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Nation as Imagined in Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird*

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**Letter of Recommendation**

Prakash Acharya has completed his thesis entitled "Nation as Imagined in Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird*" under my supervision. He carried out his research from February 2022 to April 2022 A.D. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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## Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled " Nation as Imagined in Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Prakash Acharya has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Prakash Acharya

## **Nation as Imagined in Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird***

*Utilizing the concept of Nationalism this research explores various crosscurrents and undercurrents of migration, which creates adverse conditions for Indian migrants in Anita Desai's novel Bye Bye Blackbird. In the novel characters from India migrate to England in search of better life, education and wealth. In England they go through cultural and psychological problem. They are inferior and below the human line. They do not get education, health facility and freedom. Natural rights and fundamental rights are mere dream for them. In the midst of prejudice and other anti-migrant hassles, they do not hesitate adapt to the shifting cultural locale as a strategy of survival. The characters of the novel; Adit and Dev adopt western way of education, culture and religion as a camouflage to resist western atrocities. However they feel cultural in-between in the midst of western culture. They create imaginative community as diaspora.*

Key Words: Diaspora, Mimicry, Nation Hybridity, Identity, Survival, In-between-ness

This research examines the search of national identity of Indian Migrants in Anita Desai's novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird*. It is a psychological analysis of the Indian diaspora in England, who suffer a mixed feelings of love and hate towards the country of their adoption. In *Bye-Bye Blackbird* the author Anita Desai deals with the East-West encounters. 'Blackbird' used in the title is none other than the immigrant, whom London says goodbye. Desai highlights the physical and psychological problems of Indian immigrants and explores the adjustment difficulties that they face in England. The author gives beautiful descriptions of the busy London and the quite retired life in countryside, which is totally opposite to one another. The characters are not so real, but their inner conflicts and crisis remain the same that every immigrant undergoes.

Diaspora is a voluntarily or forcible movement of people from one geographical location to another location. When people move from one geographical location to another in search for opportunity, in such a condition cultural variation becomes difficult to adjust. Though a person becomes happy temporarily the cultural compensation is unbearable. The gained culture keeps her/him in the position of either rejection or assimilation to the original or acquired culture. In such a condition the person's hybrid identity becomes threat. Diaspora is "the movement, migration, or scattering of people away from an established or ancestral homeland"(Hall 1). When an individual leaves his/her home country and migrates to another country in search of more opportunities and loses the identity as scattered one and gains the identity of another culture, the condition is called Diaspora.

Set against England's green landscape, enigmatic and attractive to some, depressing and nauseating to others, *Bye-Bye Black Bird* explores the lives of the outsiders seeking to forge a new identity in an alien society. Present research examines the plight of Indian immigrants in London. The book is divided into three parts e.g. Arrival, Discovery and Recognition, and Departure. Dev arrives in England for higher studies. He stays with Adit Sen and his English wife, Sarah. Dev gives up the idea of studying and starts looking for a job. Unable to find any, he thinks of returning to India. But it is well settled Adit who decides to leave London. Meanwhile, Dev manages to find a job and stays back. In this novel the common problem of England 'Racism' has shown widely. The treatment meted out to Indians disturbs Dev. He hates being called a 'Wog', as Indians are humiliated in public and private places. England is said to be full of Asians, but Dev's visit to countryside changes his attitude towards England. As for Adit, he finds himself living in a 'little India' in London. He loses his former rock-solid mental and emotional balance, while

Adit's English wife Sarah feels like making claim to a life and an identity that she never owned.

As the research explores migrant experiences, potential levels of assimilation and the consequent transformation of their loyalties in the land of their settlement in the 1960s Britain, Desai's sympathetic interrogation of identity formations in the process of migration, makes this novel particularly poignant in the current climate of borders solidified, (would be) walls erected, and the waves of xenophobia seeking to stem the tides of migration.

In the novel, Adit's eventual rejection of his life in England and his decision to return to India, taking his reluctant wife with him, the narrative deliberately occludes the possibility of the exploration of the nationality existence in India. Drawing on the colonial discourse, postcolonial theory, as well as critical insight of postmodernism and new-historicism, the research scrutinizes the stylistics of the novel in arguing that the text skillfully dissects the dynamics of the process of migration: from the initial desire to migrate, the encounter with the target culture of migration, to the eventual decision to return home. In doing so, the novel presents a useful framework of inquiry into the formations of cultural identities, transformed, or translated, in the process of recurrent movement across cultures and nations, as the text asks a question: having migrated away from the culture of "home" nation, is the return ever possible? Is it possible to construct nation through imagination? What is state? What is nation? Is there any similarities between them? These are the issues this research efforts to solve. In the era of trans-national movement and migration in the postcolonial world, the novel presents a paradigm of literary transnationalism: originated, developed, produced and consumed across national borders.

