

TORTUROUS ESTRANGEMENT IN ANITA DESAI'S BYE-BYE BLACKBIRD

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ABSTRACT

This research paper attempts to explore and examine the torturous estrangement in the novel 'Bye Bye Blackbird'. Dev, Adit and Sarah are culturally and socially estranged from their own root. It attempts to highlight, through the study of the novel, how Desai has delineated the problems and plights of exile and the rootless individuals caught in the crisis of a changing society and it shows complexities and dilemmas of the immigrants in an alien land by focusing upon its attraction, repulsion and their exploitation by the vested interests. This paper proposes to present a broad outline to Anita Desai's novel Bye-Bye Blackbird. The study shows how Indian novelist like Anita Desai has chartered the crisis of tormenting sensitive soul of immigrants.

Keywords: Estrangement, Exile, Isolation, Rootless, Alien, Identity

INTRODUCTION

Anita Desai is considered to be one of the most important Indian writers today. She is well known for her presentations of India and the Indian people throughout different historical periods, but she is also famous for her literary presentations of isolation, loneliness, family affairs, immigration, and the position of men and women. What makes Anita Desai especially important from the aspect of postcolonial literature are her depictions of the ordinary people alone against a sea of troubles, both in their original and their adopted homeland. Anita Desai presents her protagonist as individual who is hypersensitive and unusually tense. He or she is rendered helpless and restless when confronted with her or his responsibilities, and at the same time she or he tries hard to discover her or his true self.

Anita Desai's third novel, 'Bye-Bye, Blackbird' published in 1971, depicts the plight of Indian immigrants in London. She well portrays the conflict of the immigrant who cannot sever his cultural roots and yet makes an effort to strike new roots in an alien territory and eventually becomes alienated. The theme of estrangement is expressed in this novel and the ideas and intention are different from those of other novels. In this novel Desai has dwelt at great length upon the problem of East-West relationship. She goes on writing about the complexes of the easterners in relation to the westerners. She does not agree with Kipling in saying that 'East is east and west is west and never the twain shall meet.' After studying the novel it appears that the theme of East-West encounter seems to assume in her fiction, social,

cultural and even intellectual dimensions. In an interview with Atma Ram Desai, replying to a question regarding 'Bye-Bye Blackbird' she observed that, "of all my novels it is most rooted experience and the least literary in derivation." Desai wants to portray Indians and Englishmen in England with their problems-both physical and psychological. In the same sense, the torturous estrangement has been delineated through the protagonists Dev, Adit and Sarah. The restlessness or helplessness of Desai's protagonists like Dev, Adit and Sarah may be rightly interpreted in terms of their hectic search for self-identity and self-knowledge. Adit, an Indian, is married to Sarah, an English girl. Both of them suffer from problems such as, the loss of identity, alienation and humiliation largely on account of racial and cultural prejudices. Dev comes to England to study and feels hurt as Indian immigrants are openly humiliated, called "wags" and Macaulay's "bastards" and are not even allowed to use a common lavatory. He has a sort of love-hate relationship with England on one hand and on the other he does not belong to the country. He feels upset by standardization, regimentation and mass production. Tired of living an artificial life in England Adit too feels nostalgia for the Indian scene. However he keeps on a smiling face while his heart cries out in agony.

Estrangement and 20th century

The twentieth century has been rightly called 'The Age of Estrangement'. Modern man is fated to suffer the coercive impact of alienation. It manifests itself variously in the form of generation gap, the credibility of loss of gap, the compartmentalization of life, the stunning of personal development and the cessation of the sense of meaningfulness of life, etc. Edmund Fuller puts it, "in our age, man suffers not only from war, persecution, famine and ruin, but from inner problem - a conviction of isolation, randomness and meaninglessness in his way of existence". The malaise of the contemporary man has been considerably aggravated by what Spengler calls 'the crisis of the present'. The present century has seen the dissolution of old certainties and as Paul Brunton points out, "never before were so many people plunged in so much uncertainty, so much perplexity and unsettlement". The pervasive sense of estrangement has corroded human life from various quarters. The modern man has shrunk in spirit languishing in confusion, frustration, disintegration, disillusionment and alienation. Freud's doctrine of the subconscious, Einstein's concept of relativity and Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, consequently man suffers from an acute sense of rootlessness, which may manifest itself as 'the alienation from oneself, from one's fellowmen and from nature, the awareness that life runs out of one's hand like sand'.

