CHAPTER IV

BYE, BYE, BLACKBIRD
- A CULTURAL TRANSPLANTATION
Bye, Bye Blackbird is an authentic study of human relationships bewitched by cultural encounters. Of all the novels of Anita Desai it is most intimately related to her own experiences. In her interview with Atma Ram she told that "of all my novels it is most rooted in experience and the least literary in derivation." and it "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 alienated persons. Which also deals with the problem of "loneliness and hollowness, adjustment and belonging." The novel is also about the "alienation and accommodation of the immigrants in a world which is alluring and appalling at the same time." It explores the existentialist problems of alienation, adjustment, belonging, hollowness and ultimate decision in the lives of the three major characters - Dev, Adit, and Sarah. It also explores their inter-racial and inter-cultural relationship and their fragmented psyche. As Kher points out "it reveals both realistically and psychologically, how the protagonists cope with their sense of alienation, marginality and otherness making several adjustments to integrate but realising the impossibility of total assimilation in another culture." The tension and conflict between the locale and the individual acquires a new dimension in the novel. The tension between the white locale and the immigrant blackbird involves issues of alienation and the immigrant has to struggle in an alien and yet familiar world. The Indian immigrants who rush to the West and there they miss their own country and get alienated and the sociology as well as psychology of the immigrants' experience, loneliness and alienation overwhelm them from all directions making them feel sometimes as bewildered 'aliens' and at other times as 'outraged outsiders'. The shock of cultural transplantation leads to
social, cultural and psychological alienation in the novel. They suffer from a loss of identity because in the changed social atmosphere they find themselves uprooted. The shock of cultural transplantation leads them to alienation. They suffer from loss of identity and a crippling sense of gradual social uprooting, cultural dichotomy is at the back of the despair and discontent that they experience in England. C.P. Singh rightly says that the "Theme of immigration and consequent alienation of characters has been the subject matter of choice for many Indo-Anglian and American artists." In fact, the East-West dilemma is very strong in this novel and alienation runs parallel to this dilemma.

Anita Desai herself confesses in her article, The Book I Enjoyed Writing Most; "their (immigrants') schizophrenia amused me while I was with them and continue to tease me when I returned to India. I wrote it in an effort to understand the split psychology, the double loyalties of the immigrants." The sense of social discrimination is felt more acutely by Dev than perhaps by Adit. His condition is like that of one of those, "... eternal immigrants who can never accept their new home and continue to walk the streets like strangers, enemy, in territory, frozen listless but dutifully trying to be busy, unobtrusive and, however, superficially, to belong." Sarah's alienation is purely social and psychological. It is of her own making but not a part of her personality and character. She has chosen it deliberately by marrying Adit, an Indian.

Structurally, the novel begins with Dev's 'arrival' in London, England. It progresses through Dev and his friend Adit's 'discovery and recognition' of the true nature of their experience being immigrants, and ends with Adit and his wife Sarah's 'departure' to India. Dev, with an ambition to join the London School of Economics for
higher studies comes to London. But soon he gives up the idea and tries to secure a job. He gets frustrated in the beginning because of racial ill-treatment given to the immigrants by the Englishmen. But ultimately he gets the job of a salesman in a book shop. He begins his life in the new setting, the new culture. Right from the beginning he is prepared to fight against all that is English. The pattern of life in England particularly shocks him as it is entirely different from that of the life in India. In England he finds, ‘Everyone a stranger and living in hiding... It could happen nowhere in India’ (p. 64). The Indian immigrants are discriminated everywhere and are openly insulted and abused. They are called ‘wogs’ and ‘Macaulay’s bastards’. They are not allowed to use a lavatory meant for the English, as ‘the London docks have three kinds of lavatories - Ladies, Gents and Asiatics.’ Dev asserts that he will not live in a country where he is insulted and unwanted. Besides being a victim of social prejudice, the Indians have to face the economic prejudice also. An Indian cannot hold a top position in any office because there is always an Englishman for it. Dev is against the imperialistic approach of the English people. A pedlar refuses to tell Dev the price of a Russian icon, considering him too poor an Indian to buy it. When he insists on him to tell the price of the icon, the pedlar scornfully tells him that it is very costly and he does not even name the price to him. He feels greatly annoyed by this type of behaviour. When the icon pedlar refused to tell him the price ‘suddenly he feels himself melting away, melting to pieces, flowing on several different currents at a time, trying, vainly to collect the pieces and hold them together with inept fingers’ (p. 80). Such experiences of humiliation are demoralising. He feels that he is caught up in social and cultural differences and he becomes a target of social insults and prejudices. He gets angry at the social discrimination and criticises his Indian friends for tolerating or ignoring it for the
sake of money. The anguish of racial tensions seems to shatter his initial vision and enthusiasm and disgustedly he cries out, out of alienation at Adit, and he declares that he would not live in a country where he is insulted and unwanted. He is also contemptuous of the climate of England. He tells Adit, that the must be masochists to live in that climate and he scornfully dislikes it and hates it. He feels that it is a stinking climate. He comes to the conclusion that the Indian immigrants always go soft with the Britishers. His sense of pride does not allow him to adjust with the English people. He is shocked to notice that the Indians can sell even their souls in England. Thus he alienates himself from the Indian friends because he does not adopt their changed ways.

