

REFLECTION OF YOUTH MIGRATION AND CULTURAL CRISIS IN ANITA DESAI'S *BYE BYE BLACKBIRD*

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ABSTRACT

Anita Desai is one of the leading figures in the literary world. Anita Desai contributed to the Indian English Fiction. She is recognized for her action, plot the development of the novel in modern era. The fictional technique of Anita Desai is guided by several factors of her development as a novelist. Anita Desai's novel deals with the characters rather than social milieu. Desai's characters are individual men and women. Her characters are independent, frustrated, suffering with alienation, dilemma, and face cultural crisis. In the present paper, it is proposed to study mainly the fiction of Anita Desai with the reference to the Migration of educated youth Particularly the Indian in England. Contemporary Indian English novel portrays images of protagonists confined to rigid tradition and orthodoxy. In this study, therefore an attempt will be made to scrutinize Anita Desai's novel to show how she has depicted the problem of higher middle class educated Indians and that have come up in the contemporary India.

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In this novel, Adit and Dev, Sarah and Christine Langford are the major characters. They fight for the meaningful life and accept the challenge of life. As they believe in struggle for existence. There are moments of transformation in their life. The novel is based on the theme of

immigration of native Indians to England. There are clashes of ideas, tradition and cultures. This theme of the novel is simple rendering of emotions of Indians who face abnormal situation in living and partly living every moment of life in foreign land. The novel highlights the problem of the Asian emigrants in the U.K. often complicated by inter-racial marriages. It is a story of an educated Indian couple. Adit Sen, and his wife Sarah and Dev, his Bengali friend are the major characters in the novel. Adit is an Indian but his wife is an English girl, Sarah. He is settled down in England. Sarah, tries to locate or identify herself with her Indian husband. They are not happy in their domestic life. Adit is worried about his family in India. He always cherishes his anecdote and past life in India. This *homesickness* is the cause of his tragedy and problems in his married life.

The novel begins with the arrival of Dev, a young Bengali student at England. He has to take admission into London school of Economics. Dev with his background of English Literature. Adit Sen has modified to appreciate the British life. Adit is settled in England with his English wife. Therefore he tries to prove himself equal to the Britishers. He proves himself superior to the new Indian immigrants like Dev. Adit tries to persuade Dev to accept England and British cultural ways of life without being prejudiced. On his departure to India. Adit wants to change his attitude He says:

As though he saw the Union Jack being lowered in sadness at his departure and saw the Indian tricolor rising upon the opposite horizon.
(257)

Dev is very optimistic character who visits to England for academic purpose. Dev is critical of England and conscious of India's culture. Hence wish to impress Adit. Adit is completely alienated from Indian culture. Dev says Sanskrit hymn *richas*. Dev is happy in reciting vedic *richas* but Adit is not interested even in visiting the Victoria Albert Museum where Indian Moghul and Rajasthan miniatures are collected. Dev has come in search of a cultural and intellectual quest.

In *Bye Bye Blackbird*, It is observed that the same spirit and desire to have taken place for migration for a better future. England was a dreamland for Indian migrants. Indians migrate there to get better education and well-paid easy jobs, for England is the land of opportunity and employment. Therefore, it is noteworthy that on one lands at England due to any change in one's heart. While living there they suppress their love towards their own home and country; they even forget temporarily their own festivals and religious ceremonies, and if not, observe them merely as a token. They are made to undermine their cultural heritage and cut their roots of birth and go to England with strong determination for their ambition to be fulfilled.

There is a sense of superiority among the Britishers. It is clearly observed that Sarah's marriage with an Indian is not accepted by British society. Even Sarah suffers from a sense of insecurity and separation from her own society.

Sarah feels the two selves in her, the English self and the Indian one are only, frauds; each had large shadowed elements of charade about it. (34)

The real problem of Sarah is that she suffers from the identity and cultural crisis. Sarah's position is very pathetic. By marrying an Indian, she had broken the unspoken code of English society. She suffers from a sense of inferiority because of her marrying an Indian and for this she has to suffer the taunts from her colleague. She fails to reconcile with Indian ethos. Sarah is in dilemma also to locate her identity. She has no complaints against her marriage with Adit. It is depicted by novelist, Desai points out:

With her husband brought her ,he seemed so rich to her, he seemed to have so much to give her-so many relations and attachments ,pictures and stories,legends,promises and warnings.(237)

Sarah represents foreign identity but in Indian context she suffers a lot. On the other hand, she is a victim of male dominance mentality. She is ready to cope up even in odd situation. Even marrying an Indian, she had become unidentified and loss her origin. She had rejected her identity .There is no mental peace and satisfaction in her life. She is taunted and abused by her own people in her own land.

