



# Different Diasporic Thoughts In Indian Literature

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## **Abstract:**

Originally, diaspora refers to the dispersion of the Jews beyond Israel. It is otherwise known as a scattered population whose origin lies in a separate locale. Historically too, diaspora goes back to the Bible era when the Jews exiled from Israel by the Babylonians. The term Diaspora is derived from ancient Greek language which means "Scatter about". But the term is now described to show any large migration of refugees, language or culture.

**Keywords:** Diaspora, Migration, Hybridity, In-betweenness, Mutation, Expatriation.

## **Introduction:**

The word 'Diaspora' takes its origin from the Greek word 'diasperian', which means 'scattering or dispersion.' The term was first used in the context of the experiences and predicament of the Jews who were rendered homeless after Babylonian conquests. According to Webster Dictionary, diaspora refers to 'dispersion from'. Hence the term implies the notion of a center, a home from where the dispersion occurs. So, the word invokes the image of journeys and displacements wherein putting down roots in other alternative homes. Once they settle, their social relations are determined by class, race, ethnicity, racism, gender and sexuality are important factors that configure a diaspora and subsequently its literature in a certain manner. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin define 'diaspora' as "the voluntary or forcible movement of the people from their homelands into new regions..." Robert Cohen describes diasporas as the communities of people living together in one country who "acknowledge that the old country – a nation often buried deep in language, religion, custom or folklore- always has some claim on their loyalty and emotions."

In the modern context the term diaspora has an extended meaning which encompasses the words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, exiles, immigrant, and ethnic community. Diaspora suggests a dislocation from the nation state or a geographical location of origin and relocation in one or more nation states or territories or countries. Avtar Brah describe the status of diasporas in the dominant culture very appropriately by saying "All diasporas are differentiated, heterogeneous, contested spaces, even as they are implicated in the construction of a common, we"

Diaspora may indicate transnationalism, but it differs from transnationalism. Diaspora refers to the movement forced or voluntary of people from one or more nation states to another. Transnationalism speaks to larger more impersonal forces, specifically those of globalization and global capitalism. Diaspora is concerned with migration and displacement of people while translation includes the movement of information as well as traffic in goods, products and capital across geographical terrain. Stuart remarks with regard to the diaspora experience "not be essence or purity but by the recognition of necessary heterogeneity and diversity

– by a conception of identity which lives with and through, not despite difference, by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference.”

The literature of Indian diaspora produced by such diversity as V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Anita Desai, Kavitha Daswani, Kiran Desai, Uma Parameswaran, Bharati Mukherjee, Rohinton Mistry, Meena Alexander, Jhumpa Lahri, Meera Syal, Suniti Namjoshi, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Ran Badami, and many others, explores problems and possibilities engendered by the experiences of migration and diasporic life. According to T.S. Anand & Silky Khalar-Anand “Diasporic literature reflects challenges, aspirations, and anxieties of a person who migrates to a new land. The first generations of all immigrants always suffer from a broad sum of nostalgia and the first generation of immigrants tends to cling strenuously together in order to preserve their culture, religion and linguistic identity preserving their ideals is one of their chief concerns.”

Bharti Mukherjee (b. 1940) who resides in America is a diasporic fiction writer who holds that migratory experiences have enriched expatriate literary writings. In fact, her experience as an expatriate forms the main source of her writings. Her works also deal with the issues of identity, the notion of belonging, the feeling of alienation and rootlessness, migrations, dislocations and relocations. According to Bharathi Mukherjee, “we immigrants have a fascinating tales to relate. Many of us have lived in newly independent or emerging countries which are placed by civil and religious conflicts. When we uproot ourselves from those countries and come here, either by choice or out of necessity, we suddenly must absorb 200 years of American history and learn to adapt to American society. I attempt to illustrate this in my novels and short stories. My aim is to expose Americans to the energetic voices of new settlers in this country”.

