

## REFLECTION OF HOME IN FOREIGN LAND IN ANITA DESAI'S *BYE-BYE BLACKBIRD*

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### Abstract

*Postcolonial literature refers to the literature written after the withdrawal of the imperial power from the territory of the native people. Having got freedom from colonial rule, the postcolonial people thought of having their identity. So they raised their voice against the past exploitation and oppression and attempted to establish their identity. Postcolonial cultural studies have a special interest in the newly emerged phenomena of borders and borderlands, translation, double consciousness and in the affective dimensions of migration and diaspora. Anita Desai is the foremost Indian novelist of the post-independence era. Anita Desai is interested in the psychic life of her characters. The themes for her novels are the agony of existence, the metaphysical void, and racial alienation. She deals with the condition of being an Indian diaspora citizen in the United States of America in the novel *Bye- Bye Blackbird*. This paper focuses on the various perspective that have been used in Anita Desai's *Bye- Bye Blackbird*.*

**Keywords:** *Migration, Diaspora, Home, Cultural alienation.*

### Introduction

Indian English literature originated as a necessary outcome of the introduction of English education in India under the colonial rule. In recent years it has attracted widespread interest, both in India and abroad. Postcolonial literature is the body of literary writings that responds to the intellectual discourses of European colonisation which is profound in Indian literature. Diaspora has emerged as a theory of postcolonial studies. Diaspora has brought about significant changes in the emphasis on displacement. The notion of diaspora in particular has been productive in its attention to the real-life movement of peoples throughout the world, whether these migrations have been through choice or compulsion.

There are many diasporic writers in English literature such as V.S.Naipaul, M.G. Vassanji, S. Whanio Mootoo, Bharati Mukharjee, David Dabydeen, Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, Hanif Kureishi and others. India has received migrants from various parts of the world and absorbed them instinctively with their culture, language, economic and social status. The novel *Bye- Bye Blackbird* was published in the year 1971. The theme of alienation is explored from a different perspective and dimension in this novel. It is about the condition of the India in immigrants in England, their social, cultural and racial displacement. Anita Desai is sensitive in portraying the diasporic sensibilities in the characters in her fiction, *Bye-Bye Blackbird*. The conflict of the migratory blackbird is rendered in fictional terms to the character of Dev. The novel vividly represents emigrant situation and the treatment of different issues relate to diaspora and her status as a diaspora writer describes the diasporia and immigrant issues. This research article is an attempt to

analyse the feeling of 'Home' in Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird*.

### Longing for Home

The novel describes the life and experiences of Indian immigrants in England, who constantly face situations that make them long for their home. Adit, the chief protagonist, is an Indian, is comfortably employed in London. He feels happy and enjoys a good time there. He admires the Western life and the erstwhile masters. In order to accommodate oneself in a new environment one has to reconstruct one's self. He has to tolerate and adapt. He falls in love with Sarah, a beautiful English girl, and then marries her. Sarah agrees to follow him like a typical Hindu wife. Dev, his friend, visits England to pursue higher studies, lives with Sarah and Adit and is shocked to find Adit swallowing ungrudgingly the humiliations thrown at him by the erstwhile masters. Dev gets initially frustrated, he ultimately gets a job of a salesman in a bookshop. He turned into a completely disillusioned man when he came to London. He feels alienated in London from both Indians and Englishman. He finds it extremely difficult to adjust himself with the new surroundings. The cultural differences expand and Dev moves out in search of a job. He undergoes various experiences and cultural shocks. He would like to go back India as an "England-returned teacher". At the same time he is relieved to hear from Adit that the English wives were manageable and were not as they looked.. Emma Moffit, the landlady who lived like some aged mouse in the attic of the house, is the one person who closed to Sarah.

Weeks later, Adit, Dev and Sarah visit Sarah's parents, Mrs. and Mr. Roscommon James. They travel with

two friends of Adit. It is a village that is close to Winchester where Adit's in-laws live a secluded, retired life. Adit is excited about the tour while Sarah is not. After some days, Adit started hates England. He finds that he is unable to come to terms with the incompatibility he felt with them even though not with his own wife. Something draws Adit back to India. A sudden clamour was aroused in him, like a child's tantrum, to see again an Indian sunset. Finally, one day Adit declares to his wife that he wants to go back to India and asks Sarah, now expecting their first child, whether she would like to accompany. When Sarah announces her pregnancy, Adit immediately forwards his wish that "he will be born in India, Sarah, My son will be born in India" (199). A committed wife Sarah, starts packing up, spurns lucrative job offer and withstands Adit's mood swings while enduring own physical and emotional travails with fortitude. The story ends at the Waterloo railway station, from where Adit and Sarah embark upon their onward journey. Dev, who Adit helped to get a decent job in the firm from which he has resigned and whom Sarah has convinced to rent the same Clapham flat in which the couple used to live, has come to see them off.

### Sense of Belonging

The focus of *Bye-Bye, Blackbird* is on Dev who comes to London to pursue his studies. As the plot develops, Dev turns into completely disillusioned man. He feels alienated in London from both Indians and the Englishmen. The Englishmen, do not recognize their neighbours and behave with them like strangers. He finds himself insulted and isolated. In London the situation is different. There everyone is a stranger who lives in hiding. They live silently and invisibly which would happen nowhere in India. Dev found it difficult to adjust to the silence and emptiness that prevailed in London which was uncharacteristic of India. He realizes that the Indian immigrants rush to the West and in the process miss their motherland. Dev takes his final decision not to return to India. His desire for a foothold on the England soil now ripens into a reality. The blackbird in him dies a partial death. But he shocked one and all when he bids goodbye to Adit and Sarah at the end of the novel. He bids "goodbye" to the internal blackbird, that is, Adit, his companion and to his oriental chums leaving England for India. He declared that his feeling that he was half-English was only pretence. Sarah who was going to have a baby assured him that she would certainly accompany him to

India. He expressed his desire that the child should be born in India. He became aware of the great gulf between her country home in Hampshire and his own over-filled city home in Calcutta. To put it briefly, one cannot but empathise with Adit when he is made to undergo the turmoil when he has to make choice between the life at London and India. He is made to believe that he is an Indian and Indians are inferior in all sorts of ways. But to cut off the English connection was never easy for him as he was wedded to an English lady. But finally he takes a bold decision to return to India- his home where he wants his son to be born. The departure of Adit is instinctive, motivated by a mythical longing on the part of his alienated self for a tryst with his homeland. All these three characters, Adit, Dev and Sarah go through the plight of alienation and crisis of identity.

### Conclusion

The novel describes a diasporic space in which Adit and Dev attempt to assimilate in other culture on immigration background. There is always protest and contrast between the real culture and the assumed culture in the process of assimilation. Both find the gap between the imagery England created in the minds of the Indian immigrants and the reality they confront there. Adit is the self-satisfied expatriate who finds himself estranged in the new environment of England. He fails to assimilate the host culture and becomes the victim of maladjustments where he is haunted by Hamlet's dilemma, 'to be or not to be'.

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