

Double Exile: Psychological Dislocation and the Quest for Self in Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird*

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Abstract

This article explores the deep sense of nostalgia in the lives of the immigrants. Migration takes place in everyone's life. The reasons may be vary according to the situation they undergo. The immigrants who migrate to other countries face critical situations and unfair treatment by the colonizers. They experience a sense of longing, loss of cultures, loss of traditions, alienation, dislocation, depression and torn between multiple cultures in the new land. The settlers experience mental trauma and homesickness. The treatment by the westerners on the indigenous people is unfair. They are treated as outsiders. However they have to remain resilient in every situation.

Nostalgia is not only a sentimental longing for the past, but it is the driving force in bringing people to their homeland. The nostalgic effects can be overwhelming, prompting individuals to return to their homeland. Nostalgia serves as a catalyst in the protagonist's life, leads to self- discovery and ultimately, return to his homeland. This research analyses the psychology of the immigrants through the lens of psychoanalytical theory proposed by Sigmund Freud and the concept of fragmentation by Jacques Lacan. The settlers are torn between the impacts of nostalgia and unable to escape the bitter life in western life. This inner conflict made a tremendous change in their lives and ultimately made them to return to their homeland. Homeland is a place of joy, happiness and peace which made the settlers to return to their homeland by using nostalgia as a catalyst.

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Introduction

Diaspora Literature mirrors the life of the immigrants and the uncertainty that surrounds and fills them in the alien land and the struggle they face to discover their own identity. They are situated in a complex space between several worlds and cultures: they can neither forget their home country they have come from and which would be different if they returned to it now; nor can they fully assimilate into the new land they have adopted. The prime focus of this paper is the study of nostalgia, sentiments and consciousness that the characters in Anita Desai's novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird* experience while living in a western country. Diaspora is not just physical displacement but it refers to a feeling of nostalgia accompanied by alienation.

The word diaspora comes from the Greek word meaning "to scatter and to sow," and originally referred to the dispersal and settlement of Jews outside of Palestine following the Babylonian exile (586 BC). Diaspora involves the dispersal of peoples away from their traditional homelands. While dandelion seeds are scattered by the wind or other disturbances, say children picking the stems and blowing the fluff off, it is not always clear why people move away from their home and transverse the world. While some Diasporas are forced, such as the Old Testament expulsion of the Jews from Judea, and the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, others result from a people's choice to leave one place and live in another.

Anita Desai is a renowned Indian novelist and story writer, born on June 24, 1937 in Mussoorie, India. Her father is an Indian and her mother belongs to Germany. She grew up in a mixed culture and traditions. So her writings reflect the theme of identity, belonging and culture. Her career for writing begins in 1960. Desai published her first novel, *The Peacock Garden* (1963) and other novels such as *Voices in the City* (1965) and *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (1971).

Bye-Bye Blackbird is a seminal work that portrays the life of the immigrants in the western country. People migrate to other country mainly for education, career and to lead a settle life. Along with this, they also face cultural conflicts, loss of identity, tension between modern and urban lifestyle. Bye- Bye Blackbird challenges the difficulties faced by the immigrants. They are treated as outsiders by the western countries. The struggles faced by the immigrants to hold a place in the western society is a difficult task. The immigrants torn between the desires for their homeland, unable to connect and stuck between the new country and culture. All these themes found in *Bye-Bye Blackbird* serve as a medium for Diasporic literature.

Review Of Literature

DR. A. J. Manju, in "Culture conflict in Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird*," exposes the effects of colonialism, its impact, and the changes in the lifestyle of the Indians. Indians start to follow the western life. Their life change according to the western

style. The effect of the western culture prevails in the minds of the native Indians. Though the colonialism ends, the effects continued. Indians after getting education in the western countries, they stick to the western culture leaving their traditional orientation. The immigrants live in the state of dilemma. They live in the western country with the memory of their homeland.

Shabnam Bano, in “Study of Alienation in Anita Desai’s *Bye-Bye Blackbird*,” brings out the process of alienation. It takes place in three ways; construction, deconstruction and reconstruction. Immigrants who leave their homeland, culture, tradition and live in the foreign land with unfamiliar culture and traditions undergo alienation. It is a powerful tool which makes the people to feel isolated from their living community. In Anita Desai’s *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, the characters Adit, Sarah and Dev feel alienated among their community. At first, Adit enjoys and glorifies the lifestyle, environment and sophisticated life in the new country. Yet, his mind thinks about his identity and belonging. The indigenous root he belongs to and the new place he has to adopt, put him in alienation.

