

Globalised Literature: Diaspora

Abstract

When speaking of 'globalization' it is rare to find two people having same mind, as there exist a consistent variation in approach of every single individual. Today's world is a globalised one. The literature existing is also a globalised one, which under literary term means 'Diaspora literature.' There are people who have fear of cultural /traditional loss when confronted with the process of cultural assimilation. Writers of Diaspora literature have marked such people in their literary works: Bharti Mukherjee, Uma Parmeshwaran, V.S.Naipaul, Margaret Atwood, Chinua Achebe, etc. have talked about people struggling for their identity, people suffering from Diaspora feeling. We just cannot term it as nostalgic or mere thinking of past and lost; it is a flow of thought which arises in every human being who has a change of place and culture. The crisis of identity prevails everywhere in this globalised world. Global as the word suggests means spreading something worldwide and Diaspora means scattered; the words are interrelated undoubtedly. One may think it to be a worldwide scattered /spread literature of today.

Keywords: Globalization, Diaspora, Identity, Nostalgia, Crisis, Culture, Emigrant, Immigrant, Alienation Existence.

Introduction

We all are aware that now it's the third wave of Diaspora. It will not be wrong to say that the term is now over rated. In spite of such a fervent change in the understanding of the concept the base remains the same; the search of identity. It is true people find it not at all challenging to live abroad, but when they dive deep into the reality they undergo certain conflict. The present paper will cover the meaning of Diaspora, its changing concept: Its impact and influence is quite clearly visible in the writings of Uma Parmeshwaran, V.S.Naipaul, Jhumpa Lahiri. The Diaspora writers made the literature globalised. Multiculturalism is a visible fact to prove my words. People are now growing with mix cultures which in literary terms are called *hybridity*, a term given by Mr. Bhabha. Diaspora writings have made literature globalised. The crisis of the identity still lingers in the mind and heart of the dweller. It becomes complicated for him/her to cope with the culture and the society adopted

Aim of the Study

Aim of the study is to highlight the present and past of the people facing diaspora situation. It will also portray characters having positive approach for multiculturalism who are still not happy with the change. This takes them to the situation of identity crisis. The paper aims to pour out the writers and his characters' stream of consciousness.

Review of Literature

Smith and Stares (2007)

The book edited by Hazel Smith and Paul Stares presents empirical case studies from various locations around the world that highlight the complexity of the diaspora phenomenon. Their main claim is that Diasporas can be both peace-makers and peace-wreckers, sometimes even at "one and the same time".

Skrbis (1997)

Diasporas can play a key role in supporting extremist groups. It has been claimed that they engage in what is termed as 'virtual conflict', meaning that they experience the conflict through the internet, telephone and television.

Ashcroft (1999)

In the conventional sense, diaspora signifies a homogeneous entity of geographically displaced people such as indentured labourers or slaves basically under the Empire and often referred to as exiled or expatriates. This standard term also includes the descendants of these expatriates under its ambit.

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Nandy (2001)

Diaspora is a journey that alters the cartography of the self. Diaspora signifies an experience and since besides crossing of geographical boundaries, a leap from one identity to another takes place; it is a spiritual/cultural/social transition as well as transformation

Mishra (1996)

The new Diaspora is the Diaspora of globalization and mobility. Its members live in two worlds simultaneously. Consisting of members who lead hyphenated lives, this diaspora makes its presence felt in the world. It is hyphenated as the self is not identified with any of the two nations in absolute—homeland and adopted. It is a part of multiculturalism taking nourishment from both the adopted as well as the native land. Mishra points out that the new Indian Diaspora “incorporated India into its bordered, de-territorialized experiences within Western nation— states

The criticisms of the early records of globalization have steered in a more critical approach to understanding cross border flows and exchange. Notwithstanding spat over the extent of globalization, what it attempted to describe and how it proposed to conceptualize this had received less discussion. Consequently, globalization was measured as a particular form of expansion, an escalating Westernization of the globe at the length of a particular, largely neo-liberal, curve. While there is an acceptance that globalization involves forms of what academics term ‘time-space compression and distancing’ and the disembedding and re-embedding of institutional norms into different local contexts. (Jessop 2002). There is clearly a complex relationship between the state, forced migration and domestic issues of citizenship and multiculturalism.

