

Identity Crisis of an Immigrant in Desai's *Bye Bye Blackbird*

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Abstract: *One important aspect of postcolonial studies is the experience of Diaspora, which has been a common theme in English literature. Diaspora is not only a physical mobility of the immigrants from their homeland to the foreign land, but a kind of psychological dislocation in which the immigrants experience a sense of displacement, marginalization and a loss of identity. Some immigrants experience ambivalent feelings of in-betweenness and are torn between the two cultures, thus they suffer from a broken and split identity. On the other hand, other immigrants try to fully adjust themselves and assimilate with the new culture and live as expatriates. The image of a journey to settle down somewhere else is central to the notion of diaspora. Diaspora has habitually been comprehended as a yearning for a lost home. It is a phenomenon, which is associated with the process of shifting, moving, settling and unsettling of the person or community involved in the act. Bye Bye Blackbird deals with the experience of an Indian man who lived in Britain and married to a British wife*

Keywords: Diaspora, Prototype, Identity Crisis, Immigrant, Cultural Difference

I. INTRODUCTION

Diaspora Literature can be defined as works that are written by authors who are away from their homeland or native land. The term identifies a work's particular geographic origin. Diaspora literature can also be defined by based on the content of the writing irrespective of its place where it has been written. If a piece of literature or a piece of work, though written in motherland, speaks about the character's adoption and surviving outside the motherland it can be considered as diaspora literature. The Story of Joseph from Bible and The Book of Job are the best examples of this type. In the story of Joseph though the book is written in Isreal it speaks about Joseph's learning to survive outside motherland. Identity, origin and truth have become structureless assemblages according to postmodern terminology. Anita Desai is the best example in this regard as she has complex origin as her parents belong to different origins. Her mother, Antoinette Nime, could trace her origin to France, and her father, Dhiren Mazumdar's native place was Dhaka (now in Bangladesh) but he had settled in New Delhi. Having the advantage of double perspective, the writings of Anita Desai can well describe India and Indians and as well as about migrants in India and Indian migrants to the West. She is both insider and outsider. She is outsider if seen from her mother's side. She is insider if seen from her father's side. he diasporic element can be seen when Anita Desai describes the solitude of the characters. This solitude is the result of the external circumstances which shows its effect on inner psyche of the characters. But loneliness is the manifestation of both inner and outer conditions. So, it can be evoked even in the middle of the society. Even the Indian Community is not exempted from being a victim of the sense of loneliness. It felt diasporic.

Bye-Bye Blackbird displays the immigrant's condition and the situation in which they are living and unfurls their inner selves with their difficulties of adjustment in an unfamiliar world. The major problem of the obliteration of the inner self or the psyche of the immigrants leading an insulting life in a foreign culture. The text, *Bye ByeBlackBird* is divided into three main parts - "Arrival." "Discovery." "Recognition and Departure," describing the story of two Bengalis - Adit Sen and Dev, and Adit's wife Sarah who was an English. Dev leaves his motherland to study Economics at the School of London. The complete novel documents the gradual proceedings of constructing i.e. migration, deconstructing i.e. staying in an alien land and reconstruction i.e. going back to their land of origin or their homeland. Adit leaves his own

land India to pursue higher education in London School of Economics, and after acquiring a degree from there, fails to get a good job in India. Ultimately, he decided to migrate to England and started working in a post office there as an officer. Later he worked as a teacher also and at the end, he does a trivial job at Blue Skies with an ambition to become the director someday. Dev his friend doesn't like his decision and strongly believed that Indians who migrate to other countries are weak and under the influence of the British...

"The trouble with you immigrants ... is that you go soft. If anyone in India told you to turn off your radio, you wouldn't dream of doing it. You might even pull out a knife and blood would spill. Over here all you do is shut up and look upon." (Bye Bye Blackbird :26).

This diasporic novel focuses on the immigrants and it brings out the contrast between their own country, India and their settled country, England. In this novel Anita Desai describes the physical as well as psychological problems of the Indian immigrants and their difficulties in England. This novel is classified into three parts such as Arrival, Discovery, and Departure. The novel opens with the Bengali Indian immigrant, Adit Sen, his English wife Sarah and his Indian friend Dev. The first part picturizes Adit as an admirer of England because of its environment, clubs, coffee houses, buildings etc. Dev who has come to London for his studies in Economics but he hates England by criticizing it. The second part of the novel gives the picturization of London city and the dilemma of immigrants in London. And the third part throws the light on the departure of Adit and Sarah's decision of leaving England and return back to India. The Diaspora has been the common denominators in the lives of Adit and Dev in Bye-Bye Blackbird. Dev is unable to accept his cultural division. He became furious about British tradition and culture. It is presented in the novel as "He wondered if it had died in the night of an inability to acclimatise itself" (Desai 7). The Diaspora has been the common denominators in the lives of Adit and Dev in Bye-Bye Blackbird. Dev is unable to accept his cultural division. He became furious about British tradition and culture. It is presented in the novel as "He wondered if it had died in the night of an inability to acclimatise itself" (Desai 7). But Dev found that life in London was contrast to the life in India. He is an Indian and Bengali student at the soil of England. He has been taught from childhood to appreciate the British history and literature, ways and manners. He reconciles to stay in England and suffers from humiliation ungrudgingly, though identifying himself inwardly with India. It shows that he is longing for his Indian friends, activities, food, dress, music, news, and stories. Dev, as an immigrant in England, finds out the contrastive features of India and Britain. For instance, the Mall of a Himalayan hill station is dissimilar to the mall in the High streets of London suburbs. But soon Dev starts to search a job for himself because he wants to earn something. It shows that he doesn't want to depend on anybody else. Before that he felt disillusioned and felt helpless. He wanted a job but he could not get any job at first.

In the beginning, the novel describes Adit as the romantic lover of England and Dev as the hater of England even he gets irritated by Adit's behaviour. Adit sees everything as the gold in London but Dev sees everything as dull and cold. As an admirer of England Adit has stayed in London for a long period and married an English woman named as Sarah. He expresses his disappointment that he had in India by saying

All I could find was a ruddy clerking job in some Government of India tourist bureau. They were going to pay me two hundred and fifty rupees and after thirty years I could expect to have five hundred rupees. That is what depressed me – the thirty years I would have to spend in panting after that extra two hundred and fifty rupees. (Desai 20)

At the end of the story Dev who always complains about the country and its people decides to settle in England to reap a rich harvest. He is successful to establish his roots in England. But Adit and Sarah bid good bye to England. At the time of bidding goodbye, Dev calls out, "Bye-Bye Blackbird". This is how Anita Desai describes the diasporic element to the eyes of readers.

II. CONCLUSION

Diaspora expresses the oscillated mind, suffering and agony of cultural change. Anita Desai has very realistically displayed the dilemma of uprooted individuals through the protagonists Dev in *Bye-Bye, Blackbird*. The experience of migration and cultural displacement makes the protagonist Dev along with Adit alienated and lonely in spite of their attempts towards assimilation.

REFERENCES

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