In the critically examined paradigm of migration, is the return "home" ever

possible? As the novel ends with. It might seem that placing the narrative ending at the point of departure for a new life would serve to propagate the fantasy of a happy, multi-racial, multi-cultural coexistence, devoid of the hindrances encountered in Britain (in the same way that the nineteenth century romantic/realist novels cut off the plot at the point of a heroine's marriage, fostering the myth of conjugal happiness secured at the point of tying the knot). However, the ending serves deliberately to provide more questions than answers as it destabilizes the myth and the possibility of return "home". This effect suggests, is achieved through the sense of repetition, reminiscent of the titular images of rhythmicity of migration, in the sense of frustration and growing discontentment in Adit.

The illusory possibility of ever returning "home" and rediscovering the state of originary cultural purity is denied, in so far as the action- replay of the character motivation sets up the unrealistic expectations of arriving in a culture which will provide an escape from the frustrations of whatever "home" context one finds oneself in. Migration eludes the fulfilment of the imaginary vision of the new "home", just as the experience of having been "borne across" or migrated shuts out the possibility of ever returning to the "home" you left behind. Desai's characters, like postcolonial men, become migrated subjects, caught up in the ideological tides which, presenting the vision of a foreign or domestic shore, simultaneously take you further away from either of them.

Desai is the prominent author of the contemporary World. She is largely considered as the novelist with vigorous longing for politico-cultural realism. She has criticized several social and ideological bigotries. She always stands for the progressive transformation of society. Sanjay Dewekar makes the following remarks about the novel, *Bye-Bye Blackbird*



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 smell. (15)

According to Dewakar, the political and social issues are merged and modified in the novel. In a sense, *Bye-Bye Blackbird* Desai tends to reflect upon the history of modern World but with bias oriental perspective. Modern World has come a long way since the last few decades. Yet it still has to face countless number of challenges and troubles. She is of the opinion that contemplation upon history gives profound insight to those who want to alter the course of history of modern World.

Baljit Dhaliwal is another critic of Desai .He is critically aware of Desai's limitations as a novelist. He enumerates how Desai has injected her own anecdotal experience to portrayal of Third World. She is talking about the struggle of the characters in the western society to craeate identity. How difficult is it to sustain in western society being outsider. Dhaliwal argues thu:

Apart from this he obviously longs for Indian friends, activities, food, dress, music and culture. Sarah, his English wife, finds by hints and suggestions that she is not liked by her own countrymen for having married an Indian. Adit and Sarah love each other even though their language and culture continue to differ. Sarah cooks Indian curry without developing a taste for it while Adit has none for some British items of food. Sarah's cat doesn't please Adit. Sarah

does not like Indian music nor can she understand and appreciate Indian jokes and conversations which Adit enjoys a great deal. (29)

Whether Desai has beautifully portraying the characters in their organic form or not, it is not clear. She is focusing upon the formalistic devices used by the writer in this text. He is not only interested in the formalistic devices but also to the thematic elements. Most critics are agreed that Anita Desai's novel deals with the theme of East-West encounter. It will be worthwhile here to quote a few of them. Tayeb Salih comments that "*Bye-Bye Blackbird* deals with the theme of East-West encounter" (02). He further elaborates about the struggle of character for identity formation. He further elaborates:

While providing elegant narrative, she fails to put the hold upon the story.

Though, Adit's homeward journey evokes nostalgia with consummate mastery, towards the end, the story gets increasingly implausible. An encounter with Indians in a bus as a co-passenger which spares protagonist alive and his beloved dead is much a make-believe stuff. Desai would have been better off had he woven the denouement more plausibly. (27)

Adit is abruptly arrested from his gallery. Intentionally unfolding story is jolted into attention due to the authorial intervention and sporadic events. The novel comes to an end leaving Adit all alone. The epilogue is an inquiry of his buddy from US. The beginning of metafictional mould is captivating. Harish Raizadato, observes that the novelist here "deals with the topical problem of adjustment faced by black immigrants in England ..." (87). The novel works on different level and through each character. Desai reflects on our culture, values and most important of all deals with the current fascination of the youth towards the western culture. But the book also has

characters that come back to their motherland with great zeal and enthusiasm. Within this framework Raziadattoo says:

The pressing topic that the book addresses through a series of minor characters is the effect of western culture. The writer creates the scenes of skeletal remains of Indian characters' struggle in England. Loss of loved ones in the foreign land and the pain it causes is shown from different perspective like the, death of the husband of a newly married woman and the tragedy of losing a best friend experienced by a child. (17)

The issue of violence and its effects in the delicate psyche of the innocent youths are crystallized in the novel. In terms of narration, Desai is akin to his protagonist Aditi. She is able to paint a broad portrait of an apocalyptic present with the note of urgency and poignancy. She colors his fictional canvas with deft strokes. He writes with thoroughness of detail and poetic imageries. But his strength appears to be his weakness. Similarly, Inder Nath Kher comments, "Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird* delineates the nature of the immigrant experience, highlighting the hopes and fears, aspirations and frustrations of its chief protagonists, Dev and Aditi, as well as their social, cultural, and racial displacement"(4). Shashi Khanna adds another dimension to this theme by saying that with the "problem of immigration and racial discrimination", its "underlying theme is one of loneliness" (5). In this study, the main theme of the novel has been found to be the resolution of the identity-crises that arise in the three protagonists. All these critics have examined the novel *Bye Bye Blackbird* from different perspectives of Western Ideology. However, the issue of nationalism is untouched by them. By using the perspective of nationalism the researcher makes the thorough analysis of the text to search the systematic othering of Asians.