As Ramesh K. Srivastava rightly states, *Bye, Bye Blackbird*, mirrors alienation and lack of adjustment encountered by Indian immigrants in England. Escalators and underground trains also strike a panic. Dev regards London as a city of machines where people live life most mechanically. He is surprised to see that the English people are not half-conscious about their relationship, unlike the Indians. That is why he feels himself a stranger. The difference between the cultures of the East and West is the main cause of disharmony. His sense of pride does not allow him to adjust in England. Born and brought of India, Dev feels a deep sense of social uprooting. He also feels that Britishers pay more attention to their pets than to the foreigners. He is surprised to see lack of morality in English society. Mr. M.K. Naik rightly says that "the theme of East-West confrontation is dwelt on the surface only," because in this novel the major theme is the alienation of different characters in different cultures.

‘Different environment and an indifferent culture in England seem ‘absurd and superfluous’ to Dev. His behaviour and personality are conditioned by the prejudices he
holds for the Britishers and vice versa. The Western notion of minding one's own business gives a rough jolt to Dev. Englishmen hardly mix up with outsiders. His desire to live with its variety and multiplicity remains unsatisfied as he finds everyone a stranger and living in hiding. They live silently and invisibly. It could happen nowhere in India. At times he feels "like a Kafka's Stranger walking through the dark labyrinth of a prison. He feels that life of immigrants in England is unbearable." Even the slightest affront to his dignity or the dignity of any Indian immigrant is something absolutely insupportable for Dev. He "fails vehemently against the obsequious nature of the Indian immigrants attitude towards the English who regardless of their self-respect pocket all insults and continue to stay in England".

Dev feels dreadfully suffocated inside Clapham Tube Station which creates a terrible sense of claustrophobia in him... the menacing slither of escalators strikes panic into a speechless Dev as he is swept down with an awful sensation of being taken where he doesn’t want to go’ (p.57). He feels separated and alienated inside Clapham Tube Station. He hates the speechlessness of English Society. It is quite strange to him. In the opinion of Frank Johnson, "The notion of overcoming separation from others creates the highest level of anxiety in the alienated person." Dev’s dilemma’s are seen imanating from his emotional and instinctive responses to the London scene. He wanders in its streets in search of his new identity. Thus London reflects various psychic states that he goes through before he discovers his affinity in the country side. His alienation and spiritual agony are felt through his hellish experience in the London tube. He is tortured both emotionally and intellectually.
Dev's visit to England was goal oriented. His intention to leave India is to free himself from the social and economic bondage and to seek material freedom. But the psychological conflicts, arising out of his practical experience in dealing with people disturb him. His longing for life in its variety and multiplicity remains unsatiated in the new atmosphere where everyone is a stranger and lives in hidings. In a world where people live silently and invisibly he is constantly reminded of India. It makes him nostalgic of an India of familiar faces, sounds and smells. His alienation is normally social and cultural. It is not based on personal differences, but the behaviour of the Britishers forces him to think that racism certainly conditions social interaction. The isolation of Dev from the Britishers makes him conscious of his subordinate position for the Whites do not treat them as neighbours. Dev's sense of alienation and spiritual agony are objectified in his bitter and grave experiences during the ventures into the city. He feels alienated because the world that he perceives around him is different physically and socially. He expects the people to be more social like Indians. The emptiness of the houses and the streets of London makes Dev uneasy and alienated. 'The English habit of keeping all doors and windows tightly shut ... of guarding their privacy as they guarded their tongues remains incomprehensible to him' (p. 63). He finds even a thickly populated place like London utterly silent and deserted - a cold waste land of brick and tile. The way of life the English people lead is quite strange to Dev. In India one is familiar with everything and everybody around but it is not possible in England. Here everyone is a stranger and lives in hiding. In all his walks and bus rides through the city, Dev feels offended by the silence and emptiness of it. The houses and the blocks of flats, streets and squares and crescents - all are dull and dead to him. The
silence in heavily populated streets makes him uneasy. The disparities are the utter indiff erence of people makes him feel as insignifi cant as a particle of dust. Dev is shocked to see the dearth of people in the country. He oscillates between certainty and uncertainty continuously. In him, as R.P. Blackmur observes, "The expatriate is orthodox as a human type, classic in the nature of his struggle, romantic, only in the ordinary sense of being stranger, in appearance or nostalgic in some of his attitudes."

