

Cultural Labyrinth in Anita Desai's Novel *Bye - Bye Blackbird*

Ahmed Flayih Hassan

English Teacher

Ministry of Education

Diyala Education, Iraq

Email-id: ahmedliterature76@gmail.com

Abstract

Anita Desai, an author from the Indian Diaspora, has charted the problem that afflicts the immigrant community's sensitive soul. Through an objective analysis of *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, this essay also aims to draw attention to these aspects of the book. Desai elucidated the plight of those in Exile and the Diaspora caught amid society's transformational dilemma. The essay attempts, in her masterful style, to represent the Exile's chaos and strife, and it demonstrates how her novel depicts the perspective of Exile literary and Indian Diasporic writing. The main Cultural Labyrinth in the Novel "*Bye Bye Black Bird*" we find Sarah's Conundrum of Self-Esteem, Taking an English Girl as My Wife, The Ultimate Call

Introduction

A labyrinth, taken from the Greek labyrinths, is a complex-like structure with a single path, unlike an actual maze with numerous closely linked paths. Labyrinth synonyms include a maze, network, web, warren, jungle, snarl, tangle, knot wilderness, jungle, and odland, swamp. Mediaeval Crete, the nation of France, Hopi Native Americans, Norway, India, and the British Isles have labyrinths¹. Literary labyrinth, artistic labyrinth. A labyrinth of interconnecting passages: She noticed his workspace after navigating a maze. In *The Labyrinth in History and Society*, Jacques Attali calls a labyrinth among the "most fundamental emblems of thinking by humans anywhere in the world."² From the Renaissance to the Industrial Revolution, linear and rational thought dominated, but now the Internet and new types of nomadism dominate our modern society. Labyrinths symbolise inward and outward journeys. Labyrinths have one passage to the centre and out. You decide to start a journey. You can continue the journey or turn back. Cultural intelligence is a maze. It's not a maze; it's a journey to self-awareness and worldview. In a labyrinth, you go around short, long, and circle edges to reach the centre. Doing so may cause reluctance, confidence, motivation, ease, caution, or introspection. We notice thoughts and emotions in the labyrinth. Carlson stated, "We can simply step back and watch the show. It's like watching a movie." Labyrinths symbolise transformation and growth. Labyrinth walking is an adventure. Listening, risk-taking, and self-challenge transform you. This change expands your worldview. It holds your life's joys, sorrows, successes, and failures. As a metaphor for cultural intelligence, the labyrinth shows that your route is sometimes shared and sometimes yours alone³. Prehistoric labyrinths may have trapped evil spirits or delineated ritual dance paths. Mediaeval labyrinths represented a difficult journey to God with one entry (birth) and one centre (God)⁴.

Penelope Reed Doob says mediaeval and early labyrinths are paradoxical. The maze-treader inside sees a confusing, fractured view, while others outside see the whole picture. Mazes combine structure and disorder, creativity and disorientation, precision and bewilderment, exquisite structure and halting progress. In this stunningly illustrated book, Doob recreates the labyrinth from classical to mediaeval times using textual and pictorial resources. Doob initially investigates many alternative lineages of the maze topos,

demonstrating that ancient chronological and topographical works provide metaphors whereby the labyrinth symbolises magnificent intricacy, while lyrical texts suggest moral duplicity. She then outlines two frequent labyrinth models and their formal implications: the unicursal model, with no false turns, found nearly universally in the visual arts, and the multicursal model, with blind alleys and dead ends, typical of literary texts. As Doob's study of a wide range of materials from the classical period through the Middle Ages suggests, this archetypal confrontation between art and literature's labyrinths unlocks the maze's metaphorical possibilities. She finishes with connected measurements of four "labyrinths of words": Virgil's Aeneid, Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy, Dante's Divine Comedy, and Chaucer's House of Fame, each of which plays with and transforms labyrinth ideas and reflects and responds to its influences. Doob offers new theoretical and historical perspectives on the labyrinth tradition and a complex mediaeval aesthetic that helps us understand structurally difficult early works⁵.

Bye Bye Black Bird

Bye Bye Black Bird honestly examines how exile & interactions between cultures affect relationships. Bye Bye Black Bird joins Dev to London to study. Anita Desai's Bye-Bye Bird depicts Indian immigrants' struggles. Dev studies in Britain. He resides with Adit and Sara and is heartbroken by Indian mistreatment. Moving abroad makes Dev friendlier. Adit and his English wife Sarah visit India when he misses it. He becomes disillusioned as the story progresses. London Indians and English guys alienate him. Men who treat their neighbours like strangers lack empathy. London's silence and emptiness unnerve and alienate Dev. He's secluded. He realises immigrants move west and miss their motherland. "Like an kafka visitor travelling around a pitch-black labyrinth at a prison," he feels stifled in the Tube station. Adit, a Londoner with an English wife, contacts Dev. As Dev seeks work, he faces serious issues. He struggles to acclimatise to the stillness and nothingness of the house, apartments, streets, and crescents. He won't live in a country that insults and rejects him. Adit, his companion, is a "spineless imperialist-lover" and a boot-licker today. Dev feels lost and alienated in a foreign culture. Since his perception and experience differ, Dev becomes alienated. He equates everything to India. He simultaneously plays the baffled stranger, fascinated observer, indignant outsider, and joyful sightseer.