An individual cannot become happy and successful in the new migrated land. Though the means of migration is voluntarily, there always remains the unbridgeable gap between the two cultures. In the recent days of migration an individual may celebrate the adopted culture but the remained gap always makes her/him sufferer and there creates nostalgic memorization to the original mother culture. Anyone cannot be out of the original culture. Such a gap between the two cultures always creates lack to the individual and the acquired culture becomes second in front of the past memories. Due to the unassimilated gap between cultural differences, the diasporic people remain in the state of in-between-ness.

The present researcher adopts Benedict Anderson's and Salman Rushdie's concept of Nationalism to conduct the research. Anderson's famous dictum, a nation is an *imagined community*: although members of a nation do not know most of their fellow members, they carry an "image of their communion" in their minds (6). Following the demise of traditional, hierarchical forms of social organization associated with Christendom, Anderson attributes a "major role to economic factors that helped spread supposedly universal, homogenous and horizontal-secular notions of national space, territoriality, and citizenship" (37). Specifically, "economic change fostered the rise of social-scientific discoveries, increasingly rapid communication, and the logic of capitalism, epitomized in its ruthless and perpetual search for new markets" (38). Known as 'print-capitalism,' Anderson sees an essential link between the rise of capitalism and the development of print-as-commodity. Communication and popular literature, for instance, helped disseminate national languages, consciousness, and ideologies across a broad landmass, previously unconnected by any conception of shared experience or identity. Anderson makes the following remarks:

As a secular, non-religious phenomenon, the idea of the 'nation' reached a level of mass consciousness. Nationalisms, therefore, have the unique ability to traverse millions of people in and through the interplay of capitalist relations and modes of production, the spread of communications, or print technology which resulted in the ultimate demise of human linguistic diversity prevalent in the pre-modern era. At the same time, however, Anderson's conception of the nation is one of a community that is socially-constructed, or imagined into being: all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact are imagined. (47)

Anderson's approach emphasizes the role of creative imagery, invented traditions, representation, imagination, symbols, and traditions in nationalism, as a constructed narrative about the nation-state. As a phenomenon that is fundamentally historical in its constitution, the truth of national identity cannot be found in fixed racial categories, myths about origins, or certain primordial facts.

Chatterjee takes issue with Anderson's conception of nationalism as one that pre-exists in modular forms, such that its basic tenets can easily be exported and appropriated in the postcolonial world. He states:

History, it would seem, has decreed that we in the postcolonial world shall only be perpetual consumers of modernity. Europe and the Americas, the only true subjects of history, have thought out on our behalf not only the script of colonial enlightenment and exploitation, but also that of our anti-colonial resistance and postcolonial misery. Even our imaginations must remain forever colonized. (216)

While appearing to oppose the colonial influence at one level, the problematic of anti-colonial nationalisms assert a form of inner sovereignty. Inner domain of national

culture matters a lot in the process of understanding nationalism in local cultural context. Nonetheless, the very thematic of post-Enlightenment epistemologies and ethical systems provides a national-theoretical framework. Partha Chatterjee counter-argues that Anderson's conception of nationalism as imagined comes dangerously close to idealizing discourse to the extent that the nation can be read as some sort of text, in order to uncover the legitimizing narratives that aid in its construction"(53). The political economy or materialist aspects of Anderson's theory point to underlying social-material relations. The base of these relations can be found in the workings of the capitalist-economy. It is grounded on the corresponding modes of social production. Such theories tend to conceive ideas as mere reflections, or representations of a socio-economic base.

Salman Rushdie in his book *Imaginary Homeland* talks about construction of homeland with the help of memory. Nationalism can be defined not just as physical homeland, Rushdie's case proves that, as a migrant who lives for years in foreign country: "If we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge which gives rise to profound uncertainties that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost" (65). Because even we live far away from our home country, the echo of nationalism and strong feelings due to that country are still strong.

*Bye-Bye Blackbird* revolves around Adit and other characters' struggle in England. Adit's attachment to his cultural belongings becomes altered as he becomes familiar with the new English culture. His cultural belongingness in Indian root also changed Adit and other characters are the emblems of other people who migrate to another country in search of opportunities. But their happiness does not remain always the same. The

changed culture does not become befriend to them as they become more attached culturally in England. Despite their happiness, they go on remembering their original culture. Such type of memorization to their cultural root is a loss in the crowd of immigrants in the England. Adit who stricts in his ancient Indian culture. Efforts to create mini India in England. This thesis is divided into three chapters. In the first chapter, the researcher introduces the topic, elaborates the hypothesis, and quotes different critics' views regarding to the text. In the second chapter the researcher makes a thorough analysis of the texts by applying the concept of nationalism. The last chapter contains the conclusive ending of the research.

