

Diaspora Literature with Reference to Indian English Literature**Dr. Sushil Kumar Mishra***Associate Professor and Former Head, Department of English, SRM University, Sonepat, (Haryana) India***Abstract**

Diaspora Literature involves an idea of a homeland, a place from where the displacement occurs and narratives of harsh journeys undertaken on account of economic compulsions. Basically Diaspora is a minority community living in exile or displaced existence. The essay shows that diasporic Indian writing is in some sense also a part of exile literature. By exemplifying writers both from the old Indian Diaspora of indentured labourers and the modern Indian Diaspora of IT technocrats, it shows that despite peculiarities there is an inherent exilic state in all dislocated lives whether it be voluntary or involuntary migration. More importantly, a broad survey of the contributions of the second generation of the modern Indian Diaspora in the field of Indian writing in English depicts certain shift in concerns in comparison to the previous generation and thereby it widens the field of exile literature.

People migrating to another country in exile living peacefully immaterially but lose home birth of Diaspora Literature. 'Diaspora' now also refers to people living outside their traditional homeland. In the tradition of indo-Christian, the fall of Satan from the heaven and humankind's separation from the Garden of Eden, metaphorically the separation from God constitutes diasporic situations. Etymologically, 'Diaspora' with its connotative political weight is drawn from Greek meaning to disperse and signifies a voluntary or forcible movement of the people

Introduction:

Writers of the Indian Diaspora have been at the centre stage in the last decade chiefly because of the theoretical formulation being generated by their works. Language and cultures are transformed when they come in contact with the others. These writers are often pre-occupied with the elements of nostalgia as they seek to locate themselves in new cultures. They write in relation with the culture of their homeland and 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, breaking the barriers between

different countries, globalizing the global and even spreading universal peace.

Diasporic or expatriate writing occupies a place of great significance between countries and cultures. Theories are generated and positions defined in order to construct new identities which further negotiate boundaries and confines that relate to different temporary and spatial metaphors.

This movement causes the dislocation and locations of cultures and individuals harp upon memories. Diasporic writers live on the margins of two countries and create cultural theories.

Interestingly, the terms 'Diaspora', 'exile', 'alienation', 'expatriation', are synonymous and possess an ambiguous status of being

both a refugee and an ambassador. The two roles being different, the diasporic writers attempt at doing justice to both. As a refugee, he seeks security and protection and as an ambassador projects his own culture and helps enhance its comprehensibility.

Migration takes place due to various reasons and in the Indian context the migratory movements were governed by historical, political, economic reasons including higher education, better prospects and marriage. However, the Indian community has shown greater sense of adjustments, adaptability, mobility and accessibility. The sense of homelessness which every immigrant suffers is genuine and intense; but in recent times it has been seen that this concept has been minimized and made less intense through their social networking and sense of solidarity.

The Indian-English writers, notably, Raja Rao became an expatriate before the independence of the country; G. V. Desani was born in Kenya and lived in England, India, and USA; and Kamala Markandaya married an Englishman and lived in Britain (ref. Mehrotra 180, 186, 226). Nirad C. Chaudhuri preferred the English shores because his views were not readily accepted in India. Salman Rushdie's "imaginary homeland" encompasses the world over.

The modern diasporic Indian writers can be grouped into two distinct classes. One class comprises those who have spent a part of their life in India and have carried the baggage of their native land offshore. The other class comprises those who have been bred since childhood outside India. They have had a view of their country only from the outside as an exotic place of

their origin. The writers of the former group have a literal displacement where as those belonging to the latter group find themselves rootless. Both the groups of writers have produced an enviable corpus of English literature. These writers while depicting migrant characters in their fiction explore the theme of displacement and self-fashioning. The diasporic Indian writers' depiction of dislocated characters gains immense importance if seen against the geo-political background of the vast Indian subcontinent. That is precisely why such works have a global readership and an enduring appeal. The diasporic Indian writers have generally dealt with characters from their own displaced community but some of them have also taken a liking for Western characters and they have been convincing in dealing with them. Two of Vikram Seth's novels *The Golden Gate* and *An Equal Music* have the lives of Americans and Europeans respectively.

Indian-English writers like Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Shashi Tharoor, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Sunetra Gupta, Rohinton Mistry, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Hari Kunzru have all made their names while residing abroad.

This aspect is brought out very beautifully by Bhiku Parekh who states: The diasporic Indian is "like the banyan tree, the traditional symbol of the Indian way of life, he spreads out his roots in several soils, drawing nourishment from one when the rest dry up. Far from being homeless, he has several homes, and that is the only way he increasingly comes to feel at home in the world" (106)

The chief characteristic features of the diasporic writings are the quest for

identity, uprooting and re-rooting, insider and outsider syndrome, nostalgia, nagging sense of guilt etc. The diasporic writers turn to their homeland for various reasons. For example V. S. Naipaul who is in a perpetual quest for his roots turns to India for the same. Rushdie visits India to mythologize its history. Mistry visits and re-visits India for a kind of re-vitalization and to re-energize his aching soul. Bharati Mukherjee's childhood memories harken her time and again. All the same it is necessary to realise the importance of cultural encounter, the bicultural pulls which finally helps in the emergence of the new culture. The diasporic writings also known as the 'theories of migrancy' help to generate aesthetic evaluation, negotiate with cultural constructs and aid the emergence of a new hybridism.

Indian Diasporic writings help in many ways and is a powerful network connecting the entire globe. Diasporic literature helps in the circulation of information and in solving many problems too.

It helps to re-discover the commonality and inclusiveness of India. This literature works as a channel to strength the bonds between the different states of India and of India in relation with the other countries at large. Diasporic opinion helps to break through the past alienation and isolation which caused much injustice and abuse of human rights.