This research differs from other earlier researches in the view that the Role of Nostalgia in the lives of the character, how this nostalgia serves as a catalyst for the indigenous people to return to their homeland, though they lead a life in the western country as a settler. They adapt to the new environment and frame a life style for living there. They life seem to be good but every words and deeds make them to remember their homeland. Every circumstance makes them to feel for their homeland and they feel better to be in their homeland. But career, settlement, western life, modernity seem to be a barrier in their life to return. They are considered as an outsider in the western community they live. They live an unhappy life in the western country by bearing all the happenings. Though they are striving hard to stay in the western country, their hearts leap for their homeland. Ultimately, this nostalgia for their homeland serves as a catalyst and makes them to return when they come to know the new of war in India. This shows their love for home country though they will in other country. Thus nostalgia is a key factor in bringing the people to their homeland at any cost.

Analysis and Discussion:

Longing And Belonging

Nostalgia is a term coined by Swiss physician Johannes Hoffer in 1688 which derived from the Greek word “nostos” (returning home) and “algos” (pain). Nostalgia encompasses the wide range of emotions and experiences. It is used to describe a type of homesickness. The difference between memory and nostalgia is that, memory is the recollection of past events where nostalgia is a sentimental longing for the past, especially for a place. But nostalgia is a mixture of bittersweet experience in the life of the immigrants.

Nostalgia functions in psychology and the sociology of the people. As nostalgia is a mixture of bittersweet experience, it not only brings happiness in thinking of the hometown, culture, traditions, and way of living. Ultimately, it results in deep sense

of sadness and brings stress, anxiety, feeling of loneliness, loss of identity and belongings. In literature, nostalgia plays a key factor and technique used by writers to bring out the immigrant's sufferings and pain while living in a western country, leaving their homeland for career, education and to lead a settle life. Writers use this as a literary technique to explore the nature of difficulties faced by immigrants.

In the novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, Anita Desai uses nostalgia as a literary device to explore the complexities of identity, belongings, culture and traditions. The character Adit in the novel belongs to India but presently living in the western country, England. He came to England for a successful life but everything in vain. Though he leads a satisfied life of having a good job, a wife from the western land, home, food, clothes, yet he suffers deeply with the nostalgic power of his homeland. Though he lives in the western country, his heart and mind mentally connected to his homeland. When it comes to the character of Adit in *Bye-Bye Blackbird* though he is intertwined with his nostalgia for homeland, he remains stubborn to go back to the native place by pointing out the reasons, which urge him to stay in the new country though he feels as an outsider.

The role of nostalgia begins by remembering a cup of tea and cleaning the vessels "he thought with momentary bitterness of the cup of tea that would have been brought to him if he were at home in India now, by a mother fresh from her morning prayers, or a servant boy scorched and sooty from a newly made fire" (8). Adit brought a tea cosy which had been sent it out from India by his mother to her ash-blond and unknown daughter. Now he brought those tea cosy for a little seizure of nostalgia. Holding the tea cosy in hand, he recalled all the stories he had heard of the Englishmen and his pets. While he was taunted with the memories, he also compares the situation of England with his homeland as there is no poverty or bribery in England and everything can be seen only in India. Though he lives in a western land, he sang the song from an old Indian film. When a person hears a song that was significant to him during a particular period in his life, it can instantly transport him back to that moment. The emotions he felt during that time come flooding back, and he is able relieve the memories associated with that song. Songs also tap into our sense of nostalgia which is a bittersweet emotion that combines happiness and sadness. Adit, as he was strolling through the High Street in England, his mind began to wander and he felt that he was a stranger. "His mood of carelessness, so ease and so fluid of familiarity and ease, changed quickly out on the High Street where he was a stranger again and all was strange to him" (15).

The nature in the homeland is replaced by supermarkets with their pyramids of frozen food packets, delicatessens with their Continental fruits and wine and cheeses, the clothes shops with their waxy, surprise-eyed models in windows starred with gloves and lace handkerchiefs, the pubs and fish-and-chips shops, the welter of high, aristocratic perambulators and hairless pudding-faced, lollipop-stoppered babies, the well-groomed dogs on leashes, the trim nylons on the women's stout legs, the red umbrellas and blue mackintoshes, the drizzle and the sunshine, the high prices and the easy trade. "No British broths and stews for me" (17). This line

strongly brings out the Indigenous people's hatredness towards the food of the new land as they cannot adapt to such foods. Ultimately, a Pakistani who lives in England remembers his own tradition in his homeland and how far it has changed now with the evolution of new culture in new land. "My religion forbids me to drink or smoke or touch a woman. But here, in this country, what am I to do? I also do the things I see other men doing" (25).