The research examines the transformed identities in the context of (trans)national migration of Anita Desai's 1961 novel *Bye Bye Blackbird*. In the era of trans-national movement and migration in the postcolonial world, the novel presents a paradigm of transnationalism: originated, developed, produced and consumed across national borders. Adit lives in London with his English wife, Sarah. Dev is a newly arrived immigrant from India. Adit has well adjusted himself in the country of his adoption and has allayed his sense of loneliness by being nonchalant to its various causes. Dev, on the other hand, is critical of Adit's attitude. He gets disturbed and angry when someone whispers the word "wog" behind his back. Obviously Dev has more reasons to be lonely and thus when he ventures into the city he feels, "like a Kafka stranger wandering through the dark labyrinth of a prison" (Desai 169). Dev's loneliness eventually stops haunting him and he decides to stay in England. Adit, in the interim, suffers from a crisis of identity. He starts longing for the land and the people he has left behind. He feels depressed of "Mrs. Roscommon-James' sniffs and barks and Dev's angry sarcasm" (Desai 176). As well as from the fact that Sarah "had

shut him out, with a bang and a snap, from her childhood of one-eared pandas and large jigsaw puzzles" (176). He finally decides to return to India with Sarah. What this proves is that the sense of loneliness is not a phenomenon of overpowering presence but rather of intermittent overpowering, guided by circumstances incidental and always in flux.

In Benedict Anderson's famous dictum, a nation is an imagined community: although members of a nation do not know most of their fellow members, they carry an "image of their communion" in their minds (6). Since Anderson's essay, several critical voices have articulated a conviction that a nation is an imaginary ideal, an artifact that hides the presence of often conflicting, heterogeneous, disparate group interests. The role of imaginary, and non-existent, ideal in propelling the dynamics of migration is at the heart of *Bye-Bye Blackbird*. The text explores formations of identity translated or transformed in the process of migration in a trans-national postcolonial context. Outside the world of the novel, the illusory nature of the national is further brought to the fore in the era of globalization and the transnational, the latter understood as extending or having interests extending beyond national bounds or frontiers. Indeed, transnationalism as a phenomenon, etymologically clearly connected to the existence of a nation, reminds us of what it appears to transgress. Arguably, transnationalism "draws attention to what it negates – that is, the continued significance of the national" (Yeoh 2) as "transnationalist discourses insist on the continuing significance of borders, state policies, and national identities even as these are often transgressed by transnational communication circuits and social practices" (Smith, 3). *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, the title's metaphor of a seasonally migrating bird functioning as a slang shorthand for coloured migrants from India, and other countries in Great Britain. It bleakly deals with the dynamics of fluctuation of



migration which opposes the static national borders. Working on the proposition that literature affords insights into, as well as creating cultural processes of, its time, this essay explores literary representations of migration, and the emergence of identity spaces as a cultural consequence of migration.

Stuart Hall, in his essay "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", establishes a discussion of Caribbean and "Third Cinema", and defines Diaspora in terms of cultural identity, cultural practice and cultural production. In this regard, Diaspora is the formation of identity with addition and losing of original identity. Indeed Stuart Hall further asserts that:

Cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous play of history culture and power. (225)

In such a condition the identity of a person becomes hybridized. The gaining of new cultural practice makes the identity dual and keeps the immigrants in the state of in-between-ness. In the state of hegemonic construction of knowledge, there seems cultural confrontation in the presentia and absentia of culture.

*Bye Bye Blackbird* describes the solitude of the characters. This solitude is the result of the external circumstances which shows its effect on inner psyche of the characters. But loneliness is the manifestation of both inner and outer conditions. The story revolves around two friends Dev, and Adit in London. Adit has stayed for a longer period in London and married an English woman, Sarah. Dev comes to

London for his higher studies and subsequent employment. The words of Adit shows his disappointment when he says:

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. (87)

Economic condition compelled him to leave his mother country and settle in abroad for a decent income. As Adit adopted England as his home he is able to withstand the insults hurled at him and humiliations. He admires the Western life and erstwhile masters. He falls in love with an English girl and marries her. He becomes a 'spineless immigrant lover'. Sarah agrees to follow him like a typical Hindu wife. Dev, on the other hand, gets infuriated by being called as 'wog' by a school boy. When they are walking down the street, they hear Mrs. Simpson muttering aloud, "Littered with Asians! Must get Richard to move out of Clapham, it is impossible now" (90). These lines suggest how emigrants, especially Asians are looked down as 'other' in England. 'Otherness' is defined by difference, typically difference marked by outward signs like race and gender. Dev understands that Adit is least bothered about insults he hurled at him and says, "Boot-licking toady. Spineless imperialist lover....You would sell your soul, and your passport too, for a glimpse, at two shillings, of some draughty old stately home" (93). But both have realized that they are opportunists after this juncture. This role of education and literature is particularly visible in the representation of Dev. Exposed to that imperial legacy - English education in India - Dev is a product of what Bhabha would later term a "forked tongue of the colonial discourse" and its civilizing mission (85). Dev is,

effectively, a fictional representation of a mimic man. The character, who self-consciously refers to himself as one of transformed. His character is depicted as:

Macaulay's bastard[s] bears out the effectiveness of Macaulay's educational directive in the famous 1835 Minute, to form a class ... of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. Dev also very nearly testifies to the legacy of Macaulay's dream vision of the imperishable empire of our arts and our morals, our literature and our laws which will outlast the political, military impact of "schemes of policy ... victory, ... triumph. (Desai 67).

