

## Concepts, Theories and challenges of Diaspora: A panoptic Approach

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### Abstract

The present paper is intended to deal with Indian Diaspora Literature. The ancient human migrations, the medieval resettlements of warring groups and the modern globalization are the different phases of human quest for the creation of new civilization and also their need for progress and development. Such human movements have generated the concept of diaspora which means human settlements away from their original home land. Thus diaspora signals an engagement with a matrix of diversity of cultures, languages, histories, people, places, and times. The literature of the Indian diaspora comprises an important part of the burgeoning field of Anglophone postcolonial literature. Some of the well-known authors in this area include V.S.Nagpaul, Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, Bharati Mukherjee, Amitav Ghosh, Jhumpa Lahiri, Anita Desai and M.G.Vassanji.

**KEYWORDS:** Diaspora, literature, post colonialism, globalization, diversity.

#### Introduction:

The present paper is intended to deal with Indian Literature. The ancient human migrations, the medieval resettlements of warring groups and the modern globalization are the different phases of human quest for the creation of new civilization and also their need for progress and development such human movements have generated the concept of diaspora which means human settlements away from their original home and.

The word diaspora (from Greek diaspora, “scattering dispersion”) is “the movement, migration, or scattering of people away from an established homeland” or “people dispersed by whatever cause to more than one location”, or “people settled for from their ancestral homelands” (<https://en.wikipedia.org/1>).

Life and literature mirror the uncertain theory that surrounds the man and the migrant fills them with a feeling of panic and anxiety. The ambiguity of the present retrieved by the past grows from fear of the future and records an ongoing social transformation. Diasporic writers depict the plight and problems they face in the alien land, their fear of environment and the struggle they face to discover their own identity in the hostile environment. They are situated in a complex space between two worlds and two cultures: they can neither forget the world/culture they have come out of and which would be different if they returned to it now; nor can they fully assimilate into and be acculturated by the world/culture they have adopted because they cannot subvert their identities totally).

#### Labour emigration:

Diasporic writings are the records of the experiences of the diasporic communities living in varied socio-cultural settings. As far as Indian diaspora is concerned, people have acquired a new identity by the process of self-fashioning and increasing acceptance by the West. Somdatta Mandal in his article on “The Desh-Pardesh” Syndrome: Texts and Contexts of Diasporic Indian Writing in English” has quoted Emmanuel S.Nelson’s definition on

Indian diaspora as “the historical and contemporary presence of people of Indian sub-continental origin in other areas of the world” (37). Many are the first generation expatriates extended families as well as their deepest sympathies and attachments.

The success of the evolution of Indian diaspora starts way back in the nineteenth century and it can be divided into three groups. They are Pre-colonial, Colonial and Post-colonial periods. The Pre-colonial period refers to the travelling of the Buddhist Bhikkus to remove comers of Central and Eastern India and the expedition of the South Indian Cholas to trade and commerce with Sri Lanka and South East. In Colonial period Indian diaspora is a crucial phase because the demand for labour force and the opposition of slavery were highly intensified under the names of indentured labour migration, Kangani and maishy labour emigration and passage or free emigration. In Post-colonial period Indian diaspora is a significant phase in which three distinct patterns can be identified. The emigration of Anglo Indian to Australia and England, the emigration of professional and semiprofessional to the industrially advanced countries like USA, England and Canada and the emigration every continent and part of the world and has made a substantial contribution to the literary output of their host countries and serves as a powerful network connecting the entire globe.

The writers of Indian diaspora through their literary contributions have greatly enriched English literature. They have been aiming at reinventing 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 novelist. The well-known writers in this area include V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, Bharati Mukherjee, Amitav Ghosh, Jhumpa Lahiri, Anita Desai, Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni, Uma Parameswaran, Kiran Desai, Shauna Singh Baldwin and Anita Rau Badami. They have given more poignancy to the exploration by dealing with not only geographical dislocation but also socio-cultural sense of displacement. Their concerns thus become global concerns with the exiles’ sense of displacement and rootlessness. They clearly bring out the dual feeling of the sense of wonder the immigrants have along with a sense of adventure at the sight of the new land and also their feeling of nostalgia for the world left behind.

#### Writers Comparison:

One of the most celebrated expatriate writers is V.S. Naipaul whose writing is a protest against the colonial centre. He discusses how the minority culture adapts to a cosmopolitan society and the changing value system and its impact on the characters. Though he has a magnificent obsession towards India, his sensibility is British because he grew up in Trinidad. He never cared for the land of his birth and his people and he writes for the English speaking people. He considered Trinidad as a destitute society without history and without achievement. Though his ancestors belonged to India he didn’t care for Indian identity either and hence he remained homeless with a split sensibility guided by his western outlook.

