

## Cultural Alienation Reflected in Bharati Mukherjee and Anita Desai's Writings

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### **Abstract:**

Many facets of Indian cultural legacy that their forefathers had brought with them have been preserved through Indian Diasporic Literature. Several authors present a nuanced and frequently contradictory portrait of Indian culture. With her words, Bharati Mukherjee re-creates their history. One of the most renowned Indian Diaspora novels and short story writers is Bharati Mukherjee. Her short stories have the ability to intuit and gauge the actual occurrences based on autobiographical. Characters from several religions, including Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism, are portrayed in her short stories from the collection *Darkness* as they meet unique cultural issues and concerns. Her writing is mostly concerned with the plight of Asian immigrants in North America; with a focus on the changes affecting South Asian women. Anita Desai depicts racial persecution, exile, and east-west cultural dichotomies as well as the quest for identity. In her stories, cultural alienation is portrayed as a result of concerns with rootlessness, a sense of not belonging, and challenges with the clashing cultures of India and America. She thinks that a logical approach, adaptability, and adjustment with the compassion and love for others are necessary to tackle the issues of cultural and emotional estrangement.

**Keywords:** Diaspora, Indian, Culture, Identity, Alienation, rootlessness etc.

Indian Diasporic Writing has conserved various aspects of Indian cultural heritage which had been taken along by their ancestors. Many writers write a complex and often conflicting picture of the culture of India. This paper a sincere attempt to revisit the culture of India represented by Bharati Mukharjee and Anita Desai through short stories from *Darkness* and *Bye-Bye Blackbird* respectively.

The English word 'Diaspora' has been derived from Greek which means "scattering, dispersion" is the migration of a group of people sharing a national and/or ethnic identity,

away from an established or ancestral homeland. The literature written by these writers emphasizes or revisits their homelands through values, cross-cultural arts and literature.

J.A.Cuddon in his 'A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory' defines Diasporic literature as:

“broad term encompasses literature that deals with experiences of migration and exile, and cultural or geographical displacement, most often in the context of post colonialism (q.v.), but also arising from dispersals caused by traumatic historical events such as war and forced transportation.”

Indian Diasporic writers have preserved several aspects of cultural heritage which their ancestors had taken along with them. These writings sometimes paint a complex and often conflicting picture of the culture of India. The best definition has been provided by Dr. Amartya Sen, the Indian Nobel Laureate in Economics believes that the culture of modern India is a complex blend of its historical traditions, influences from the effects of colonialism over centuries and current Western culture - both collaterally and dialectically. He affirms further that western writers usually neglect crucial aspects of Indian culture and traditions and its diversities. The deep-seated heterogeneity of Indian traditions, in different parts of India, is lost in these homogenized descriptions of India. India is not and can never be a homogenous culture. The best example is her intangible heritage.

The diasporic Indian literature indicates an engagement with a milieu of diversity of cultures, languages, histories, people, places, and times. Indian Diasporic writers portray the plight and problems they face in the alien land, their fear of environment and the struggle for their own identity in the intimidating environment. They are positioned in a complex space between two worlds and two cultures. Language and cultures are transformed when they come in contact with the others. These writers wrote about the culture of their homeland at the same time adopt and negotiate with the cultural space of the host land. However, looking at the diasporic literature in a broader perspective it is seen that such literature helps in understanding various cultures, globalizing the global universal peace and breaking the barriers between different countries.

Bharati Mukherjee recreates their past through their writings Bharati Mukherjee is one of the leading Indian Diasporic novelist and short story writer. Her short stories have the power to sense to measure the living experiences of events grounded in autobiography. Her short stories from *Darkness* depict the characters from different religions like Christianity, Islam and Hindu are encountered culturally with their problems in diverse. The major theme throughout her writing centers on the condition of Asian immigrants in North America, with particular attention to the changes taking place in South Asian women in a new world. 'Lady from Lucknow' from the collection of short stories *Darkness* by Bharathi Mukherjee presents the changing status of a woman when she is culturally transplanted through Nafeesa. She is a Muslim woman from Lucknow married to Iqbal who is Engineer working for IBM in Georgia. Though hers was an arranged marriage at the age of seventeen, she had always desired for happiness defying all established taboos. It indirectly

contrasts the puritanical upbringing of Islamic women with her craving for sexual and romantic desires.