Illustrating this, the text is saturated with episodes of Dev's joyous wonder at the eventual confrontation with the landscapes of pubs, idyllic countryside and villages, buildings and monuments. Dev recognized and named the "mullioned windows", the "horse brasses" shining against the stained woodwork, the "casks" and mugs and portly British faces (76). He had known them all, he had met them before, in the pages of Dickens and Lamb, Addison, and Boswell, Dryden and Jerome K. Jerome – and yet how exact the reproductions had been, how accurate, he realised as he recognised the originals ... [The pub - and by extension various aspects of British life] was known, familiar, easy to touch, enjoy and accept because he was so well prepared to enter it - so well prepared by fifteen years of reading of the books that had been his meat and drink, the English books that had formed at least one half of his conscious existence. (10-11)

Diasporic writing mostly becomes a response to the lost homes and issues such as dislocation, nostalgia, discrimination, survival, cultural change and identity. Dislocation is one of the first feelings that haunt a diasporic community. There are several factors which are the reasons for the dislocation of a community from their

home country to a foreign land. These can be broadly divided into two such as voluntary and non- voluntary movements. Voluntary movements can occur due to two reasons namely i) educational need and ii) economic need. On the other hand, non- voluntary movements occur due to political and national compulsions and in the case of women, it could be marital causes. When diasporic people find themselves dislocated from the home society, they are upset mentally and strive to remember and locate themselves in a nostalgic past. Through nostalgia, they try to escape from the harsh realities of life in the settled land. One of the key problems that a diasporic community faces is the predicament with regard to identity. Identity is one of the most common themes in the literature of diasporic authors, and in many cases the search for self-identity is portrayed as confusing, painful and only occasionally rewarding. Salman Rushdie asserts:

Some write semi-autobiographical novels, delving into personal pasts in order to either discover or re-examine their motivations and affinities. Others use fictional characters and situations to question traditional norms, testing, trying, and occasionally reinforcing (whether internally or otherwise) notions of race and culture. (252)

The second and later generations of the diasporic community generally display a dual identity. Although the second and later generations of the diasporic community consider the country in which they are born as the home country, the society still perceives them as outsiders and therefore they are caught in a hyphenated identity. This collective feeling of anonymity, among strangers, is paradoxically, at the core of Adit's sense of freedom. He feels free from the "gravitational pull" of "the thousand constraints that [have] governed his life" (Desai 58). Adit at this moment has an intertwined feeling of being both a stranger and a free individual.

Dev and Adit plans a gathering with other colored emigrants where they can eat and drink. “Modern diasporas are ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin- their homeland.” That gathering is a fusion of different migrants. One Pakistani claims “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” (87). Sarah and Audit enjoy Bhangra dance and the enjoyment has reached its peak with the high volume of radio. All of sudden they hear a voice saying “Wrap it up, you blighters, where d’ you think you are, eh?”(88). Next moment the scene has changed and the group is forced to reduce the intensity of its merry-making. Dev can’t take this and says “The trouble with you emigrants is that you go soft. If anyone in India told you to turn off your radio, you won’t dream of doing it. You might even pull out a knife and blood would spill. Over here all you do is shut up and look sat upon” (24). Samar recounts the day he was called a bloody Pakistani” as he refused to close his umbrella at the order of an Englishman (26). These incidents leave a deep scar in Dev, who is divided between the opportunity he has got in England and the moments of bearing suppression and differences. The feelings of alienation and unidentification overwhelmed him. Desai expressed his agony:

Dev ventures into the city.... The menacing slighter of the escalators strikes panic into a speechless Dev as he swept down with an awful sensation of being taken where he does not want to go. Down, down and farther down – like Alice falling, falling down the rabbit hole, like a Kafka stranger wondering through the dark labyrinth of a prison....Dev is swamped inkily, with a great dread of being caught, step in the underground by some accident,

some collapse, and being slowly suffocated to a worm's death, never to emerge into freshness and light. (58)

Dev's anguish disappears as he is ushered by the fresh morning. He himself trying to meet the challenges of an immigrant. However, he tries to cope up with the arrogance of English people the constant humiliations irked him. When Dev asks about the feelings of Adit, he says "...the laziness of the clerks and the unpunctuality of the buses and trains, and the beggars and the flies and the stench – and the boredom, Dev yar, the boredom of it" (49). Adit insists a visit to his former land lady where he stayed for three years. Strangely Sarah rejected and reluctant to come. Adit says "That's where I lived for three years, Dev. That's the only landlady I stayed with for more than a fortnight. The others all threw me out, but I stayed with them, with the millers, for three years. At the Millers'. Adit is treated as an outsider and his visit gives him a feeling of unwelcome when he observes the treatment given by the landlady.

