



An Overview Reflecting “Enhousement And Dehousement” In The Writings Of V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Anita Desai And Bharati Mukharjee

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Abstract

This paper explores the themes of "enhousement" and "dehousement" in the works of four prominent authors of the postcolonial and diasporic literary tradition: V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Anita Desai, and Bharati Mukherjee. The terms "enhousement" and "dehousement" are used to explore the idea of rootedness and dislocation within the context of colonialism, migration, and the search for identity. By examining the novels and short stories of these writers, the paper demonstrates how their protagonists wrestle with the complexities of belonging, alienation, and identity across different spaces, often being torn between the inherited traditions of their homeland and the unfamiliar, sometimes hostile, cultures they encounter abroad. The paper critically assesses how these authors engage with issues of home, memory, displacement, and cultural hybridization through both narrative strategies and thematic concerns.

Keywords: enhousement, dehousement, dislocation, belonging, alienation

INTRODUCTION

All the four writers are the most illustrious names in the history of Indian English literature who have migrated to foreign countries out of various motives. They have migrated away from a known socio-cultural and linguistic set up, motivated by their individual willingness to risk the unknowns of a new adopted home. The protagonists of all the novels studied above, like their creators, are culturally, socially uprooted and metaphysically disturbed individuals, seeking their identity or order in a world of cultural confusion. It is in fact that "chaos" is the law of nature: "order" is the dream of man. Controlling and ordering of human experiences and imaginations are part of our dreaming self to give meaning to life. As many tries to create the world in accordance with his needs, so does the novelist create and recreate reality to fit into the need of some kind of an order. The migrant, exiled or expatriate writers, who have migrated across boundaries, across history, are more or less haunted by a sense of loss the feeling of being elsewhere in a different "place" amidst different "people" and different "culture". Their quest for reclaiming a "home" and "wholeness" is, in fact, part of an obsessive search for order that may give some meaning to their otherwise "partial" and "provisional" identity.

As the migrant writers are physically alienated person, they suffer from a "metaphysical dislocation" felt on three fronts: the first loss is the loss of a home or culture as a cozy comfortable shelter, second is the loss of one's acquaintance at home and living as a "minority" within a majority community which

probably do not appreciate the cultural differences very much; and the third loss is the loss of a language to the discomfort of the people at the native country. The three-fold dislocation creates "holes" in their perception of reality, denying them complete satisfaction. The expatriate writers feel that their present is past and the past is home, albeit a lost home amidst lost times. But the apparent dilemma lies in their inability to find peace with the newly acquired identity in the surrogated country as well as to reach after the old idea of home in the native country despite its certitudes. Therefore, the migrant writers' search for order seems to be a wistful dream, forming of an "integrated identity" in an "imaginary homeland" that is sovereign and owes no particular allegiance to any capital.

Expatriation according to Peterson is "fres migration": "a movement motivated to the individual willingness to risk the unknown of a new home and breaking from a familiar social universe for the sake of idventure, achievement of ideals or to escape a social system from which he has become alienated". A form of expatriation, which occurs most often, is self imposed chile, due to a writer's difficulty in identifying him/herself with a government, or a feeling of non-acceptance by a society to which he/she may belong. It is a problematic question which arises in our mind is how does the expatriate writer remain in the mainstreams of life away from home for long period of time? In this respect, it is interesting to note that how Alexander Solzhenitsyn in his frozen world failed to grip the attention of the noncommunist world after his deportation. In the intellectual isolation in Vermont, cut off from the Russian heart, his mind dried up. Other writers in a similar situation were lost to themselves once they were unable to breath the air of their natural environment.

"A House of Mr. Biswas" is perhaps V.S. Naipaul's best piece of writing. But of the latter, one would wonder if it has not been studies of himself and his place in the country of his forefathers than of India itself. The work is of self-identification was he in India as an expatriate, or did he try to find himself back to where he spiritually belonged, but was unable to adjust his mind and his emotions to the incompatibilities which lay bare before him. It seems that India's social and historical fabric, taking them for what they are rather what they should be, did not fit in with his pre-fabricated emotions. Apparently, Naipaul is in search of an identity. Originally a Hindu Brahmin self, disinterested in rituals, tries to find in India what he expected but unfortunately with the fusion of British self does not find solace. He remains totally homeless without any brand of identity, only a split sensibility. "Homelessness" is the only word fit to describe his condition, Naipaul should concede that the Indian community in Trinidad was more homogeneous to him.

Rushdie's "Midnight's Children" approaches India through the exotic. It abandons realism, except where titillating or grotesque for fabulism. Setting out with the avowed intention of historical truth, Rushdie, as expatriate, fails to fill in the gaps in reality he desires to. Saleem Sinai's acknowledgement of the predominant role of woman in his life dramatizes the expatriate Rushdie's troubled relationship with the mother- principle, India. The riddle of maternity in Rushdie's fiction is important as an analogue to the expatriate's lack of such connection. The influence of the West on India, and the change and decay of traditional Islamic faith, gives him the pet expatriate subject-cross-cultural tensions and the relevance or irrelevance of one contrasting culture to the other. Despite his optimistic theorizing of one contrasting culture to the other. Despite his optimistic theorizing about the assets of the expatriate perspective, Rushdie fails to give a deep and full-blooded picture of Indian reality.