Kamala Markandaya (b. 1924-2004) born of an Indian family and became a British citizen but her writings are anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist. Her *Some Inner Fury* focuses on cultural difficulties involved in an interracial relationship that develops between Mira and Richard Marlowe, an English man. Her novel *The Nowhere Man* (1972) deals with the sufferings of the first-generation immigrants in England. The protagonist of the novel Srinivas leaves his native land to settle in England but eventually, he finds that he belongs nowhere. Through flashback technique, she recounts Srinivas's past life in India juxtaposing it against his present sufferings in England. The novel deals with the issues of diasporic angst, psychological and physical displacement and hyphenated identity often experienced by the immigrants in an alien country

Diaspora involves the crossing of multiple burden such as cultural and civilization. Diaspora people are haunted by nostalgia for their original home and feel alienated and dislocated in the host land. The diasporic experience includes, the quest for identity, because they feel that they are marginalized in their adopted countries. In the case of diasporas, it is not necessary that motherland should be real. It may be imaginary. For instance, the homeland existed in the minds of Jews scattered over several countries before the establishment of Israel. It is a condition precedent to Diaspora that the individuals should be emotionally attached to their mother culture. A feeling of indeterminacy as well as uncertainty, a sense of rootlessness, a collective memory and dispersal are the silent features of the diasporic consciousness.

Generally, migrants undergo racism, discrimination and lots of struggle for survival in their countries of residence. They are displaced from their own country, geographically, culturally, linguistically as well as psychologically. They feel alienated, obscured, peripheralized and marginalized in a world of conflicting values. With the long duration of stay in these countries, they learn to adjust, adapt and accommodate to the dominant culture, with the strong belief in their own culture. Their natural or cultural dislocation is replaced by acculturation. They can contribute to the dominant culture and still remain themselves. Homogenization of the diasporic life is impossible because of its varied and complex nature.

Diasporic culture includes practices that are partly inherited, partly modified and partly invented. These cultures are continually shifting under pressure from within and without. As member of diaspora, he is a citizen of the world belonging everywhere and nowhere. Heterogeneity, hybridity and multiplicity are the characteristics of the diaspora cultures.

Heterogeneity means the existence of differences and different relationships among the diaspora in the adopted country. Hybridity suggests adjustment, adaptive and accommodation of the immigrant practices to the dominant forms. Multiplicity conveys how subjects, located within social relations are determined in multiple ways by the contradiction of capitalism, patriarchy, race and religion. The immigrant culture in turn

may affect the dominant culture. Diasporic cultural identity teaches us those cultures are not preserved by being protected from mixing. By and large diasporic identity has emerged on a secular acceptable force at the individual level. Historically and politically, diasporas have come to be accepted as a part of their adopted countries.

Nearly twenty million strong Indian diaspora is spread over hundred and ten countries, across all the ocean and continents. It is the second largest diaspora from Asia, next only to China. Their identity is characterized by their Indian origin, they are conscious of India's cultural heritage and their attachment to India. Another aspect of the Indian Diaspora worth examining is what happens when minority Diaspora communities attain the status of majority in some part of the adopted land. This is what has happened in the U.K., the U.S.A. and the other parts of the world. South Hall as well as Silicon Valley is a mini-India. Leicester is expected to become Briton's white minority.

The Indian diaspora has made a substantial contribution to the literary output of their host countries. Some eminent creative writers have been accorded recognition. In many universities abroad several text books belong to Indian Diaspora literature for the courses on Indian literature. According to Shaikh Samad "The immigrant writers create and inscribe alternate worlds by exchanging tradition for another, one culture for another and one home for another. They are caught in a dilemma of nothingness or not belonging. Their identity becomes hyphenated identity.... Memory becomes the most significant feature which sets the diasporic writer's discourse in the center. It is the nostalgia for the past that make immigrants survives. It sustains or even creates memory."

