

Dynamics Of Indian Diaspora Literature: A Panoramic View

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Abstract:

Diaspora Theory has affected the literature of every language of the globe with its multiple characteristics. This literature is commonly referred to as Diasporic or Expatriate Literature. Diasporic Literature is a very broad idea and a paragliding term that involves all those literary works published by writers outside their home nation, but these works are linked to indigenous culture and background. All those authors can be considered as diasporic authors in this broad context, who write outside their nation but through their work stayed linked to their homeland. Diasporic literature has its origins in the sense of loss and alienation resulting from migration and expatriation. Diasporic literature generally deals with alienation, displacement, existential rootlessness, nostalgia, identity quest. Migrants suffer from the pain of being away from their homes, their motherland memories, the anguish of leaving behind everything familiar agonizes migrants' minds. The diasporic Indians, too, are not breaking their ancestral land connection. There is a search for continuity and an astral impulse, an attempt to search for their origins. Settlement in alien territory leads to dislocation for them. Dislocation can be seen as a rupture with the ancient identity. By debating characteristics of expatriate or diasporic literature, the article tried to examine the reflection of Diaspora Theory and its multiple aspects in literature. The Indian contribution to diasporic literature was also evaluated in English.

Keywords: Diaspora, Alienation, Displacement, Existential rootlessness, Identity quest, Dislocation, Indian Literature.

Introduction:

Diaspora Theory has affected the literature of every language of the globe with its multiple characteristics. This literature is commonly referred to as Diasporic or Expatriate Literature. Diasporic Literature is a very broad idea and a paragliding term that involves all those literary works published by writers outside their home nation, but these works are linked to indigenous culture and background. All those authors can be considered as diasporic authors in this broad context, who write outside their nation but through their works stayed linked to their homeland. Diasporic literature deals with alienation, displacement, rootlessness in existence, nostalgia, identity quest. It also discusses problems linked to cultures being amalgamated or disintegrated. It represents the experience of immigrants coming from the settlement of immigrants. Uma Parameswaran described the following;.....first is one of nostalgia for the homeland left behind mingled with fear in a strange land. The second is a phase in which one is busy adjusting to the new environment that there is little creative output. The third phase is the shaping of diaspora existence by involving themselves ethno cultural issues. The fourth is when they have 'arrived' and start participating in the larger world of politics and national issues. (Parameswaran, 165)

The history of Indian diasporic writing is as old as the diaspora itself is interesting to note. Dean Mohamed, who was born in Patna, India, is ascribed the first Indian writing in English. Dean Mahomet's book *The Travels* was released in 1794. It predates the first English

text published by an Indian resident in India by about forty years. Kylas Chunder Dutt's 'Imaginary History' released in 1835 *A Journal of Forty-Eight hours* of the year 1945. The first Indian English novel, Rajmohan's Wife of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, was to be released in 1864 much later. It demonstrates that the Indian Diaspora's contribution to the writing of Indian English is not new. Writers such as See Prasad Naipaul and later Shiva Naipaul, V. S. Naipaul, Cyril Debden, David Debden, Sam Selvon, M.G. Vassanji, Subramanian, K.S. Maniam, Shani Muthoo and Marina Budos play a significant role in this sector. V. S. Naipaul's protagonists, such as Mohun Biswas from *A House for Mr. Biswas* or Ganesh Ramsumair from the *Mystic Masseur*, are examples of people who are centuries away from their initial country, India, but their heritage provides them an understanding of their past. The characters of Naipaul are controlled by an hereditary memory of dislocation, not by real displacement. For them, their indigenous country India is not a geographic space, but an imagination creation. Their predicament as he points out can be clarified in the words of Rushdie; "-- the past is a country, from which we have all emigrated, that its loss is part of our common humanity." (Rushdie, 1991:87)

Old generation literature by diasporic Indian writers such as Raja Rao, G. V. Desani, Santha Rama Rau, Dhal Chandra Rajan, Nirad Chaudhari, Ved Metha, look back primarily at India and hardly ever record their experiences as expatriates away from India. It's as if when they're out of India, these authors found their Indianans. The distance provides separation so necessary to have a clear understanding of their native land. The ancient diaspora of indentured laborers is gradually substituted by the fresh diaspora of International Indian English Writers living in the globe driven by the economy. It is possible to group these contemporary Indian diasporic authors into two distinct groups. The first group involves those who spent portion of their lives in India carrying offshore baggage from their native land. The other group includes those who have been raised outside India since infancy. Only from the outside they had a vision of their nation as an alien location of their origin. Both the writers' group has developed an enviable English literature corpus. These authors explore the theme of displacement, alienation, assimilation, acculturation, etc. while depicting migrant characters in their fiction.

