

INDIAN DIASPORA AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY: A STUDY ON THE WRITINGS OF KIRAN DESAI AND JHUMPA LAHIRI

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ABSTRACT

Indian writing in English is increasingly gaining accolade among readers and prize-panel judges. In recent years, Indian writing in English has achieved some phenomenal success in the form of prizes and best selling status. The history of English writing in India is perhaps best understood from a retrospective glance at its colonial past. From the very inception to simple experimentation, the Indian diasporic fiction is now globally recognized for the wide use of employed narrative techniques, hybrid language and undercurrents of contemporary issues. The new generation Indian diasporic fiction writers have touched all the possible spheres of human enterprise and as a result, the vast numbers of readers across the world, are tempted to experience the universe through the eyes of those who have beautifully observed it. In the recent years, Indian fiction writers have been widely recognized by the west. Writers like Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Roy, Rohinton Mistry, Aravind Adiga, Kiran Desai and Jhumpa Lahiri have either won the prestigious literary prizes or they have been short listed for it. The history of Indian English literature indicates certain points of progress, points of departure from a former period towards a new one. When we speak of the Indian diaspora, writers generally refer to persons of Indian birth or ethnicity living abroad.

keywords: *Subcontinent, Independence, Partition, Diasporic, British- India, Ethnic*

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INTRODUCTION

The term 'Diaspora' is derived from the Greek term "diasperien", from "dia-across" and "sperien-to sow or scatter seeds" (Wikipedia-the free Encyclopedia). It is based on Hebrew word of diaspora - 'galut', meaning 'exile' (that is from the Holy Land) (The New Encyclopedia of Britannica (vol.3)). In the beginning the term "diaspora" was used by the ancient Greeks to refer to citizens of a grand city who migrated to the conquered land with the purpose of colonization to assimilate the territory into the Empire. "Diaspora" (from the Greek word for "scattering") refers to the dispersion of a people from their homeland. The term diaspora has emerged has a new discipline in English literature across the globe. It has become international recognition to study the different cultures and life style of the people of their homeland and nostalgia of the writers residing away from their country. The concept 'Diaspora' refers to dispersal of Jews from Palestine throughout the world. Along with physical dispersal of the Jews, the term carries religious, philosophical and eschatological connotations, inasmuch as a special relationship is understood to exist between the land of Israel and Jewish people. Dispersion of Africans, Armenians, Irish, Palestinians and the Jews conceived their scattering as arising from a cataclysmic event that had traumatized the group as a whole. Their dispersal was involuntary, pathetic and tragic. So the term 'Diaspora' is used to refer to any people of ethnic population forced or induced to leave their traditional ethnic homelands; being dispersed throughout other parts of the world; and the ensuing developments in their dispersal and culture. The original meaning of 'Diaspora' was cut off from the present meaning . The diasporic 'scattering' is transformed into 'gathering' by Homi Bhabha. "Gathering of exiles and émigrés and refugees; gathering on the edge of 'foreign' cultures; gathering at the frontiers; gathering in the ghettos or cafes of city centers Also the gathering of people in the diaspora : indentured, migrant, ..." (Bhabha 198-199).

INDIAN DIASPORA AND GLOBAL IDENTIFICATION

Indian diaspora is distinguished between two main phases of emigration :

1. Colonial Phase / Overseas emigration in the 19th c. - it began in the 2 nd quarter of 19th c. and continued into the early decades of 20th c. (1834-1920). It was the emigration of indentured labourers from North India to British colonies – Guyana, Fiji, Trinidad, Jamaica the Dutch Colony- Surinam and other French Colonies. Some Tamil labourers were deported to Burma from Gujarat and Punjab, and the members of trading community also emigrated to South Africa and East Africa (Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda).
2. Postcolonial Phase / 20thc. migration to industrially developed countries. The Postcolonial Phase of Indian Diaspora started after the independence of India (1947). In this phase the emigration of AngloIndians to England and Australia took place. Professionals and semiprofessionals migrated to the countries like UK., USA, Canada and the skilled and unskilled migrants emigrated to west Asia. The immigration of intellectuals in postcolonial period, called the 'brain drain' (voluntary and individual) of the scientists, doctors, engineers & professors in late 1960s, 70s, 80s, etc.

