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## CULTURE CONFLICT IN ANITA DESAI'S *BYE BYE BLACKBIRD...*

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**ABSTRACT**

Colonialism resulted in the exposure of Indians to western life, attitude and thinking. Even after India has liberated from British rule, this influence continued. The confrontation of Indians with the Westerns left a dilemma in the Indians. The essence of Western culture is individual freedom and intellectual liberty. At the same time Indian culture is family oriented and spiritualistic. Even after Western education, Indians remain tradition oriented. Crossing boundaries and its impacts are always an area of interest for studies. The experiences of the expatriates were highly complicated. Because their life is shuttling between the memory of their homeland and the day to day life they confront in the present. Anita Desai is one among the best writers who can portray in a brilliant style the conflicting life and psycho of the immigrants. The major characters in the novel *Bye-bye Blackbird* portrays the dilemma of immigration. Racial prejudice as well as cultural orientation made the lives of Dev and Adit complicated. Adit's English wife Sarah also suffers the problems of adjustment to an alien culture. All of them were experiencing the meaningless of life in their personal life. This study focuses on the culture conflict they contented and the defense mechanism they developed in their life.

**Key words:** Alienation, Identity crisis, migration, and Memory.

**Introduction**

"A nation invariably presupposes nationalism. In fact, nationalism predates the nation in the Construction of which a community expends much of its ideological energy, indeed, more of ideological energy than of the physical, military energy (Texts Histories Geographies ch.2). Dev and Adil depicts extreme different attitude of the immigrants towards the host country. From the very beginning of the novel the readers can see that Adit is inclined towards the Western culture .He was high influenced by the English culture. In contrast to this Dev dislike the Western way of life. The novel with the entry of Dev to England for higher education. He doesn't have a plan to settle in England. As a result his observation of European culture was objective and disinterested. He always ponders over the disparity between the Indian and Western culture. But, he willingly married the English woman, Sarah and started developing an affinity towards the life of England. He could easily assimilate to the western life in the beginning. But his later experiences compelled him to rethink. He was a typical nationalist in case of his life in England and with his wife. Search She has a reconciliatory attitude towards both Indian and English culture. She sacrifices her genuine leanings which she got from her culture, for the sake of her husband. Dev loves his home land and Adit his host land. But Sarah was swinging between the both. This life was her choice. During the time of war in India his patriotism and nostalgia compelled him to go to India. Finally he decides to go back. Here the response of Sarah was like that of traditional Indian wife. She decided to accompany her husband by leaving her homeland and accepts her fate. The culture conflict experienced by the three major characters. Dev, Adit and Sarah is the central theme of *Bye-Bye Blackbird*. The mind of the Indian immigrants was warring between the Eastern and Western culture. The host culture seems strange and hostile for them. Both Dev and Aditya faced bitter experience. The case of Sarah was different. She became alienated in her native place. As a result of Marrying an Indian. All of them were experiencing identity crisis.

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In this novel the readers can see that both Dev and Adit were victims of racial discrimination. Both of them were suffering from sense of non- belongingness and identity crisis. This resulted a psychic disequilibrium. But they could manage themselves from yielding to such feelings. The plot develops through the developments of new attitudes and ideas in their minds. Both Adit and Sarah unanimously decides to go back to India Sarah accompanied him. Forwards the part of the readers can see Dev is infatuated by the Western life and he stays in England and bids bye, bye to the black-bird. Dev and Adit reflect two divergent form of life and the novel pictures their existential pursuits. Their words show their different points view. Adit is a typical rationalist and has a scientific turn of mind. But Dev has a vague idea about it. The difference between Dev and Adit is significant in the novel. Both of them represent divergent philosophers of life. Adit could easily adapt to the London life, so he was free from the uncertainties and dilemmas that caught Dev on trouble. The life in London was just apposite to his expectations and everyone in there remained strangers. They were living silently and invisibly. He could not escape from the memories of India its familiar faces, lands, sounds as well as smells.

