Relevance of Diasporic Literature in the Globalised World: A Study

Dr. Avinash Kumar
Assistant Professor, Department of English, Government College for Women, Mahendergarh, Haryana - 123029, INDIA.

Corresponding Author: raoavi11@gmail.com

www.ijrah.com || Vol. 2 No. 6 (2022): November Issue

ABSTRACT

Today science and technology have shrunk the whole world into a small and assessable global village. In this era of cutthroat competition, people readily avail the opportunity to move to any corner of the world to support themselves, affecting the world’s cultural, political, social, economic and literary trends and issues. One academic issue worth analysing is diasporic literature and its relevance to the globalised world. This paper is motivated by a need to understand the relevance of Diaspora literature in the globalised world. It discusses different dynamics of Diasporic literature, its in-depth analysis, the literary tendencies and practices being observed, diversity of ethnicities, languages and religious traditions, etymological growth, issues of migration, the feelings, problems, solace and the acculturation of the migrating community, hybridity and its effects on the second generation in the aftermath of globalisation. I also intend to speculate on the fleeting notion of quality and how that relates to and affects the globe of our time.

Keywords: diaspora, literature, world, culture, global, relevance, people, migration.

The term 'Diaspora' literally means 'scattering.' It signifies the dispersal of human beings through the migration from a single native land to other continents and nation-states worldwide. The word 'Diaspora' has different connotations. The global phenomenon of Diasporic populations is by no means new but its rising scale in the present century is dynamic and dramatic. The nature and aspects of contemporary Diasporic literature, given the unprecedented and unexpected global reach of technology and media, are also significantly more complicated and ambivalent than the previous ones. Robin Cohen defines the relevance of Diasporic literature in the globalised world as the expressions of people living together in one country who acknowledge that the old country always has some claim on their loyalty and emotions. It is not only the coexistence of multiple cultures and ethnicities but a condition to maintain individuality and self-recognition.

It refers to the Jewish Diaspora who moved from Israel in the sixth and seventh century BC from Jerusalem. The best-known historical Diasporas are Jewish, Armenian, and African communities dispersed because of the slave trade. Though the etymological record of Diaspora began from Greek civilisation, now it's widespread over almost every continent. The causes of the diasporic movement were numerous. It started with slave trading and shifting slaves to distant deserted lands such as the US, Australia, West Indies, etc.; but war, imperialism, religious propaganda and human trafficking were the key reasons. The movement of masses sharing a common ethnic identity was sometimes done forcefully, but later on, people began to move voluntarily in search of work away from their homelands and became residents of new lands. Advanced communication and money flow have helped people adjust to foreign countries easily. Arjun Appadurai has pointed out that large communications networks erode national boundaries even as they promote intense interaction between members of Diaspora communities: Diasporic communities remain local and provincial even as they acquire transnational characteristics.

The Diasporic communities provide an outlet to their wit through different means, and fiction is one way to preserve their identity, resulting in multiculturalism occurring at various levels throughout the whole globe. The diaspora can be categorised into ancient, medieval
and modern. The old refers to labourers, artisans and traders who experienced new lands for work money. In medieval times, British imperialism caused mass movement of artisans, labourers and soldiers. Today skilled people are migrating to developed economies for better ventures, especially from IT, Medicine, Nano and Space Technology, Engineering, Finance and Management sectors. The people are multi-faceted. They can be more than eminent artists, writers, orators, actors, economists, business tycoons, financial experts, etc. They are attracting the world's attention by stepping into more than one role, representing their nation. Hence, the relevance between Diasporic literature and the globalised world is established.

In this context, in research from Manjit Inder Singh, observations are quite right; he says: What happens quite often is somewhat like this: the writer starts with a set or a burden of a real material of life and resolves it into a creative but along the line partly that material gets assimilated into other, parallel and personal recollections to alter its appeal radically One of Naipaul — non-fictional and fictional- as it were answers and echoes other stories, other narratives of travel and reflection to complicate and illuminate a given knowledge of the world (205).

