wanted – she screamed No! No! No!” (242). J.A.C. Brown argues that the act of suicide, like a neurotic symptom, satisfies both the desire to punish oneself for hating one, who should be loved, and the desire to punish the beloved for real or imagined neglect. The meaning of the act is, therefore, “a specific approach: If you had treated me better I should not have killed myself” (Solanki 123). Her expected alienation ends in her death.

In Jiban’s house, Monisha’s congenital and hypersensitivity are combined with an atmosphere of distrust, ignorance and lack of privacy. Monisha’s situation represents not only her individual situation of so many daughter-in-laws who become jail birds in the houses of their husbands. Her situation is a typical representation of the social situation of numerous young birds in India who end up as cases of bride-burning or suicide. However, Monisha’s death is symbolically predicted by the novelist. Ultimately, her death gives Nirode the knowledge of reality.
CHAPTER IV
ALIENATION IN AN ALIEN LAND: BYE-BYE BLACK BIRD

Many contemporary novels deal with the experiences of the exile. The theme of immigration, alienation and expatriate experience are common in the twentieth century literary scene, crossing the barriers of caste, creed and nationality. Anita Desai is an expert in delineating the lacerated psyche. She also portrays the insecurity, alienation and anguish of uprooted individuals in Bye-Bye Blackbird (1971). It is about migrant Indians in the England of 1960s. It depicts the lives of the immigrants from India who have settled in England. It also presents the East-West encounter. Viney Kirpal observes, “it is not merely a physical journey from one land to another but it involves severing of spiritual and symbiotic ties with his mother country” (Tiwari 168). Desai captures the unconscious and sub-conscious psyche of the expatriates and reveals their phases of attraction, rejection and frustration, nostalgia and longing for their native land.

The novel deals with social reality in the life of Indian Immigrants especially in London. It is widely praised novel and also regarded as Anita Desai’s disguised autobiography. In her interview with Atma Ram, she says: “Bye-Bye Blackbird is the closest of all my novels to actuality. Practically everything in it is drawn directly from my experience of living with Indian immigrants in London” (Sali 16). It is about migrant Indians in the England of 1960s. In Bye-Bye Blackbird, one notices that Desai’s existentialist concern is rooted in expatriate experience. Ostensibly concerned with the lives of Indian immigrants in England, the novel explores the existentialist problems of
alienation, adjustment, rootlessness and the final decision in the lives of the three major characters – Dev, Adit and Sarah. Desai’s mother was a German Christian and her father was a Bengali Indian. Her mother, Antoinette Nime, could trace her origin to France, and her father, Dhiren Mazumdar’s native place was Dhaka (now in Bangladesh). Dhiren had settled in New Delhi. The mixed parentage of complex origin gives Anita Desai the advantage of having double perspective when writing about India and Indians, and migrants in India and Indian migrants in the West. She is an outsider either from her mother’s side or from her father’s side. This amalgamation of diverse elements of cultural backgrounds and experiences within the family itself might have helped her in formulating ideas in the novel.

Desai’s third novel, *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, is different from her earlier two novels. Compared to her other novels, this novel is most intimately related to her own experiences. Desai deals with the topical problem of adjustment faced by black immigrants in England. She depicts this problem through Dev, Adit and Sarah. Dr. Sumitra Kukreti in her article titled *Love-Hate Relationship of Expatriates in Anita Desai’s Bye-Bye Blackbird* rightly comments that “Desai’s *Bye-Bye Blackbird* depicts circular journey of a soul searching for a perfect life, as she feels that all these immigrants are prone to a schizophrenia and predicament to live or not live in England” (Bhatnagar 193). Her depiction of characters and situation is not one-sided and her protagonists seem to be cherishing a strange love-hate relationship with the land of their adoption.
The novel presents the difficulties of adjustment in foreign land and of those who return to the motherland, often complicated by interracial marriage. Anita Desai is concerned with the problem caused by racial relations. The title of the novel directly deals with the theme and signifies that London has said good-bye to one blackbird (Adit), but has offered a nest to another (Dev). Adit has well-adjusted himself in the country of his adoption. Desai lays stress on the art of characterization. Her characters are neither ordinary nor suffer from mental worries. Their problems are related with food, clothes and houses. Dev’s solitude eventually stops haunting him and he decides to stay in England. On the other hand, Adit suffers from a crisis for identity. He starts longing for the land and the people he has left behind.

