

The Quest for Home in Host Country; documenting experiences of Indian Diaspora's First-generation

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Abstract

This paper aims to critically examine the terms that are more allied with immigrants i.e., 'unhomely new home', 'self-identity' and 'belongingness'. All these are embraced under an umbrella term of Diasporic literature, covering those works composed and written by the authors settled away from their motherland country. But these works carry a connection with their motherland country and native background and culture. Generally, diasporic literature deals with existential rootlessness, alienation, resettlement, quest for identity, nostalgia, hybridity, and homesickness. The questions that plague the diasporic minds are the identity problems like : Who am I, where do I belong, which culture do I represent, am I western etc. This is, what they have experienced from their Diasporic encounter and such discrimination made them feel alienated in their new unhomely 'home'. Whereas diasporic writers may share themes in common, but they may differ based on generations/ages. The writings of the first-generation diasporic writers may be different from the second and third generations. Through the first-generation writers put in the picture about their earlier life and experiences. The second and later generations of the diasporic group in general show a dual identity. Though these generations of the diasporic community consider the nation in which they are born as the home country, the society still sees them as outsiders and henceforth they are entombed in a double-identity consciousness. They are not enthralled by the mode their parents live. It brings about quite a lot of misapprehensions between both generations. The concept of "home" endures to exaggerate inter-generational struggles that exist everywhere within the Diaspora community.

The paper shows how diasporic writers share some common traits: among the originators of the work and their protagonists, how they are engaged in a constant search for their origins. It is a quest for identity and home, nostalgia for the past, yearnings for the lost principles of their ancestors, and a critical sense of their "otherness".

Keywords

Diaspora, Identity, Home, Host, hybridity, First-generation, Otherness.

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This complex issue of identity is merely not because of forceful dislocation and relocation, but there are some who opt for this purposefully in terms of social development and betterment of economic status. It's why a great change is observed in the concept of Diaspora, based upon the technological development and changes in the demography. The diasporic encounter of the drifting generation of post-1965 have diverse views and experiences than the post-1980s and 2000s generation. Besides, the shaping of the Diaspora's existence made them involved more in ethnocultural issues. Culture is one of the prominent factors in Diasporic literature as stated by Jasbir Jain in "The Plural Tradition: Indian English Fiction",

"Diaspora writing now focuses on culture, the differences in cultural heritage and the ability or otherwise of rejecting, discarding or growing with it. Because of the inherent conflicts in the lives of immigrants and the constant beckoning of a person or a historical past, this writing is vibrant with new approaches and strategies." [page81]

Thus, the identities of Diaspora individuals can neither be accompanied to their homeland to which they have an urge to return nor to the country they inhabit. They, certainly, face the dilemma of a hybrid or two-fold identity throughout their journey, which makes their survival and upcoming generations living very difficult. This is an audacious experience applicable to all Indian Diaspora, however their social group, culture, county and religious conviction. Any generous writers of Diaspora have the sincere power of the contemporary literary thoughts in the regeneration of the individual's predicament in the milieu of alienation, exile, immigration, expulsion and the quest for identity.

Therefore, diasporic consciousness is the most prevailing experience in the world literature that encompasses the mental aeronautical of diasporas who persistently try to streamline their present on the basis of the past that occupies them. Their search for the past, dislocation, and marginalization in the host country and the acculturation into the culture of the adopted country conveys the ambivalent state of conflicting feelings. The Indian diaspora writers have enrichingly maintained the quality of creative writing in English with their literary contributions. Indian diasporas have been concentrating in their writings on reinventing India by signifying complexities of another cultivation, homesickness, surviving identity crisis, cultural assimilation and impulse for existence. They dive profoundly into the realm of creative power to describe something fairly different and distinct from that portrayed by the contemporary novelists. Prominent writers of Indian Diaspora writings comprise V.S. Naipaul, Rohinton Mistry, Bharati Mukherjee, Salman Rushdie,

Jhumpa Lahiri, Amitav Ghosh, Anita Desai, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Uma Parameswaran, Kiran Desai, Anita Rau Badami etc. The process of persistence of the displaced individual/ community between “home of origin” and “world of adoption” is the journey undertaken in the complete process from “alienation” to final “assimilation.”