The depiction of dislocated characters by the diasporic Indian writers gains enormous importance when viewed against the vast Indian subcontinent's geopolitical context. Anita Desai's *Bye Blackbird* and Kamala Markandaya's *The Nowhere Man* are two of the earliest novels that efficiently portrayed diasporic Indian characters. These novels show how racial prejudice against Indians isolates the personality in the UK of the 1960s and deepens their feeling of displacement. Bharati Mukherjee's novels like *Wife* and *Jasmine* depict U.S. Indians—the land of both legal and illegal immigrants—before the momentum gained by globalization. In his novel *The Satanic Verses*, Salman Rushdie approaches the migration metaphor by embracing the magic realism method. In her novel *The Mistress of Spices*, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni depicts Tilo, the protagonist, as an exotic personality revealing the pain of the migrant. The novel *The Shadow Lines* by Amitav Ghosh illustrates the magnitude of rootlessness experienced by character born and raised on a foreign land. Amit Chaudhari depicts the life of Indian pupils in Oxford in his novel *Afternoon Raag*. The

beneficial aspect of displacement was also portrayed by these authors. Living as a migrant has advantages, the chance to have a double view to experience various cultural methods. Often this benefit allows diasporic Indians to face the dilemma of dual identities, especially of the second generation. Such ambivalence in their psychology generates existential distress. Second-generation diasporic Indian writers such as Meera Syal, Shashi Tharoor, Hari Kunzru, Sunetra Gupta, Jhumpa Lahiri, etc. have faithfully illustrated the life of first-and second-generation immigrants in the United States. Indian English fiction's excellent authors such as Raja Rao, Mulkraj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Kamala Markandaya, had a powerful commitment to expose the cruel realities of life to effect the required social change. Nationalism, Partition Poverty, Peasantry, Subjugated Women, Rural-Urban Divide, Eastern-Western Encounter, Feudal Practices, Casteism, and Communalism were some of the themes of their lives. All of them are well known for representing modern Indian life in a realistic manner. Departing from the first generation of Indian English novelists, postmodern Indian English novelists have focused on a whole fresh set of themes that are wide-ranging and inclusive as life in the era of globalization is immersed in the evolving questions of globalization and subsequent multiculturalism, feminism, queer theories, diasporic sensitivity, glamour, consumerism, commoditization, upward mobility, erosion of ethical values are some of the primary problems that modern novelists and authors of short stories have raised.

The portrayal of the numerous problems produced by migration and diaspora experiences, such as displacement, alienation, rootlessness, fragmentation, ethnic discrimination, marginalization, identity crisis, cultural conflict, and many others, is mainly depicted in modern Indian Writing in English. The word 'diaspora' was used mainly in conjunction with the dispersal and banishment of Jews from their motherland and their nostalgia for their lost nation and the cultural alienation they encountered in new place societies. However, there was an increase in migration from India in the 17th century. In his early novels *The Mystic Masseur* and *The Mimic Men*, V. S. Naipaul captured very faithfully the nostalgia and longings of such people back to their homelands dislocated in the form of indentured labor. In the 18th and 19th centuries, many individuals were uprooted to serve the British Empire in different areas of the globe. These displaced people's yearnings for their homelands stated for them political freedom. Many Hindus, Muslims and mostly Punjabi Sikhs came to Canada for their job in the early part of the 20th century as they worked in sawmills as lumberjacks. They had to work for poor salaries, suffering from racial hate and discrimination. A fresh element of this life in exile was introduced in India in the post-independence era when many individuals started moving to developed countries on their own accord either to prevent political or financial problems in their native land or to study or as experts called by Gayatri Chakravorty-Spivak as part of 'brain drain.' (162) This move to other nations has continued since then. It is essential to note that the immigrants experience the feeling of unbelonging and displacement in the new territories regardless of the reasons for migration. Although they remain on the margins of most cultures, they experience complicated experiences of anxiety, confusion, yearnings, and ambitions. These Diasporas live in what Homi K Babha calls in the midst of a very agonizing situation, and there is a desire for 'home' that remains a "mythic place of desire in diasporic imagination." (77) They