He fi nds himself unwanted, insulted and isolated. He realises that Indian immigrants rush to the west and in the process miss badly their own country. "Dev’s reactions are unemotional, even illogical. In fact he beats his wings in the void."

Sindh Oberoi in Arun Joshi’s The Foreigner also feels alienated in the cosmopolitan crowd of America. He fi nds other students very aloof and busy in their own pursuits. He calls them "quite an international crowd." He also suffers from a lack of belongingness like Dev and gets fed up of living in a foreign land. Even after accepting English culture and way of life as it is, Dev remains an outsider. As Solanki rightly says Dev "oscillates between nationalism and cosmopolitanism and feels emotionally disturbed and intellectually dissatisfied. This suffering is destructive because he keeps wavering between his choices."

Dev’s character does not catch up the dilemma of alienation or loss of identity unlike Kamala Markandeya’s Srinivas in The Nowhere Man. Srinivas’s quest for identity is, that he has settled in England and tries to assimilate the acquired culture, into his life. Dev, however blusters, all along. Srinivas silently loses the shores of his existence "and, yet, Srinivas’s immigration is transmuted into a metaphor of isolation
and no more" as Prasad says. The severance of natural ties brings into sensitive minds such disease as schizophrenia. His traumatic conditions reveal that it is very difficult to break the natural ties. He tries to attach meaning to his life. The great turmoil in his mind splits him. It is only at Rosecommon James in Hampshire that Dev "finds romantic healing to his suffering and uncertain wavering." Everything seems to fit into the pattern and for the first time he feels that he is not an intruder, and feels acceptance. He gets a sense of belonging. As Erich Fromm puts it, "While the infant is rooted in mother man in his historical infancy remains rooted in nature. Though having emerged from nature, the natural world remains his home, here, are still his roots. He tries to find security regressing to identifying himself with nature. In relating himself to them (Parts of nature) the individual finds his sense of identity and belonging as part of nature." 

There is a trait of confusion in his character. There is a sea change in Dev after visiting the Millers with Adit and Sarah. He realises that the English people are not as self-conscious as they are supposed to be. They are quite unself-conscious when it comes to things like love. The city, the river and the nature ‘in one glance, gives him the expanding, soaring sensation of an explorer on the verge of discovery’ (p.90). Slowly Dev develops a sort of fascination for England and feels that the streets of London are an education. He begins to undergo a slow change in his attitude towards England from anglophobia to Anglophilia, and ultimately, surrenders silently to irresistible spell of English life," as rightly said by Madhusudhan Prasad. Sometimes he would walk down the streets and parks of the city like a tourist, grateful for its daffodils and patches of sunshine. At other times, in a strange summer he would be ‘the bewildered alien, the
charmed observer, the outraged outsider and a thrilled sight-seer all at once and in a succession.' At this stage it seems that the deep dimension of his character opens and in this 'growing uncertainty he feels the divisions inside him divided further and redivided once more... He is perfectly aware of the schizophrenia that is infecting him like a disease... at times he invites it, at times he fights it' (p.86).

However a visit to Sarah's country house, with Adit and friends brings Dev some inner peace and zest for life. His visit proves to be an adventure not of discovery but of recognition. He learns to cope up with different problems of adjustment and finally decides to continue to stay in England. He begins to dream of a golden country of his future life in London. Dev falls in love with the whole rural setting and feels rejuvenated. This may be Dev's romantic reaction to the whole pastoral landscape and its peace, but the scene reminds him of the holy and pious places in India.

