

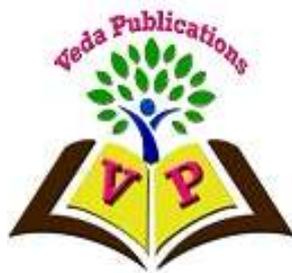


DIASPORIC SENSIBILITIES WITH REFERENCE TO CONTEMPORARY INDIAN WRITERS (Amitav Ghosh, Aravinda Adiga and Salman Rushdie)

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ABSTRACT



The globalised world has become ostentatious to a number of races to diversify in the name of living style but not sticking to certain convictions. Consequently, the number of people starting to migrate to different corners of the world for different purposes has been rapidly growing. Though the purposes of different people have made them to relocate to a different world they may not discard their cultural identities. When a writer migrates from one culture to another, "he being a man endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness feels in so intensely that his mother culture reflects itself automatically". The term 'Expatriation' has also been seen exhibiting all such features that several writers and critics prefer to use as their themes interchangeably. These themes include 'homelessness' 'alienation' (temporary) 'rootlessness' and love for the mother country, and ethnic or group consciousness. Rushdie (1991) calls his native place as an 'imaginary homeland'

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The globalised world has become ostentatious to a number of races to diversify in the name of living style but not sticking to certain convictions. Consequently, the number of people starting to migrate to different corners of the world for different purposes has been rapidly growing. Though the purposes of different people have made them to relocate to a different world they may not discard their cultural identities. This can be witnessed when the situation demands and the inner self would be aware of the consciousness of the vicious cultural habits will be exhibited. This is evidently seen amongst the writers of literature especially. When a writer migrates from one culture to another, "he being a man endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness feels in so intensely that his mother culture reflects itself automatically". Imbibing to the culture of the migrated place is as easy as one can get through the life style but it is merely a veneer as the cultural of the self will be present no matter wherever he is.

Arfin Tofter speaks of the modern man is uninterested in putting down the roots anywhere. It is the question of the root whether at least the expatriate writers have not put down the roots in India as is reflected in their writings or not. But Meenakshi Mukharjee rightly says "Today it is not at all rare to find a writer for whom the multicultural situation is not only a subject matter but a mode of perception as well. The expatriate sensibility works in a powerful manner in the expatriate writers who for same reason or the other have exiled themselves from their native lands. Their writings abound with references to their parent culture" (Multiculturalism and Religious Identity: Canada and India:127).

The colonial rule made the people from different countries to migrate to various places. As a result, the writers have developed a sense of revival in the past of a nation and carried the same. The knowledge of the western education and the disastrous changes taught them how to separate the grain from the chaff. The sojourn of the writer makes him to view the cultures, of the native as well as the migrated, critically and contrast them by a juxtaposition of the two. Hence it enables the writer to present the conflict in drama through bi-racial and

multi-racial characters. Thus living in another culture enables the writer to enrich his writings.

Similarly, Cohen (1997) provides his characteristics of immigrants:

- 1) Traumatic Dispersal from original homeland for reasons of trade, work, etc;
- 2) Frequent attempts and development to return to the homeland;
- 3) Idealizing the ancestral home and a continuous attempt for its maintenance and restoration;
- 4) Constrained relationship with the host society due to the lack of acceptability;
- 5) A collective memory and myth about the homeland with a strong ethnic group consciousness.

However, Cohen (1997) also mentions a paradigm shift in the meaning and understanding of Diasporic studies over the time. Cohen sees Diaspora first as a metaphor to represent different Ilyas groups of Diasporic community comprising expatriates, political refugees, alien residents, expellees, and all such immigrants of ethnic and racial minorities. But later, in the post-colonial world, Cohen admits Diaspora turning into a kind of deterritorialization highlighting nationalities of individual and group expatriates, rather than an ideology. Individualized and personalized versions of Expatriation from the post-colonial countries spread in the form of writings and nostalgic tales of expatriates finding themselves in a traumatic dilemma expressing typical cravings for the homeland.