Desai develops the theme of cultural diversity through Adit and Sarah. England was dreamland for Indian migrants. Indians migrate there to get better education and lucrative and comfortable jobs, for England is ‘The Land of Opportunity.’ They are made to undermine their cultural heritage, cut their roots of birth and go to England to fulfill their ambition. But when they arrive in England, they find it very difficult to get equilibrium between their own country and their country of adoption.

*Bye-Bye Blackbird* deals with the theme of East-West encounter. Another theme in this novel is violence which is represented by Indian and English characters. The Indians show their violence in their jeers, jokers, irony, sarcasm, giggles and taunts with which they hit each other’s accents, languages, customs, religion, myths and intellectuals. The novel depicts the love-hate relationship of the expatriates with England. The roles of
Adit and Dev are reversed. Adit leaves England and Dev stays there. In *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, Anita Desai’s chief concern is human relationship. Desai states that “characters and situations are not one-sided and her protagonists seem to be cherishing a strange love-hate relationship with the land of their adoption” (Bhatnagar 193). Desai aims to bring out the significance of things and creatively show the complexity of the human experience. She seems to suggest that the immigrants should try to cope with their alienation and cultural displacement through various strategies of replacement and re-possession. They should face the challenge of their situation with courage and identity. They also should make genuine attempts to integrate with the society of their adoption. S. Krishnamoorthy Aithal states: “It symbolically represents…the equality of status achieved by India with the countries of the Western World with her political independence” (Sharma 67). The novelist portrays well the conflict of the immigrants who cannot serve their cultural roots and yet make an attempt to strike new roots in an alien land and consequently become alienated. She turns inward into the realities of life and analyses the depths of human psyche with a view to bring out its mysteries, turmoil and chaos.

The title, *Bye-Bye Blackbird* stands for England’s bidding farewell to an Indian a ‘Blackbird’. The novel consists of three parts: ‘Arrival’, ‘Discovery and Recognition’, and ‘Departure’. In the first part of the novel, Dev arrives in England for higher studies. He stays with his friend Adit and his wife Sarah. However, he is perturbed to find Indians being humiliated in both public and private places. It develops in Dev, a sense of
disgust toward England. In the second part Dev changes his opinion and begins to feel a charm for the country and decides to live in England. In the last part of the novel, Adit, a well settled man in England, becomes homesick for India and leaves for it along with his English wife Sarah and an unborn child. Desai develops the theme of cultural diversity through Adit and Dev. Even Sarah has to suffer and face cultural diversity for getting married to an Indian.

Working in migrant countries, the immigrants initially achieved a standard of living they could never have hoped for at home, but soon the situation began to change. It was feared that hordes of immigrants pouring in a country like Britain, would endanger an economy which the immigrants had not helped to build and “panicky Englishmen began to ask for more stringent laws against immigration” (Kirpal 26). The discrimination against the immigrants began to be exercised on racial basis in many ways. Hostility and rejection in the host country produced in immigrants a deeper sense of consciousness about their oppressed condition and compelled them to make a frantic search for their roots and identity. Despite living in two cultures, their dilemma whether to stay in the host country or return to homeland persisted. Here *Bye-Bye Blackbird* meticulously explores all these aspects of immigrant experience in detail.

The novel opens with the arrival of Dev in England. Prasad states that “Dev, the new immigrant, begins his life in the new setting, the new culture with a high voltage of rhetoric.” (Prasad 58). He is a Bengali youth and his ambition is to join the London school of Economics for higher studies. The different environment and an indifferent culture in
England seem absurd and superfluous to Dev. He is particularly disgusted with the treatment accorded to immigrants in England. Indians are openly insulted and made to feel inferior. His dream changes into ugly reality. He is caught up in social and cultural differences and he becomes a target of racial insults and prejudices. He is hurt at being called a ‘Wog’ at the public places. The discrimination is so obvious that Indians are not allowed to use the lavatory meant for English. “London docks have three kinds of lavatories – Ladies, Gents and Asiatic” (BBB 19). The anguish of cultural diversity seems to shatter his initial vision and enthusiasm.