Even when he realises that he is an outsider and not entitled to England, he is determined to 'seek' 'discover' and win the England of his dreams and reading and "Somehow Dev's inner and outer world's intersect here and he stays, at least for now."22 Dev who initially remains a cynical observer, is slowly drawn into London life and quietly settles down there. His anguish has a romantic touch about it. For, he is drawn to the magic of a land that is as much mental as it is geographical what draws him to England is as Adit imagines, "... the magic of England - her grace her peace her abundance, and embroidery of her history and traditions - and the susceptibility of the Indian mind to these elements, trained and prepared as it was since its schooldays to receive, to understand and appreciate these very qualities' (p.180). Dev finally takes a
decision not to go back to India and not to lead 'the way of the masses' there. So he declares '...All I want is... a good time. Not to return to India not to marry and breed, go to office, come home and go to office again but to know a little freedom' (p. 140). He also makes it clear the real purpose of his visit to England when he says, that he is there to interpret his country to them and to conquer to England. ‘I am here... to interpret my country to them, to conquer England

Standing in the middle of the Petticoat Lane, Dev observes gladly the Indian wares displayed in the bazaar. He feels so much ‘exhilarated by the rowdy, libertine atmosphere about him.’ He wishes to Indianise England. As he has already developed a sort of attraction towards English life in London and expresses his aim of staying there, he does not like to leave England. His aim to Indianise England, no doubt, is an impossible and impracticable one. Yet, he expresses his serious concern for the attitude of the English people in vain. Dev displays characteristic psychic traits of an ex-colonial often in his mutually contradictory responses to England. He "suffers essentially from a Caliban complex, now adoring, now loathing, the sensibility that he has imbibed from the colonial rule." London makes him aware of his otherness, makes him aware that he does not belong to the world that he takes to be source of his conscious existence. His suffering emanates from this duality between experience and mental perception. He "goes through the entire gamut of love-hate relationship and exists between the colonialist and the colonised before his final reconciliation." He suffers because he keeps wavering between his choices. England is the golden world the price of which is too high for him to pay. His ‘observed search for signs of imperialist insolence’ (p. 84)
is typical of the ex-colonial. "Each phase in Dev's reconciliation suggests a psychic situation involving cross-cultural conflicts and the impact they have on individual sensibility."

Dev's friend, Adit Sen married Sarah, an English girl, who looks like a Bengali to him. He is impressed by her beauty, shyness and rectitude. He lives with her happily in England as a travel agent. He can accept life as it comes. He leads the life of an average man without bothering his head about the cultural differences which shock Dev on his arrival in England. Very much attracted by the natural beauty and way of life of England, Adit settles there happily with his wife Sarah. To Adit everything in England is 'gold like Sarah's golden hair.' When Dev bangs him for his indifference for the racial prejudice accorded to the immigrants by the Britishers and asks him whether or not he would come back to India, he tells him, '... I love it here. I am so happy here... I feel like a millionaire. I like the girls here... I like the pubs... I like the freedom a man has here... and I like the Thames. I like the week end at the sea-side... '(p. 90).

All these are attractions to Adit there. So it is clear that he does not like to go back to India just to work as a Clerk as he has already been so much attracted by the charm and colour of English life in London. He becomes an Anglophile. To him England is a 'land of opportunity'. Dev blames him for his special attraction and admiration of England. So he calls him a 'bootlicker' and 'spineless imperialist lover' who would sell his soul one day. He has a reasonably secure job with a tourist agency Blue Skies and he is married to Sarah a lovely and loving English woman who tries hard to become Indian
for his sake. It seems that there is no dark cloud over Adit’s horizon and he feels lucky to live in England.

In spite of all his attraction towards English life in London, Adit is fully conscious of his alienness. To counter his feelings of being a stranger, Adit hangs on both inwardly and outwardly, to his Indianness, which manifests in many different ways. He insists on eating Indian food ‘authentic charchari’, ‘rich carrot halwa’, etc. He teaches Sarah to cook’ Indian dishes using genuine spices for a curry and declares that he does not like any British broches and stews. He enjoys listening to Indian music, Bismillah Khan’s Shennai and Ravi Shankar’s sitar, and he socialises only with Indian friends such as Samar and Bella, Jasbir and Mala. At times he forces Sarah to wear Indian Sari and jewellery, because he wishes to see her as an Indian bride. At a deeper level he cannot accept her as one of his own without denying her true English identity.

He likes to treat her as a Bengali girl. He tells her in his first meeting with her: ‘You are like a Bengali girl. Bengali women are like that - reserved, quiet. May be you were one in your previous life. But you are improving on it - you are so much prettier’ (p.84). Even when he thinks of a brief visit to India, the images of Indian food, dress and music are predominant in his mind. According to Indernath Kher, “It should be obvious here at a psychological level, the above life-style and behaviour symbolise Adit’s conscious as well as unconscious strategies to maintain his Indian identity and to cope with his inner sense of alienation.” If uncertainty is the first stage in the evolution of an immigrant character, incongruity is the second. Anita Desai encapsulates the whole character when she writes: “I was fascinated by them. They remained Indian to the tips of their fingers and yet they lived almost wholly English lives... They had turned
themselves into brown Englishmen. Yet emotionally they were, if anything, more Indian than the Indians at home. Hardly any of them were able to sever their roots, not even those who tried hard. Indeed the roots seemed to have been strengthened by transplantation.