The term 'Expatriation' has also been seen exhibiting all such features that several writers and critics prefer to use as their themes interchangeably. These themes include 'homelessness' 'alienation' (temporary) 'rootlessness' and love for the mother country, and ethnic or group consciousness. Rushdie (1991) calls his native place as an 'imaginary homeland'. Jain (2007) rightly calls the expatriate 'both an ambassador and refugee.' Her studies on expatriate writings are rooted in her vision that she developed through her readings of both fiction and non-fiction and by carrying out extensive research symposia and workshops on the theme. A major theme of the Expatriate writings is the quest for identity caused due to frequent uprooting and re-rooting. The individual protagonist is shown disconnected from his roots, being forced to make a



difficult choice between his nationality and a forced-exile and succumbing to a kind of “insider and outsider syndrome.” An anxious sense of “dislocation” and “homelessness” is also another theme of expatriate writings in which the protagonist not only resists assimilation with the new land and culture but also cannot realign himself with his native culture, his own homeland, whenever he finds an opportunity to return to it. He thus not only fails to be an “adaptable immigrant” on the foreign soil but also fails to re-root himself back into his homeland whenever an opportunity arrives, although feeling nostalgic and refusing to abandon his ethnic identity. The burden of the nostalgic past and a sense of guilt are thus aligned together in Expatriation. It was only such individual expatriates who formulated the concept “Asian - American aesthetics” or African – American or Black Americans which are exemplary of a revolt against being “unserved” by the Eurocentric point of view and which led to the development of the expatriate consciousness and their own aesthetics. Expatriate writings of last two decades display several Journal of Social Studies Education Research 2018: 9 (1), 106-123 images of transmigrants or expatriates as protagonists in both fiction and nonfiction portraying these features and themes. The reasons assigned for such a massive migration, dislocation and relocation are financial, political or historical where people migrate for higher education and better employment prospects. In earlier writings, colonization was also one of the reasons. Ranjeet Kirpal Singh in Naipaul’s *The Mimic Men*, for instance, is one such displaced and disillusioned colonial individual who represents the colonialism that took away his personal identity, sense of belonging to a place, to a nation or to a culture.

The major theme of the quest for identity can be witnessed in the novels of Amitav Ghosh, Aravinda Adiga and Salman Rushdie. The alienated and the naïve protagonists are shown disconnected from their roots, being forced to make a difficult choice between his nationality and a forced-exile and succumbing to a kind of “insider and outsider syndrome.”

“Does any historian mention the impact of Partition on common people like Thamma (Lines) or the refugees in Tide who were

made to pay the price of national history they have no share in? The answer is in the negative for it is only public history that has been found worthy of record while private history of an individual and family is conveniently sidelined. However if history has failed to come to terms with private histories, creative writers compensate for the discrepancy through the stories of pain and suffering of little people. Be it Lines or even Tide, Ghosh takes it up as his duty to trace the lives of numerous citizens as they are made to bow down to the game of power politics”. (Jennifer Ph.D, 36)

The anxious sense of “dislocation” and “homelessness” which is also another theme of expatriate writings is clearly depicted by the authors Ghosh, Aravinda Adiga and Rushdie. The Protagonists thus not only fail to be an “adaptable immigrant” on the foreign soil but also fails to re-root himself back into his homeland whenever an opportunity arrives, although feeling nostalgic and refusing to abandon his ethnic identity. The partition of India and Pakistan changed not only the territories and boundaries of the countries but also the mindset and nature of the people. This could be seen like, even Thamma and Jitamoshai felt their old house in Dhaka as their home and the place Dhaka is their home land. The location of Dhaka has become the foreign land to Thamma and Jitamoshai after the partition of India and Pakistan. The insecure feeling came in such a way that Jitamoshai won’t leave the place the home or homeland at any cost. Of course after all the efforts of Thamma, Khalil to look after Jitamoshai were triumphant. Jitamoshai, also known as Ukilbabu due to his profession, doesn’t believe in moving to a new place or leaving for unknown lands. He wants to die in his birth place only, not considering whatever the issue may be, for the sake of his life or for his blood relations. He seems to be proved as the righteous character as he provides shelter to Khalil’s family. When Jitamoshai is asked by Thamma, to move from Dhaka to India, due to the communal riots, especially being Hindus of Indian origin, he rejects their offer saying.