Estrangement and Indo-English Fiction

The theme of alienation and loneliness is a recurring theme in modern Western fiction. Consequently modern novel is an existential fable on man's predicament. The protagonist of Dostoevski is 'possessed'; 'Camus' is 'outsider,' Kafka's is under the 'trial,' Beckett's is 'absurd,' Bellow's is 'displaced' and Ellison's is 'invisible.' These tortured individuals are synoptic of the disinheritance of the Western life. The experience of disinheritance and futility has not percolated in the wide fabric of our Indian life, but it has pierced into the life of a significant segment of our society. Life in India is also no longer tranquil and composite. Life in our country is also changing fast and its changing facets are mirrored in Indian English novels. Kamala Markandaya, Shashi Deshpande, Arun Joshi and Kiran Desai have given a fictional form to this new experience of the upper urban society. They have shown their awareness of the emerging dilemma of human loneliness, rootlessness, and an ardent

sense of quest for one's identity are the leit motif of the fiction of Kafka, Sartre, Camus, Mann, Durrell, Saul Bellow and Malamud. Their protagonists grope in the labyrinths of existence; dilemma is metaphysical. They are living metaphors of loneliness.

Bye-Bye Blackbird and Estrangement

Anita Desai's novel 'Bye-Bye Blackbird' captures the confusions and conflicts of another set of alienated persons. R.S. Sharma says, "It has rightly been maintained that the tension between the local and the immigrant blackbird involves issues of alienation and accommodation that the immigrant has to confront in an alien and yet familiar world." In this novel Desai seeks to explore the complexities of the dilemma of alienated immigration by focusing upon its attractions as well as repulsions. In the novel there is xenophobia or dislike for the foreigners and it focuses on the socio-political and communal values or biases which make the life of an individual a veritable hell in an alienated world.

Dev and Rootlessness

The novel opens at a very poetic note announcing the arrival of Dev in England. Dev the chief character of the novel, has some intellectual pretensions and has come to study at London Schools of Economics. He is, however, confronted with an initial problem of adjustment in a foreign land. He is an Indian and Bengali student at the soil of England. Having been taught from childhood to appreciate the British history and Literature, ways and manners, he reconciles to his stay in England and suffers humiliations ungrudgingly, though identifying himself inwardly with India so obvious in his longing for Indian friends, activities, food, dress, music, news and stories. The mission of his visit is disclosed a bit. The description of London morning has been given in a poetic way. His London host Adit Sen, with his English wife Sarah, seems to be a typical Indian both by habit and by attitude. But soon Dev starts trying to secure a job for himself because he wants to do something. This shows his quality of self dependence. Initially he is frustrated but ultimately gets the job of a salesman in a book-shop. He is an Anglophobe whereas Adit is an Anglophile. Dev's Anglophobia stems chiefly from the sort of treatment the Indian immigrants get from the English.

As the plot develops, one can find him turning into a completely disillusioned man. He feels estranged in London from both Indians and English men. There is a lack of sympathy in English men, who do not, recognize their neighbors and behave with them like strangers. The silence and hollowness London disturbs Dev and makes him uneasy and alienated. He finds himself insulated and isolated. He realizes that the Indian immigrants rush to the west and in the process miss badly their own mother land. He feels extremely suffocated in the Tube station and considers himself, "like a Kafka stranger wandering through the dark labyrinth at a prison". Dev contact begins from Adit who has settled in London with an English wife. He is confronted with the major problems as Dev moves out in search of a job. He finds it difficult to adjust with silences and emptiness of it – the house and blocks of flats, streets and squares and crescents – all. He never wants to live in a country where he is insulted and unwanted. He calls Adit, his friend a boot-licking today and a "spineless imperialist-lover". Searching for an identity in an alien culture, Dev feels lost and suffers from alienation. In England Dev feels insulted at every step. He is full of rebellious spirit which reminds us of Nirode in Voices in the City. The attitude towards the Indian immigrants is different. He calls Adit, "Boot licking pudgy shameless imperialist lover."

