



THE VARIOUS ASPECTS OF MIGRATION IN THE SELECTED WORKS OF ANITA DESAI AND KIRAN DESAI

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the various aspects of migration in the selected works of women writers with reference to the novels of Anita Desai and Kiran Desai. While Anita Desai's novels reflect the social reality, Kiran's novels manages to explore every contemporary international issue. Anita Desai is the one novelist who concentrates more on the exploration of modern Indian society and sensibility. She observes the realities from a psychological perspective. Truthfulness is its motto, realism is its animating principle.

Anita Desai's major themes are human relationships, alienation, migration, loneliness, lack of communication, East West Encounter, violence and death. Her novels unfold the inner realities and psychic reverberations of her characters and tell the traumatic tales of blunted human relationships. The novels are certainly reflective of social realities. She is keen on projecting the social world.

Being the daughter of representative of Indian novelist, Kiran Desai has won the Booker prize, where her mother could not succeed though Anita Desai's novel was listed thrice. Kiran walked on the foot steps of her mother. She continued along the contours marked by her mother's experience and the way of writing. The aim of the social realities depicted in the novels of Anita Desai and Kiran Desai.

"It is clear to those of us who have read Anita Desai that Kiran has learned from her mother's work." Both write not just about India but about Indian communities in the world. The remarkable thing about Kiran is that she is aware of Anglo-Indian inheritance but she does something pioneering contemporary issues. While her mother is interested in exploring the social realities, she is more interested in the social upheavals. Both writers present the impact of migration in their married life.

Key words:

consciousness, feministic, migration, protagonist, reference, sensibility

India is a country that is home to one of the most linguistically diverse communities on the planet with many languages and hundreds of dialects and evolved in various cultures. The literatures from this country include languages that have evolved, changed and have been passed down through generations and translated to English and other tongues, so that the wider global audience can enjoy and study a vast array of texts, each with its own rich history. Diasporic Indian Women writers examine what migration resulted in. Particular self-expressions and externalizations are sometimes careful choices that each character makes to deal with the consequences and situations they are in, in the context of the place that they live. This causes them to respond to and engage differently with the world around them. Further, these texts are significant in that they primarily feature is deals with the women characters who are all connected by their culturally-circumscribed gender roles. They each face a unique set of challenges as women in their respective societies. They demonstrate their agency differently, they are all bound by their amorphousness, mutability and common experiences of handling the day-to-day obstacles and spectral violences inflicted by their historical and

colonial pasts. The intention is to also call attention to how diasporic women's agency is represented differently over evolving traditions of their native societies.

“Narratives of gender are too often based on the white, middle-class, female experience, while narratives of race are based often on the black male experience” (Crenshaw 1991).

The entire globe is connected by the powerful network called Indian diaspora. Tukaram Narayan states that,

“The diasporic Indian is like banyan tree, the traditional symbol of the Indian way of life, he spreads out his roots in several soils, drawing nourishment from one when the rest dry up. Far from being homeless, he has several homes and that is the only way he has increasingly comes to feel at home in the world.” (1)

Among these writers Anita Desai is one of the leading writers in diasporic literature as her mother is German Christian and father is Bengali Indian. In her novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird* she has successfully illustrated migrated Indian characters.

Anita Desai's novels are concerned with a woman's search for her identity - an exploration into the female psyche. Her protagonists undergo an arduous journey to discover themselves and this leads them through a maze of self-doubts and fears. In her novels, she depicts woman in myriad roles - wife, mother, daughter and an individual in her own right. She dexterously delineates all kinds of visible and invisible pressures that kept Indian women suffocated for long. Like Shashi Deshpande, Manju Kapur and Arundati Roy focuses on the plight of the women in the society and the marathon struggle for seeking the sense of identity in a male-dominated conservative framework. What is interesting to note in the novels of these two women writers is their primary concern for women in dealing with the theme of incompatibility in marriage and the marital discord that seriously affects the whole family relationships. They present artistically the plight of their characters with their oddities and limitations in their respective novels. They have feminist concerns and this is evident in their choice of themes and treatment of characters in their novels.

Bye-Bye, Blackbird:

The background of Anita Desai's novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird* is set in England. This diasporic novel focuses on the immigrants and it brings out the contrast between their own country, India and their settled country, England. In this novel Anita Desai describes the physical as well as psychological problems of the Indian immigrants and their difficulties in England

Desai's third novel *Bye-Bye, Blackbird* (1971) revolves around the accommodation and feelings of alienation by an immigrant. Desai's mixed feelings of love and hatred of immigrants towards the country of their adoption puts the novel in the line of award winning novels. The compound 'blackbird' refers to the immigrants to whom the countries of their inhabitation, now or then, say 'bye-bye'. The novel is divided into three parts: Arrival, Discovery and Recognition and Departure. Dev comes to England for higher studies. There he stays with Aditi and Sarah, leaves study in search of job but when he finds himself unable to find a job. He starts thinking of leaving for India. Isolation, alienation and identity crises Sarah's search for the identity are the major themes of the novel.