Salman Rushdie, an outstanding writer, discusses the issue of migrant identity. All his characters like the author himself are migrants drifting from shore to shore in search of an ‘imaginary homeland’. The recurring themes of all his work are ‘double identity’ divided selves’ and search for identity.

The sense of alienation and nuclear insanity in modern American Society are well explained in the novels of Vikram Seth, His work has been described as an American novel

instead of an Indo English novel. All his characters are isolated and lonely personalities leading a disintegrating family life in America.

A new dimension of the Indian English works can be seen in the works of Anita Desai. Her writing focuses on alienation, estrangement, anxiety, anguish and threats to individual identity. She articulates the dwindling of conventional value system, marital discords, collapses of joint family system, ambivalent cultural responses to the impact of West, social and economic disparities and the quest for identity in a multicultural world.

Bharathi Mukherjee, an Indian – American immigrant writer, liberates her women protagonists for a “new World Order”. Her portrayal of women is inspired by her experience in India as well as abroad. Her protagonists are sensitive and they lack a stable sense of personal and cultural identity. They are victimized by racism, sexism and other form of social oppression. Bharathi Mukherjee is concerned with characters that strain and struggle for the articulation of their repressed and stunted voice. As a writer she likes to put much stress on the fact that her characters, whether they are uniquely Indian or superficially western, are basically human. Her women characters vent their feminine sensibility in their frantic desire for an authentic communication with their own selves as well as with the society.

Both the novelists Anita Desai and Bharati Mukherjee discuss the theme of isolation, disintegration of personality and cultural shock in their works. The women characters suffer from depression and frustration and take extreme steps of killing their husbands. Apart from nostalgic reminiscences, these writers recreate their past through their writings. They have become folk historians, mythmakers and custodians of the collective history of their people, giving an alarm to the community life, to local or national politics through their experience of being alienated, observed, peripheralized and marginalized.

Jhumpa Lahiri belongs to the category of Indian diaspora whose only link with India is her origin. She portrays the loneliness and sense of alienation felt by immigrants where the first generation finds it difficult to be cut off from their roots, while the second generations and the baffling new world they encounter every day.

Kiran Desai, daughter of the distinguished Indo English Writer Anita Desai explores with intimacy and insight the contemporary issues like globalization, multiculturalism economic inequality, fundamentalism and terrorist violence.

Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni’s work encapsulates the personal problems of Indian immigrant community, their transformation and bonds with native land. Her works include *Arranged Marriage* (1966), *Sister of My Heart* (1999), *The view of Desire* (2002). *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives* (2002). In her novel *The Mistress of Spices* (1997) the protagonist’s ship is wrecked on a remote Island, which carried away only women travelers. Here the protagonist learns magic from a mysterious ugly old woman, who specializes in her power of spices, which are more than of cooking.

Divakaruni’s second novel *Sister of Heart* describes realistically the complicated relationships in a family in Bengal.

Uma Parameswaran’s work deals with Canada and recounts stories of the South Asian Canadian immigrant experience. She is an Indian born writer who has successfully portrayed the diasporic consciousness of an immigrant who comes to Canada in search of greener

pastures and thus is physically and culturally alienated from his/her native place. Her cultural affinity with India makes her an alien in Canada here she makes repeated attempts to transmute and transform her identity. Exploring the challenges of coping with ambiguous identity, she deals with the issues of assimilation and racism. Her writings comprise different genres which include short stories, plays and poems with common themes which ascertain her Western experience with the Indian realities. As a creative writer she has used her own experience as first hand observation to reinforce the intensity of social alienation. Her writings have reference to Indian culture because she has always been involved in promoting Indian culture in Canada.

Anita Rau Badami, one of the modern writers in the field of Diasporic literature even with her few literary writings have been able to carve a niche for her in the literary world. Among the Indo-Canadian writers Badami has earned unique place in the vibrant field with her focus on psychological insights and concern of her women protagonist. Anita Rau Badami with each novel explores an updated analysis of the migrated Indian families in India and abroad. Her writings focus on the complexities, the extraordinary range of possibilities, situations present in Indian family life. Her themes, however, remain universal-love, loss, separation, heroism, despair, happiness. Her critically acclaimed novels deal with the complexities of Indian family life with the cultural gap that emerges when Indian moves to the West.

Conclusion :

A close study of her novels reveals the women's quest for identity, the repression of double marginalization she faces within and outside the family, family relations, and the crumbling traditions of the society, generation conflicts and east-west cultural collision. Badami's novels mainly focus on themes like – firstly it explores family tension, the changing possibilities of memory and the elusive nature of mind. Secondly, it explores the misunderstandings between two generation, by exploring the conflict between modernity and traditional values and thirdly, it explores the changing status of women from traditional roles to conflicting women characters.

Thus diasporic writings occupy a significant position among cultures and countries and the writers of the Indian diaspora through literary contribution have greatly enriched English Literature. In the words of Bhiku Parekh:” ... 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” (110).

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