Dev’s visit to England is goal-oriented, but the psychological conflicts arising out of his practical experience in dealing with the people disturb him. His bias is normally social and cultural. It is not based on personal differences, but the behavior of the English forces him to think that racism certainly conditions of social interaction. He feels alienated because the world that he perceives around him is different, characterized by uncertainty of his situation. But he carries on his love-hate relationship with England. He oscillates between nationalism and cosmopolitanism and feels emotionally disturbed and intellectually dissatisfied. He cries out to Adit, “I wouldn’t live in a country where I was insulted and unwanted” (19). Dev is full of rebellious snobbery and the resultant ill-treatment to the Indian immigrants in England. His friend Adit Sen lives in England with his English wife Sarah. He works as a travel agent in England. Dev gets puzzled with the docile behaviour of Adit and taunts him about his sheepishness and loss of self-respect.
Dev feels alienated in London from both as an Indian and from Englishmen. He finds extremely difficult to adjust himself with the new surroundings. His conduct starts with Adit who settled in London with an English wife. He goes out in search of a good job. But he undergoes different experiences and cultural shocks. He is disturbed by his expectation and reality. He feels self-conscious to differentiate both of them. He comes to London only to get proper education. He hardly notices a few drawbacks. But he loves England and he feels happy to stay there. On the other hand, his friend, Adit likes the ‘pubs’, the ‘freedom both social and economic’, ‘Thames’ and lots of other things in England. Dev’s opinion is that his friend always remains inferior and at the level of bottom in his office whereas he will never go to the top. The top is always occupied by “an English man here” (18). Adit replies, “Why should I care ya?” (18). This shows the different characters of two friends. Adit is ready to compromise with his society but Dev neglects everything. He called Adit, his friend, a ‘boot-licking’ and ‘spineless imperialist lover’, saying, “you would sell your soul and your passport too, for a glimpse at two shillings, of some draughty old stately home” (21). However, Adit uses his opportunity in a proper way. But the question is how long he will be able to continue this compromising nature.

Adit and Sarah also face the crisis of cultural identity. In the beginning, Adit seems to be a romantic admirer of England and the West. He tolerates the humiliations of the white people. According to him, England is a country of golden opportunities for employment. In the early part of the novel, the novelist shows that he is very much fond
of England. He says, “I love it here. I’m so happy here; I hardly notice the few
drawbacks…” (19). Adit counters his feelings of being a stranger. Both inwardly and
outwardly, he hangs to his Indiaanness, which manifests in many different ways. He forces
his wife to wear Indian sari and Jewels, 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, as he tells her in his first meeting
with her, “You are like a Bengali girl. Bengali women are like that reserved, quiet.
Maybe you were one in your previous life. But you are improving on it – you are so
much prettier! (74). It should be obvious here that at a psychological level, the above
life-style and behaviour represent Adit’s conscious as well as unconscious strategies to
maintain his Indian identity and to cope with his inner sense of alienation.

Sarah marries Adit the ‘Blackbird’ and suffers from a sense of insecurity and
alienation from her own society. Her situation as an English girl, married to an Indian,
culturally alienates her from her homeland. She avoids facing her own people. Sarah
loses her identity in her own country, she becomes nameless. She hears Julia, her young
colleague saying, “If she’s that ashamed of having an Indian husband, why did she go
and marry him?” (39). Such comments from her friends and colleague make Sarah feel
socially alienated. Her problem is rooted in her cross-cultural marriage. S. Indira in her
work *Anita Desai as an Artist* observes, “Sarah can be either an Indian wife or an English
woman but can never be both at the same time” (56). She is overwhelmed by the change
because she cannot fully involve herself in her husband’s culture nor can she adopt herself to her own society.