The readers can see the confused self and fragmented psyche of the expatriates who were trapped in a strange land like blackbirds. Because they are like treated as outriders. This alienation and estrangement made their life complex. The cultural difference made their life miserable. Being Indians both Adit and Dev lost their identity. They were uprooted from their homeland and could not properly reroot themselves in the host land. One can see the role of cultural dichotomy in the despair and depression felt by Adit and Dev. Their experience is the theme of the novel. The inner psyche of Adit was Indian. The life and experience they underwent brought their inner selves outside, A Although Adit preferred England in the beginning he became nostalgic of his homeland. 'He could see even in the outspread hair about Sarah's shoulders that Indian landscape' (180). In contrast to this Dev was nostalgic about India in the beginning but started loving England more towards the end. Dev's transformation is like that of a postcolonial. He adores as well as dislike England. He was puzzled in front of accept and rejection. He was suffering both intellectually and emotionally. His mental perception and experience are contradictory. Sometimes he hated London, Sometimes loved. "He goes through the entire gamut of love-hate relationship that exists between the colonialist and the colonized, before his final reconciliation" (Sharma 40). While visiting England he had an aim but the daily life he was confronting disturbed him much. He has social and cultural prejudice. The cause of his sufferings was his mind which was wavering between the two cultures. For him, England is a dreamland but he had to pay with his individuality for this. He was a puzzled in front of the choices. In the beginning he felt the fruitlessness of his stay in England. Later he could understand he has to involve in some adventure. He visited the countryside with great reluctance. But this journey has an impact on his mind. He could find the magic of London in the countryside.' His long stay on the country side brought in his life a new feeling of adventure, an adventure not of discovery but of recognition' (165). Those places could stir his feelings. He could free his soul there. Here the nature could heal him. The scenic beauty of England's countryside charmed him. His transformation is reflected in poetic terms:

Something had happened he remembered it clearly enough - When he sat on the banks of the trout stream in Hampshire... For the first time Dev felt the rapture... that accompanied him back to London, so that he

no longer saw it with the eye of a member of a once conquered race, or an apprehensive and short sighted visitor, but of someone before whom vistas of love, success and joy had opened (229).

Adit wished to be home in England and thus Married an English woman, Sarah. He is a trade agent. He wished to lead a common man's life, without thinking about the cultural matters. In order to escape from the humiliation of an alien land, he resorts to Sarah's love. His marriage was an escape from the loneliness and alienation. Even though he was born and brought up in India he favors England speaks for it instead of India. Because he started loving the host land since it gave him good job. His encounter with Sarah's mother had a negative impact on him. Their behavior towards him hurts him and he yearned for his homeland. He was humiliated from there. This was an eye-opener to him. Because he could understand that he will always be an outsider there. His self-respect and sense of none belongingness made him crave for his native land. All his in-laws and English friends considered him inferior. It was difficult for him to continue there. His, hate, frustration and anger made him rethink about his decision of settling in England. Now he cannot hold the balance in the expatriate life Sarah's life was not different. She willingly withdrawn from was not her identity. But now she is reluctant to visit her friends. Because her Indian husband will be a topic of discussion. Her identity was split into two divergent things; one is an English Lady and the other is an Indian wife. Both English really contrasting to each other. She was lost herself in between these two. Now she likes to be with strangers who doesn't know anything about herself. Here Anita Desai gives light on the predicament of the English woman who lost herself by marrying an Indian. Because her marriage with Adit culturally alienated herself from her native place. She tolerated this dilemma patiently.

## CONCLUSION

Anita Desai in *Bye Bye Blackbird* discusses the socio-cultural dimensions of identity crisis and alienation in a broad manner. It not only discusses the culture conflict and alienation of Indian expatriates but also the alienation suffered by the English. The transformation of Dev, Adit and Sarah is unpredictable. The novel has a more systematic development. Because in the beginning the characters were puzzled in front of the strange experience. But gradually they could realize their real self. Adit decides to go back to India as a result of his patriotic feeling for India. Sarah decides to go to India with her husband in order to escape from alienation. Dev decides to settle in England. Towards the end they could find their real selves.

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