“I understand very well, the old man muttered, I know everything. Once you start



moving you never stop. That's what I told my sons when they took the trains. I said: I don't believe in this India – Sindhia. It's all very well, you're going away now, but suppose when you get there they decide to draw another line somewhere? What will you do then? Where will you move too? No one will have you anywhere. As for me, I was born here, and I'll die here". (The Shadow Lines, 1988, 237)

While going to Dhaka by car Thamma recalls her childhood memories and the driver points out at the place is nothing but Dhaka, as many changes (developments) took place. She exclaims that

"The driver pointed out the sights to my grandmother as they went by: the Plaza Picture Palace with a fifteen- foot hoarding of Ben Hur hanging outside. The Gulshan Palace Hotel, Ramna Rae Course and so on. It's all wonderful, she said. But where's Dhaka?" (The Shadow Lines, 1988, 227)

The suppressed memories are articulated in this way. The characters live in the illusion of those 'lines and borders'. To familiarize this we have another illustration from the novel i.e.

"she drew another set of lines, right next to the staircase. That's Aunty Elizabeth's bedroom, she said. It's right above the drawing room. If you look out of these windows you can see the cricket field.

I shook my head violently; something about these lines had begun to disturb me." (The Shadow Lines, 1988, 77)

Ghosh's imagination is like Diasporas as it is post- colonial fiction, to be an output of certain histories of the sub- continent in the 20th century. He examines the individuality of the so-called world traveler in his fiction: that entity, who is certainly everything that Ila in "The Shadow Lines", is not – a woman who recalls the exotic places she has been to only by the location the ladies' restroom in their airport lounges. As the narrator says to her despairingly, after being rebuffed for expressing his longing to visit Cairo: "You wouldn't understand: to you Cairo was a place to piss in". (The Shadow Lines, 1998, 108) The Post- colonial or Diaspora writers do not have an sufficient publishing infrastructure or a

agreeably stylish readership from their native countries recurrently. The economics of literacy and publishing means that third world writers are nevertheless above all writing for western and metropolitan audiences. These facts are important aspects to analyze the illusory versions of history while the Diaspora writers are actually writing about their own countries. It is clearly stated that the language of fantasy, of fragmentation, of discontinuity, of dislocation was more appropriate than any other, for the societies in which they found themselves as opined by Marquez and his fellow Latin American Writers. It is a world where nature and culture are equally alien and arbitrary. In reality Naipaul's Trinidad, Marquez's Columbia and Rushdie's India are borrowed fragments of European culture. Rushdie, Naipaul, and Marquez, are at the peripheries of European culture. The novel as an agent of social critique especially 20th Century Postmodernist fiction has been originated in these cultural margins.

Critics have noticed the similarities of Rushdie's fiction with that of Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Rushdie himself evaluates Marquez's 'chronicle of a death foretold' as:

"The book and its narrator probe slowly, painfully through the mists of half accurate memories, equivocations, contradictory versions, trying to establish what happened and why, and achieve only provisional answers... And the triumph of the book is that this new hesitancy, this abdication of Olympus, is turned to such excellent account, and becomes a source of strength".

5

The readers can find new techniques in the description of the events in the novel and find their echoes in the content of the narrative. The readers on following their writers have begun to explore new places to construct theories of narration in the 20th Century. Rushdie's readers have to "discover" and understand India bit by bit, just like Saleem's grandfather discovered Naseem. The whole narration of the story is related to Saleem's future wife Padma. This tradition enables each age to reinvent the tale in the light of its own widespread



ideology and cultural experience. Fran'tz Fanon in a landmark essay entitled, 'On National Culture' writes: "Culture abhors simplification and refers to "the fluctuating movements that people are just giving shape to." He talks of 'the zone of occult instability where the people dwell. 11

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