

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



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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 satiric, 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 Tsagarousian, 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 Hariharan, 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 Nanjangud* 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 Nanjangud 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 Mukharjee 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 Nobel 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

concerned 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).

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