Fear, insecurity and the resultant withdrawal are the three major motifs of the novel. The novel incorporates the impact of an East-West marriage on the psyche of Sarah. Adit marries Sarah, an English woman, settles in England and feels at home there. Dev reaches England from India for higher studies. He is soon nauseated by the racial prejudices. He is highly critical to face certain situations in the English land. Their attitudes take a sudden turn after their return from a weekend spent in the suburb of London. Dev starts loving England whereas Adit is nauseated. He decides to leave for India. Although the novel revolves round the two male characters, the main story concerns Sarah, who lives in a dual world – the two social worlds that do not meet; the two incompatible cultures that split her. Disharmony prevails in Sarah’s familial life and seems to threaten her marriage. They maintain their cultural identities, yet experience a close affinity with each other’s culture. Sarah’s irrational fear is not an outcome of her social alienation alone. We can analyse her motives in the light of her anxiety behind her psychological upheaval.

Before going to her mother-in-law, Adit was hopeful that he would come back with a strong conviction that he belonged to England. But his mother-in-law’s behaviour makes him aware of the fact that he is an outsider and will always be so. He realizes that he is discarded completely and that nothing on his part can change the English people’s behaviour towards the Indians. Adit’s confused state of mind ends with the news of the
war between Indian and Pakistan. He suddenly thinks about the British hand in making the Hindus and the Muslims perpetual enemy of each other. He realizes that he belongs to India alone. He decides to leave England, and tells Sarah about it. Finally, when Adit and Sarah leave for England, Dev cogitates about the dramatic change in the situation. Before Dev has hesitated to lead life in the new land, he accepts it now. But Adit changes his mind and ready to fly over to India. There is a psychological change in the minds of two friends.

Even in his personal life, Adit has little problems with his English wife. He tries to compromise his wife in certain situations. But it would fail. He says to Dev that on last Christmas he allowed his wife to have her “plum pudding” but he himself preferred “rich carrot halwa” (15). But such compromise is also a case of opportunity. Adit seldom shows any sincerity in his behavior towards his wife. In the beginning, one finds him saying that “These English wives are quite manageable” as long as one treats them “right” and roars “at them regularly once or twice a week” (29). Adit’s remarks show negative picture and hint that there seems to be no change in his character.

Perhaps Adit has a love-hate relationship with England, India and also his wife. Adit loves England because it is a land of opportunity. At the same time, he hates it by facing problems in his married life. He hates India because of “the laziness of the clerks and the unpunctuality of the buses and trains and the beggars and the files and the stench-and the boredom” (49), which he experienced when he was in India few years back. Adit says “Then I’m mad to get back to England” (61). But when he becomes nostalgic he has
a sweet vision of his life in his motherland. He says “This time I’ll go by air, with a bag full of luxury goods. When I have a whole month of leave saved up. I’ll go, My mother will cook ‘hilsa’ fish wrapped in banana leaves for me. My sister will dress in saris and gold ornaments. I’ll lie in bed till ten every morning and sit up half the night listening to the shehnai and sitar (48). This ‘Nowab’ like day-dreaming of nostalgic Adit clearly indicates his love of motherland but what checks him from going back to his country is the unpromising future. At least, he has the opportunity in England.

Furthermore, Adit is a practical man and lives in England. His presence in England is happy, so he wants to stay here. He accepts it openly when Dev refers to the ‘dilemma’ in which Adit seems to have been caught. Adit says, “I live for the moment …” (49). It is a very true statement about his own nature. At this moment, there is no bright future in India. So, he prefers to stay in England even by compromising with certain problems. Later, he changes his decision that he is frustrated with England and more prospects in India. At present, he tries to compromise his life with his English wife.

Dev finds it difficult to adjust himself to the silence and emptiness which prevail in London and which are not characteristics of India. The houses and blocks of flats, streets and squares all appear to him dead. Dev also looks at built churches in London critically: “The cross itself is almost obscured and certainly overshadowed by the monstrous white mushrooming of marble statuary” (69). He feels that these are not
temples of Christ but temples dedicated to the British Empire. They celebrate the British concept of God, King and country and not the Christian concept of God.