But a visit to his in-law's the Roscommon James, bring a sudden and surprising change in Adit's posture. It is a turning point in his life. Like other visits, this one is also 'marred by tactlessness by inane misunderstanding by loud underlining of the basic disharmony of the brightness of life, as though blood had ceased to flow inside him' (P.201). He 'wondered a little fearfully, if he had ever felt so depressed before'. He does not understand the exact cause of his strained mood. The behaviour meted out to him by Mrs. Roscommon, Sarah's mother, hurts him and he starts yearning for his own country. He feels as if his self-respect were threatened when he hears: 'You won't mind having sandwiches left over from tea, will you, Adit?' He is forced to realise his inferior place in his in-laws' house. Mrs. Roscommon - James does not accept Adit as her son-in-law and does not behave with him properly. She rejects him because he is an Indian. By chance he goes into the old bedroom of Sarah there in her mother's house. In the bedroom Adit is very much attracted by the toys of her childhood. Sarah cries out and asks him not to touch those toys. It compels him to realise that Sarah's English life does not allow him to share her feelings and things. He feels offended and rejected by the private English world of Sarah. He wants to meet his mother-in-law with the idea that he will come back with a strong conviction that he belongs to English life, but he feels badly disappointed. E.M. Durrett observes about Indians: "Their new self-awareness makes it impossible for Indians to go back, their cherishing of Indianness makes it
difficult for them to go ahead. Adit may seem to be happy. But still like an ugly
duckling he is treated like an outcaste in the flock because the very ‘species’ is different.
As he is not familiar by bonds of blood and soil, he is looked upon with suspicion by
Mrs. Miller and Rosecommon -James. His attempt to establish new ties by marrying
Sarah has failed. He fails to establish unity either with people or with nature. Touched
to the quick, he desires to go back to his motherland and to see Indian landscape of
vastness and wilderness, Sun rise and Sun set. He feels himself a stranger in England,
and realises alienated from the English people. The feeling is induced upon him that he
is living an artificial life and to lead a real life will be possible for him if only he goes
back to his motherland. He becomes aware of the tragic fact that he will always remain
an outsider in England and "the lack of belongingness and self respect make him crave
for his own culture and country and he is alienated. By marrying an English girl, Adit
could not cross the racial barriers." His visit to his in-laws' house becomes the turning
point in his life. In this relationship, he is personally involved with the people and the
culture of the alien land. His frustration, hate, anger - all become obvious and he fails
to hold the balance he has been successfully maintaining earlier. His habits, beliefs,
goals, values, emotional responses and attitudes are culturally patterned. Therefore it is
believed that "individuals cannot exist apart from culture and society and the latter take
on reality only in the personalities and behaviour of individuals."

However, he feels deeply homesick. He is overwhelmed by the images of India
and he yearns for Indian landscape. He thinks of dancing of peacocks and jackals that
make the Indian night loud with reminders of the emptiness, the melancholy of
everything. The Hampshire landscape brings to his mind the revelation of the ‘wild,
wide granduer, its supreme granduer, its loneliness and black, glittering enchantment’ (P. 205) of India. Sarah begins to wonder ‘how he had kept this amount of yearning shut up and enclosed inside him for so long.’ His life in England appears ‘fake’ to him and he feels ‘stifled’ and sick of the whole business of being an ‘Indian Immigrant’. He is totally disenchanted with England and can no longer pretend to be happy here. The two experiences of Adit and Dev give a new perspective to the novel. Desai seems to imply a connection between the inner landscape and outer landscape. The inner landscape of Adit is Indian while that of Dev is English. The disturbing experience brings to the surface what is within them. The experience makes Adit nostalgic of what was natural to his soul, the experience of India.