Full text

Literature bent by the Diaspora has been an important vicinity of postcolonial theory and criticism. Diaspora literature has spread its web world widely. Literature of all languages has been using this theme as their chief concern to study and analyze the related issues to it. Indian diasporic writers like Homi. K. Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivack, and Aijaz Ahmed are eminent ones to be mentioned in the discussion of the theme like diaspora. Uma Parmeshwaran, V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie are some of the personalities proving them as exemplary of diasporic literature. Diaspora is a literature studying the stream of consciousness of the migrants; people who shun their country, society, culture and their relatives. This globalised form of literature has taken culture, tradition, society, identity as its major themes to be focused on. The mind of the writer or the mind of the character created by the writer undergoes certain confusion and chaos in his/her mind that the situation takes him to the condition of becoming Diaspora. The thought process moving in the mind of such people makes the basis of Diaspora literature. Talking of Diaspora is talking about time and space, mixed culture and identity. Diaspora literature may be mindful of the ancestral native land, but the nostalgia for it has lessened, if not disappeared. Diasporic

literature is, furthermore, occupied by the possibilities of the new location. Finally, it may be written well after the Babylonian exile by Jews who chose not to return. Diasporic living stops short of integration because the community still maintains its idiosyncratic individuality and its status as a marginal people. A simple definition of *diaspora literature*, then, would be works that are written by authors who live outside their native land.

The history of the Diaspora writers is surveyed with interest in the context of the cosmopolitan world order constructed by globalization. Diaspora writers relatively have no geopolitical constraints in formulating national stories as they are conveniently distanced from the spaces they describe. The need to explore Diasporic literature is far more important in the milieu that it is grouped with post colonial literature. As Edward Said quotes, “The number of dislocated people has been constantly on the increase in our times because widespread social and political upheavals have produced “more refugees, migrants, displaced persons and exiles than ever before in history” (Culture and Imperialism 402). Diaspora reconstructions of history have globally been perceived with tremendous interest.

The word diaspora is derivative of the Greek amalgamated verb *dia* and *spiren / speiro (infinitive)*, which means ‘to scatter’ ‘to spread’ or ‘to disperse’. The term is generally applied to people who physically remove themselves from their own country of birth and settle or even stay in a foreign country, but how long one can stay abroad away from their homelands. Diasporic consciousness involves recognition of the positive virtues of retaining a diasporic identity. The conceptual space occupied by diaspora is a disputed territory (Cohen). Robin Cohen describes Diasporas as communities of people living together in one country who “acknowledge that ‘the old country’-a notion often buried deep in language, religion, custom, or folklore-always have some claim on their loyalty and emotions.”(Global Diasporas 9). According to him “a member’s adherence to a diasporic community is demonstrated by an acceptance of an inescapable link with their past migration history and a sense of co-ethnicity with others of a similar background” (9). In recent decades, experts from different disciplines in the social sciences and the humanities have incorporated the term. Diaspora into their discourses is an attempt to represent experiences of displacement. *The creation in 1991 of Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* attests to the prominence achieved by the term as an instrument of analysis. In the Preface to the Journal’s inaugural issue, the editor, Khachig Tololayan, relates the term to a large semantic domain including words like ‘immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest worker, exile community, ethnic community, the vocabulary of transnationalism’ (Tololayan 5). Diasporic literature may be heedful of the ancestral native land, but the nostalgia for it is tapering, if not disappeared. Diasporic literature is, moreover, engaged by the possibilities of the new location. Finally, it may be written well after the Babylonian exile by Jews who

chose not to return. The diasporic writers claim the availability of the past on the basis of the same they create their narratives. The writers like V.S.Naipaul, Uma Parmeshwaran, Amitav Ghosh, Jhumpa Lahiri, Chinua Achebe, Margaret Atwood, Toni Morrison and more have penned their thoughts and experiences in their narratives and other forms of literary genre. Novels like *Sea of poppies*, *Shadow Lines*, *River of Smoke*, and *Glass Palace* are instances of Diaspora elements in them.

