks personal freedom and self-sufficiency. Her determination to pursue an education and career in the U.S. demonstrates her psychological need for self-fulfilment and independence, which contrasts with the societal expectations of her Indian family.
2. **Clash of Expectations:** Dimple's psychological journey is significantly influenced by the clash between the expectations of her Indian family and the contrasting expectations of her American husband and society. This conflict highlights the psychological stress she experiences as she attempts to balance these competing demands. It also underscores the internal struggle she faces in her pursuit of her own desires.
3. **Transformation and Growth:** Throughout the novel, Dimple undergoes a remarkable transformation. She evolves from a passive, obedient young woman into a self-assured and assertive individual. Her psychological growth is marked by her ability to assert her choices and desires, ultimately taking control of her own destiny. Her transformation is emblematic of her psychological resilience and adaptability.
4. **Gender Roles and Empowerment:** "Wife" explores the evolving role of women in both Indian and American societies. Dimple's psychological journey represents the conflicts and growth associated with challenging traditional gender roles. She confronts the notion that being a "good wife" is her primary duty and embraces the idea that she can be an independent, career-oriented woman.
5. **Ambition and Self-Discovery:** Dimple's pursuit of education and a career reflects her ambition and the desire for self-discovery. This ambition drives her psychological journey, as she not only explores her academic and professional potential but also discovers her own identity and the strength to stand up for her aspirations.

In "Wife," Dimple's psychological journey is a central theme, illustrating the transformation of an individual adapting to a new culture, challenging traditional gender roles, and pursuing personal growth

and autonomy. Her character showcases the psychological resilience and the internal battles that individuals can face when their cultural, societal, and personal expectations clash, ultimately emerging as a symbol of strength and empowerment.

Societal and Cultural Contexts in Psychological Analysis

Societal and cultural contexts play a crucial role in the psychological analysis of characters in literature. They shape the characters' thoughts, behaviours, and psychological experiences. In the context of Anita Desai's "Cry, the Peacock" and Bharati Mukherjee's "Wife," these elements significantly impact the protagonists' psychological journeys.

Societal Expectations in "Cry, the Peacock" and "Wife":

- **"Cry, the Peacock":** The societal expectations placed on Maya, the protagonist, are evident throughout the novel. Maya is expected to fulfil her role as a wife and mother, conforming to traditional gender roles. Her inability to meet these expectations leads to intense inner conflict and psychological turmoil. The pressure to conform to societal norms exacerbates her paranoia and existential crisis.
- **"Wife":** In "Wife," societal expectations are equally influential in shaping Dimple's psychological journey. In India, Dimple's family expects her to marry and fulfil her traditional role as a wife. However, when she moves to the United States, she encounters different societal norms and expectations. The clash between the expectations of her Indian family and American society creates psychological tension, compelling her to navigate a path that aligns with her own desires.

Cultural Context in "Cry, the Peacock" and "Wife":

- **"Cry, the Peacock":** The cultural context of post-colonial India in "Cry, the Peacock" influences Maya's character and psychological turmoil. The novel is set during a time of cultural transition and social change in India. Maya's experiences are rooted in the clash between tradition and modernity, as well as the expectations of a patriarchal society. Her psychological struggles are intensified by the cultural expectations placed upon her as a woman in that society.
- **"Wife":** "Wife" focuses on Dimple's cultural adaptation from traditional Indian values to the American way of life. The American cultural context is crucial in shaping her psychological journey. The novel explores themes of immigration and identity, with Dimple navigating the complexities of being an Indian immigrant in the U.S. The clash between the two cultures accentuates her identity crisis and influences her psychological growth.

Gender Roles in "Cry, the Peacock" and "Wife":

- **"Cry, the Peacock":** The novel critically examines the restrictive gender roles of the time. Maya is expected to fulfil her role as a wife and mother, which she resists. The societal insistence on traditional gender roles is a significant contributor to her psychological turmoil, as she seeks to break free from these expectations.
- **"Wife":** "Wife" also explores gender roles, but in a different cultural context. Dimple's transformation from a traditional Indian wife to an independent individual reflects the changing dynamics of gender roles. The American society she encounters allows for greater autonomy, challenging traditional expectations and influencing her psychological journey.

In both novels, the societal and cultural contexts act as powerful forces that impact the characters' psychological experiences. The clash between tradition and modernity, East and West, and traditional gender roles and evolving expectations creates the psychological tension and complexity that drive the characters' development and the overall narrative. These contextual elements provide valuable insights into the characters' struggles and transformations, offering a nuanced psychological analysis within the broader framework of their respective societies and cultures.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the psychological analysis of the characters in Anita Desai's "Cry, the Peacock" and Bharati Mukherjee's "Wife" reveals the profound influence of societal and cultural contexts on the protagonists' psychological journeys. In "Cry, the Peacock," Maya's struggles are shaped by the societal expectations placed on women in post-colonial India, which accentuate her fears, paranoia, and existential crisis. The clash between tradition and modernity, as well as the rigid gender roles of her society, significantly contribute to her psychological turmoil.

In "Wife," Dimple's psychological journey is intricately tied to her cultural adaptation from India to the United States. The novel explores the impact of shifting cultural norms and the clash of societal expectations, both in her native culture and her adopted one. Dimple's desire for independence and autonomy, her transformation from a traditional Indian wife to an assertive individual, and her challenge to gender roles are all deeply influenced by the cultural contexts in which she finds herself.

These novels illustrate how societal and cultural expectations, traditions, and values can be powerful drivers of character development and psychological conflict. The clash between individual desires and societal norms, as well as the process of adapting to new cultural contexts, creates complex psychological terrain for the characters to navigate. Both "Cry, the Peacock" and "Wife" provide a lens through which readers can explore the intricate interplay between individual psychology and the external influences of society and culture, ultimately offering valuable insights into the complexities of the human experience.

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