Thus the first part of the novel describes their contrast with each other. Dev becomes a victim of alienation as his conception and perception are at variance with the experiences he gets. He compares and relates everything to India. He goes through different phases of the bewildered alien, the charmed observer, the outraged outsider and thrilled sightseer all at once in succession. Kalpana S. Wandrekar's observations aptly sum up Dev's alienated status. "Dev's experience in England makes him neurotic because he is unable to attach meaning to his experience. He is aware of this state of chaos and confusion in him caused by the outside pressure." Dev takes his final decision not to return to India and not to lead the way of the masses there. He slowly and steadily adapts himself to the new environment.

The absurdities of Dev's existence in England and its drab superficialities have been recorded by the novelist with accuracy and detachment in a poetic way. Dev's longing for living with its variety and multiplicity remains unsatisfied in the new atmosphere where "everyone is a stranger and lives in a hiding." It is a world where people "live silently and invisibly," the world which makes him nostalgic about India – the India of familiar faces, familiar sounds and familiar smells. Dev is particularly unhappy with the treatment accorded to immigrants in England. They are openly insulted, so much so that they are not allowed to use a lavatory meant for the English: the London docks have three kinds of lavatories-Ladies, Gents and Asiatics.' He gives vent to his feelings candidly when he tells Adit:

"I wouldn't live in a country where I was insulted and unwanted. The silence and emptiness of the houses and streets of London make him uneasy. The English habit of keeping all doors and windows tightly shutof guarding their privacy as they guarded their tongues remains incomprehensible to him."

What Dev disliked most was the immigrant's sheepishness and loss of self-respect. Dev said to Adit that 'the trouble with you immigrants is that you go soft.' If anyone in India told you to turn off your radio, you wouldn't dream of doing it. You might even pull out a knife and blood wiled spill. Over here all you do is shut up and look sat upon. But when Dev begins to wander about in London, observing its various attractions and allurements, a slow change creeps into his attitude.

Adit and Identity Crisis

In England, Adit has forgotten to worship the Sun at the bank of the Thames, no puja and according to Dev he has become a 'destroyer of idols-iconoclast.' Adit knows that Indians mostly go to England for higher studies. He tells Dev that in England there is neither bribery nor poverty as we have in India. One has only to impress the professors to get one admitted to the universities for higher studies but he also knows that Indians have 'the deep wisdom of the oriental mind.' Adit has his liking and interest in Indian film song. His taste is known by his love for poetry, he sings:

Where somebody cares for me,
Sugar is sweet and so is she,
Bye-Bye Blackbird.

After coming to England Adit worked as a teacher, and finally accepted a little job at Blue skies. He is happy with his job. He feels now a sense of cultural affinity. This closeness, however, does not obliterate the sense of his own cultural identity. He appreciates the landscape of England. For him England is fertile, luxurious and prosperous. At times Adit even groans:

“O England’s green and grisly land, I love you and only a babu can”.

But scenario changes in the last part of the novel. He secretly longs for Indian food, music and friends. A sudden clamor was aroused in him, like a child’s tantrum, to see again an India’s sunset. Even on out spread hair about Sarah’s shoulders he could see the Indian landscape. Even when he thinks of a brief visit to India, the images of Indian food, dress and music are predominant in his mind. Adit feels himself as a stranger in England, and realizes alienated from the English people. He frankly admits to be “a stranger, a non-belonger” in England. He takes a boat back to India with his wife. Sumitra Kurketi comments why Adit decides to return to India. “Ironically, notwithstanding his entire appraisal, he realizes that England can provide him neither of these liberty and individualism wherever he goes, he becomes a victim of racial discrimination and apartheid and is constantly regarded as a second grade citizen an intruder.”

Sarah and Loneliness

This novel is not about the Dev and Adit as much as it is about Sarah who has withdrawn from the world of her childhood. She does not want to look back and in this respect she is different from Maya and Sita. There is no meeting point between the external and her private worlds and when she moves from one to the other, there is an automatic and switch-swift adjustment.” Outside her home, she has the ‘hurried rush and tough friskiness of one suspicious, one on the defensive.’ Once when Adit had seen her from a distance, he had noticed her anguish: “An anguish, it seemed to him, of loveliness – and then it became absurd to call her by his own name, to call her by any name, she had shed her name as she had shed her ancestry and identity, as she sat there, staring, as though she watched them disappear.” She is reluctant to visit her former friends, just as she is unwilling to talk about her Indian husband. Her whole existence is split into two different roles and “when she was not playing them, she was nobody. Her face was a mask, her body only a costume.” The real Sarah is lost somewhere between the two worlds and:

“She wondered with great sadness, if she would ever be allowed to step off the stage, leave the theatre and enter the real world – whether English or Indian, she did not care, she wanted only its sincerity, its truth.”