Dev experiences so much in the London streets. Even he reconsiders his idea of entering London school of Economics. He oscillates whether he should continue to be in London or go back to India. The real crisis in Dev’s identity is made amply clear in these words. Now, he realizes that it is going to be a distant dream for him to get settled well in London. “He was slowly regretfully letting drop and melt away his dreams of adventure, seeing now quite clearly that he had left the true land of adventure of the unexpected, the spontaneous, the wild and weird, for a very enclosed part of the world” (104). Even in the first interview, Dev turns to be flop. It tells him something about the importance of being not an Indian or a Hindu. Before taking him, the interviewer wants to know about his background. At the moment, he learns that he is not a Christian, and he says, “Not a Catholic? Not even Christian?...I am sorry. Dear me, I ought to have mentioned it at once … we simply must have a Catholic, or at least a High Church man” (108). Dev has found it difficult to maintain decorum in his walk as he has left the office and made for the gates of the cemetery. Crossing his motherland, Dev feels entangled and suffocated. He keeps on saying to himself that he is trapped.

Dev begins to wander about in London like a tourist, observing its various attractions and allurements with a wondering gaze; he begins to undergo a slow change in his attitude towards England from Anglophobia to Anglophile. Ultimately, he spells silently to the irresistible spell of English life. This slow process of change in his attitude
has been beautifully depicted in the following lines: “He walks the streets and parks of the city…wistfully gazing at the peacock-blue and rose-red paper flowers in a Mexican boutiques…he watches, covertly, the girls impatiently… the charmed observer, the outraged outsider and thrilled sight-seer all at once and in succession” (94). There is a slow change in Dev’s attitude and he confuses whether he should stay on in England or he should return to his homeland.

Dev is perfectly aware of the schizophrenia that is infecting him like the disease from which Indians suffer abroad. When Dev makes a clear decision about his stay in London, he feels relaxed and happy. His behavior puzzles Adit who wonders at Dev’s sudden happiness. When he sees Dev enjoying the lovely countryside around him, Adit feels upset because of this realization. He thinks that he is happy with his possessions and life, but his condition, in reality, is symbolically depicted by a thrush bird. Though Adit thinks himself as a thrush bird with a laurel leaf, the bird actually, “flew out of its nest in the pear tree which Dev had unintentionally disturbed and in a panicked windmill of brown feathers” (48). The panicky bird stands for Adit’s unconscious mind which is disturbed by Dev’s attraction for the London life. Unconsciously, he knows that he is not holding anything like laurel leaf which suggests security and a sense of belonging. His mental insecurity and panic are aptly symbolized by the panicky bird. Adit and Sarah are more realized characters. Adit claims that he is not in dilemma and he lives for the moment, without worrying and thinking. But this urbanite self, the lover of the steamy smell of the crowded bus and the warmth of an evening pub, finds him in the tortuous
process of change in the later part of the novel. After spending a week end with Sarah’s parents at Hampshire, he is seized by moods of melancholy.

When Dev visits Sarah’s country house with Adit and his friend, he feels happy and gets inner peace: “There’s something about your house that makes one dream, golden dreams, Sarah…” (177). He loves the entire atmosphere of the house and he invigorates his mind. He expresses his romantic reaction to the whole pastoral landscape and its setting reminiscences him of the “stones in Hindu temples that have been touched by so many devout foreheads” (197). He enjoys such a pleasurable place after a long time.

Adit experiences a ghastly moment of shock at a tea-party when Mrs. Roscommon James, his mother-in-law asks him to take his “supper”: “You won’t mind having the sandwiches left over from tea. Will you, Adit? I’m afraid I was so busy with them all afternoon I hadn’t time to cook the proper dinner I had ‘planned’ to give you” (147). Perhaps it is here in Hampshire where his dissatisfaction with England begins.

Sarah, the next important character in the novel, also faces identity crisis. She romantically loves India. She dislikes the English people’s love of privacy and reserve. Her marriage to an Indian shows her love for India and Indian way of life. She does not find it difficult to put up with the insults of her fellow citizens. In fact, she is hung between the two different societies. She never entertains questions about her personal life. To display her letters from India, “to discuss her Indian husband, would have forced her to parade like an impostor, to make claims to a life, an identity that she did not herself feel to be her own” (37). But Julia wondered if she was ashamed of having an Indian
husband why she married him. That she found comfort in the company of Emma, the landlady, who had once been engaged to a young British soldier who had served in India and died there of dysentery is significant.