The chief characteristic features of the diasporic writers are the issues of identity, home, dislocation, relocation, rootlessness, loneliness, nostalgia, memory, cultural conflict, foreignness, generational differences, bewilderment, hybrid identities and belonging to which multicultural context provide setting. Uma Parameshwaran says that "the gender plays a significant role in defining the responses of the individual in a diasporic situation."

## **Diaspora and Literature**

Diaspora plays a significant role in literature, especially in Indian Writing in English. Literature from the Indian diaspora functions as a substitute for the homeland on a global platform, and it traverses across historical periods and geographies. It explores questions of representation, and delves into the experiences of dislocation, marginalization, and acculturation that are usually associated with migration to a foreign land. Simultaneously, it probes into the very idea of a 'home', and into the notion of belonging. It also draws upon a variety of perspectives from literary and digital cultures to evaluate issues such as gender, politics, generational conflict, race, class, and transnational encounters. An intersectional web of exploration is carried out through these texts, with authors questioning the very basis of their cultural identities.

Diaspora literature in English is largely associated with writers like V.S. Naipaul, Anita Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Bharati Mukherjee, Rohinton Mistry, Kiran Desai, Meena Alexander, Salman Rushdie, and also with the more recent Benyamin, Deepak Unnikrishnan and many more. "Being in diaspora means living in a cross-cultural context, in which change, fusion, and expansion are inevitable...those aware of the complexities...produced a number of voices in recent years that echoed through the medium of literature" (Writing Diaspora: South Asian Women, Culture and Ethnicity, Yasmin Hussain, 2005). Literature is one of the most prominent mediums through which migrant experiences are transmitted from one generation to the next. Literary texts carry a perception of history that links them to the past, whilst also carrying an insight into the future. This creates transnational identities.

## **Diaspora Literature in Indian Languages**

The term 'Indian diaspora' has often been used in academic discourse representing writers from the Indian subcontinent. While diasporic writing in English has drawn sufficient attention from critics, literature in Indian languages has not received its due recognition. There are a fair number of writers who write in their Indian languages. Language stands as an important vehicle for maintaining ethnic identity, distinguishing one group from another. Such a study is also important for Western people, as it would shed some light on the nature and dynamics of Indian society and culture (*Diasporic Indian Women Writers*, Sireesha Telugu, 2009).

For a very long time, regional diaspora literature tried to be *a part* of mainstream literature but remained *apart* due to the dominance of literature in English.

Early migrants relied on their native tongues, and migrant oral narratives were narrated in their vernacular languages, but not in written narratives. Diaspora literature in Indian Languages has been present for some time now but has not acquired public visibility, and there has been a constant struggle of Indians to promote their works written in Indian languages. The diasporic writers writing in vernacular languages say that they have their own style with which they express their emotions and ideas freely. They seek to preserve their mother-languages in this hybridized cultural community. The diasporic writers writing in Indian languages hope that their language and literature reaches the future generations. This group writes for immigrant people of their cultures only, and speaks only to the native readership in the diaspora. They confess that they are the writers, poets, audience, readers and critics. They write to cherish their community's past and a fear of loss of this past makes them want to preserve their language.

The Indian diasporic writers have roots in India. But they present image of various geographical areas of the Indian Diaspora: from the South Pacific to South America, from the Indian Islands of Mauritius and Singapore to the cities and suburbs of London, New York, Johannesburg, and Toronto. The people of Indian Diaspora share a diasporic consciousness generated by a complex network of historical connections, spiritual affinities and unifying racial memories and that their shared sensibility is manifested in the cultural productions of the Indian diasporic communities around the globe. Indian diaspora can be applied to ample number of writers including major international writers such as V.S.Naipaul and Salman Rushdie and other accomplished emerging writers.

Initially, diasporic literature in native languages began as a space of expression. It was used as a vent for the emotional outflow for most of the migrants. As such, most of the diasporic writers who write in native languages do not belong to an academic background, unlike those who are writing in English. Most of them work as doctors, engineers or are simple homemakers, who chose to immigrate. Writing gave them an opportunity to maintain their languages which constructed the diasporic culture, without them needing to go back to India to do so.