The experience of "misrecognition, resonating of the dynamics of the identity formation" as Anderson argues, haunts the subject until it eventually propels him or her to withdraw from the migrated context and return "home" (78). The withdrawal following on from the loss of recognition coincides with the arrival of the next intake of migrants. That, however, is hinting already at stage three: the decision to return home, whereas it would first like to explore stage two: an encounter with the culture into which you migrate, in greater detail. The second stage then is the encounter with the already appropriated culture. Britain is represented through the technique of kaleidoscopic images and richly sensuous language: for example, as the narrative opens we find the personified morning light as it "slides" down the telephone wires, "perches" on television aerials, ringing the brass door knockers and setting the birds

and bottles clinking and clanking in informal good morning voices that “politely” wake Dev up 95). Dev falls in the “world of beer-soft, plum-thick, semi darkness” (Desai 10). However, the encounter with the host culture also brings back the memories of “home”, of the past, including colonial past, as Dev’s focalization reminds us. Albert Memorial analyzes the condition of Dev in England – bulges with it, balloons with it, groans and sighs with it. He asserts:

Dev is not sure whether he comes to it, again and again, in order to look upon the face of England as it had existed in his imagination when he was a child— years before he had begun to plan to come to England – or because it reminds him of that Victorian India that formed a part – unreal and, therefore, all the more haunting, omnipresent and subliminal – of the India he had known. (84)

Alberto highlights the text’s debate of the processes of cultural identifications, as the role of visual, sensory memory is exposed. The images, as well as imaginings – of social, economic freedom, of visions communicated in literary and artistic representations - can propel you into a physical move of migration, but they can also hold you back; haunting, they never do let go. Having grown up on a diet of “language and literature completely alien” but fed to him “like a sweet in infancy” (87). In a moment of searching self-awareness Dev struggles to rationally comprehend why he had travelled so far in search of the origin, the fountain head of the vision induced by this drug, that enthralling, bewitching vision that had lived in him so long so that now both drug and vision, copy and original, held him in the double net.

The settled country considers the practice of a different culture by the diasporic community as a threat to its own culture and therefore it provokes the settled society to discriminate the diasporic community. When the settled society finds a

mixing of the diasporic community's culture with its own, it feels the danger of fragmentation of its cultural identity. As pointed out by Anderson:

Under such circumstances the national majority considers migrants to be the root of its difficulties, and draws on racial definitions that combine the idea of natural race and the idea of culture in order to make them scapegoats.

Therefore, the diasporic communities are greatly discriminated. Not only the settled government, but also the people of the country take law into their hand and discriminate the diasporic community in several ways. (108)

The question of identity is the most controversial issue of migrants and it can be regarded the most important because of its crisis exist in all postcolonial communities. Due to the circumstances of post colonial era and the problematic conditions that faced newly freed nations and countries in their search and formation of self identity the crisis floated on the surface. The issue of identity is not a clear and fixed concept as it may imagined, that led to the crisis and became a phenomena as Mercer argues identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty.

The novel singles out two processes which problematize cultural identifications in the country of target migration. Primarily, as far as identification in this context is concerned, there are two possible scenarios: the first one is one of integration and assimilation into the culture of target migration, so that it in time becomes "home"; the second is that of the rigid ossification of cultural practices of "home" while "away". The first of those scenarios is denied a narrative possibility of fulfilment. In the face of unemployment and racial abuse, or at best, indifference, the metropolis which was once "a land of opportunity" becomes a land of "silence and emptiness", "a cold wasteland of brick and tile" (63). Disjunction of expectations and



reality of migration, coupled with awareness that recognition and willed appropriation does not equal being recognized, propel the characters into solidifying the manifestations of culture or origin.

The Indian community represented in the novel becomes gradually more inward looking, and the role of objects and cultural practices in the formations of cultural identification resurfaces as paramount. This process sets up the dynamic which propels the characters into stage three: the decision to return “home”. Here, two factors which emerge as significant straddle the two stages: they are present during the migrant experiences living in the nation of target migration, but they also propel them into the decision to return “home”. The first of those is the role of memory and the second is the circulation of cultural objects and practices. Memory, as a factor in developing the dynamics of the return “home”, is represented as a force whose power equals that of the imagination which set the characters on the road to migration in the first place. Its role affirms the text’s emphasis on the imaginative leaps taken before the physical action. Powerful as it might be, the function of memory, including sensory memory is, however, gently mocked as misleading in the processes of cultural identifications. That much is evident in the tone of narrative distance from the character’s focalization every time they reminisce of or visualize their “home”: for example, in Adit’s repeated exaggerated lusciousness of halva, or Dev’s idealized thoughts about India as a somewhat alliterative “place of sun, security and status” (86). Hearing the sound of a sitar, during one of the music evenings, a recital of a great artist Ustad Sultan Ahmad of Benares, many of the listeners, especially ladies “are glazed-eyed as the music poured over them like showers of mango blossom, of the jasmine-scented night that they recalled with a deep, unburied passion, extravagantly glorified and thrice romanticised by long

memory” (96) .The escalating irony of the narrative voice in the hyperbolic exultations that rapidly spiral out of control would be impossible to miss. The second key factor is outlined as communal, cultural practices – such as music evenings, art exhibitions, social gatherings. Those, alongside use of language and culturally significant objects, are playing a key role in the formation of cultural identification. However, they soon emerge as either fetishised territories on which minute struggles of cultural supremacy are enacted, or ghettoising practices which deny the possibility of settling into the culture of the “host” nation. The affirmation of cultural identity through such objects in the context of migration is only part of the problem. The issue is also one of authenticity. The communal practices gradually acquire the charge of “inauthenticity”, emerging as simulacra, the term which the text invites, through Adit’s focalization, for the Indian way of living in Britain as a whole. Adit’s address to his wife vocalizes the issues:

Our lives here – they’ve been so unreal, don’t you feel it? Little India in London. All our records and lamb curries and sing- songs, it’s all so unreal. ... 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 circumstance. (204)

This is one of the focal points of the character’s crisis which precipitates his final decision. His growing dissatisfaction with the strained copies of the “authentic” ways of Indian life is coupled with his realization that communal Indian practices reinforce the exclusion in the society of migration. The model which bleakly emerges is not one of national, cultural assimilation but ghettoisation, and the search for originary cultural practices. It might be worth bearing in mind, however, that since the character is here

speaking in a highly charged, emotional state, his focalization may be unreliable and in any case it cannot be unproblematically taken as the stance of the narrative as a whole. Adiv's perspective is not legitimised by the value judgments of the narrative voice in the novel.

The circulation of social energies in the exchange and use of culturally significant objects resonates here of the insights from Greenblatt's new historicist essay "The Circulation of Social Energy". If Greenblatt, however, in trying to find the answer to the extraordinary longevity of Renaissance drama, pointed the finger to the circulation of cultural objects and exchanges which encoded the texts with the *energia*, the scenario of the novel is more akin to Baudrillard's, than Greenblatt's, conclusions in *Simulacra and Simulation*. The practices, rituals and objects resorted to in an attempt to foster the spirit of "home" while in existing in the host nation do not primarily circulate between diverse social groups but within them and, moreover, transpire as a source of disappointment for the characters, attracting – as I have already said - the criticism of inauthenticity, a kind of second order simulation where the cultural product masks and perverts the recollected reality of originary culture of "home". Conversely, if this is not a solution to retaining a sense of one's "original" cultural identity in a context of migration, it seems equally counterproductive in the existence in the newly adopted sphere of the country of migration. Here, the "original" cultural practices, transpire as having a largely ghettoizing function, and thus unsettle categories of both cultures and cultural identities, problematically undermining the possibility of belonging to either culture.

Stuart Hall in *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory* claims "modern identities are being

disinterred, that is dislocated or fragmented" (274). The modern people experience their identities being fragmented in the multiracial societies. The effect of global market and global migration has thwarted the cultural landscape of class, gender, ethnicity, race and nationality which give firm location and social individual's identity. In such situation; contradictory cultures come together to merge into one another and arise the cultural confusion. Hall considers the role of globalization to be crucial to bring such a crisis of identity. The wide varieties of cultures are brought together and are assimilated mutually. But the assimilation is not equal. Always the so-called civilized culture of West dominates the culture of other than West. The colonizer people and their cultures are always on the front and above among other cultures. There is binary relationship between the people of two cultures, races and languages and such relation produced a hybrid culture and hybrid society. It is always the people no other than non westerner encounter the fragmentation of life, culture and position, poised by the assimilation of cultures and societies. But it is not the fact the diasporas people are left to tie in The hybrid society sad hybrid culture. The experiences of being hybrid can be useful and effective tools to describe the diaspora situation. Critics now agree that V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie and some other prominent non western writers find a unique and fertile place from where they can write about their anguish towards the West as well as express a hunting search for their own cultural identity. The experience of being at one and the same time insiders and outsiders sharpens them for their writings. By articulating a grievance, their writing can be read as expressions to seek their belonging. Rushdie also accepts the diasporic experiences to be fruitful for the writers. On regarding diasporic situations and experiences Rushdie makes his statement:

Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times that we fall between two stools but however ambiguous and shifting this ground may be, it is not an infertile territory for a writer to occupy. However bitter experiences it is the expatriated writers seek to assimilate into new social milieu to create new identities for the existence.

(15)

Rushdie scrutinizes the lived experiences of South Asian members of the Commonwealth in England, exploring the formations of cultural identifications. He singles out the role of memory, including sensory memory, further pointing towards the circulation of objects and cultural practices. In tackling the former, he employs ironical distancing from the question of memory, revealing it to be misleading in the (re)construction of visions of the shifting categories of what is “home” in the context of transnational existence. Idealization of another culture, through the exposure to the images of it in art and literature, received in the country of one’s birth, is singled out as one of the key elements in the processes of formation of cultural identification. At the same time, however, this process through the crucial narrative strategy of the use of an ironic counterpoint to the projection of idealized images of originary culture, or the culture of target migration.