Sarah, in *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, has been portrayed as a lifeless doll lacking spiritual depth and insight. More attention is given to her English origin rather than to herself. Though Sarah, the wife of Adit who migrated to England, is of Anglo-Saxon origin, she is quite ‘oriental’ in her ways, gentle and submissive. Her marriage to an Indian immigrant makes her very confused because she has to adapt the mixed cultures of the East and West. However, she makes efforts to come to terms with reality. Sarah agrees to come to India with Adit. But the fact is that the East-West conflict affects her relationship with her husband. The sense of alienation looms large in her life and she realizes that her relationship with Adit is fragile for she is apprehensive of a split any time.

Even without getting transplanted physically to another culture, Sarah loses her identity in her own native soil. Unlike Adit and Dev who have willingly uprooted themselves from their native soil, Sarah gets herself alienated from her society through her marriage. Her inter-cultural marriage does not offer her anything grand and fabulous. With her marriage, “she had become nameless, she had shed her name as she had shed her ancestry and identity” (31). The resultant tension, anguish and a sense of guilt withdraw her from her English society and her parents, and bury her inside her self-made cocoon. Her reluctance to discuss her Indian husband before her colleagues shows her
identity crisis and bewilderment and invites the comment, “If she’s that ashamed of having an Indian husband, why did she go and marry him” (37). Sarah feels socially alienated in her own country which creates psychological trauma in her and she feels in her own country, “parading like an imposter, to make claims to a life, an identity that she did not herself feel to be her own” (37). The novel depicts the hostility that Sarah generates among her friends and colleagues by marrying a “Wog”. Sarah also feels sad when she is addressed like “Hurry, hurry, Mrs. Scurry! and “Where’s the fore, pussy cat?” (38). Sarah in ‘Bye-Bye Blackbird’ sacrifices her identity as a British woman at the altar of her marriage with an Indian, Adit. Her husband in fact suffers from cultural alienation. Though he settles in England, he fails to forget his Indianness. He is haunted by the memories of his native land. He decides to come back to India; However, Sarah’s misfortune is greater in comparison with that of Adit. She is an alien in Adit’s social circle. She has seen Indian immigrants in England suffering from feelings of inferiority. She doesn’t desire to be labeled as an Indian. Her problem is rooted in her cross-cultural marriage. Her bewilderment and frustration are the result which, according to Toffler causes, “a breakdown in communication, a misreading of reality, and inability to cope” (Bande 124). She is overwhelmed by the change because she is neither fully involved herself in her husband’s culture nor she adopts herself to her own society. She suffers from dual estrangement. She describes her husband to her friends, “would have forced her parade like and imposter, to make claims to a life, an identity that she did not herself feel her to be her own” (42). She is suffered by inner conflict, identity crisis and loneliness in her native place.
Being a foreigner, Sarah is different from the other female protagonists in the novels of Anita Desai. However, her self-control, the sense of sacrifice and the attempts at compromise are appreciable. For the first time, Desai has taken a working woman as a character in her novels through whom she describes the problems faced by working women in a hostile society. Apparently, Sarah may be a pathetic creature, suffering from alienation yet her courage and stoicism in trying to adjust her qualities to be admired. It is her strong will-power that often comes to her rescue. She does not allow tensions to crop up between Adit and her. She is a silent volcano, not dead, yet not bursting. She understands Dev, she knows her mother well, keeps a balanced relationship with friends and visitors, and shows her feelings to Adit. Right from the beginning, she has been quiet in her response. Dev’s long arguments and heated discussions of other friends never disturb her silence”. Sarah is prepared to make sacrifices for the sake of preserving her marriage.

Sarah also tries to adjust and accommodate without showing the master-slave complex or racial superiority. Yet her culture is isomorphic and she tries to build up a harmonious matrimonial relationship by keeping the past and present to two watertight compartments. Hence, her life becomes mechanical, keeping an emotional distance from anyone and anything. She remains an outsider in her own soil and her acquired nation. Emptiness and dissatisfaction haunt her. Her final decision to follow Adit to India is only relief to her, because in her homeland she considers herself not as a person but as roles –
Mrs. Sen and Sarah and “when she was not playing them, she was nobody” (35). At least in India, she hopes, she will have only one face – Adit’s wife.