A similar experience is incorporated in Arun Joshi’s novel, The Foreigner. Sind Oberoi, while talking to his beloved, June says: “Marriage would not help June. We are alone, both you and I. That is the problem. And our aloneness must be resolved from within.” 31 He is fed up with narrow patriarchal life of an Indian in England, and also of the English themselves. Being aware of who he is and where he is, he goes into all the pubs he had ever known, one by one, and in each was hunted out by the sensation of not belonging. It was as though in one summer night that he had been away, London had been blitzed and he returned to find the grey ash of a nuclear war fallen from the skies already frosted with winter breath and the whole city shrouded with it. As in the case of Sindi Oberoi, Adit’s foreignness lies within him from crisis to crisis rendering it difficult for him to leave "himself" behind wherever he goes. Adit finds himself to be quite out of place in England. He suffocates and is fed up of wearing the label ‘Indian Immigrants’. "It is sniffling,... being aware of who one is and where one is" (p.214).
Frustration causes mental imbalance. If he does not belong anywhere, there is the danger of the loosening the sense of ‘I’ which preserves sanity. What prices him most is ‘not the occasional sights and insults directed against him as a stranger, a non-belonger,... but the placidity, the munificence and the ease of England’ (p.210).

In addition to the disrespect and ill-treatment meted out to him by his mother-in-law the news of Indo-Pakistan war of 1965 shocks him and increases his frenzy. It fills his heart with a sense of patriotism and he makes up his mind to fight against Pakistan. So he explodes with schizophrenic energy: ‘I can’t stand it, Sarah, I tell you, I have had enough. It is all got to end now. There must be a change. I have done with England now. Sarah, I am going back... home... I can’t live here any more. Our lives here... they have been so unreal... I have got to go home and start living a real life’ (p.232). He feels himself a stranger in England and realises that he is alienated from the English people. He points out that Pakistan’s attack on India is the main reason for his departure from England, but in reality it is due to his alienation from the English people and their way of life. He becomes aware of his otherness only after his visit to the in-laws and prepares to leave England as a patriotic Indian.

Even at Christine Longford’s cocktail party, the hosts and guests make him feel humiliated as a result of which Sarah’s shyness and rectitude attract him. Humiliation and uncertainty were not sensations in which Adit felt at home, and so he chose Sarah for company. The stay at his in-laws’ evokes opposite reaction in Adit’s mind. He is haunted by nostalgia. The nostalgia grows with such ferocity that it becomes an illness, an ache: When he returns to his house in Clapham, he is a changed man. ‘Adit stood in the hall, blinking not recognising his cat or his home exactly like a stranger arrived
at a hotel in a strange city. He shrinks into isolation and is dumb with despair. He suffocates and is fed up of wearing the label 'Indian immigrants' and 'it is too stifling... being aware of who one is and where one is.' Frustration causes mental imbalance. He bears a nervous break down. At Christine Longford's wedding the symptoms can be clearly seen: 'Struck with fear for his health, for his mental balance, he stood frozen on the paramount... his (p.217). He has become nameless. The question torments him, who is he? Where is he? He is no longer Mr. Sen but a label - 'wog', 'Asiatic', or 'Indian Immigrant'. He gets visions as the one who is a psychic case.

The India-Pakistan war is the last straw to finalise Adit's decision to return to his own clan. This decision reminds one of Sind Oberoi who comes to India with the motivation as which Kalpana Wandrekar says "meant escape from a bit of myself that appeared the most decayed. Sind's alienation was of somewhere as Adit's was caused mainly by geography." The cycle is complete and Adit discovers his real self throwing away the garb of a Pukka Sahib. He wants to escape the unreal and the artificial life which he is leading, 'Little India in London. All our records and lamb curries and sing song, it is all so unreal... Whatever it is, it will be Indian, it will be my natural condition, my true circumstance' (p.206), as he becomes aware of his 'otherness' after his visit to his in-laws and leaves England with his English wife Sarah with his anglophobic self. He is grown from anglophilia to anglophobia.

Sarah marries Adit because he seemed to have so much to give her - so many relations and attachments, pictures and stories, legends promises and warnings. She is very much fascinated by the charming nature of Adit. Adit is a colourful, light-hearted and open minded man. He loves brightness and boldness while Sarah is dull, simple and
lovely. She always wants to hide herself. Their personalities are quite different. Adit suffers from an inferiority complex by considering English people superior. Sarah too suffers from inferiority complex as she has married an Indian. This complex forces her to behave like a tortoise. But she is apprehensive of others and so withdraws herself. She does not share her views with her husband. Sometimes in her heart of hearts, she considers Indians inferior. Adit is deeply involved in his likes and dislikes. So he does not particularly bother about his wife's problems and even her feelings. It shows the wide mental gap between the husband and wife. Adit does not know the loveliness of his wife.