'*Bye-Bye, Blackbird*' deals with the migration of the Indians to England and the emotional disturbances experienced by them in England. It observes the psychological process of acculturation to an alien soil, and projects an evolutionary progression. The theme is based on the problematic life of the immigrants. The unwanted black-bird Dev feels the unpleasantness of the English life lack of suitable posts for the black, variation of behaviour in market places. He comes to England for higher studies, feels an alien. The difference between reality and expectation disturbs him and makes him feel self-conscious. He is rejected by the country where he chooses to live. He gives vent to his feelings candidly when he tells Aditi: "I wouldn't live in a country where I was insulted and unwanted." (BBB, 1971, 18) Prompted by an urge for emotional identification with his new home, he struggles to discover his identity in silent and strange milieu. Stranded between acceptance and rejection, he is tortured intellectually and emotionally. London makes him aware that he does not belong to the world which, he thinks about his source of conscious existence. It is this 'otherness' in him that alienates him. In spite of the rejection by the country he discovers the attraction London holds for him and decides to stay in England. His emotional identification with the English Countryside produces a vital change in him.

Aditi is an Indian, but he has married an English Girl Sarah. Because he has settled down in England. He is very satisfied and pleased in the beginning. But he becomes aware of his otherness after his visit to the in-laws and the people of the country. He is repelled by the situation. When war is declared, Aditi recalls the Hindu-Muslim riots in Calcutta in 1947, when Hindus and Muslims killed one another, burnt one another's houses and raped one another's wives. He imagines the same scene repeated again in the war that is going on. The war makes severe homesickness in him and urges him to leave behind the unperturbed that he has made for himself. At last when he finds himself that it is impossible to stay in England, he behaves in an extremely practical manner. He has picked up his baggage and together with Sarah leave for India immediately.

Sarah is in complete loneliness. She married an Indian brown man. And in doing so she has broken the social code of the British society by marrying a person from India. Her marriage to Adit alienates her from her own culture and even from her individual self. Her main problem is to discover her identity and attain self-actualization. But she fails in these and goes through the agony of loss of identity silently. The significant thing about Sarah is that she is a devoted wife and even though she undergoes suffering and mental torture. She doesn't hesitate to leave her native country and go for a good tour to India. At the time of going away she felt all the ache of saying Good-Bye to her past twenty four years.

Sarah is alien to Adit's land after leaving the England. She is well aware of the tarried oriental heat and ugliness. Her anguish is torment of loneliness. The reasons why she avoids society and loves solitude, have been analysed by Usha Bande in these word : After wedding, her reticence turns into aloofness. Sarah loses her zest to participate in living, apathy pervades her and she feels empty, and ineffectual in directing her life. Sarah's reactions are more against racial discrimination. It has than against the dullness of the physical world. But she is involved in some kind of job outside her home. Her work in the school office keeps her busy and she does not find too much time thinking about herself. She is realistic and even her sense of alienation which comes from marrying an Indian does not drive her to maribic delusion and tragic loss. However, Sarah is practical and balanced and hence faces the reality boldly and rationally. All the time we find her grow from strength to strength. The good thing in this novel is that the feeling of utter hopelessness despair and destruction is absent.

The Inheritance of Loss:

Kiran Desai wrote this novel in 2006. It gives worldwide recognition, came her sophomore novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*, which won her the 2006 Booker Prize. Nakasha Ahmad comments: Desai might not be the first desi Booker prize winner - she follows the esteemed footsteps of Arundhati Roy, V.S. Naipaul and Salman Rushdie - but at 35, she is the youngest winner ever. The inheritance of a literary life, however, is one that comes from her mother, a great novelist Anita Desai. She herself has been shortlisted for the Booker Prize several times. (Nakasha. "Legacies. Loss & Literature")

It focuses on the fate of a few powerless individual women. Kiran Desai's novel explores intimacy and insight just about every contemporary international issue such as economic inequality, globalization, fundamentalism, migration, multiculturalism, terrorist violence and suppression of women. The life of Biju is being shown, the son of Sai's grandfather's cook. He belongs to the shadow class of illegal immigrants in New York and spends much of his time escaping the authorities, moving from one ill-paid job to another.

Today's multicultural societies have been challenged. Prejudice and intolerance especially in connection with differences in race and civilization have been demanding and becoming problematic. Due to variations in culture, religious background and gender roles have been proven difficult in relation to western ideas and other cultures. Eventually, the question of class has been of significance not only in respect of professional skills and social status in the country of origin but also regarding how immigrants settle and integrate into a new country.