Sarah has sacrificed her past to gain a new life. She has deliberately distanced even from her parents to adjust with her new identity. It is difficult to forget the real self but she is hopeful that she will come to life in India. She will not have to play dual roles and ultimately get rid of her despair and anguish. In this novel, one finds that “Desai’s delicate art of exploring human experience and human associations” (Ramulu 37). She acquires social skills to enable herself to deal with different people with different ideologies. She feels a great sense of emptiness and lack of fulfillment, despite the fact that she tries to be an ideal and faithful wife. Sarah suffers between reality and unreality. Her predicament is more intense than that of Adit or Dev. At least, they are aware of their roots. But Sarah has no security even in her own homeland. She is not eager to visit her parents. She meets them only a sense of duty and she constantly gets tension about her unreal life.

Hence, Sarah is affected by tortures of anxiety and insecurity. The split in her is clear in her monologue: “In the centre she sat, feeling the waves rock her and then the fear and the questioning began? Who was she… Both these creatures were frauds, each had a large shadowed element of charade about it… Her face was only a mask, her body only a costume” (34-35). Sarah suffers from inferiority complex. The introvert and brooding nature fears this outcome and to avoid it, she submits to Adit. She is always ready to sacrifice anything to save her marriage. She refuses the promotion in her job in
order to accompany Adit to the East. Anita Desai referring to this novel has observed: “I don’t think anybody’s exile from society can solve any problem. I think basically the problem is how to exist in society and yet maintain one’s individuality rather than suffering from a lack of society and a lack of belonging, that is why exile has never been my theme” (Jain 18). Thus the novel captures the psychological problems of alienated individuals caught in the web of biculturalism or multi-culturalism. Sarah is quite disturbed when Adit desires to return to India. However, she soon decides to go with Adit to India and is well prepared to adjust on an alien soil. Jena rightly comments that “she consciously puts her English self into the background and fits into the garb of an Indian wife. It was not only bidding farewell to England but also to her English self” (27). When finally the train blew steam, blew whistles, rang bells and roared, Sarah clutched at Adit’s arm and momentarily her face lit up with the thrill of a journey and the prospect of a new world.

Sarah searches for her identity in two different cultures. Her problems become acute as her relations to herself turn impersonal. She feels ashamed of herself and also moves away from her real self. It is suggested through her dream. During her parents weekend visit to her house, she dreams that she is carried on the back of a gigantic water-mammoth, “that suddenly rose out of its underwater lair to start burrowing and digging through banks of black mud that flew back into her face no matter how she fought it off, protesting, and very nearly choked her ”(174). It denotes her unconscious terror of the relentless forces of self-pity and self-destructiveness. It is symbolic of her disturbed
psyche. The water-mammoth symbolizes her self-hate. She is smeared with black mud symbolizes her fear of inner process. She is unable to stand up with her own. It indicates Sarah’s wish to hide her identity and not to perceive her genuine self for recognition.

Sarah is aware of her two roles as an English lady and an Indian wife. The freedom necessary for self-identity is not fully recognized because she is acting her roles. When she dramatizes her roles, no one is near to her. She cannot even separate her two roles because both are intermingled: “if only she were allowed to keep her one role apart from the other, one play from the other, she would not feel so cut and slashed into living, bleeding pieces. Apart, apart, the enviable, cool, clear quiet state of apartness” (43). The discovery of the falseness of her situation is a positive step towards establishing a contact with the self. She wishes to discard the masks and she wants to be true and sincere to self. She wants to be genuine to adopt her identity either British or Indian. She wonders, “if she would ever be allowed to step off the stage, leave the theatre and enter a real world-whether English or Indian, she did not care she wanted only its sincerity, its truth.”(39) She remembers her challenges to be face in the future: “there was the baby. There was the voyage. The uprooting” (206). She mentally prepares herself to face her challenges.
When they leave home, Sarah bids farewell to her mother. Adit silently looks at Sarah and also stares at drops of rain out of the window and feels himself, “drained of the brightness of life as though blood had ceased to flow inside him” (175). However, he has overcome his depression in earlier. Now, he is unable to control himself. “But what has happened to him? He cannot tell himself. Who was responsible for such depression? He talks to himself “My mother-in-law hates and despises me. Dev makes fun of the life I lead and the Idea I profess. Therefore, I am angry. I am hurt” (176). He drives in a depressed mood to cross Hampshire fields. At the time, he thinks about India and its culture. He imagines that he is in India. He gradually feels his native land, festivals, celebrations and rural imagery. He eagerly goes to his native land.