It also serves as an outlet to the pent up passions, emotions and feelings, providing a ventilator to grievances and grudges. In other words diasporic literature helps as a cathartic indignation. The welfare and wellbeing of the overseas Indians, a sense of security for them and India's greater

concern for them is brought out through these writings.

The diasporic writings have also helped in casting a new aura around global India and have also contributed in building a novel image of India abroad. All this helps in strengthening bonds between various countries and they begin to relate through historical, cultural, social, traditional and economic ties.

Indian culture tradition, rich heritage and glorifies India.

A famous American travelogue says, "India is the cradle of the human race, the birth place of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend and great grandmother of tradition."

India is a country noted for its unity in diversity. The rich cultural heritage, tradition, rites, rituals, customs, languages, dress and food stand us apart. Further, all this is made accessible to the world at large through the medium of literature. To justify the same, it is best to quote the example of Buddhism and the spread of the same. It was not through conquests or forceful means but through peace and peaceful means that Buddhism spread all through South East Asia and other parts of Asia. The noble ideals and ideologies of the Vedas which were enriched by Buddhism have helped in enhancing the culture and civilization of many countries and today they share the same great Indian thoughts. Now this could not have been possible if not for the medium of literature.

It would be worth quoting Albert Einstein, who said, "We owe a lot to the Indians, who taught us how to count without which no worthwhile scientific discovery could have been made."

India which has always been the store house of knowledge and information can take pride in the greatness and contributions made in the spheres of science, mathematics, medicine, technology, physics, astronomy and much more.

When Prof. Amartya Sen, Noble Laureate for Economics, 1998; was asked why one should be proud of India. He said, “it is because of its tradition, culture, civilization of openness, its inclusiveness, its dynamic interactive civilization, its Sanskrit heritage and much more.” Asking the Indians not to adopt a ‘frog-in-the-well’ attitude, he invited them to open up and interact with the other countries in different fields. The truth is we are not only open but also interactive to others. This intellectual give and take policy has gone on to enrich us and also others because of us. It would not be wrong to say that various countries all around the world have been economically and intellectually enhanced because of us. While the economic benefit has come about due to work force – both physical labour and intellectual work; the intellectual enhancement has come about through and intellectual exercise, much of which is the contributions made by the diasporic literature. Even the Western Countries are greatly pleased and truly indebted to India for all the knowledge and intellectual wealth, so easily accessible. If this was not true, Thoreau would not have stated,

“In the morning, I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmopolitan philosophy of the Bhagavad-Gita, in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seems funny and trivial.”

There are many other landmarks created by the diasporic literature. It has helped to understand and form potentials and core competencies.

Access made available to educational, social, professional opportunities and political empowerment. It has made possible the removal of all kinds of limitations and barriers traditional, cultural, linguistic etc. It ignites and synergies common and shared values in addition to coalition building among the social and political Diaspora.

In addition to strengthening, it also enhances ties and bonds with others countries. To mention a few are the neighbouring countries including Pakistan, China, Bangladesh and other Asian Countries.

Diasporic literature also helps countries to bring about a strategic partnership based on prosperity, security and commitment to freedom and peace.

These are actually a very few features to name. If planned and monitored positively, diasporic literature can also aid to fight larger evils such as terrorism, drug trafficking, environment degradation, combating the spread of contagious disease and actually fighting many other common political and social hurdles.

Looking at it optimistically, diasporic literature also helps in creating good will, a cordial relationship and in spreading values, virtues and universal peace.

Shri A. B. Vajpayee speaking on his expectations from the Pravasi Bharatis, i.e. N.R.Is’ said,

“What we seek is a broader relationship, in fact a partnership among all children of Mother India, so that our country can

emerge as a major global player. We value the role of people of Indian origin as unofficial ambassadors providing a link between India and the rest of the world”.

No doubt, many of the Indians have left their motherland to seek anchor in various other countries. The reason for this movement ranges from indentured labour to seeking better prospects. No matter where we all are scattered across the globe, we are brought closer through the medium of films, songs, concerts and of course the diasporic literature. This literature has helped in providing a link between India and the rest of the world. And this coming together and closer has helped creating tremendous self confidence with a combative spirit. The awareness that they are articulate, artistic, talented, creative, practical and adaptable has also dawned upon them.

In the past, the Indians were intellectually fed on the thoughts of Dickens, Scott and the likes. Today, people all over the world are being nourished by the writers of the Indian Diaspora namely V.S. Naipaul, Rushdie, Mistry, Vikram Seth, Mukherjee, Vassanji etc. The European voyagers, travellers and traders rediscovered the cosmopolitan culture of India. The writers of the Indian Diaspora, through their

literary contributions have greatly enriched the English literature. They have been aiming at re-inventing India through the rhythms of ancient legends, the cadences of mythology, the complexities of another civilization, cultural assimilation and nostalgia. They dive deep into the realms of imaginations and the ocean of memory to paint something quite different and distinct from that portrayed by fellow novelists. The writers of the Indian Diaspora write about India painting the vastness and the complexities of the home country which contains everything in multitudes – multiple truths, multiple crisis, multiple realities and this diversity is portrayed for the world wide reading public.

Conclusion:

Diaspora is therefore, a scattering of the seed in the wind, the fruits of which are a new creation and a fight to survive. Every diasporic movement holds a historical significance, as it carries within itself the kernel of the nations’ history. Diaspora is a journey towards self-realization, self-recognition, self-knowledge and self-definition. There is an element of creativity present in the diasporic writings and this creation stands as a compensation for the many losses suffered. .

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