Sea of Poppies (2008)

"Sea of Poppies" written by Amitav Ghosh modernizes the first wave of history of Indian Diaspora. It is a significant novel for its rendering of colonialism and the migration of the indentured laborers of North India; specifically to Mauritius in Ghosh's "Sea of Poppies". The annihilation of slavery in 1833, in the British Empire clogged the furnishing of the cheap labor for the plantations of the colonies. Additionally there was an approaching peril to the opium trade because of the new trade regulations by the empire in China. In such historical improvements, the transportation and the conscription of indentured workers from India became a marketable endeavor for the British people of imperialism. The workers had to sign an "agreement" called as *girmit* in the North Indian language; so they were called as *girmitiyas*. The novel "Sea of Poppies" is a chronicle of the *girmitiyas* those who were the first Indian Diaspora. In the novel, "Sea of Poppies" Amitav Ghosh highlights the different Diasporas elements in the early Indian Diaspora. The most important phase of the novel is the loss of the native soil, national and cultural identity because of the migration and how the laborers try to form a new identity in a foreign land. Amitav Ghosh's "Sea of Poppies", the novel in 'Ibis trilogy' is a historical saga set in the time when opium trade was instituting during the colonial British rule. The Diaspora that resulted because of this is now called as the 'old indenture diaspora'. The two forms of diaspora could be seen as the two autonomous archives relatively designated as 'old' and 'new'. The Diaspora features of homelessness, dislocation and alienation are well represented through the character of Ashima in *The Namesake* a novel by Jhumpa Lahiri. In *The Namesake*, Ashima, leaves her home country (India) for America after her marriage with Ashoka. After settling there, she feels lonesome in the isolated area. It is a rented apartment where she starts her life. The life style of the owners of the apartment is different from her Indian way of life. She passes the whole day alone in the apartment as Ashoka, her husband is busy with his studies. In India, her life was filled with a number of relatives but in the U.S.A. she finds no one to exchange a few words even. When she becomes pregnant not a soul was there to give her suggestions. If she had been in India she would have been accompanied by so many elder ladies to take care of her during the pregnancy period. When she gives birth to Gogol, she cries because only she and her husband are there to take care of the baby. Feelings of loneliness make her depressed and emotionally upset. She fails to find any solace from the new society; she is beginning to realize that

this is a sort of lifelong pregnancy – a long-lasting wait, a rigid burden, an unbroken feeling out of sorts. It is an unending responsibility, a digression in what had once been ordinary life, only to discover that previous life has vanished, replaced by something more complicated and demanding. Like pregnancy, being a foreigner, Ashima believes, is something that elicits the same curiosity from strangers, the same combination of pity and respect. (49-50)

About the Diaspora writing Jasbir Jain says, "Language and cultures are transformed as they come into contact with other languages and cultures. The writers who have concentrated on the Indian Diaspora are V. S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Rohinton Mistry, M. G. Vasantji, Bapsi Sidhwa, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri etc. They have tried to write in detail the issues of the immigrants like the identity crisis, racial and cultural conflicts, sense of belongingness, loneliness and alienation. The history of immigration is the history of alienation and its effects. The sense of the loss of the identity is the grass root of Diaspora writings.

V.S. Naipaul first tried for Diaspora writing through his collection of short stories. It lays the establishment for ensuing narratives of the Diaspora. As a Diaspora writer, Rushdie transcends sheer geographical and physical migration dealing with spiritual alienation and rootlessness. The theme of Anita Desai, a remarkable novelist and supporter of a feminine sensibility, has been solitude and alienation. She usually has dealt with personal lives of people in general and women in particular. Bharati Mukherjee's childhood memories harkens her time and again. All the same it is necessary to realize the importance of cultural encounter, the bicultural pulls which finally help in the emergence of the new culture. Diaspora writing elaborates issues such as marginalization, cultural narrowness; social inconsistency, racism, etc. as the migrants are in a predicament whether they should remain with old values with least interface with the mass, or break the barriers and get assimilated with the magnetizing new culture. Dealing with the attractions of home and those of the new, the migrants have an invariable conflict with his self. His old world is complete with myth and tradition; the new world order is flourished with thirst for freedom and independence.