Adit’s eventual rejection of his life in England and his decision to return to India, taking his reluctant wife with him, the narrative deliberately occludes the possibility of the exploration of the multi-cultural existence in India. It might seem that placing the narrative ending at the point of departure for a new life would serve to propagate the fantasy of a happy, multi-racial, multi-cultural coexistence, devoid of the hindrances encountered in Britain (in the same way that the nineteenth century romantic/realist novels cut off the plot at the point of a heroine’s marriage, fostering

the myth of conjugal happiness secured at the point of tying the knot). However, I would argue that the ending serves deliberately to provide more questions than answers as it destabilizes the myth and the possibility of return “home”. This effect, I would suggest, is achieved through the sense of repetition, reminiscent of the titular images of rhythmicity of migration, in the sense of frustration and growing discontentment in Adit. His experiences in England mirror almost directly his initial experiences that lead to the decision to migrate to London. Both stages of his life are marked by the sense of frustration with the lack of opportunities of employment and economic advancement, coupled with his desire for “freedom”. On his arrival in England it is the comparative social and economic freedom which excites Adit, while directly precipitating his decision to return to India; it is likewise the freedom, this time in its absence, of his ghettoized existence - restricted to a circle of Indian friends and petty jobs - which acts as a catalyst for departure.

Even though the vectors of the migration movement are circular, the place you finish your journey (in physical) terms on your return to your nation of origin is clearly not the same place you began in terms of emotive, conceptual terrains of identity locus. When Salman Rushdie famously said that “[h]aving being borne across the world, we are translated men”, (17), he might also have said that we are migrated subjects. The connotation of movement across cultural and linguistic terrains evoked in his dictum resonates in the physical and imaginary leap of migration. The verb “translate” signified a change or transformation in form, appearance or substance as early as the fourteenth century, and in the late sixteenth century Shakespeare famously used the term “translated” to mean changed with reference to Bottom who, upon his ontological transformation, is addressed as being translated, i.e. transformed (105). The subjects of Desai’s novel are translated, transformed in the

process of transnational migration. What the novel depicts is the continuity of the process of transformative migration, that is to say, the momentum of the narrative defies the possibility of narrative closure because the process of migration is set to continue. The illusory possibility of ever returning “home” and rediscovering the state of originary cultural purity is denied, in so far as the action- replay of the character motivation sets up the unrealistic expectations of arriving in a culture which will provide an escape from the frustrations of whatever “home” context one finds oneself in. Migration eludes the fulfilment of the imaginary vision of the new “home”, just as the experience of having been “borne across” or migrated shuts out the possibility of ever returning to the “home” you left behind. Desai’s characters, like postcolonial men, become migrated subjects, caught up in the ideological tides which, presenting the vision of a foreign or domestic shore, simultaneously take you further away from either of them.

Finally, Adit’s decision to return to India in the context of an apparently comfortable life in England. His option to leave England is the most surprising since he seems the best adjusted to the English setting. However, a closer look at his immigrant experience reveals the perceived burden of being marked as culturally different. At some point, Adit acknowledges that he is aware of the challenges involved in being a member of a minority group, therefore trapped in cultural sameness. Thus, Adit is overwhelmed by the association of his immigrant condition with the necessity to live without transgressing the conventions of a specific culture. It seems that his willingness to accept British values and norms clashes with a group-oriented perspective that isolates Indian immigrants within the confines of their safe cultural homogeneity. At the same time, one may assume that mainstream acts of racism experienced in England also obstruct the immigrants’ attempts to step out of

their cultural sphere. This perceived hostility is presented as a constant element of the characters' exposure to foreign contexts and it partially accounts for their tendency to adopt a ghettoized lifestyle. Despite this inconvenience, Adit's life in England is relatively tranquil, up to a point when the character undergoes a crisis that suddenly sets off his desire to go back home. The radical change of his perspective takes shape during an exploration of the English countryside as Adit and his friends visit Sarah's parents. Adit is overwhelmed by the beauty and abundance of the English landscape that emanates a sense of perfection.

Thus, natural splendor coupled with luxuriance are registered as signifiers of British superiority and eventually perceived as incompatible with the character's Indian coordinates. Consequently, instead of admiring the bountifulness of English nature, Adit can only approach it through the lenses afforded by an evil pair of spectacles that distorts vision. Unable to enjoy the resplendence of the English landscape, Adit is depressed by the possibility of real plenty and splendor. Thus, the exploration of the English country side presupposes Adit's direct contact with a reality that he has not experienced before. Therefore, he finds it hard to comprehend the concrete manifestation of grandeur and prosperity, since they are missing from his familiar Indian setting.

Consequently, the image that gains contour in his mind is a misshapen and frightening counterpart of the English landscape, rendered through an Indian imagery: When he had leaned over the bridge and gazed down at the river Test and laughed at the downy cygnets following their regal parent under the silver-leaved willows Adit's impressions suggest that he can only approach the English landscape through the perspective afforded by his Indian experience. Consequently, Adit cannot enjoy the



beauty of the English countryside, as he instantly translates it into an opposite type of scenery.

The Indian counterpart of the English idyllic canvas is constructed by Adit as a background of poverty, violence, death and decay. Adit's/ dichotomic perception of the two spaces entails his eventual inability to overcome a perceived incompatibility between his native background and the English context. Notwithstanding his professed love for the English culture, Adit acknowledges that he is unable to detach himself from his Indian past in order to embrace English bountifulness, composure, wealth and leisure. As he reflects upon his decision to return to India, Adit ponders over his inability to assimilate different cultural values that he ultimately finds incompatible with his own.

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