As Williams and Wanchoo, have mentioned in their chapter ‘Negotiating Des Pardes’:

“Though the naming of the physical landscape continues wherever possible, it is the psychological and emotional naming of the diasporic experience through writing that has taken precedence over the earlier form of naming.” [Page-238]

Established writers like V.S. Naipaul, Jhumpa Lahiri and Bharati Mukherjee and the recent ones like Vikram Seth, Moyez J. Vassanji, Anita Rau Badami, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Kiran Desai have given ample evidence of this process of naming in their works. Their works are filled with the diasporic consciousness, as they experience diasporic issues that vary as per their generations, attitudes, discernments and specific identities. Their apprehensions turn into universal concerns with the exiles’ sense of displacement and rootlessness”. Their works also offer a keen sense of pathos by coping with not only terrestrial displacement but also socio-cultural sense of dislocation. Even presumptuous writings of the diaspora writers vary in accord with the reasons for their shifting, the shared aims among their writings are their sense of guilt for not being able to contribute to any of the societies. The racism, cultural-identical barriers and violence faced by the immigrants are expressed throughout the Diasporic literature. The stiffness of living in between the two unlike worlds is mirrored suitably in their works.

Let’s take examples of a few, firstly, V.S. Naipaul is one of the most celebrated emigrant writers ponders how the marginal culture regulates to a multi-ethnic civilization and how the fluctuating value system makes its impression on the characters. Though he appeals to Indian readers towards India, his receptivity is British because he was raised in Trinidad. In a hypothetical framework presented by Homi K. Bhabha, Naipaul’s works depict the necessary ambivalence, mimicry and in dilemmas marking the lives of refugees those who understand the voidness in their existentialism owing to the loss of their native-cultural identities. His novels are jam-packed with the metaphors of homelessness and represent the divided selves of the stranded diaspora who have been trapped in the subtle realities of the host country or alien land. He remarkably presents the hunt for the roots in his “A House for Mr. Biswas”.

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In this way, Bharti Mukherjee's work goes on to center issues of migration, the migrant's state after migration, and how to locate a space that feels unwelcoming. Her life with identity-first of all as an immigrant from India, then later as an Indian expat in Canada, and finally in the United States as one of its immigrants her closer to the realization of her role, as a settler in this land of immigrants. Bharti Mukherjee is one who writes stories in an invariable setting within Indian scenarios. Literary fictions based on her stories address various ideas surrounding trans-cultural interaction and cultural assimilation, with Mukherjee's works divided according to many scholars into eras, which denote periods that speak of exile and diaspora. In 1988, she has won 'The National Book Critics Circle Award' for "The Middle and Other Stories". Her other works are "Jasmine" and "Wife". 'The Middle Man' and other stories portray the theme of immigration, while 'Jasmine' is the story of a woman who is reluctant to accept the old-fashioned traditional society. Also, the collection of stories *Darkness* (1985) focuses on the immigrant's experiences in the USA.

In addition to the list, the next illustration is of an incomparable writer Salman Rushdie, who critically studies the issue of migrant identity. All his characters along with the author, are migrants in search of an "imaginary homeland". The recurrent themes of all his works are: the search for identity, belongingness and divided selves. The inquisitive residence occupied by the migrant or the exile is the focal point of Rushdie throughout his works. All of the Rushdie's fiction, from his Booker-winning novels, 'Midnight's Children' to the 'Enchantress of Florence' demonstrates migrant terminology. Though the two above-mentioned novels are more political than fictional, their characters are the agents of the subalterns and marginal.