The Diaspora writers turn to their homeland in their writings for various reasons. Literature should remain the faithful representation of contemporary society. So, it is the moral duty of the Diaspora writers to remain faithful while mixing the facts with fiction in their writings. They would be considered, to some extent the flag bearers of the history of their time. Majority of the Diaspora writers write about their own experiences, the problems they face while settling on the new land. The Writers of Indian Diaspora, as William Safran observes: "Continue to relate personally or vicariously, to the homeland in one way or another, and their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defamed by the existence of such a relationship" (Paranjpe) Diaspora led to proliferate literature. Writers were

initially more autobiographical with references to the narration of self. At a later stage they turned toward scholarly writings with studies on Diaspora. Tololayan makes a distinction between these two types of writing by explaining that there are two discourses, named the emic Diaspora and the etic Diaspora. The emic Diaspora refers to the Diaspora that talk about themselves (autobiographical), while the etic refers to scholarly works on Diaspora. He further states that, "The self-study of diasporas produced representations and various forms of self-knowledge, some embodied in quotidian practices, some in public performances and others in oral and written archives and the thriving native language press of groups such as the Armenians and the Chinese"(654). He is of the opinion that Diasporas in the emic discourse generally keep making self-representations by referring to their selves in English. The other matter that is significant in Diaspora studies, according to Tololayan, is the aspect of representation: "Who represents diasporas—the community itself or scholars—matters.(654)

The Diaspora construction of cultural meanings occurs in many areas, such as existing music, film, theatre and dance, but writing is one of the most appealing and premeditated ways in which Diaspora is hypothetically to dislocate the dual traditions of local and global and might raise issues of national, racial and ethnic formulations of identity.

Diaspora writing has produced a great momentous position between countries and cultures. We might call 'Diaspora' as social form, 'Diaspora' as type of consciousness, and 'Diaspora' as mode of cultural production. Majority of works discuss individual/ community attachment to the homeland and the urge to belong in the settled land and as a result of this they reveal a hybrid existence. They are people who are as multicultural as they are multi-lingual. They do not observe themselves as entirely belonging in either culture, and have virtually evolved a sub-culture strange to themselves. They try to take the best from both worlds, but experience the sense of mixture and cultural mess. It is very much appealing that Jhumpa Lahiri is the child of Indian immigrants and that she also crosses borders when she migrates from England, her birth place, to the U.S.A. and became an American citizen. In the *Namesake*, Lahiri's experiences of rising up as a child of immigrants resemble that of her protagonist, Gogol Ganguly. Immigration became blessing in disguise as that makes her a Diaspora writer. In the *Namesake*, she replicates on the Indian Diaspora and creates a sequence of events that reveals the irregularity of the notion of identity and cultural difference in the space of Diaspora." (Lahiri, IOM 198).

The immigrants are those who grow up in two worlds. They are culturally displaced for one or the other reason and therefore the question of identity remains a difficult issue. Jhumpa Lahiri believes that for immigrants (the first generation people), the challenge of exile, the loneliness, the constant sense of alienations, the knowledge of and longing for a lost world are more explicit and distressing than for their children. In writing Diaspora culture suggests the arts,

