



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 4. Issue.2., 2017 (April-June)

INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA  
2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

DESCRIPTION OF IDENTITY CRISIS IN ANITA DESAI'S AND V.S. NAIPAUL'S WRITINGS

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ABSTRACT

*Bye-Bye Blackbird* by Anita Desai projects her own feeling towards Indian migrants settled in London who always struggle for their individual and cultural identity. In the novel "Bye-Bye Blackbird" the character of Adit who immigrates to London but always feels neglected by natives, and discovers loss of identity. Though he is attracted towards English culture and society but neither he is able neither to give up his Indian culture nor to accept foreign culture. His quests for cultural identity force him to go back in his native country. Here Anita Desai's blackbird is itself a metaphor of immigration Adit returns back to India leaving behind her culture and identity. A House for Mr. Biswas by V.S. Naipaul shows feeling of an Indian towards the search of identity in one's own homeland. Mr. Biswas is a man of intense desire and his whole life ends in searching his identity. As we find a house is symbol of identity in "A House for Mr. Biswas" whereas in Anita Desai's 'Bye-Bye Blackbird' birds are of metaphor of two contrary cultures, where identity appears dubious. In the novel of Anita Desai we see blackbird bids good bye to white nest and white bird to black nest. The main objective of this paper is to show how migrants are struggling for their own identity in alien land either by choice or under compulsion.

**Keywords:** Identity, Quest, Migrants, Immigration, Struggle, Exile, Crisis.

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INTRODUCTION

Theorist Erik Erikson coined the term identity crisis and believed that it was one of the most important conflicts people face in development. According to Erikson, an identity crisis is a time of intensive analysis and exploration of different ways of looking at oneself.

Anita Majumdar Desai is the eminent and popular writer. She is one of the best contemporary women writers of Indian fictions in English, and the Emeriti John E. Burchard professor of Humanities at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She has given many famous novels to the world literature. In most of her novel we find the protagonist dealing with quest for identity in one or another way. In *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, Desai captures the immigrant's dilemma on strange new soil in the image of the blackbird. Nostalgia and alienation, rejection and acceptance of the colonizer's identity, are dualities deftly braided together in this work of East-West tensions and oppositions. Desai highlights the psychological problems of Indian immigrants and explores the adjustment difficulties that they face in England. The focus of *Bye-Bye Blackbird* is on Dev

who comes to London to pursue his studies. As the plot develops, one can find him turning into a completely disillusioned man. When Dev,

“Pulled out his watch from under his pillow he was disgusted to find it was barely five o’ clock. He wondered if it had died in the night of inability to acclimatize itself.”

The inability to adjust in new climate is Dev’s own problem. He feels alienated in London from both Indians and English men. There is a lack of sympathy in English men, the silence and hollowness London disturb dev and makes him uneasy and alienated. He finds himself insulted and isolated. Due to this he suffers from identity crisis. The immigrants are not at all happy with their life at England. Dev takes his final decision not to return to India a not to lead the way of the masses there. He slowly and steadily adapts himself to the new environment. His friend Adit Sen, a young man from India lives in England with his English wife. For him England is fertile, luxurious and prosperous. The novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird* which has an international theme in the sense that Adit marries an English girl Sarah and by doing so he incurs the anger of the white society. Ironically, it is not Adit who suffers most on this account but his docile wife Sarah. A clear description of Sarah’s identity crisis is found in the novel.

Sir V.S. Naipaul is a Trinidadian British writer of Indian descent known for his pessimistic novels set in developing, countries. He contributed many works which more or less related to Indian identity. He published *A House for Mr. Biswas* in 1961, where Naipaul took childhood memories of his father for inspiration. It is set in Trinidad, was much more important work and won him major recognition. It centre’s on the main character, Mr. Biswas who attempt to assert his personal identity and establish his independence as symbolized by owning his own house. The theme of rootlessness of an exile and psychological effects of colonialism can be detected in Biswas personal struggle:

“Biswas is everyman, wavering between identity and nonentity and claiming his acquaintance with the rest of them”.

Naipaul’s subsequent novel’s used other national settings but continued to explore the personal and collective alienation experienced in new nation that were struggling to integrate their native and western-colonial heritages.

Mr. Biswas faced a lot of problems including questioning for self-identity and isolation. Humiliation and violence of a protagonist is presented as a psychological trauma of misfortune. His quest for home becomes first of all a personal search for identity. Secondly, a need to reinstate himself within the warm, integrated form of a family. The house symbolically accommodates both these needs. Certain universal implication can be detected in Biswas’ personal struggle. He is trapped into marriage with Shama, daughter of the wealthy Tulsis family. The Tulsis who are keen on absorbing him and are ready to encourage him to surrender his identity in a way challenged Biswas to make something of him so that he can oppose them.

### **Conclusion**

We see that both writers experienced identity crisis in one or other way. In their work we find Indians are struggling for their individual identity either it is on an alien land or on home land. Anita Desai very brilliantly has brought to focus the exile and self-alienation of these three characters in *Bye-Bye Blackbird*. Desai emphasis the life of an Indian in an alien land and their struggle of making identity among white man. Whereas, Naipaul shows all this conflict in one’s own home land. He uses house as a metaphor of identity. The novel is part of Naipaul’s early phase as a novelist when he, through his own place in the world. We find that two main character of the novels i.e Mr. Biswas and Sarah was homeless in their own native country.

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