Indo-Anglian Novels: Isolation and Separation

Salman Rashide, Mulk Raj Anand, and Kamala Markandaya have one thing which is common, i.e., alienation, as have Anita Desai and Arun Joshi. These writers have turned within and the focus is a profoundly personal conflict psyche, rather than the open, direct clash between people and forces. Most of the women in the novels are married and have families, yet they still feel isolated and want deeper connections. They're lonely individuals, and their external struggles reflect their inside struggles. In cry, The peacock, Voices in the City, Bye Bye Blackbird, where shall we go this summer, clear light day, and fire on the Mountain, Anita Desai depicts alienation and solitude. These six novels are interesting because they shift from outer realities or social realism to inner mind and psychic tensions, with a market preference to experiment with the novel as an art form and with point of view or perspectives. Her style and visuals make her memorable to readers. Her language is sensuous, sensitive, and loves words. In all her novels, the emphasis shifts from outer the facts or realistic society to the within awareness and clairvoyant conflicts, and an obvious forecasting of tinkering with the written word as an art form and with the different points of view or perspectives makes her novels particularly interesting.

Novel Themes

Modern humanity is suffering. Two global wars destroyed the psyche of individuals in the 21st century. Science, technology, and urbanization overwhelm individuals nowadays. Work ethics and culture separate them from society and themselves. Modern humans face uncertainty, disappointment, obstacles, and irritation due to alienation. The current age is nicknamed "the age of alienation" because separation has become a significant concern."⁶ Today's human feels disconnected from self and surroundings in every situation. Erick Fromm is right: "The alienated individual is not as in touch without himself as he is with any other person." Like other people, he is experienced with the senses and common sense. Still, without being tied to yourself and the external environment outside, productivity". Time and work pressure force people to work like machines. They are too busy making their "secondary self" relevant to think about what constitutes their "primary self."⁷

Anita Desai's primary concern is exile and cultural alienation. 20th century. Universal Exile and Cultural alienation. The novel by Anita Desai depicts exile and cultural alienation. Desai reads minds and understands isolation. Themes victimize her Bye-Bye Black Bird characters. Desai's writings describe uprooted people's ontological instability, conflict, and misery. Her works show her detachment from this issue. Her condition is. Indian soil and European culture from my mother separated my roots. According to the author, now we have two stands⁷. Most of her characters strive for independence and believe that alienation would help them find their identities. Rebellion comes from yearning for Independence.

Exile concept

Exile can relate to economic upheaval, cultural change, and political removal. Exile encompasses all ruptures that drive societal transformation. Critical modernity representation will include expulsion. The exile's dominance in current society and critique is problematic. Culture is social exchange's vitality, not a container. Therefore, culture and exiles must be linked to the constructive and disruptive process of transgression⁹. Anita Desai has always focused on her protagonists' experiences of alienation and exile in her writing. In each of her books, there are a few memorable characters. She has a particular interest in stories with female characters who live in isolated, interior worlds full of existential anxiety and conflicting emotions. When compared to other authors of Indo-English fiction, Anita Desai stands out because she treats each of her characters like a puzzle. Her emphasis on her characters' sense of alienation provides surprising psychological depth. In her work Bye Bye BlackBird, Anita Desai describes the emotional pain of a different group of people who are marginalised in society. It's been claimed, and it's true, that "the conflict between the native blackbird and the immigrant blackbird encompasses issues of estrangement and adaptation that the immigrant must deal with in an alien despite a familiar environment."¹⁰

If exile were merely an objective subject and if empathy were merely a subjective form of understanding, then the exhaustibility of exile and the one-sidedness of empathy would defeat both the author's compulsion to repeat an approach and the resonance of a theme through mere persistence. Empathy broadens one's sense of self by viewing the other person not as a thing to be studied but as a thinking, feeling human being. This process of understanding is more like a trip than a simple accumulation of facts already known to the mind. The process of empathising with another person is similar to going into self-imposed exile, and the word for this coming together and breaking apart, overlapping of the familiar and unfamiliar is metaphor¹¹.

The Isolation Idea

The idea of estrangement may have been there from the beginning of time. It's a broad term for the way in which one person's possessions and identity gradually become foreign to another person. Marx's usage of the term "alienation" stems from that of Georgy Wilhelm Fredrich Hegel, and Marx is the first author to rigorously define and analyze the concept. This is especially true of Marx's early works. Hegel claims that alienation is always an internal process. Understanding one's own unique identity within the context of a broader, often hostile society has been described as the root cause of alienation. Hegel's recognition of alienation as a process of the Geist—wherein the Geist must distance itself from itself in order to gain insight into itself—is significant. Marx flips Hegel's term on its head by turning his attention to workers' material situations¹².

