

## GLOBALIZATION AND ALIENATION IN THE NOVELS OF ANITA DESAI

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### Abstract-

This research paper focuses the theme of Globalization and Alienation in the novels of Anita Desai. She has made immense contribution to the Indian-English fiction. Writing is a process of self-discovery to go deep into the complexities of existence. She is essentially a psychological novelist. She sees the social realities from a psychological point of view and does not look at them as a social reformer. Her focus of attention is on the inner climate, the climate of sensibility. Due to globalization, it affected the protagonists of her novels; they feel alienated, isolated, separated and detached in this modern world. They live in their own world of imagination. They cannot adjust in this world. *Voices in the City* (1965) is a tragic exploration of personal suffering of Nirode, Monisha and Amla. *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (1971) is an authentic study of human relationship bedeviled by cultural encounters.

**Key Words:** Alienation, Globalization, Isolated, detached, Psychic.

### Introduction

Anita Desai is a distinguished artist of high order and her concern of high order and her concern for human lot has imported appeal to her novels. Globalization is a modern concept. Globalization is the process of interaction among the people, companies and governments worldwide. Globalization has grown due to advances in science and technology. Due to globalization living standard of the people has increased, but with that human beings are detached from each other. Modern age is not only an age of anxiety but an age of alienation as well; where man suffers not only from war, persecution, famine and rain but from inner problem... a conviction of isolation, randomness and meaninglessness in his very existence. The contemporary man is constantly in search of a way in which he can confront a universe which has become disjointed, purposeless and absurd. Most of the Indo-Anglian novelists after the independence show concern about the inner problem of their protagonist resulted due to their cultural alienation or self-alienation. In all her novels Desai deals with the themes of alienation and involvement, love and hate, quest and complacency, and existentialism and materialism, globalization and human psyche. Her fictional world is revelation of a world where man is confronted by the self and the questions of his existence.

Anita Desai in her *Voices in the City* gives us three major characters who are tortured by hollow existence. Consciously or sub-consciously they go deep into their own psyche and expose their inner selves. *Voices in the City* is a sensible representation of a wanton city society. Society shows up the city of Calcutta. The story encompasses about the life of white scholarly Calcutta people which is one of the fundamental structure of innovator composing. Innovator craftsmanship has had extraordinary relations with the modern city. While they were generative situations for scholarly and social trade, the urban communities were additionally in the meantime novel

situations, conveying inside themselves the many sided quality and strain of modern metropolitan life, which so profoundly underlies modern awareness and present day composing.

Her Nirode is a rootless character without any definite goal in life as he changes his goals one after another. He is obsessed by failure in achieving success in life that creates a void, a sense of emptiness. He finds no difference in love, hate, resistance or compromise, though he is somewhat different at the last stage in his spiritual quest when he suffers a new jolt at Monisha's death :

There was so much he wanted to tell them to reassure them that no outrage had been committed, that Monisha had died from an excess of caring in a five of care and consciously and that they too must accept, with a life intensity, the vigilance of heart and conscience allowing no deed of indifference or in comprehension to drift by, but to seize each moment, each person, each fragment of the world and reverence it with that acute care that had driven Monisha to her splendid death (*Voices* 248).

Amla, his unmarried sister, describes his detachment that makes him a rootless creature in a big city like Calcutta :

In his state of purely detached acceptance of a world not worth realizing, nothing could matter enough to trouble him. In fact it was easier for him to live here where he could rest, in such anonymity, upon the heave, swell, and drift of great black wave, a part of the crusted flotsam on its crest, allowing it to carry him, in perfect indifference and without any certitude of destiny, moving only because the tide made it move, continuing only because it continued. One day it would break on the shore and with it he would sink quickly, silently into the sand (*Voices* 185-86).

Nirode remains a rootless, a wanderer and a misfit. He also does not like to be called a revolutionary he rather loves to be a reactionary. He remains a psychic rebel with his feelings of utmost intensity and absurdity.

Like Nirode, his sister Monisha is also a character who has a miserable psychic. She has a vacuum inside and outside both. Her relation with Jiban, her husband, is marked by loneliness and in-communication. She frantically tries to search for a real meaning in life but she fails. Nothing sustains her, only nothing wise is there in her life. She prefers non-existence to a meaning-less existence. Her hypertension does not help her relate herself meaning fully to the external reality. She fails to combine the ideas of personal freedom, domestic duties and social responsibilities.

Monisha is more and more tormented. She admits that the absence of love element has made both brother and sister all alone. She wants to be free like Nirode, but unlike him she finds it difficult. She withdraws from the family concerns and remains behind the barred windows Dr. Madhusudan Prasad sums up her position in the following lines :

In her existential search, Monisha ultimately discovers that it is the 'absence' of the 'element of love' that has made both brother and sister' such object rebels, such craven tragedious. The insufferable cacophony of overcrowded, apathetic Calcutta, Monisha's claustrophobic and oppressive lack of privacy, her incapacity to bear a child, her total incommunication with her non-chalant husband, the absence of love in her life and the resultant fermenting loneliness within and the suspicion of her in-laws who look on her as a thief—all this terribly tortures her mentally and she shrieks in agony, 'There is no escape from it' and makes her feel the futility of her hollow existence and ultimately drives her to suicide. (Prasad, *Anita Desai* 27)