Next, Amitav Ghosh's writing is concerned with more in the epic themes of travel and diaspora, political scuffle and communal violence, history and memory, and love and loss, crossing the generic margins between anthropology and artwork. Diasporic emotional responses can be analyzed here with specific reference to one of his novels 'The Circle of Reason' (1986) and 'The Glass Palace' (2000). However, Amitav Ghosh's diasporic associations are not as crystal clear or forthright as those of his contemporary novelists. While other writers made their homes in other geopolitical spaces, Ghosh's embrace of the diaspora aesthetic is evident in his fundamental denunciation of the purity of cultural identities and the idea of the coherence of "home". Ghosh argues that the Indian diaspora is less likely to harbor a desire for "roots," or the desire to go back to the "homeland," and more on "routes," which represent the capacity to create an identity that is unique for a different cultural space. The nature of diaspora consists of the creation of new identities in a different

cultural space. To prove the statement, Jhumpa Lahiri is the best example. As Lahiri's works are apparent to the notion of being evacuated from the native land and also put importance on the pursuit of amalgamation in the host country. Her characters efforts are portrayed as to become a "new self" without really consenting to go off the "old – self" and thus produce stories that display universal appeal. Lahiri trails contradictory ways in managing the issues of diasporic life which makes her writing a delicate and dignified voice within the Indian and world diasporic literature.

Correspondingly, Anita Desai born to a Bengali father and a German mother, was brought up in India and then she spent major part of her life in India and nowadays lives in the USA. Anita Desai and Bharati Mukherjee scrutinize the themes of seclusion, isolation, dual cultural shock and disintegration of personality in their works. The female characters go through depression and frustration and take extreme steps to assassinate their husbands. Besides nostalgic reminiscences, these writers reconstruct their past through their writings. They give an apprehension to the community life, to local or national politics through their understandings of being alienated, peripheralized and marginalized.

Also, Uma Parameswaran aptly states:

“Most young people whose parents keep to the old ways feel trapped by their differences, not only at school but at home. However, with the resilience of youth, most of them find balance, and some even start appreciating aspects of their heritage culture.”

Uma Parameswaran is considered as a first-generation immigrant from India to Canada. Her works are the constitution of diasporic studies which certifies her Western experience with the Indian pragmatism. In her works she has publicized the shifting concepts of "home and displacement" in the successive generations of migrants. This has positioned her among other notable Diaspora writers. Like many other immigrant authors, she is able to show rich thematic resonance in the immigrant experience, particularly within the context of South Asian Canada, through her focus on themes regarding assimilation and racial identity. Her writings encompass different genres which comprise short stories, plays and poems with shared themes furthermore she has employed her personal experience as direct observation to underline the intensity of social alienation. As observed in this paper, the meaning of diaspora which originated from the Greek, is "to scatter" and "to sow", which advocates both dispersal and settlement. Diaspora focuses on settlement after displacement which is responsible for creating transnational networks. In the post-colonial world, largely pronounced by globalization, international migration is a reality. Thus there are

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abundant groups of people who circumnavigate across the national borders to arrive at their assured land.

Conclusion

Diasporas widen and progress together with not only the original emigrants honored as the first generation but also their preceding generations, the alternate generation, as long as they prefer to or are made to endure as a separate community. This course of conduct is a veritably long-standing. The first and indeed the alternate generation of settlers, those who thrive in Diaspora jottings largely have to come to terms with issues and to be stricken with effects and traumas on the way to their national, gender, artistic, cultural, racial individualities and ethnical identities.

Indian diaspora literature apprehending global consideration moment is classically by and about erudite migrants/settlers or their descendants. It levers subjects like alienation, crisis, discrimination, nostalgia, identity etc. It functions in a cultural space preoccupied by heterogeneity and tries to reconcile with alien realities. A literary network connected with questions of equality and identity, it attempts to adapt to the host country and society. All diasporic fiction, thus, is filled with issues associated with location, movement, crossing border, original home and espoused home and identity. The diaspora writers act like transitional beings moving from one cultural and socio-political setting to another, in a way, reacting equivocally to dual cultures, and making an effort to integrate between the home and the identity. Hence to sum up, Indian Diasporic literature explores the cultural displacement and its impact. The whole diaspora literature can be treated as a result of experiences of immigration. This is especially noteworthy in any analysis of Indian English literature because its diaspora encompasses to almost all parts of the globe.

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