But in her present position she can feel free only amongst strangers where she is unidentifiable. Sarah is also wary of touch or contact. Her loneliness is not an instinctive need but has risen out of her circumstances and it is Adit who can help her.

Sarah feels alienation and suffers a lot. Although her plight has not been treated in detail, there are certain significant clues to her problems, which present a very lonely and helpless person. She is culturally alienated and her marriage to a ‘wog’ obliges her to keep “to the loneliest path,” and walk “drawing across her face a mask of secrecy.” Those who glanced at her – made aware of her by the violence with which she turned away from them – felt apprehensive, but, since she was a stranger, gave it no thought.” Her main problem is to

know her identity in precise terms. Her married life being what it is, she begins to play roles to hoodwink people and even herself. She would display her letters from Indian and discuss her husband, knowing very well that she is parading like an impostor, to make claims to a life, an identity that she did not herself feel to be her own. This acting out of roles tells upon her nerves and she feels 'so cut and slashed into living, bleeding pieces.' By the time move to live in a new house, Adit relives himself from Sarah's life also. Puzzled by her husband's bewilderment, she begins to have a clear idea of her miserable life:

"It was though she has chosen to be cast out of her home, her background, and would not be drawn back to it, not even by her husband...she listened to the stream rush and an owl cry and felt herself cut loose from her mornings and began to drift round and round heavily and giddily, as though caught in a slow whirlpool of dark, deep water."

Sarah's love in comparison with Maya's in *Cry*, The Peacock and Monisha's in *Voices in the City*, is ideal. Maya and Monisha, both married to Indian husbands, are unable to adjust with their husbands. And this is because their husbands fail to love them. But Sarah is wiser. She loves Adit and so does Adit. The bond remains intact despite the differences in their social background. The matters become still worse when, even Adit was unable to apprehend the real reason of her anguished loneliness and 'sat back, sat silent, shocked by that anguish' of hers. Knowing out Sarah's crisis, the novelist continues: "An anguish it seemed to him, of loneliness – and then it became absurd to call her by his own name, to call her by any name: she had become nameless, she had shed her name as she shed her ancestry and identity." Everything is continued and she is left with stark loneliness.

Marital Disharmony and Estrangement

Isolation plays a vital role in the life of both husband and wife. The novel depicts the social isolation of Adit and Sarah. Like many of his fellow immigrants in England, Adit has developed a love and fascination for England right from his school days in India. He had read their history, enjoyed their literature and music, and taken pleasure in adopting their ways and manners. He is the pure product of Lord Macaulay's Indian education which aimed at producing a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. He regards England as a land of infinite opportunities, and bewails the poverty and misery of his own countrymen. Despite all this love and regard for England and self-hatred, England does not accept him. He is, like others, abused, insulted, and humiliated all the time, even by school-children. He lives Laurel Lane, Clapham, in virtual isolation among people who keep their doors and windows tightly closed taking no interest in their neighbors. To see such atmosphere Adit confines himself in the company of a few friends. His society consists only of a few selected fellow Indian immigrants, and, ironically he himself despises the immigrants as a group, as much as the British do.

The novel, 'Bye-Bye Blackbird' which has an international theme in the sense that Adit marries an English girl Sarah and by doing so he incurs the anger of the white society. Ironically, it is not Adit who suffers most on this account but his docile wife Sarah. By marrying a brown Asian she has broken the social code of England hence she is always subject to taunts and jibes of not only her colleagues but even of young pupils of the school where she works as a clerk. She always avoids any questions regarding her husband and family life but her peers take a perverse delight in asking such questions. Julia who is a

teacher in her school comes out with typical British superciliousness. Sarah dreads such embarrassing comments:

“She was still breathing hard at having so narrowly escaped having to answer personal questions. It would have wrecked her for the whole day to have to discuss Adit with Julia, with Miss Pimm, in this sane, chalk dusted, workday office. She was willing to listen for hours to Miss Pimm’s diagnosis of her aches and pains... But to display her letters from India, to discuss her Indian husband, would have forced her to parade like an impostor, to make claims to a life, an identity that she did not herself feel to be her own, although they would have been more than ready to believe her ... She had stammered out her replies, too unhappy even to accuse them of tactlessness or inquisitiveness and, for her pains, had heard Julia sniff, as she left the room, if she’s ashamed of having an Indian husband, why did she go and marry him ?”