Naipaul and Rushdie stand in the forefront of contemporary expatriate writers engaged in a provocative relationship with India. The problematic nature of Indian reality -physical and metaphysical -has ultimately led to their withdrawal to a neutral centre, more in tune with their artistic temperaments as writers. Possessing strong links with India either by birth, ancestry or marriage, both of them have expressed their affection for India and paid tribute to India as an overpowering presence. However, seeing India from the viewpoint of their individualistic, modern, Western-oriented selves, they have felt disdain for the violence, cruelty and sheer chaos of the Indian plurality. Yet these expatriates are unable to let go of India completely. Their attitudes towards India comprising nostalgia, anger or a defiant resistance end in a realization of difference. They experience, in the words of another expatriate writer "the sheer tearing pain of not being able to belong to the very place where one wants to send down roots". Agitation, neurotic responses and a troubling restlessness have been seen to be among the personality traits common to these expatriates. There is certainly (whether overtly expressed or latent) a guilt over the inadequately forged relationship with the "mother" country. From this point the expatriates move on to examine their identity in relation to a "second tradition" (the West's), before moving on to consolidate their own third, expatriate tradition. Withdrawing physically from India, the expatriates make a return through the imagination. The West provides the intellectual life but it is India which tugs at the

imagination. Amidst the fragmentation and insecurity the migrant -exile experiences, India as the past offers a promise of wholeness. The promise, attractive from a distance, is frustrated by mingling with India. Exile has brought only a measure of satisfaction to these writers, which accounts for their looking back persistently at India. Ambivalence towards both Indian and Western cultures is characteristic of Naipaul and Rushdie, though the form, intensity and quality of distancing to both cultures varies among them.

As both of them are products of colonized countries, Naipaul and Rushdie focus on the problems (mainly of identity) for citizens of colonial and neo-colonial notions. Memory of colonial wrong and the consequent loss of status as individuals separate them from the racist West, though language and a quest for modernity make them seek connection there eagerly. The detachment of mind that the expatriate seeks-detachment from cultural bias and prejudice, can be counted amongst its assets. Self-questioning and interrogation of cultures for their worth and demerits shows the evidence of a logical mind in this sensibility. Both Naipaul and Rushdie question and order facts with the intention of shedding valueless roots and attempting to move towards a cosmopolitan and modern civilization. Detachment provides new angles at which to enter reality, which is the expatriate angle. In Rushdie, this angle yields a relatively superficial and exotic interpretation of Indian reality, whereas Naipaul achieves the maximum depth in the use of his insider-outsider sensibility, through a rare integrity to his subject. Rushdie shows himself to be free of Naipaul's terror of being re-implicated in a tradition like India though confessing to guilt feelings about his Indian past and the inability to take to it again. Rushdie's response is clearly differentiated from Naipaul's trauma ridden one. He gives the most unemotional analysis of the losses and gains of expatriation from India.

Bharati Mukherjee's Canadian Experience as an expatriate who was being constantly crippled in self-defense in a hostile environment has made her welcome the freedom of the anonymous in the US. Unlike another expatriate writer Anita Desai who treated the Indian immigrant situation as one of conflict and adjustment with a little understanding and love, Mukherjee gives it a new, challenging perspective enabling the immigrants to emerge out of their cocoons of defence into the openness of assertion and say that they do belong. Mukherjee's emphasis is mainly on female centered character, as we have seen the protagonists of "Jasmine" and "Wife" are female who have struggled throughout the novels. But it is partially true about Desai, as she has Deven as the protagonist of her novel "In Custody". A person often faces the conflict between reason and instinct, the will and reality and between involvement and detachment within him. Her novels depict these extreme situations arising out of conflicts in the inner configurations of the individual which revolve round the interplay of the "self" with others. Amid the flux of empirical reality, the individual relentlessly struggles to attain authentic selfhood-the core of being from where human action springs-which would not only enable him to grasp reality but also endow a meaning to his existence. This struggle of the individual for a possible apprehension of self-identity forms a recurrent theme in the novels of Desai.

Both the writers deal with the middle class sensibility of the Indian people and the protagonists of their novels are mainly derived from the middle class background. But the point of difference between them is that Anita Desai's protagonists reflects Indianess and does not want to fully assimilate with any culture of foreign country. As in "Clear Light of Day", Bim, the protagonist strives to re-create a reality of her own by her immanent faith in her will. Desai describes Bim's present state of stasis by constructing the worldviews of Bim who has remained confined to her home since her childhood but her sister Tara lives abroad who comes here on holiday. Deven. In Custody" is a socially secure person who believes in the Western notion of freewill and seeks to reach out into wider world in the hope of self-fulfillment. During this process, he undergoes experiences of various shades and complexities and eventually emerges as a typical Indian person with a more complete knowledge of being in this world. He now looks for answers to life's problems in art which must not remain just a perfectly crafted artefact. On the other hand, Mukherjee claims herself to be not just an expatriate novelist but also a mainstream American writer. Jasmine and Dimple, the protagonist of "Jasmine" and "Wife" strives to settle himself or herself in America, the land of fortune. They like to feel as "a total American" and do not want to take any relics from their old life. Even Dimple takes the extreme step of killing her husband Amit to feel very American, almost like a character in a I.V. Serial She become isolated, rootless, aliens because of her ambivalent attitude to her native tradition as well as the culture of the new world, on the reverse. Jasmine enjoys the assimilated status of immigration by a sheer will to bond herself to her adopted land.

The expatriate loses home, emotional security and usually racial status to aggressively preserve the values of his work and ego-centered being. He becomes involved in a quest for meaning that necessarily leaves behind the first principles given to him by his culture/ country. Painful tugs of wars with his personality ensue; the transition is never smooth or fully made. The expatriate never fully arrives-he apprehends the journey back or the onward journey. The expatriate sensibility is valuable for attempting to bridge cultures through a widening out of experience. In this process, it itself becomes an outcast, hoarding the past through memory. The greatest value it believes in is the value of individual being. On this there is no looking back.

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