The maladjustment in their married life is quite clear when Adit receives a letter from his parents and he does not try to translate it to his wife. He never wishes her comprehend his country and people. He seems to be well adjusted with the British way of life, but he has not changed his Indian way of thinking. Sarah seems to have lost her identity. She hides her tensions and feelings from her husband because there is a wide gulf between them. Her marriage with Adit has alienated her. Inspite of her indifferent feelings and alienation from Adit, she proves herself a faithful and devoted wife.

Sarah is a case of both social and psychological alienation. The social factor stems from her marriage to Adit. Her psychological trouble emanates from her pride. Alienation and cultural dissociation can be experienced even when living in one's own society. Sarah's situation as an English girl culturally alienates her in her homeland. Her marriage to a 'wog' compels her to keep 'to the loneliest path' and walk, drawing across her face, 'a mask of secrecy'. She avoids facing her own people. Her pain and agony know no bounds when she hears Julia, her colleagues saying, 'If she is that ashamed of
having an Indian husband, why did she go and marry him’ (p.42). Such comments from her friends make her feel socially alienated. This alienation creates a psychological crisis wherein she feels that she is parading ‘like an imposter’ to make claims to a life, an identity that she did not herself feel to see her own’ (p.42). She loses her identity in her own country and becomes nameless. She suffers this anguish silently. But she fails to hide the turmoil within. Adit notices this but can not perceive the true nature and cause of her disturbance. ‘An anguish, it seemed to him, of loneliness and then it became absurd to call her by her own name, to call her by any name : she had become nameless, she had shed her name as she has 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?’ (p.35). Sarah is sincerely attached to Adit and considers her relation with him more significant than everything else. She is the Head’s Secretary in a convent school. She is known for her efficiency and sincerity both at the office and home.

According to Meenakshi Mukharjee Sarah’s is a “complex, hypersensitive and intelligent” character. Usha Bande says that she “lives a dual world - the two social worlds that do not meet; the two incompatible cultures that split her”. It is felt that Sarah is the central character in the novel - Sarah who has withdrawn from the world of childhood, does not want to look back. In this respect she is different from Maya and Sita. In an interview with Jasbir Jain, Desai says, "Sarah’s alienation is chosen by herself deliberately whereas for my other characters it is a part of their personality, part of their nature. She chooses it by marrying a foreigner. She is an exile in her own land, in her
own country". But in the case of her other characters it is a part of their personality and character.

Sarah's condition is such as she finds herself nowhere at home, and torn between the two worlds. She is constantly subjected to inner tortures and settings. She has an intense longing to lead a life of utmost sincerity. She cares everybody around. She even prepares herself to go to India to see her mother-in-law off on a pilgrimage. Disharmony in Sarah's familial life seems to threaten her marriage because of their racial differences. Adit's tastes are entirely different from that of Sarah's. It is felt they have been leading an adjusted life inspite of their temperamental differences. Adit's romantic love for England is matched by the romanticism of her imagination about India. They maintain their cultural identities, yet experience a close affinity with other's culture. Sarah's irrational fear is not an outcome of her 'social alienation' only it is analysed by her motives in the light of her anxiety behind her psychological unheaval'.

Any comments either from her friends or colleagues about her marriage with an Indian (Adit) make Sarah feel socially alienated. This alienation creates a psychological crisis wherein she feels that she did not herself feel to be her own. Sarah's behaviour is like a tortoise. She is apprehensive of others and withdraws herself. She is always defensive because of her weakness which is her marriage with an Indian. She wants to hide it from others. By marrying Adit, Sarah has become a 'Nowhere woman' who does not know who she is and to which group she really belongs. This struggle to know her real identity is expressed when she questions herself: 'Who was she - Where was she?... 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' (p.39).

The displeasure of Sarah’s father and unconcealed bitterness of her mother towards Indians create interpersonal and intra-psychic conflicts in Sarah threatening disintegration of personality. She wavers between two selves - public and private - and is torn between the two worlds. In an attempt to survive and lead a meaningful existence, she withdraws herself from her English friends, and relatives and creates a small world inside her house. Her decisions to herself away from her English past and present, and withdrawing completely into the world of Adit and Dev, pose further problems for her. Her relation to herself turns impersonal. Ashamed of herself, she moves away from her real self. Her self- alienation and self-hate are symbolised through a water mammoth in her dreams. The water mammoth represents her self-hate. She is smeared with block mud, which signifies the fear of her inner longing chiding her for not being able to stand upto ‘shoulds’. This indicates her wish to hide her identity and not to perceive her genuine self, struggling for recognition. Adit’s decision to leave for India makes her feel uncertain and suspicious of the outcome of this change of lands. She is not sure whether he would be able to ‘lift her and transport her to a land where she would regain warmth and personality’ (p.255).