What of grown-ups, even the young ones emulating the elders, taunt her. Her pupils ignore her and taunt. As she dated through their throng, they pretended not to notice her at all, but once she came across the road, she heard them scream, “Hurry, hurry, Mrs. Scurry.” And “Where’s the fire, pussy cat?” this much about the ordeal she undergoes at her work place at the hands of her colleagues and pupils. But the strains of interracial marriage are so much on her that they affect her day-to-day life. When she goes for shopping she avoids going to the stores of Laurel Lane where she lives, for her shopping would easily betray her link with India. So she prefers going to big department store where she would remain an anonymous buyer, none knowing her Asian connections.

But in spite of all her precautions she cannot escape the charade which is made part of her life. The tension between pretension and actuality, appearance and reality is always there which tells upon her, resulting in schizophrenia. She does not know to where she belongs and she is fed-up with putting on faces. She wants genuineness and that would come only when she leaves England for good at the end of the novel. In England she is not at peace. Her alienation has been described more than once in the novel which makes her lonely, the question always nagging her who she is. After marriage Sarah faces an alienated crisis:

“She had become nameless, she had shed her name as she had shed her ancestry and identity, and she sat there, staring as though she watched them disappear. Or could only someone who knew her, knew of her background and her marriage, imagine this? Would a stranger have seen in her a lost maiden in search of her name that she seemed, with sudden silver falling on the light of glamour, to an unusually subdued and thoughtful Adit?”

A clear description of Sarah’s identity crisis is to be found in later authorial comment in the same chapter of the novel. If a girl marries in the same culture it is easier for her to adjust to her new home and people. But interracial and intercultural marriage causes adjustment problem which are not easy to overcome. In Sarah’s case the problem becomes more complicated for she has married a person whose race was once ruled over by her own. In spite of “progress” and “modernity” old prejudices die hard. Sarah is homeless in her own native country which is the biggest irony. The question continues to haunt her: who was she? : Who was she –Mrs. Sen who had been married in a red and gold Benares brocade sari One burning, bronzed day in September, or Mrs. Sen the Head’s secretary, who sent out the bills and took in the cheques, kept order in the school and was known for her efficiency ? Both these creatures were frauds; each had a large, shadowed element of charade about it. When

she briskly dealt with letters ... she felt an impostor, but equally, she was playing a part when she tapped her fingers to the sitar music on Adit's records ... she had so little command over these two charades she played each day, one in the morning at school and one in the evening at home, that she could not even tell with how much sincerity she played one role or the other. They were roles and when she was playing them, she was nobody. Her face was only a mask, her body only a costume. Where was Sarah? Where was Sarah? ... She wondered if Sarah had any existence at all, and then she wondered, with great sadness, if she would ever be allowed to step offstage, leave the theatre and enter the real world –whether English or Indian, she did not care, she wanted only its sincerity, its truth.

Sarah's problem is human. She wants to be a real person whether English or Indian. She is fed-up with sitting in the fence. She tries her best to remain a sincere wife seeing to it that her martial life is not destroyed. Her husband too had been playing charade although not as consciously as she. But he also realizes falsity of his existence in England and Sarah also knows it well: "His whole personality seemed to her to have cracked apart into an unbearable number of disjointed pieces, rattling together noisily and disharmoniously." When after the 1965 Indo-Pak war Adit is in the process of making a decision to leave England for good, he is very edgy and unstable and this is the time when he needs a cooperative understanding wife, and Sarah does well as a wife. Of all wives in Anita Desai's novels she is the best in understanding and supports her husband. In the circumstance mentioned above she knows how to handle her husband:

"She could not tell what effect the smaller refusal or contradiction might have on him ...rather she would sacrifice anything at all, in order to maintain, however superficially, a semblance of order and discipline in her house, in her relationship with him. His whole personality seemed to her to have cracked apart ... if she allowed this chaos to reflect upon their marriage, she knew its fragments would not remain jangling together but would scatter, drift and crumble."

