

Genesis of Indian Diaspora: A Brief Survey

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Abstract

Diaspora writings have emerged as the most important discourse in the postmodern era. Consequent upon the ravaging wars, mass migrations and genocidal practices in the contemporary political and social scenarios. Diaspora has appeared as a revisionist phenomenon in the purist framework of globalization. With the increased electronic and technological revolutions, the world has entered into the global current of new millennia in which associations between two countries, even continents, have become effortless. The literature of Indian diaspora has attained extensive global recognition over the past few decades. The Indian diaspora is spread across different parts of the world. According to Edwards, "is considered to be one of the most developed and contributive communities of the world." This collection of pieces of diasporic literature is an import part of studies for students and scholars dealing with exile and immigration, in general post-colonial writing and the diaspora literature of immigration and exile.

Keywords: Trauma, migrant, haunting, post-colonial and identity.

The Indian diaspora is starred by numerous writers that have attained commendable praise and recognition. The literature of Indian Diaspora in fact constitutes major literature studies and valuable cultural texts of the diaspora. If a theoretical framework of the diaspora literature is built then it would probably be based on travel, translation, trauma, specters, recognition and mourning. The literature has created a niche for an ethnic enclave within an alien nation state. This literature of the Indian diaspora in fact has acted as the mouth piece of the diaspora where that has always tried to speak either consciously or unconsciously as a group with a strong sense of displacement (Mavroudi, 467) A term "migrant identity" has become more relevant with the diaspora community with the aid of the literature. The Indian diaspora literature now boasts of wide range of important writers that are based in countries spread across the globe. The countries where Indian diaspora writers have been able to make a remarkable presence include nations like, Denmark, Canada, America and UK. Some of the notable diasporic writers include VS Naipaul, Balachandra Rajan,

M G Vassanji, Jumpa Lahiri, Gautam Malkani, Shiva Naipaul, Tabish Khair and many others. Their presence makes evident the exemplariness of the diaspora and at the same time the kind of traumas faced and tolerated by the people of Diaspora.

There are basically different literary traditions within the Indian diaspora. Though they share certain common resonances that are connected through historical events, racial memories and spiritual affinities, but as individual works, they indeed come up very distinct and challenging insights, depending upon individuality of the writers, followed by different experiences. However, on the other hand, no one can doubt one basic and very core element of Indian diaspora and that is the haunting presence of their very own land, India. Almost every writing piece of the Indian diaspora shares the same feeling of anguish of individual loss, leading to generation of aesthetics and "reworlding" which ultimately underlies and uniforms the entire body of literature.

The Indian diaspora literature is actually helpful in retracing the post colonial form of narratives. These narratives come under the direct scrutiny of complex migrant experience, covering both cultural alienation and lingering nostalgia on one hand cultural hybridization and assimilation on the other. Though the recent and old pieces of diasporic literature are full of concepts related to experience of lost identity the degree and nature varies to great extent. The Indian diasporic writings can actually be divided into two main parts. The first part of literature consists of writers who have migrated from India to foreign lands. These are the people who have actually spent a good part of their life in the country India before they have moved to another country. On the other hand, there is another set of writers who have born in foreign countries but are in constant pursuit for their source of origin. Although both the categories of writers suffer from a deep sense of loss, an identity crisis, the nature and degree is definitely different (Vatuk, 49)³. The first group of writers are major nostalgic in their accounts and descriptions as they are already well aware of the customs and traditions practiced in their homeland. They have received the warmth and closeness back in their own homeland. In

contrast they have also experienced the incipient hostility in their adopted homeland, the experienced the struggles for survival and availing of opportunities in order to make a better living. The writing mainly shows up the tribulations and the emotional turmoil that they have suffered in the adopted country.

Kamala Markandaya's *Nowhere Man* gives a detailed account about the experiences of the first-generation diaspora people. Kamala Markandaya herself was a migrant from India. She carried along with her the memories of her life in India, the culture and tradition in which she was brought up and as a result of which the problems she faced while adjusting with her newly adopted country English. The protagonist of her novel *Nowhere Man* also went through similar such ordeals. The protagonist settles in abroad in his adulthood. The story of the novel brings out some very significant issues that the character had to undergo while living in the alien country. He at one point of time even decided to leave for India but later realized that he is a *Nowhere Man* and has to stay back in the new country. *Bye Bye Black Bird* (1980) of Anita Desai another such novel that tries to unravel the various episodes of soul-searching experience. It is a novel about immigrants who suffer from mixed feelings of both hate and love towards the country of their adoption. In short, the novel deals with the theme of East West encounter.

The second group on the other hand, though not has been bred in India can clearly understand that they are completely not part of the society in which they live. As a result, their writings represent an identity crisis and a constant looking to India in order to dig out their origins and establish belongingness. Indeed one fact cannot be denied at all; the India diaspora writing has shown how migrant population feels and how their emotion works when they are basically in between the thresholds of two worlds, Indian, their country of origin and their adopted land for existence and survival.

On the other hand, the themes of second generation literature have revolved around identity search. Jhumpa Lahiri's *Namesake* (2003) is one of the most famous novels depicting the theme of identity crisis. The novel is mainly about the journey of a confused young second generation born individual who gradually through series of experiences gains maturity and realizes his true identity. Gurjinder Basran's *Everything was Goodbye* (2008) is another novel the depicts the crisis faced by second generation Indians who are brought up in the midst of western world but are expected to maintain Indian tradition and values. The novel is about youngest of the six daughters brought up by a widowed mother. Meena

is a young Indian origin woman who is struggling to find a place in the world. She belongs to a household that still observes age old tradition and culture which is nothing but creating a stifling situation for her as she has a temperament of a young North American Woman. The girl is very much aware of the fact that freedom is an experience which is beyond her reach. On the other hand, she refuses to follow the footsteps of her other sisters, a life which is dictated by tradition. Eventually, in the novel, much against her family norms, she falls in love with a man named Liam. She had to make a very painful choice that ultimately led to very irrevocable and stunning consequences.

The literature of the latest group of diaspora has a probing as well as an insightful understanding. The novels of later group of Indian diaspora act as the foreground of de-territorialisation based on the expatriate sensibility of these new set of authors. It would be notable that these novels of second generation authors has an element of blending of sensibilities quite seamlessly with the various other prominent features consisting of general features of diasporic writing. For example, the trend of individualisation as well as self-definition in the writings of Rushdie, the constant conquest of the feeling of rootlessness in the novels of Jhumpa Lahiri, the aspects related to cultural in-betweenness in the writings of B.Rajan and very special charms of sensibilities of diasporic communities in the writings of V.S Naipaul.

A typical migrant narration becomes the true fiction of self-definition and individualism which can be a kind of travel literature where the event of departure is always forced, featured with endless transit and a rare level of achievement where one is able to arrive to a point where the present is lived by renaming the past. The process of migration basically leads to change. This change is mainly associated to losing of one's own identity. The works of diaspora literature always not found to be recognized by the authors by themselves with the new image but people around them fail to accept any other identity other than the one reflected in their novels. As a result of which, the diasporic authors are found to be experiencing everyday life as a continuous process of oscillation, moving between dream and reality. A migrant author is often seen to be opposing imaging and the fantastic to that western concept of realistic mimesis. According to Feyissa, "the migrant labour is almost forced to experience the world with the aid of imagination". Globalization has heightened the importance of diaspora over the years. India being an economically developing country with aims of becoming one of the global powers, has shown great interest in strengthening ties with the Indian diaspora.

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