In a fit of fancy, Adit screams to see again an Indian sunset. He reminiscences that he had recorded Bismillah Khan’s Shehnai. He can see the Indian landscape even in the outspread of Sarah’s hair. His eagerness is boundless. In the driving, he goes on talk about India and he is proud to be an Indian. He continues that they kept pigeons on the top of roof during the time of puja. Sarah wonders at his attitude, “how he had kept this amount of yearning shut up and enclosed inside him for so long, releasing it now like a dam that releases its water when it is full to bursting” (184). Even Adit did not tell anything about this. Sarah convinces herself that this is not the insult from her country changes his attitude. When Adit and Sarah think about their journey, Dev murmurs, “Make my bed and light and light, I’ll arrive late tonight. Blackbird, bye-bye’” (224).
Through these words, one understands that Dev is ready to accept his life in the alien soil and his practical way of thinking.

Finally the train blew steam, blew whistles, rang bells and roared, Sarah clutched at Adit’s arm and momentarily her face lit up with the thrill of a journey and the prospect of a new world. Anita Desai depicts crisis of identity in the life of an English girl, Sarah. She is the epitome of a woman under stress. She faces her problem in her own soil by marrying an Indian. This novel is a best example of portraying mixed marriage. Desai states: “Of all my novels… the most rooted in experience and the least literary in derivation” (Pandey 107). In the novel, Anita Desai effectively portrays the theme of identity crisis and variety of other issues like alienation, exploitation of the job-seekers, the nostalgia that follows immigration, etc.

In the first two novels, protagonists struggle between life and death. They also revolt against social relationships. They fail in their married life because Maya and Monisha are unable to overcome their problems in their challenging new roles. But Sarah is entirely different in her roles. She convincingly accepts all the roles, first as a working woman in London and house wife of an Indian husband. Even though she is alienated in her own soil, she has self-introspection, self-discovery and compromises herself. She stands firmly to face her problems. As R.S. Sharma remarks, “the blackbird stands both for the temptation and the gloom that this temptation creates for the ex-colonial. It Adit is free of his temptation; Dev is free of his gloom. The novel therefore rightly bids the blackbird a ‘bye-bye’” (92).Adit and Dev have a change of hearts. In the end, Adit leaves
England with his wife and Dev stays on. Desai presents a clear reversal of attitude of these two expatriates.

Desai aims to bring out the complexity of human experience in this novel. 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 identity” (Kher 8). They also should make genuine attempts to integrate with the society of their adoption. Desai inwardly analyses the depths of human psyche with a view to bring out its mysteries, turmoil and chaos. Thus, Anita Desai describes the marginalized Indian in London in this novel. By placing Indian immigrants in a fictional world, Desai focuses not only on Dev’s and Adit’s problems as immigrants but also on all the blackbirds- The Asians. Desai shows the racial predicament which may pose as a big challenge in future in England.

It is a great challenge of writers who writes about immigrant experience on the basis of memory. Desai is an expert among the Indian novelists cut off from their cultural roots. A close study of Desai’s works reveals her struggle for female autonomy played out against the backdrop of the patriarchal cultural pattern. Purnima Mehta in her article titled, “Dehumanization of the Male in Anita Desai’s Fiction,” comments that “Her protagonists … are constantly confronted with the stupendous task of defining their relation to themselves and to their immediate human context” (Dodiya 36). Here Desai deals with expatriate experience of three characters in a effective way. Characters often