Now comes the point of whether the Diasporic writings represent the native culture. That is true; it is undoubtedly a reflective resource of the psychology and behaviour, problems, solutions and adjustments of the migrants, who are universally scattered. Their ability to affect political, social, cultural, and economic scenarios can't be overlooked. So they find a place in the literature coined by them. Do we have to analyse where we can discover Diasporic literature? Should it be considered a completely different genre of writing? How should it be evaluated? What are the characteristics of a Diasporic text? The answer is that it's readily accessible and close to us. Native writers writing about migrated places can also be compared with foreign writers writing about the reader's land. There are numerous probable combinations of texts, genres and tools.

Present literates born and growing up in England, Australia, USA or Canada have weak connections with their countries but have a distinct voice within the multicultural design of the host country. They master writing a spectrum of ideas on paper. They take pride in calling themselves the host country's residents but always seek the raw material for their writing from their own country. That's true with people of Indian origin too. They long for love, affection, togetherness, dedication, sacrifice, and a joint family. They, too, curse the poverty, terrorism, corruption, population, etc. They, even after being critical and satirical, have an unflinching urge and need to explore India. They do suffer solitude and estrangement. As N. Jayaram rightly explains:

In human migration, two unique factors need to be recognised: migration does not mean the mere physical movement of people. They may retain physical and mental contact with their homeland, often characterised by what is called 'the myth of return' (16).

Diaspora literature has long observed a comprehensive development resulting in refinement and enrichment over years of social and cultural segregation to complete acculturation in the context of globalisation. Since its inception, the basic features remain constant, to say- disbandment from native land, migration to the foreign or alienated land, feeling of segregation, pangs of community memory, a painful struggle to establish in the antagonist culture, hybridity that leads to the ‘third space’ (a condition where the intermingling of cultures happens) and the dilemma of returning to the origin. The early migrants experience such nostalgic yearning, whereas the next generation finds it easy to break the bonding with their original roots. The Diaspora of different countries experienced different outcomes as their history differs. The Asian, the Jewish and the Black Diasporas, as per their race, ethnicity, religion, history, culture and identity, are termed Sojourners, displaced people and bondsmen, respectively. Chinese are now addressed as aliens, the Jewish as strangers and the Blacks as subalterns. The feeling of exile is eminent in all Diasporic writing, and it is the crucial factor of the diaspora, which is undoubtedly eased by the knowledge of languages across borders. It helps to narrow the bridge between cultures. Linguistic identity signifies ownership and identity.

It's a transformation of the sensibility of a person lost in an alien land who constantly gets nostalgic for his past, roots, culture, traditions, language, and religion and shows lingering consciousness of displacement. The migrants of one such country unite to make communities, which later on are joined by the people of similar communities in other countries, creating a composite society. The adopted country's cultural discourse influences the thinking, way of life, priorities, work and identity. So Tsagarouian, a modern outlook on diaspora is aptly conveyed as:

Diasporas should be seen as depending not so much on displacement but on connectivity or the complex nexus of linkages that contemporary transnational dynamics make possible and sustain. Moreover, I suggest that diasporas should be seen not as given communities, a logical, albeit territorialised, an extension of an ethnic or national group, but as imagined communities, continuously reconstructed and reinvented (52).

Most Diasporic writers pen about their personal experiences and more than fifty writers have native roots
in India. The Diasporic creativity is evident in the
writing of R. K. Narayan, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita
Desai, Arundhati Roy, Vikram Seth, Khushwant Singh,
Alan Sealy, Sashi Deshpande, Shobha De, Vikram
Chandra, Amit Choudhury, Githa Hariraran, Amitav
Ghosh, Salman Rushdie and several others.

G.S. Saratchandra, a poet of Diaspora, lives in
America. He got five collections of poetry published:
April in Nanjagud in 1971, Once or Twice in 1974,
Heirloom in 1978, Immigrants of Loss in 1993 and
Family of Mirrors in 1993. He has his lineage from
Nanjagud in the Mysore district of Karnataka, India,
and migrated to Toronto in Canada. He remembers his
"home" in his poems and highlights the racism practised
in Canada. Fate and circumstances had destined him to
be an expatriate poet who kept dwindling between two
cultures, i.e. Hindu and American, at the initial stage, but
later on, he accepted the multicultural society and the
nostalgia for his own culture diminished. The theme of
isolation can also be traced to Jhumpa Lahiri's
Unaccustomed Earth. The same theme is dealt with in
the novel Bye-Bye Blackbird by Anita Desai. The story
also narrates the plight of Indian immigrants in England.
It also describes the theme of marital and cultural
disharmony in a social environment supported by racial
discrimination. Bharti Mukherjee discusses diasporic
issues in her fiction.