customs and institutions of a society, state or nation. It helps to distinguish certain people of a society, state or nation from other group of people of a society, state or nation. Certain elements represent markers of identity of a particular culture like food, clothes, language, religion, music, dance, myths, legends, customs, individual community, rites of passage and others. These are retained, discarded or adopted differently at unusual times and places; but a feeling of oneness; a tug of the roots persists even after several years and sometimes centuries. 'The *Namesake*' of Jhumpa Lahiri provides different molds of life among people representing conflicting cultures and worldviews. Lahiri highlights not only the immigrants who leave home to make a new home in the United States but also the continuous procedure of coming and goings that create familial, cultural, linguistic and economic bonds across national borders. Her characters live in between, spanning two worlds, making their individuality transnational. Cultural change is a major dilemma faced by the diasporic community especially by the first generation people. When they try to settle in a new place, they find quite a few changes in the new society. It shocks them and they try to cling to their homeland culture by following it strictly. In *The Namesake*, Ashima and Ashoke find many Bengali friends and try to create their own community there. Often they used to throw parties to their friends in order to meet them. They wait enthusiastically for such gatherings. They try to reinstate their traditions by preparing Indian food, inviting Brahmin for rituals and so on. As Wieviorka states, when a Diaspora community is "constantly rejected or interiorized while only wanting to be included, either socially or culturally, or when this group or this individual is racially discriminated, and demonized under the argument of a supposed cultural different" then the individual or the group is embarrassed and this eventually "leads to a self-definition and behaviors based on this culture and, eventually, racial distinction." (69) In *The Namesake*, characters are incessantly making comparisons between Indian and American life. For Indian immigrants such as Ashima and Ashoke, many aspects of American culture are overseas to them, and they also feel like strangers in American society. As immigrants, Ashima and Ashoke create their own amalgamated culture, a blend of American and Bengali elements. They fight back to maintain certain Indian traditions, while adapting to American customs, such as Christmas, for the sake of their children. Indian-American characters such as Gogol and Moushumi often sense foreign in both India and America, as though they're lost in between the world of their parents and the world in which they were born. A sense of alienation, loneliness and feeling of loss are inextricable for them particularly when news from India comes on phones. Even though they face external problems of identity crisis, their own inner problems like loneliness and alienation cause more suffering to them. They do not mingle with others in the settled society. Their friends are Indians and Bengalis. But at the same time they are not willing to follow the new land's culture completely. At times,

Remarking An Analisation

even when they live in the settled land for a long time, they still consider it as another country. Most of the second generation Diaspora, on the other hand, accept the land in which they are born as their homeland. They are not happy about the way their parents live. It leads to several kinds of misunderstandings between both generations. Edward Said rightly describes the concept of cultures as something distinctive, representative of an exclusive to a certain group or nation in Culture and Imperialism (1993) so as to understand the basic problem with such terms. In *The Namesake* Ashima celebrates all the Hindu festivals and at the same time Western festivals for the sake of her children. It shows the mingling of both the cultures. Ashima and Ashoke are not bothered about Gogol's relationship with the White girls. However, when it comes to marriage, Ashima wishes her son to be married off to a Bengali girl. Said writes: Culture is a concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society's reservoir of the best that has been known and thought, as Matthew Arnold put it in the 1860's Arnold believed that culture palliates it does not altogether neutralizes, the ravage of a modern, aggressive, mercantile and brutalizing urban experience....In time culture comes to be associated, often aggressively, with the nation or the nation or the state, this differentiates 'us from them' almost always with some degree of identity, and a rather combative one at that (Said:1993).Today's fiction celebrates hybridity.The present wave is a new wave of diaspora. All the more it is welcomed by people.

Conclusion

A globalised culture has now emerged and it must battle with the world of assorted societies who do not desire to leave aside their historical essentials which give them individuality. Through *Namesake*, Lahiri sends a crystal-clear message to people who are quite keen on dreaming of settling with strong aspirations for a better future on a foreign land without realizing that this displacement demands greater adaptability in terms of both climate and culture. Every Diaspora movement holds a historical significance, as it carries within itself the core of the nation's history. Diaspora is a journey towards self-realization, self-recognition, self-knowledge and self-definition. There is an element of creativity present in the Diaspora writings and this creation stands as a compensation for the many losses suffered. Indian Diaspora writings

help in many ways and is a powerful network connecting the entire globe. Diaspora literature helps in the circulation of information and in solving many problems too. It helps to re-discover the cohesion and completeness of India. Indian philosophy describes that the world is a family. The process of globalization has not only unsettled people and cultures but has created new identities and affiliations in terms of both conflicts and collaborations.

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