Amla is also an existential character. She is entirely different from Nirode and Monisha. She tries to opt out of the absurd and lead a happy life attending cocktail parties, dinners and dances. She enjoys conversation with the painter Dharma. Anita Desai portrays her in this manner :

Despite all stimulation of a new experiences, new occupations, new acquaintances, and the mild sweet winter air, this sense of hollowness and futility persisted. Daily it perused her to the office, hid quietly under the mouthpiece of her telephone, shook—ever so slightly the tip of her pencil as she traced the severe lines of a well draped sari, then engulfed her in the evenings when she attended parties at which she still knew no one well, and at night when she tried to compose her unsteady thoughts for sleep (*Voices* 157-58).

Monisha's suicide and Nirode's relentless efforts to obliterate self identity make Amla apathetic and alienated from her mother. The novelist succeeds in portraying the individual human relationship against the backdrop of a cosmopolitan consciousness. She also records the growth of individual consciousness from a cynical sense of loss of identity to the mystical realization of the meaning of existence. We agree with the novelist when she says, "Neither Nirode nor Amla actually escape from their dilemmas, do they ? I see art as an exploration, an enquiry, not an escape." (Shrivastava, *Desai at work* 22)

*Bye-bye Black Bird*, is a unique creation which has described on the landscape of cultural social system brought by globalization. It is a mirror of a social relationship. One way, it has reflected cross cultural conflicts and on the other way it has pinpointed feeling of isolation and loneliness. We also have Anita Desai's deep existential concerns exploring adjustment, belonging and ultimate decision in the lives of three major characters Dev, Adit and Sarah. Desai captures the conflict in fictional forms through Dev, "one of those eternal immigrants, who can never accept their new homes and continue to walk the streets like strangers in enemy territory, frozen, listless, but dutifully trying to be busy, unobtrusive and, however specifically to belong." (Desai, *Bye* 208)

Dev has come to study at the London School of Economics. His contact begins right from Adit's house who has settled in London with an English wife Sarah. There the cultural differences expand and Dev moves out looking for a job. He undergoes various experiences and cultural shock. He recognizes the people, their faces. It is rather the gap between the expected and the immediately known that disturbs him. He is self-conscious of his identity which he does not find there. This crisis of identity is also for Dev, Adit and Sarah. Dev wanders in the London streets in search of his new identity. Thus, London reflects many psychic stages that he undergoes before he discovers his affinity in the countryside. In this wide world he finds himself alienated. He is rootless like SindiOberoi of *The Foreigner*. Educated in London Dev feels like an outsider, a foreigner, and an immigrant. Desai points out his real position :

The menacing slither of escalators strikes panic into a speechless Dev as he swept down with an awful sensation of being taken where he does not want to go. Down, down and further down—like Alice falling, falling down the rabbit hole, like a kafka stranger wandering through the dark labyrinth of a prison. On the platform with black lights glaring at the cold, white tiles all around, he stands fearfully with his fellow travelers and darts horrified glances at the strange looks of these people. In a panic he throws himself into the tube that has come sleeping like a long worm (*Bye* 66).

The self is a product of the social and cultural forces and its division has its own function. A sense of unreality haunts Sarah in *Bye-Bye Blackbird*. She worries and wonders about her identity. Her two roles do not seem to match and she feels like an imposter while playing the role of an English Secretary and an Indian wife. Her situation is more complex than that of Adit. As Sarah is practical and balanced she faces the reality boldly, but at times she seems divided to decide which is her real self.

Adit and Dev have the choice to opt for their true circumstances, Sarah has no choice and as such she has to follow her husband. Adit, in seeking his own self, is totally unaware of the loss of self that his decision hurts Sarah. The black bird here stands for the temptation and gloom that it creates.

With the advancement of science and technology, world is getting closer but the humans are moving away from each other. Every single protagonist of Anita Desai's novels has that potential where they could have lived their life peacefully but due to their inner conflicts with their self, cross cultural aspects, less emotional attachment, more attracted towards physical pleasure make them suffer mentally.

### **Conclusion**

Globalization is associated with rapid and significant human changes. The movement of the people from rural to urban areas has accelerated and the growth of the cities in the developing world especially is linked to substandard living for many. Family disruption and domestic violence are increasing. There is a concern that competitiveness introduced by globalization is leading to more individualistic societies. On the other hand, rapid change can encourage fundamentalism, a desire for the past and a loss of tolerance for differences in religion and culture. The nation, state, individual is losing influence relative to global economic pressures and in societies, there is failure or hesitation to develop social policies. All these changes increase the likelihood the vulnerable people will be exploited. Anita Desai presents the major theme of alienation to literary treatment adequately in her novels. In Anita Desai most protagonists show a marked tendency towards neurotic behavior. She is also interested in peculiar characters rather than everyday average ones. To her characters there is no sense of contentment at all but when they realize that they have to live they compromise. The picture of man-woman relation is never satisfying. The real self in her novels acquires significance and it motivates us to seek a separate identity of our own. So, it may be concluded that in her different novels Anita Desai has portrayed different facets of human psyche. She explores the anguish of individual living in modern society.

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