Kamla Markandaya's search for national and
personal identity is penned in Possessions and The
Nowhere Man, respectively. Bharati Mukherjee is a
notable Diasporic author whose novels have been
analysed for her style and syntax. Her novels -The Tree
Bride, The Tiger's Daughter, Leave It to Me, Jasmine,
The Holder of the World, Desirable Daughters- and a
few stories try to balance exile and home. She inscribes
her sentiments for being a writer of the Indian Diaspora
and cherishes the melting pot concept of North America.
The prominent theme in her writing centres on the plight
of Asian immigrants in North America and Canada,
specifically the changes in females, especially South
Asian women, in a new challenging world. V.S.Naipaul,
the proud recipient of the Noble Prize (2001), is an
incredible author with Diasporic insight. He was born in
Chaguanas, in Trinidad, to parents of Indian origin and
married an English woman, Patricia Hale. His profound
knowledge of Diasporic agony and search for roots are
conveyed in his fiction. His fictional output is incredible
and immensely appreciated in his two novels - A Way in
the World and A House for Mr Biswas.

Recently immigration has increased, in most
cases, it is a willing and volunteer transfer of people in
search of better livelihood and professional gain, and
diaspora fiction discusses such issues. Especially,
Amitav Ghosh, Meena Alexander, Rohinton Mistry and
Shauna Singh Baldwin explain the labyrinth of hybridity
elaborately. The emphasis has shifted from homeland
orientation to hybridity, fluidity and boundary removal.
Ashcroft remarks,” Most post-colonial writings have
cconcerned themselves with the hybridised nature of post-
colonial culture as a strength rather than a weakness.”
Ghosh's Shadow Lines and Sea of Poppies are on the
same lines. The Indo-Canadian Diaspora is marvellously
mirrored in Mistry's A Fine Balance. Meena Alexander's
Manhattan Music reflects modernity and moves in the
vein of feminism and femininity in the Diaspora. The
reader explores the dynamics of women's individuality,
self and identity in Shauna Singh Baldwin's The Tiger
Claw. One can explore the marginal status and condition
of Indian Diasporas in the Middle East. We can study
fractured identities, torturing and fragmented memories,
which are the factual realities of the modern world
inscribed in Diaspora literature.

The human being is a social animal, and sharing
is inescapable. Pros and cons of modernity, circumstantial
aspects and a search for betterment make a man dependent and conversant with others. Well said; if a person can live alone, he is a God or an animal. Communication is mandatory to learn new from others and to allow others to learn from us to facilitate the
exchange of cultures. That's what Diasporic literature is
doing in the globalised world today. Jasbir Jain aptly
remarks:

Language, in itself, is a border which works
both ways: it acts like a barrier when cultures
need to express themselves in an alien
language, but when these foreign languages
become a bridge enabling a crossing, then
cultures travel and enrich themselves as well as
others (15).

REFERENCES

[1] Appadurai, Arjun. 'Disjuncture and Difference in the
Global Cultural Economy’. Design: Critical and
SOURCES, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2016,
https://doi.org/10.5040/9781472428888.
(Global Diasporas). 1st ed., University of Washington
Subcontinental Writing in English. Rawat
of Migration. Thousand Oaks, Canada, SAGE
[6] Singh, Manjit Inder. Poetics of Alienation and
Identity: V.S.Naipaul and George Laming. Ajanta
Pubns.,India, 1998.
[7] Tsagaroussianou, Roza. Rethinking the Concept of
Diaspora: Mobility, Connectivity and Communication in
a Globalised World. Westminster Papers in
Communication and Culture, vol. 1, no. 1, University of
https://doi.org/10.16997/wpcc.203.