create' imaginary homelands' from their home country's fragmentary and partial memories. They are going through cultural dilemmas, feeling culturally displaced and endangered by their cultural identity at the ridiculousness of their cultural practices and symbols whose baggage they are carrying with them and trying to keep it. Avtar Brah and Uma Parmeswaran argue that diasporas must cross the psychic boundaries after crossing the political boundaries and create a mark of identification and gratitude in the realistic, historical and political space of the location of relocation as Uma Parmeswaran thinks and argues ; "Both exile and home is here, within the new homeland." (107)

In their literary works, many Indian diaspora writers who write in English and other languages also portrayed certain community, region and culture-specific conflicts in the new relocation lands that illuminate the multiplicity of Indian culture. But their main concern about diaspora problems was dislocation, fragmentation, nostalgia for home, marginalization, ethnic hate, cultural and gender hate, disputes, identity crisis, differences in generation, transformation of subjectivities, the emergence of fresh life patterns with cross-cultural interaction and disintegration. Indian literature on diaspora has raised various issues and aspects of the lives of immigrants. Fictional stories such as Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* (1990), Meera Syal's *Anita and Me* (1996), Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2003), Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices* (1996) showed the Indians residing in England, America and where they emigrated either to advance their economic situation or to pursue employment because of homeland unemployment or better education or better professional possibilities for their kids. Another element that emerges from novels such as *Jasmine* by Bharati Mukherjee and *The Mistress of Spices* by Chitra Divakaruni is the violence and sexual exploitation endured by Indian females at home and at work for multiple purposes. But some of the female characters in these novels also show that they adopt different approaches of resistance to emphasize their identity and live life of self-respect and dignity. We also note that the lives of negligence at home led by the over-occupied immigrant kids and the racial discrimination they endured in social environments and in schools. Meera Syal from the mental anguish of the nine-year-old Meena, Chitra Banerjee-Divakaruni from the psychological repression and beatings hurled daily on Jagjit, a twelve-year-old Sikh boy from white American schoolmates for wearing a turban and considering Paki, show how often Indian immigrants feel exploited, fight hard and look for distinct escape paths to create room for the indigenous culture. Chitra Banerjee- Divakaruni in her novel *The Queen of Dreams* (2004), where a second generation young Sikh man Jaspal receives nasty punches from a few American youths, although he continues to cry that he is an American like them. This is an insecure diaspora identity situation, creating a query before the diaspora identity theorists as to which country truly belongs to the diaspora.

Literary works such as *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri, *Anita and Me* by Meera Syal, *The Queen of Dreams* by Chitra Banerjee- Divakaruni also portrayed the issue of the Indian Diaspora's intergenerational gap. The parents of the first generation expect their children to live by the value system of Indian culture that they impose on them at home through food, clothing, customs, rituals, language, beliefs, etc., but the children who

encounter different cultural environments outside find the latter fascinated, sandwiched between the two cultures.

Some Indian diaspora authors such as Jhumpa Lahiri in *The Namesake* and in her short story *The Last and Final Continent* and Kavita Daswani in her *For Matrimonial Purposes* (2003) have depicted beneficial elements of diaspora experiences that extend the range of perception and alter the subjectivities of their characters. Through their protagonists, they have defined that cultural interaction not only opens fresh paths for them linking with the culture of the new place and their homeland, but also makes them mobile carriers of cultures and ways of thinking to both the territories and more lands, thus generating fresh third cultures and shaping third history. According to Vijay Mishra, the latest advances in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and the fastest means of transport have enabled; “--- the late modern hypermobile diaspora make the cultural assimilation faster, bring global and local cultures together and transplant and reinvent their home cultures in new lands.” (67) In conclusion, it is appropriate to say that Indian diasporic fiction is an important genre depicting in a broad sense the experiences and mentalities of the Indian diaspora. It allows room for debates about Indian immigrants and provides the specific diaspora with emotional security. As representatives of the Indian diaspora, diasporic authors have succeeded in discussing Indian English literature readers in a delicate, unpretentious style while at the same time having a feeling of universal immigration experience. It has also analyzed the Indian contribution to diasporic literature in English.

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