The expression of nostalgia by Adit to Sarah made her fall in love with the homeland of Adit. Though she doesn't even know the place before or never visit once in her lifetime. Though Adit wants to stay in England with his load of nostalgia, he loves India in all his ways. But in reality, he doesn't want to go back to India anymore. But his words of love towards his country made his English wife to fall in love with India. "I feel if I went, I wouldn't find it strange at all" (85). As the novel goes by, it can be noticed that this nostalgia serves as a catalyst for Adit to return back to India. The words of Adit follow: "I've done with England now. I'm going back" (209) "I'm twenty seven now. I've got to go home and start living a real life. I don't know what real life there will mean. I can't tell you if it won't be war, Islam, Communism, famine, anarchy or what. Whatever it is it will be Indian, it will be my natural condition, my true circumstances" (210). "My son will be born in India" (211).

The nostalgia which Adit experiences turns into his love for Indian and ultimately made him to return to homeland. It is important to analysis the reasons behind the characters in the novel for nostalgia. Although, nostalgia is a human emotion of remembering the past, it usually triggers the various experiences and memories. The life of Adit, Sarah and Dev explicit the role of nostalgia expressed through their emotions, behaviours and relationships between the people. When it comes for Adit and Sarah, Nostalgia closely intertwined with their Indigenous heritage and their loss of culture. On the other hand, when it comes to the character of Dev, nostalgia is closely related with his sense of identity and belonging as a settler.

When Sarah marries Adit, an immigrant, her life proves to be alone with Adit and Dev as her family members don't accept her. Even though they try to do, they can't cope up with the lifestyle of the immigrants like Adit and Dev. There is always a clash between these people whenever they meet. As she navigates her adult life, Sarah finds herself longing for the cultural connection she once had. She nostalgically remembers the stories her grandmother used to tell her, the traditional songs she used to sing, and the cultural ceremonies she used to participate in. This nostalgia fills Sarah's heart with a sense of sadness and loss, as she mourns the erosion of her indigenous heritage.

Nostalgia has laid deep impacts in the lives of the characters Adit, Sarah, and Dev. Nostalgia affects their way of living, relationship with others, sense of identity, community they belong to. Though nostalgia has a good force in a human life, it also possesses negative impacts in the life of the immigrant people. This bitter feeling of nostalgia leads one to take wrong decisions in life and affects the people both

mentally and physically. The negative effects cannot be overcome by the people and ultimately put them in risk. The only thing immigrants bring to the new land is memory of their homeland. This memory turns into nostalgia and holds a firm place in the life of the people. It gives them pleasure, sense of longing, familiarity, sense of comfort, peace, sense of identity, pride of their homeland and culture. But later results in high risk of stepping back to their country, leaving all their belongings in the new world, unable to fit to the environment, mental trauma and physical illness.

Nostalgia And The Fractured Self

Nostalgia is a sentimental longing for the past. Nostalgia plays a significant role in the life of immigrants. Nostalgia has a psychological impact on the people by boosting the well-being of the people, social connectedness and self-esteem. It develops confidence in the life of the immigrants. It brings potential social behaviours in the people. It strengthens the relationship; create a bond and sense of belonging. It provides self-continuity to be a capable person and elevates the upheaval thinking of their genuine deeds and freely chosen. Nostalgia for one's own homeland in a psychological view, it is a sense of belonging, affection, love for homeland, sense of connection. It increases the social well-being and social connectedness and self-esteem of the human beings.

Psychoanalytical theory ingrained in the works of Sigmund Freud. It explores the unconscious mind and its impact in the character and behaviour of the person. Sigmund Freud in his work "The interpretation of Dreams" he deals with the psychology and how it affects the mental health and conscious mind of a person,

Nothing has entered into you from without; a part of the activity of your own mind has been withdrawn from your knowledge and from the command of your will, That, too, is why you are so weak in your defence; you are using one part of your force to fought the other part and you cannot concentrate the whole of your force as you would against an external enemy. (4)

These lines portray the unconscious mind of the people that delves with the nostalgic experience it undergoes. The mind becomes weak on such nostalgic thoughts which are often thought by the people and even go through such circumstances in their life. Even though they don't want to do this, they are forced to accept such happenings.