More recently, there has been some critical reading for the diaspora literature produced in some of the Indian languages. Literary associations were formed in the diaspora, providing a platform for these writers to share their works. Publishing houses like the Vanguri Foundation in Houston started hosting the diaspora works written in Indian languages. Diaspora literature in Bengali, Marathi, Oriya, Tamil, Sindhi, Kannada, Gujarati, Hindi, and many more are traversing the global today. Vanguri Foundation in America has been publishing Telugu diasporic literature for the past 40 years that relates to the migrant experiences that the writers in English do. In order to promote Indian languages, many chose to express their concerns in their narratives.

In the present global scenario, many people migrate in search of employment, business and trade. All diasporic communities established outside their birth territories concede that their own native land always has some claim on their loyalty and emotion. This occurs through language, religion and custom. The diasporic people often find themselves managing across cultural identities. They have to create various cultural, ethnic and political identities to meet the challenges from their native lands and their adopted homelands. The way in which the diasporic people manage their identities is determined by political, social, professional and class factors. The diasporic communities might choose adoption, accommodation, acculturation, and assimilation. Identity crisis arises if one migrates from one territory to another place.

Most of the immigrant writers are nostalgic of their homeland and make creative writing an important medium. Mention may be made of expatriate writers like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Vissanji, Bharti Mukherjee, 101 P.V. Laxmiprasad, Chitra Banerjee Divakarani, Rohinton Mistry, Shashi Tharoor, Anita Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai, Meerasyal, Amit Chaudhury, Meena Alexander, Sunetra Gupta, Gita Mehtha, Suniti Namjoshi, Shani Mootoo, Anurag Mathur, Amulya Malladi, Vineela Vijayaraghavan, Anita Rau Badami, Abraham Varghese and Peter Nazareth. Most of the women writers have contributed perspective of gender along with the themes of ethnicity, migrancy and post-coloniality languages and religious traditions. One needs to mention briefly about the stories and themes of certain expatriate writers. The Indian diaspora creates a new multiple reality a kaleidoscopic pattern which is typical and yet unique. A

new woman emerged in almost all nations. The modern concept of immigration thus became the center story in women's literature. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an award-winning author born in Calcutta and spent the first nineteen years of her life in India. Having had her school education in a missionary school run by Irish nuns she moved to United States to continue her studies.

Diasporic identities are manifold, heterogeneous and subject to persistent metamorphosis. While they attempt to adopt themselves to their various experiences, they simultaneously endeavor to find their identity. The compromise among these multiple, mobile and altering identities can be sorted out by the formation of a transcultural identity. Diasporic discourse compels us to contemplate about fundamentals of nation and nationalism, while determining the affinities of citizens and nation state. Diasporic discourse mirrors awareness that living is a part of transnational network that involves a homeland. Diaspora discourse speaks about people who reside in one place but passionate for another place. Another aspect of diasporic discourse is the search for selfhood in the world between two cultures that of homeland and embraced land. The notion of 'home' often plays a cardinal function in Diaspora communities. In migrating from one nation to another, the migrant quests for setting up home in a new land. But they are unable to identify the new place as their home. Instead, they find their home elsewhere, back across the boundary and they always wish to come back. The expatriate has to start his next beginning wherever he goes to settle. In M.G.Vassanji's *Amrika* at the end Ramji would neither adjust with life in America nor exposes the dynamics of east African-Indian life in a new country, he feels strangely depleted.

### Conclusion:

The Indian Diaspora plays a significant role in reflecting the complexities of diasporic experiences in literature. It aims to examine the displacement and the nostalgia for their homeland and alienation caused by displacement or dislocation as well as conflict between generations and cultural identity. Diasporic writers tend to portray the cultural dilemmas, the generational differences, and transformation of their identities during displacement. The spirit of exile and alienation enriches the diasporic writers to seek rehabilitation in their writings and establish a permanent place in English Diasporic literature.

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