The major portion of the novel covers India in the year 1986, a period of great turmoil and topsy-turvy in the region of India where the story is set. Here, where India blurred into Bhutan and Sikkim and the army did pull-ups and push-ups, maintaining their tanks with khaki paint in case the Chinese grew hungry for more territory than Tibet. It had always been a messy map. The papers sounded resigned. A great amount of wairing, betraying, bartering had occurred between Nepal, England, Tibet, India, Sikkim, Bhutan. Darjeeling stolen from here, Kalimpong plucked from there, despite, ah, despite the mist charging downs like a dragon, dissolving, making, undoing and ridiculous the drawing of borders. At the outset, it is clear that the country i.e. India and her population is feeling a profound sense of alienation. It is an estrangement from one's family, language and history, alienation from society and alienation from the self as proposed by Melvin Seeman. People cry out for an identity of their own, fighting among themselves and claiming ground for their own existence. They fight for as a nation and as individuals. Desai has wonderfully shown the human predicament and their sense of alienation, through "illuminating the pain of exile, the ambiguities of post-colonialism and the blinding desire for a better life." Desai's novel comprises themes like migration, alienation, multiculturalism, cultural aspects, religion, economic inequality, fundamentalism and terrorist violence. The title of *The Inheritance of Loss* gives negative associations with alienation by the use of the word "loss." The title, therefore, reflects an important aspect of the novel: "Could fulfilment ever be felt as deeply as loss?" (*TJOL*, 2006, 2).

The theme of alienation is presented throughout the novel, in particular in the sense of losing one's pride and respect. Towards the end of the novel most of the characters suffer from a sense of loss. In *The Inheritance of Loss*, Kiran Desai tells the story of Sai who lives with her grandfather Jemubhai, a retired judge, in Kalimpong on the Indian side of the Himalayas and in the foot hills of Mount Kanchenjunga. At the same time, Desai reveals the life of Biju, the cook's son in the judge's household, who works as an illegal immigrant in New York. The novel provides vivid descriptions of alienated individuals living in different places. The two Bengali sisters Lola and Noni yearn for their past and both arc presented as delicate human beings in search for love and happiness. Furthermore, the character of Gyan in the novel introduces the reader to some of the history of Nepal.

The novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*, set in Kalimpong, a hill station in the Himalayan foothills, is the story of Jemubhai Patel, a retired judge, and his relationship with his granddaughter, Sai. Sai's love affair with an India-Nepalese, Gyan, is set against the backdrop of the insurgency in the Himalayas by the Gorkha people fighting for their identity.

Another focus of the novel is the life of Biju, the son of the judge's cook. Biju is an illegal immigrant making his way in New York. While his father proudly boasts to neighbours and friends of Biju's success. We see Biju migrates between tedious

jobs, unable to attain legality in the U.S. and struggles to maintain his identity as an Indian. Through the flashback technique, Desai takes us in the 1930s when Jemubhai was subjected to racist violence and humiliation at Cambridge University.

Desai describes *The Inheritance of Loss* as a book that "tries to capture what it means to live between East and West and what it means to be an immigrant" and goes on to say that it also explores at a deeper level "what happens when a Western element is introduced into a country that is not of the West" which happened during the British colonial days in India, and is happening again "with India's new relationship with the states". Her third aim was to write about "What happens when you take people from a poor country and place them in a wealthy one. How does the imbalance between these two worlds change a person's thinking and feeling?". In migration of Biju he faces many difficulties for his existence.

The issues recognized and elaborated by her in *The Inheritance of Loss* explain her journey and opportunities to see and identify various backgrounds closely. As her early life demonstrates that she herself has been a part of multicultural society. She lived in India until the age of 14, then went to England for a year, finally became a permanent resident of the US and thus apparently got to discover the lifestyles, status of women and the associated tribulations of the three countries. I am not sure whether the opportunity of close interaction with three countries has been her inspiration for this novel, but the familiarity with the three distinguishing cultures might have played some role in the development of the script.

Kiran Desai has successfully attempted to portray two different parts of the world and have captured common vital concerns in the novel. It raises necessary emotions, creates humor and develops imagination. It makes the readers laugh and cry at the same time.

Both Mother and daughter have their own different writing styles. Anita is a deceptively quiet writer, Kiran is little bit more showy as a writer. While her mother had to learn how to teach in a different country, she struggles with learning to write. Her prize winning novel *The Inheritance of Loss* is like her mother's. She manages to explore every contemporary issues like migration, its impact and influence over persons and their lives. Both Anita Desai and Kiran Desai surely succeeded in projecting post-colonial Indian society to the English world through their novels.

Anita Desai's heroines exhibit the cosmic emptiness, continual isolation and an awful desolation from which they suffer. They flip the idea that women should be confined to the "four-walls and their primary duty is towards their family".

Conclusion:

Anita Desai has contributed significantly to the literary world in general and to the Indian writing in English in particular by investing her works with a inner voice of women perspective that widens and enlarges the frontiers of thought and wishes is therefore considered a very important literary characteristic by most critics and thinkers. Kiran Desai has given a vivid and clear description of various relations that are found in the postcolonial Indian society. She has even a parallel picture of these relations in India and in the west. Desai has created a picture of different shades of life and relationships that people share in the migrated world.

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