Sarah, the English wife of Adit Sen has the same feeling of alienation as her husband. She lives in a dual world, the two social worlds that do not meet the two incompatible cultures that split her. She gets herself alienated from her society through her marriage. She remains an outsider in Indian community because she is English. She does not belong anywhere. She is not a physically uprooted person. Yet her condition is precarious. Sarah's dilemma is not that of finding new roots but it is that of uprootedness and hence deeper. She finds herself an alien and a stranger. At the time of her departure, Sarah is sad to leave her place, "It was her English self that was receding and fading and dying, she knew, it was her English self to which she must say good-bye." After marriage, Sarah has tried many times in vain to persuade Adit to go to India and take her with him. She withdraws from society. In her conversation, in her moments and in her general social intercourse she behaves as if she has some secret to keep which she does not want to open. She snaps whatever parental attachment was there. When Adit reminds her that she has not visited her parents for a long time she must go to visit them, she retorts: "its months since you've written to your parents and perhaps they would like you to visit them oftener too." She always wants to live in the company of herself. She does not like to meet and talk with her former friends. From people who glance at her she turns away with a sudden violence and recoils from people who ask her personal question. Her behavior prompts one of her friend to remark, "If she's that

ashamed of having an Indian husband why did she go and marry him?” Adit notices in Sarah - an anguish of loneliness and sees that all her former qualities are disappeared. Sarah herself feels a loss of identity:

“Who was she – Mrs. Sen who had been married in a red and gold Benares brocade Sari one burning, bronzed day in September, or Mrs. Sen, the Head’s Secretary, who sent out the bills and took in the cheques, dept order in the school and was known for her efficiency? Both these creatures were frauds each had a large, shadowed element of charade about it She had so little command over these two charades she played each day, one in the morning at school and one in the evening at home, that she could not even tell with how much sincerity she played one role or the other. They were roles – and when she was not playing then, she was nobody. Her face was only a mask, her body only a costume. Where was Sarah? Staring out of the window at the chimneypots and the clouds, she wondered if Sarah had any existence at all, and then she wondered, with great sadness, if she would ever be allowed to step off the stage, leave the theatre and enter the real world-whether English or Indian, she did not care, she wanted only its sincerity, its truth.”

Anita Desai is also essentially Indian in her sensibility and spiritual province. She tries to harmonize the East and the West. In London, all the people mix together to enjoy Sunday leisure’s, talk without arrogance about horses and dogs. Passion and possession are the part and parcel of their way of living. But materialistic London life fails to provide peace of mind, inner contentment to Indians because passion is man’s eternal enemy. The Gita also proclaims: “Passion is man’s eternal enemy. It takes various shapes and like fire feeding on itself, is insatiable. Check it at the outset.”

In this novel Anita Desai presents the different aspects of love. Adit is too much excited by love of his country. His conscience pricks him again and again to serve his own motherland. He is totally mad as he asks Dev, “Do you know what’s happening? Do you know what Pakistan is doing to India? Don’t you care?” He does not stand in his noble aim of patriotism and the way of his passionate love of Indian culture and civilization. But he desires to become one with India, his motherland. Due to his deepest love for Indian culture he joins ‘Indian club’ – ‘a little Indian club in which his Indian friends come.’ But for Adit it is very difficult to understand the heart of Sarah because sometimes she poses herself to be the greatest lover of India with all her caste, creed, religion, etc., but on the other hand she becomes against all this. At the presentation for India’s, she begins to dislike ‘her’ because there will be no money transactions at all, why, famous Indians visit London – philosophers or painters or musician come here.”

CONCLUSION

Thus Anita Desai has brought to focus the exile, self-alienation and torturous estrangement experienced by Adit, Dev and Sarah in ‘Bye-Bye Blackbird’. The uprooted individuals Adit, Dev and Sarah have constant identity crises and suffer from cultural and social alienation throughout the novel. This paper has tried to present the growth of the Estrangement Literature from its humble beginnings to its status in the present day with special reference to Anita Desai’s novel Bye-Bye Blackbird. It is an authentic study of human relationship bedeviled by cultural encounters. Of all the novels of Desai this is one of the most intimately related to her own experiences. She accepts, Bye-Bye Blackbird is the closest of all my

books to actuality – practically everything in it is drawn directly from my experience of living with Indian immigrants in London.” The novel captures the confusions and conflicts of another set of alienated persons. It has rightly been maintained that in the novel “the tension between the local and the immigrant blackbird involves issues of estrangement and accommodation that the immigrant has to confront in an alien and yet familiar world.”

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