The significance of the story does not lie in infidelity but in coincidence of repressive cultural orthodoxy. The message appears to be very clear and loud that the confined virtue due to one's excessive cultural conditioning is always vulnerable. The cultural conflicts in between people of different religious identities can be seen with the story of Husseina who lives next door to Nafeesa . Husseina's father gets to know of his daughter's love affair with a Hindu boy, he beats her to death. In "The Lady from Lucknow" is vividly explores the themes of cultural shock, cultural adaptation interrelated with religions like other stories like ' A Father', 'Saints', and 'Angella' written by Bharati Mukherjee .

Anita Desai is one of the best prominent diasporic female Indian writers, who was born in Deharadun and later migrated to England and America respectively. Anita Desai considers "A woman novelists has to bring something new" (Choudhury 1995) .Her Novel 'Bye Bye Black Bird 'portrays east west Cultural Dichotomies, exile and racial discrimination and search for identity. Bye-Bye, Blackbird authentically studies human relationships tormented by cultural encounters. Bye-Bye Blackbird represents cultural alienation caused due to the problems of rootlessness, a sense of not-belonging and the issues involved in the conflicting cultures of Indian and America. She believes that to solve the problems of cultural and emotional alienation the need for rationalist approach, adaptability and adjustment with compassion, and love for others.

The feeling of alienation is the other side of identity crisis and uncertainty. In the novel "Bye-Bye Blackbird", Dev's alienation and spiritual agony are objectified in his hellish experience in London at the tube station. He is in a dilemma as to whether he stays in London or returns to India. The novelist explains his condition as... "in this growing uncertainty, he feels the divisions inside him divided further and then redivided one more..." it is the world which makes him nostalgic for India. India is that place for him full of familiar faces, sounds and smells. For him, London is a thickly Populated place. As he thinks... "...utterly silent, deserted, a cold wasteland of brick and tile". Even Adit cannot shake the sense of isolation and longing. Adit's in-laws' arrival is what's causing his melancholy. The sudden start of the Indo-Pak war has also made it worse. His nostalgia gradually takes a terrible turn. He feels sick and suffocated in the English environment. He experiences visions like a psychic case. He is disoriented by India's memory. For the Indian twilight, he carves. He longs to see an Indian sunset with rose, orange, pink, and lemon hues in the sky like a young child. He feels so lonesome that he imagines the rivers in India. He also wants to watch an Indian wedding procession, a monkey-wallah, and bullock carts. The main characters are all introverted and not particularly sensitive. Dev dangles in a state of ambiguity.

His issue stems from the manner in which English-speaking immigrants to India are treated. Dev is incredibly excited and agitated. He senses internal conflict. Considering how poorly English people treat him. He suffers insults and mistreatment at the hands of English

people. Even English restrooms are off limits to immigrants from India. The London Docks features restrooms for men, women, and Asian visitors. He can never endure to be unwelcome, thus he wants to go back to India.

Therefore, Dev and Sarah are both looking for their own identities. Dev is an outsider in a foreign land. Sarah, however, is a refugee in her own country. Anita Desai also portrays the attraction with India. Adit feels alienated from England. Dev experienced the same emotion in the novel's first chapters. In the closing chapters of the book, Adit expresses deep affection for his motherland. He opposes western civilization and culture by the book's end. Adit longs to leave the false and unreal life he is now enjoying. Adit's choice to go back to his kin was cemented by the Indo-Pak war. Adit departs England for India with his wife Sarah as a result.

Thus, being torn between acceptance and rejection, Dev and Sarah experience excruciating anguish. we can assume that diasporic Indian writers' keeps their roots linked with India and the entire world for their motherland and Indian human values.

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