When Sigmund Freud deals with the id, ego, superego, he says in his work "The Ego and the Id" (1923) "It is easy to see that the ego is that part of the id which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world through the medium" (25). Moreover, the ego seeks to bring the influence of the external world to bear upon the id and its tendencies, and endeavours to substitute the reality principle for the pleasure principle which reigns unrestrictedly in the id, which contains the passions. When it comes to superego, Sigmund Freud claims it as 'ego-ideal'. "The fact that this part of the ego is less firmly connected with consciousness" (28). When Freud explains this he says that, "The superego is, however, not simply a residue of

the earliest object-choices of the id; it also represents an energetic reaction-formation against those choices. Its relation to the ego is not exhausted by the percept; 'You ought to be like this'. It also compromises the prohibition: 'You may not be like this'" (34).

Thus the role of id, ego, and superego play a crucial role in shaping one's mind set on the basis of their nostalgic experiences they undergo when they live a country, which is unfamiliar to them. At one moment the superego shape the person's life by creating a feel for their new country and make them to act as person belongs to that country. Though they can't adapt to such circumstances, they are forced to do it. Leaving their homeland and settling in a new country itself is a drastic experience. Though they adapt to live in the new country, the past memories and childhood days and glory of their homeland drives the individual to long for the past and ultimately make them to feel as outsiders in the community.

The character Adit in the novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird* can be analysed in the lens of psychoanalytical theory in which his id is characterised as his profound desire to reconnect with his indigenous heritage, culture and homeland. His ego is presented as his struggle between reconnecting with his homeland and the desire to stay in western land to lead a sophisticated life. He is torn between the modern and urban life style. His superego is represented as guilt and shame about his people who were under the colonial powers and the sufferings of the people during the colonial rule by the western countries. He is boosted with a sense of integrity and justice to save his indigenous heritage. Sarah as a character presents a complex identity that can be examined under the lens of psychoanalytical theory. In Sarah's case, her id is presented as desire and longing for the past. Her ego is torn between the desire for connection to her indigenous heritage and Adit's indigenous heritage. This conflict is reflected in her struggles to balance her relationships with her family and friends with her own personal goals and aspirations.

On the other hand, the character Dev resembles a multifaceted identity and can be analysed under the lens of psychoanalytical theory. His id is characterised as desire for belonging and the identity. He connects all the things happening in the western country with the things in India. In India the people don't do such kind of activities like shutting their doors every time, following correct time for feeding the kids, treating the immigrants in an arrogant way, and especially not providing good career opportunities for the well-educated immigrant like him. His ego is torn between the sense of belonging and the independence he wants in new western country. His superego is represented by strong sense of morality and justice. The sufferings of his people under the colonial rules evoke his hatredness towards the western culture.

In the novel, Dev is portrayed as a man who completed his B.A. Economics and needed to work as a teacher. But for a long time he couldn't find any job to meet his needs. While he was searching for a job, there he saw an advertisement, mentioning that, "Vacancy for a young man of initiative in well-established concern facing

expansion. TED” (111). He went to the spot but he had arrived in cemetery. He envisioned his future as a worker in cemetery: “But what am I to sell—graves? Good morning, ma’am, will you need a grave today? Anyone dying on the family hearth? Pack him in this pretty coffin, hoist him into the hearse, bring him down to us and we’ll find him six feet of beautiful earth under violets, yews and dove droppings” (112). Dev loves England but England doesn’t treat him well and probably throws him in unemployment.

In contrast, Adit and Sarah’s decision to return to their homeland was influenced by a deep-seated desire to reconnect with their indigenous heritage and love for their homeland. No other situations seem to be more important before the war in India. Furthermore, Adit and Sarah’s decision to return was also influenced by a sense of responsibility and duty. When they came to know that India and Pakistan were at war, he clutched the papers and shook them, he said: Not riot, but war, War in India” (203) Adit loved England more, but when it came to crisis in his homeland he said that: “I’ve done with England now. Sarah, I’m going back. Sarah, you know I’ve loved England more than you, I’ve felt myself half-English, but it was only pretence, Sally. Now it has to be the real thing. I must go.”(210) “My son will be born in India” (211).

