



Pangs of exile Bye Bye Blackbird

Bhumika Singh

Bye Bye Blackbird is a psychosomatic analysis of expatriates who suffer a mixed feeling of love and hatred towards the country of their adoption. Anita Desai in an interview said “that out of all my novels Bye Bye Blackbird the most rooted experience and least literary derivation.” She avowed, this novel is closest to actuality-particularly everything in it is drawn directly from my experience of living writings basically present different issues related with disbandment. She is a prolific writer who is sensitive in portraying the diasporic sensibilities in the characters of her novel, she portrays problems and pangs of diasporic individuals caught in the crisis of a transient society. Her novels mainly revolve around emigration of middle class families who choose to settle beyond the boundaries of their homeland due to socio-economic and political reasons. India diasporas represents different languages, culture faith etc. After independence, the first generation of Indians migrated abroad in order to search for better career opportunities .These people happily settled in their adopted country but their mind was often filled with confusion and chaos. These migrants live for survival but often face hostility and alienation. They have two options either to go back to their native countries where there were less employment opportunities or to stay in their adopted country and face all kinds of humiliations. Bye Bye Blackbird was written in 1971 and it deals with varied human relationships. The novel is basically based on Indian diaspora which revolves around two close friends Dev and Adit who are currently

living in London. Adit has been married to Sarah , an English woman and has been in living in London for quite some time now. Sarah agreed to follow her husband like a typical hindu wife but there is a different side of her which will only be unraveled in the end of the novel. Dev has come to London in order to seek for an admission in college and find a decent job. He lives with Sarah and Adit. Bye Bye Blackbird thus potrays the condition of Indian immigrants in England. Adit loves his new adopted country because it is a land of opportunity. He is disappointed with Indian burocratic system, work,povertry, irregularity of trains,buses,population..etc. He said:

“All I could find 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 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 rupeen.”

This scenario forced him to leave his homeland and settle in london for a decent income. Adit is able to resist all the abuses and insults hurled at him because he has adopted England as his domicile, so basically insults do not reach his ear. Dev on the other is not used to this discrimination and get infuriated when a school boy calls Adit, “wog”. Asians are thus looked as the ‘other’ in the country. They are not accepted by the natives of that country and are often abused and insulted.when Adit ignores the all the insults Dev calls him a “boot-licking toady,spineless imperialist lover...he would sell his soul and his passport too for a glimpse,at two shillings of some draughty stately home.” At this point both Dev and Adit realize that they are opportunists and have economic reasons for adopting England as their homeland. The novel is divided into three parts ‘Arrival’ , ‘finding and recognition, and ‘departure’. Although Adit tries to cope up in the new environment and admires the English but gradually he feels estrangement in his adopted homeland. He gradually realizes the difference between his ‘native culture’, and ‘host culture’and thus remains a misfit like other emigrants. In his subconscious mind he gets disenchanting with his host culture and becomes nostalgic for his own country. “He fails to imbibe his host cultureand becomes a victim of maladjustments where is haunted by Hamlet’s

dilemma, 'to be or not to be'." He is aware of his racial inferiority. On the other hand Sarah marries Adit but she wants to keep her marriage a secret from the society and thus her reserve and self-conscious nature makes him more difficult to understand her love for him. Dev's early resentment towards England can be because of his unemployment. Some critics point out that Dev suffers from "caliban complex that is love-hate relationship between east and west." He is totally swayed away by English lifestyle but unable to forget his home. He visited England for academic purposes. throughout the novel he is critical of England and conscious of his Indian roots. He cannot understand the western culture where "everyone is a stranger and lives in hiding". Dev has more reasons to be despondant so when he ventures in the city he feels "like a Kafka stranger wandering through the dark labyrinth of a prison". He is disgusted when he sees a couple hissing under a lamppost and realizes the value of his own native culture. He is shocked when he sees beggars on the streets of London. Eventually he realizes that that love for motherland is supreme, however he decides to stayback in London after Adit's departure. Its not only Adit and Dev that suffer from identity crises but also Sarah also in her own native country. The moment she married Adit, she got physically transplanted from English culture to Indian. Her marriage doesn't give her anything grand or fabulous but it make her nameless and an outsider in her own country, by marrying an idian she has broken the unspoken code of british society. She becomes an image of "stress,anguish and self made cocoon".she feels inferior because of her marriage to Adit and suffers the taunts of her colleagues. Adit casually says that English wives are "quite manageable". This remark by Adit shows a negative behavior and how he behaved like a typical chauvinist Indian husband who doesn't cater to needs of his wife or take her seriously. Sarah never rebels or cross questions her husband,hence this shows internalization of gender roles across the world. She believes that she will only get peace in india and would be a typical Bengali wife. So when Adit decides to leave everything and go back to India she decides to forget her past and follow her husband like a typical Hindu wife. " 'blackbird' used in the title is none other than the immigrant whom London says Goodbye". Bye Bye Blackbird in the end gives a holistic view of Indian diasporic literature. In the novel Anita Desai's major concern is cross-cultural consciousness of her charcters. Desai brings forth the deep existential crises in the novel, Adit does not accept his new adopted country ,walks the street like a stranger, trying to be busy and self-effacing. The novel basically existential problems of estrangement, adjustment, culture conflict and final step in lives of three major character- Adit, Dev and

Sarah. Indian immigrants migrated to England for better jobs and education, they regarded it as their “dreamland”. England was the land for opportunity and employment. While living there Indians often forgot their roots, traditions, cultures and suppressed their love for their own home and country. Sometimes they don’t celebrate their own festivals or perform their own religious ceremonies. They are made to subvert their cultural heritage, cut their roots of birth and to England with a strong will for their aspirations to be fulfilled. “Adit represents modern educated youth of Indian society.” In the end he accepts the harsh reality, becomes optimistic and thinks positively about India. The novel is a journey of “self-consciousness and self realization.” One can easily relate this novel with any Indian immigrant who goes to foreign and decides to settle there for the rest of their lives.

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