The human in Marx's theory becomes alienated during the working process because, while Hegel is concerned with Geist, Marks advances away from the giestige realm and into the material world. In a perfect working world, a person would be able to make or create something, taking them out of themselves in the process. This implies the worker invests his time, energy, and life into the final product and its production methods, thereby creating his own unique version of the natural world. There was a call for research into and consideration of the sociological trends in both cultures in order to properly grasp the connections between alienation and violence. Famous humanist philosophers have always been keenly interested in and committed to improving the human condition. The human being is the undeniable major and widely acknowledged notion, the key bastion of all actions, study, creations, and truths, both material and spiritual. When a person becomes socially isolated and unable to communicate with others, estrangement may become apparent¹³.

As a result, they act neurotically when confronted with stressful situations. Corresponding sentiments, such as loneliness, sadness, anger, and rejection, will surface as a result. The estrangement of a person's personality in a hostile environment is not the same thing as the estrangement that occurs on a psychological plane. Man's activity and also man's properties and capacities are transformed into something independent and dominant over the person in the social plan or as a social process. A social psychological term, alienation describes interactions in which one person sets themselves against other individuals, groups, and ultimately society as a whole. Sigmund Freud utilised the idea to explain how someone's personality might become abnormal when exposed to a culture that is foreign and antagonistic to man's inherent nature. Again, this leads to the neurotic loss of self that characterises neurotic depersonalization. Therefore, according to Freud, the unconscious governs all actions.

Sarah's Conundrum of Self-Esteem

A clear description of Sarah's identity crisis is to be found in later authorial comment in the novel. Sarah is presented as a sensitive and reserved person. She suffers from agonies when Adit, her husband reveals the credulous side of his character to invite scorn and pity from her relatives, friends, colleagues and acquaintances. Her longing for a Christian marriage explicitly suggests non-belongingness and instability in her marriage. Sarah slowly dies a spiritual death through her intense unfulfilled desire to escape the wordly and drudgery filled world of an English home to become an integral part of an Indian family. Sarah and Adit married together being of two cultures and two countries. Their marriage life is not praiseworthy. Sarah and Adit have difficulty in adjusting to each other's concepts of cleanliness. She does not like Adit's Bengalis music. She cannot join him and his friends in

their conversation, jokes and laughter, remaining a foreigner in the world. She had problems wearing the Indian Sari and Jewellery. It makes each of them groaning in pain at the lack of regard shown by the other. These above facts indicate male Chauvinism in conventional customs.

Taking an English Girl as My Wife

Adit's decision to wed an English girl named Sarah is essential to the plot, as it causes him to face the wrath of the white establishment. She is a clerk at a school, and because she married a brown Asian, she is constantly subject to the teasing and jibes of her co-workers and even the young students. She does her best to avoid talking about her husband and family with her peers, but they take a sick pleasure in asking personal questions about her life. The teacher at her school, Julia, responds with typical British superiority. Even the young people who try to act like their elders are cruel to her. Her students laugh at her and disregard her. The crowd pretended not to see her as she made her way through, but when she reached the other side of the road, she heard a chorus of "Hurray, Hurray, Mrs. Scurry" shouted in her direction. Additionally, "Where's the fire, pussycat?" She suffers abuse from both her co-workers and her students in the office. Everyday life is difficult for her because of the stresses of her interracial marriage. Despite her best efforts, she is unable to rid her life of the fabrications that have been incorporated into it. She feels the constant strain of trying to maintain a false front while living a more authentic life. She feels like she has no place and is tired of pretending. At the novel's climax, she decides to permanently leave England in search of authenticity. She is not at ease in England. Her isolation is a result of the alienation she experiences, which is repeatedly described in the narrative. Sarah has an estrangement crisis after the wedding.

The Ultimate Call

Dev makes up his mind for good that he would not go back to India and try to inspire the masses there. He's gradually getting used to his new surroundings. Adit Sen, a young Indian man and his English wife are his friends. Adit became a teacher after moving to England and then took a part-time position with Blue Skies. As a whole, he enjoys his work. He has developed a sense of belonging to this culture. Adit even groans occasionally: "O England's green and grisly land, I love you and only a Babu khan" The novel's climax alters the course of events. He really misses his Indian friends, family, and food. Like a toddler having a temper tantrum, the desire to witness another Indian sunset suddenly arose in him. He could make out the Indian countryside in Sarah's outspread hair. His most vivid mental images of India revolve around its cuisine, fashion, and culture. Adit realises he is a foreigner among the English and feels estranged from them. In his own words, he is a "stranger, a non-be longer" in the United Kingdom. He and his wife board a boat and head back to India.

Conclusion

English literature's handling of migrants raises the most intriguing issues. Thus, Anita Desai is an outstanding example in a contemporary environment where labyrinth, source, and authenticity form cultural identity. Bye-Bye Black Bird's Anita Desai effectively depicts all three of these characters' isolation and isolation from oneself. The novel develops systematically. Since the unforeseen encounter initially confused the characters in question. They eventually found themselves.

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