Adit’s character can be considered as The Trauma of Colonialism and the Fragmented Self. Adit, an Indigenous person, can be seen as a representation of the fragmented self, a concept introduced by psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. In the International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT) Ms. Savita and Ms. Gurpreet Kaur published a journal in the title, “Language, Identity and Fragmentation-An Unfinished Project: Lacanian Perspective” stated about the Formation of the Self:

But there always remains a gap between the psychological projection of I create (the outer world) and reality (the fragmented inner world). Because Lacan goes on to say, the subject is always marked by fragmentation. Lacan’s main idea is that the subject is never complete but always fragmented. As postmodernist argue that an individual always tries to present himself through the language but he always lacks in that, he is unable to achieve that. Lacan as Postmodernist believes that there cannot be a single identity that can be referred to via language; Freud believes that we are in the control of our mind, the unconsciousness that the subject is totally unaware of. Lacan argued that “our unconsciousness is structured like a language. (2921)

Adit and Sarah feel for their loss of indigenous culture. Both have to adapt to the new culture. On the other hand, Dev undergoes a state of frustration. Though he had a very good education qualification, he can’t get a job in the western country for his living. The only happiness for these people is the nostalgia of their homeland. Unfortunately, it results in utter failure. Nostalgia proves to be a bitter experience in the lives of the immigrants. Ultimately, it serves as a catalyst which made the

immigrants return to their homeland.

Summation

This research mainly deals with the concept of nostalgia. It focuses on how nostalgia plays a prominent role in the lives of the immigrants Adit and Dev in the novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird* by Anita Desai. By using the psychoanalytical theory proposed by Sigmund Freud as a lens to unravel the challenges placed by the immigrants like displacement, alienation, cultural conflict, searching for their identity in the western land. By deeply analysing the work, this research aims to project that, nostalgia not only serve as an emotional longing for the past rather it acts as a psychological impact that shapes the life of the immigrants. This research deeply provides the sufferings of the immigrants in the western country and their resilience and acceptance towards the situations. The characters are considered as an outsider and they are not valued by the community.

The characters Adit and Dev prove as victims of nostalgia. Though they live in a sophisticated lifestyle they are treated badly by the native people made them to think of their homeland. Their homeland is a place of happiness, joy and peace. They can live a complete life. Yet they want to work in a foreign land and expect everyone in India should treat them as a person who has acquired knowledge from a foreign land. Nostalgia of their homeland made them feel safe and a source of persistent unease. They are torn between the tension between assimilation and the protection of their own cultural identity. This research extends towards the immigrant's connection towards their homeland and cultural heritage evoke a kind of nostalgia in their life.

The characters in the novel feel for their fading culture and traditions and unable to preserve it. This leads to a sense of displacement within their nation. It also highlights the impact of modernization and urbanization in the lives of the immigrants. Everything they touch and feel remembers their homeland. This nostalgia reflects in their life very strongly by comparing the things in England with the things in India. While comparing, they feel disconnection with their homeland and the inner feelings urge the individuals to return to their homeland. But they hold firm in their decision to stay in western country. But it is unchangeable that Home is where the heart is.

At one point, this nostalgia which serve as a catalyst in the immigrants life, force them to return to their homeland. Their heart is intertwined with the career and modern life in England. They don't want to return to their homeland. But when they receive the news from India that, there is a war between India and Pakistan, they can't stay calm in their western country. Without thinking of their life, career, education and relationship, the characters in the novel return to their homeland, India. The findings of this research suggest that the role of nostalgia in everyone's life is unavoidable. It serves as a driving force to return to the own country. Nostalgia influences the people to take decision to go back to their own country. Nostalgia forms a great sense of belongingness towards the homeland. It thrives

into the emotions of the people deeply. Nostalgia rooted in the unconscious mind of the people and forced them to return. Because it is true that, Home is where the heart is.

The native place of an individual is the only place where the person's heart is emotionally connected. It is full of memories, happiness, relationships, experiences etc. the sense of belongingness, comfort, safety, cultural heritage, traditions are achieved only in the homeland. Their own identity is claimed only with the homeland they connected with. Home is the place where the heart finds peace, solace, sense of belonging and happiness. Ultimately they are forced to return, but they are suppressed by the circumstances they face and are unable to return because their career, education and life are impressed in the western land. But the question is, if the immigrant's heart is not in the western land, why they have to live a life of hatredness with longing for the past, cultural heritage, traditions in the unknown land and why they have to suffer both physically and mentally in an alienated land. Demanding more why they have to undergo alienation, disconnection with their heritage, feel of losing, struck between the multicultural identities and also unworthy treatment by the western country.

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