

DIASPORIC VIEWS IN ANITA DESAI'S *BYE-BYE* *BLACKBIRD*

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on Diasporic Views in Anita Desai's Bye-Bye Blackbird. It presents the life of immigrants and their attitude towards their own country, India and their settled country, England. It also brings out the physical as well as psychological problems of the Indian immigrants and their difficulties with the culture of England.

Keywords: *diaspora, alienation, displacement, immigrant experience.*

The term Diaspora is explained by the combination of words in the sense of displacement, alienation and feeling of nostalgia. The term Diaspora is derived from a Greek word which means dispersion or scatter. When it is applied to the people, it explains about the displacement of people from their homeland to different places across the world.

The diasporic writings are also known as the theory of migrancy which helps to generate the aesthetic evaluation negotiates with cultural constructs and the emergence of new combination. The entire globe is connected by the powerful network called Indian diaspora. Tukaram Narayan states that

The diasporic Indian is like banyan tree, the traditional symbol of the Indian way of life, he spreads out his roots in several soils, drawing nourishment from one when the rest dry up. Far from being homeless, he has several homes and that is the only way he has increasingly comes to feel at home in the world. (1)

Diaspora can be categorized as Victim diaspora, Trading diaspora, Imperial diaspora and Labour diaspora. There are so many diasporic writers in Indian Literature like V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, Bharati Mukherjee, Amitav Ghosh, Jhumpa Lahiri, M.G. Vassanji, Shyam Selvadurai, and Kiran Desai and Anita Desai. Among these writers Anita Desai is one of the leading writers in diasporic literature as her mother is German Christian and father is Bengali Indian. In her novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird* she has successfully illustrated diasporic Indian characters.

The background of Anita Desai's novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird* is set in England. 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).

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.

Finally he gets the job of a salesman in a book-shop. As an immigrant he wants to face so many difficulties to adjust with the atmosphere in London even he finds the climate in London city extremely difficult. Soon he gets sick of the silence and emptiness that prevailed in London which is uncharacteristic of India. He says:

If this were India, 'he explodes one dull day, standing at the window, I would by now have known all my neighbours __even if I had never spoken to them, I'd know their taste in music by the sound of their radios. I'd know the age of their child by the sound of its howling. I'd know if the older children were studying for the exams by the sound of lessons being recited. (Desai 58)

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)

This thought made him to leave his motherland and to settle in England for a decent job and income.

When they are walking down a street the British school boy insulted them. Dev gets infuriated by being called as ‘wog’ by a school boy. He felt that even British boy has learnt to attack Indians in the name of racial prejudice.

Dev understands that Adit doesn’t worry about the insults, he turned at him and he said “You would sell your soul and your passport too, for a glimpse at two shillings, of some draughty old stately home” (Desai21). But both have realized that they are opportunists after this juncture.

At the same time Adit is treated as an outsider when he visits the landlady. He was shocked by the landlady’s behavior towards him, even she didn’t welcome his presence, where he lived for thirty years. But he didn’t bother about that and he started to enquire about her daughter but the landlady avoids answering any personal questions about her house or family. Though he was insulted, he leaves the place silently.

This insult created hatred feelings towards England. His oscillation, suffering and displacement which basically expresses the term diaspora in Indian Literature. Finally he decides to leave England and he says Sarah “Sarah, you know I’ve loved England more than you, I’ve often felt myself half-English, but it was only pretence, Sally. Now it has to be the real thing. I must go. You will come?” (Desai 198). Even though Sarah faces alienation, she also accepts his proposal.

At their departure Dev salutes to Adit and Sarah. He murmurs the following lines: “Make my bed and light the light, I’ll arrive late tonight. Blackbird, bye-bye”(Desai 224). It shows that Sarah was to say good-bye to her English self, here Dev must say good-bye to his Indian self.

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