Adit is a victim of homesick. He realizes that his weakness for England and decides to go back to India. Adit is conscious of his racial inferiority. He tries to dominate his wife He is a representative of male dominated society in India. Adit, with a happy job, family, English wife is well settled in his adopted country. But at the end of the novel he decides to leave England .When Sarah decides to visit to India. India is a different cultural background and environment But she is confident of her decision. It is certain that India's all embracing and assimilating nature that can give a sense of relief from the sense of alienation-with which Sarah experienced in her own country. Adit occasionally, shows sincerity in his behavior towards his wife. At the outset Adit says that English wives are quite manageable. This remark by Adit shows a negative attitude .He loves England because it is a land of opportunity. He hates India because of the laziness of the burocratic system, work culture population and poverty. Even criticizes irregularity of trains and buses and beggars, flies... When he becomes nostalgic, he says:

This time I'll go by air with a bag full of luxury goods..When I have a whole month of leave saved up.I'll go. My mother will cook *hilsa* fish wrapped in banana leaves for me .My sister will dress in saris and gold ornaments.I'll lie in bed till ten every morning and sit up half the night listening to the shehnai and sitar.(48)

Adit is a practical man and lives in present. He is satisfied in his job and married life in England. So he wants to stay in England. He has a friends, social relationship and happy home family hence he openly says that he loves England .He comments:

I like the pubs', I like the freedom a man has here: Economic freedom; I like reading posters in the tube.oh,I must take you to see my favorites. And I like the strawberries in summer. I even like the BBC. (18-19)

Dev's resentment is caused by his unemployment but Adit is happy and loves his adopted country. He tries to improve upon Dev's pessimistic attitude towards England. The feeling of alienation reflects in his mind. Dev is consciousness about his new life and real existence. Dev says:

You would sell your soul and your passport too, for a glimpse, at two shillings of some draughty old stately home. You'd probably vote for the Immigration laws and Mr.Oswald Mosley and the Nottinghill louts and _'
(19)

In the last chapter of the novel describes the return of the black bird to Mother land. Sarah lives the life of a cultural crisis in her own country. She feels displaced in England by marrying an Indian. She is disturbed by the anguish of shedding her own name and identity.

The feeling of utter hopelessness bordering on despair and destruction is absent in Bye-Bye Black bird, for Sarah, although she is not very sociable is involved in some kind of job outside her home. (Barucha: 1992:171)

Adit recollects the golden memory of his native land .i.e.India.Memory of cultural and festival celebrations are getting hold on his mind. One day he reads news about India and Pakistan being at war. It brings the flash back of the past memories .Adit plans to join army to fight against Pakistan .Adit changes his attitude and creates a feeling of patriotism. His plan to leave England and return to India is not miracle but the reflection of cultural consciousness. Sarah is realistic and even her sense of alienation does not allow her to miserable and tragic degeneration When Adit finds himself awkward to adjust in the foreign land., he decides to go back to his Mother land. He packs up his luggage and together with Sarah leave for India Adit recognized this difficulty to belong to a foreign country to a lack of education. The life that he enjoys became boredom and he irritated and disappointed. He decides to leave England .He explains the reason to Sarah .His decision to leave England for good was rushed by the Indo-Pak War of 1965. When Indo-Pak war is declared, Adit remembers the Hindu –Muslim communal riots in India in Calcutta in 1947.When Hindus and Muslim killed, burnt and raped one another. He recollects the same tragic picture repeated again in the war .The war aggravates homesickness in Adit and urges him to leave England and he confirmed his decision to fly back home. Adit goes back to his roots where from nobody could uproot him and the title of them novel assumes its full significance.

Make my bed and light the light,
I will arrive late to night
Black bird, bye-bye.

Adits realized the uselessness of exaggeration and false survival and finally make a decision to go to India. Adit cherishes the memory of the Indian festival .Anita Desai comments: He longed with pain, to see the fire-works and oil-lamps of Diwali: night again, to join in a Holy rump of flying coloured water and powder and leaping to the music of drum.(185) Adit represents a modern educated youth of Indian society. At the end Adit accepts the reality. He is optimistic now and thinks positively about India. It is journey of self-realization and consciousness. Anita Desai has dealt with a very contemporary problem. It has still its bearing on the cultural relationship of these two nations. Adit is unable to control his sentiment and he says:

A dilemma? Nothing of the sort! Adit snorted. “it’s only complicated ,worrying, thinking people like you who get caught in dilemmas. I live for the moment. I do not think. I do not worry.(49)

In *Bye Bye Blackbird* we find the same spirit and desire to have taken place for migration for a better future. England was and is a dreamland for Indian migrants. Indians migrate there to get better education and lucrative comfortable jobs, for England is “the land of opportunity” (p.9) therefore, it is noteworthy that on one lands at England due to any change in one`s heart. While living there they suppress their love towards their own home and country; they even forget temporarily their own festivals and religious ceremonies, and if not, observe them merely as a token. They are made to undermine their cultural heritage and cut their roots of birth and go to England with strong determination for their ambition to be fulfilled.

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