After her wedding her reticence turns into aloofness. Sarah loses her zest to participate in living; apathy pervades her. She feels empty, and ineffectual in directing her life. Socially Sarah is not lonely. There are Adit, Dev and their social circle at home. She has her colleagues at school. But amid the crowd Sarah is solitary. She can neither
enjoy the company of her countrymen, nor can she be at home at Adit's social circle. The former is psychological and the latter cultural alienation. According to Jasbir Jain, "all these lead her to withdraw but if she loves the man she has married and proud of him this need not be the case."36 Sarah's problem is rooted in her cross-cultural marriage. Her bewilderment and frustration is the result of what Toffler calls 'cultural shock'. Immersion in a strange culture "causes a breakdown in communication, a misreading of reality, an inability to cope."37 Sarah is overwhelmed by the change because she can not fully involve herself in her husband's culture, nor can she adopt herself to her own society. She refuses to work out any coordination and wants to escape socialisation by hiding and 'Sarah's duel estrangement comes, not from social transformation within her society but from a cross-cultural catalysis of her own choice'.

The gap between Sarah and her people and between her husband's people is widening. Even the tea-breaks at the office are unbearable to her. She is afraid to answer any personal questions as she suffers from an inferiority complex. She is dismissed by her parents and society and the one, she has chosen has no stronger claims because of its unknownness. The impact is 'anonymity'. She avoids answering any personal questions and is ashamed of her Indian husband though very devoted to him. The self-imposed seclusion is one of the reasons of her anonymity. This can be called moral solitude which is the result of her suffering. It is a fear of facing the unknown. Sarah, when rejected by her parents and society finds the world around her hostile and tries to submit to Adit - the very cause of her isolation and alienation.
Immeasurable disintegrating forces crowded into Sarah's mind when she visualised that in order to adopt new ways of life in India, she will have to further forgo her cultural identity. At this moment, she realises how painful it is to bid good-bye to one's own country and experiences, 'all the pangs of saying good-bye to her past twenty four years' (p.255). The situation of Adit and Dev is also same. Their feelings are same as that of Sarah's in an alien land. Their migration to a golden land makes them suffer the worst psychological trauma of losing their identity. Sarah's 'inter-cultural' marriage does not open 'new vistas' of happiness for her. In the bargain, she gets only tension, depression and a sense of guilt.

Sarah's anxiety helps her to grow out of her frustrating situation. Although it is painful to say good-bye to her 'English self', there is firm hope that 'she will come to life' in India. These positive thoughts have therapeutic value to her. In Sartre's, *The Files*, Oreste says to Zeus, 'Human life begins on the far side of despair.' Sarah has undergone the experiences of depression and is ready to reach the other side which brings her a hope to find her real-self. She is to experience a new life - not only culturally or socially but also physically.

When Adit and Sarah are finally ready to leave for India Desai conveys their situation in these poetic words 'Silent and frozen on the divan, Sarah and Adit held hands like a pair of children, feeling Bengal, feeling India sweep into room like a flooded river drowning all that had been English in it' (p.258). Desai also handles the question about Dev-Adit reversal in a highly poetic fashion. Dev asks the question clamouring for an answer 'Why, then, was it Adit who was leaving while he stayed on?'
What had made them exchange the garments of visitor and exile?" and Desai answers in her symbolic language: ‘Somewhere, at some point that summer, England’s green and gold fingers had let go of Adit drop and fall away as if she had done with him or release that he had done with her, and caught emmeshed his friend Dev’ (p.264). Dev takes Adit’s ‘place’ on both levels, ‘Physical and psychological’ - to continue the same cycle.

Desai doesn’t privilege one discourse over the other. Both Anglophilia and Anglophobia responses of the Indian immigrants in England are valid in her schizophrenic imagination. However, she seems to suggest that the immigrants should try to cope with their alienation and cultural displacement through various strategies of replacement and repossession; they should face the challenge of their situation with courage and dignity, and they should make genuine attempts to integrate with the society of their adoption. They should try to blend but not be assimilated or absorbed in the cultural traditions and social habits of the centre. Through Sarah and Emma Moffit, Desai seems to be conveying to the British society as a whole to be more tolerant and welcoming towards the immigrants.
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24. Sharma, R.S., Ibid., 4. p.40

25. Sharma, R.S., Ibid., 4. p. 31


36. Jain, Jasbir., Ibid., 35. p. 15