India has produced many talented writers who serve as a source of inspiration to the coming generation. The Indian Diaspora in US and other parts of the world has made a significant impact on the contemporary literary culture. First generation and second generation writers give us a picture of Indian society and they also cover diverse issues including the various problems faced by Indian people. Diasporic writers who have established themselves in the literary world are V.S.Naipaul, Vikram Seth, Rohinton Mistry, Bharati Mukherji, Meena Alexander, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai, and Anita Rau Badami etc. South Asian immigrants have come across several issues to frame their identities in alien shore. Writers have exposed the rich cultural heritage of India to the world readers. The writers' thematic style of writing novels, short stories are of Indian fragrance, narrates the Indian thought, mysticism, fantasy, ancient tales, and feel of immigrant experience at large. The world wide dispersion of South Asian people from countries such



as India, Srilanka, Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh is now a sociological acknowledged phenomenon known as South Asian Diaspora. The literature of South Asian diaspora is a minority discourse that is surfacing with urgency in the field of cultural studies in the world.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present research aims to focus on exploration of cross-cultural conflict in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*, and Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*. Subsequently other objectives are to study Indian diaspora as a crucial and recent trend in South Asian literature; to comprehend the interdisciplinary nature of diasporic elements integrates culture, ethics, feminism and philosophy; and to study the novels from the perspective of diasporic elements.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study is an analytical one. Because the study is based on the critical analysis of the selected novels of women novelists like Kiran Desai and Jhumpa Lahiri. The researcher has used the selected novels as a primary source and critical books, articles, research papers, journals, book reviews and e-content as secondary sources. Apart from this, the researcher has used the analytical, interpretative, descriptive, socio-cultural, comparative, psychoanalytical and textual analytical methods to complete the overall study on diaspora and cultural diversity.

DIASPORA AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN "THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS" BY KIRAN DESAI

The writer, Kiran Desai in "The Inheritance of Loss" addresses variety of postcolonial issues such as cultural hybridity, nationalism, identity and the connection between place and culture. Most characters of the novel experience great influence of the Western culture. The author shows various aspects of the postcolonial reality on a different life stories faced by people who are trying to come to terms with a strong foreign influences. The characters of the novel are representatives of various issues dealt with by people from the formerly colonized countries the story is set in a small Indian town Kalimpong in Northeast Himalayas where the

author grew up. The novel is a compound of the life stories of the main characters and gradually discloses their lives, as well as the environment in which they grew up and which shaped them. Even though all the characters are from one small town in the mountains their stories spread as far as Britain and the USA. The time scale is also quite. Wide as the stories reach from 1940's until 1980's, when most of the story takes place.

The novel shows not only the lives of the main characters but also the development of the region with growing social unrests of Nepali nationalists who are a large diaspora living in the region, and also the impact of such changes on the inhabitants of the region. The beginning of the novel introduces a retired judge who lives with his granddaughter and his cook. The judge is an old man who was as a young bright man sent to Britain to become a judge to serve the British government. However, the British society of 1940's was not prepared to encounter foreign culture and young Jemubhai Patel had to face racist behaviour which had devastating effect on his self-esteem.

The judge after the bitter experience in his youth despises everything Indian and clings to British customs as a sign of a higher class. His granddaughter Sai was brought up in a Westernized convent and after her parents' death, at the age of seven, moved to Cho Oju to live with her grandfather as he was the only living relative. Sai represents Westernized Indian upper class whose first language is English and who prefers Western traditions to the Indian ones. After her affair with her math tutor Gyan, who is Nepali, she is confronted with his accusations to be a servant of the West.

You are like slaves, that's what you are, running after the West, embarrassing yourself. Can't think for you. Copycat, copycat. Don't you know these people you copy like a copycat, THEY DON'T WANT YOU!!!! Gyan points out Sai's not belonging as she does not belong to Indian culture but at the same time is not part of the British culture either as Gyan believes she will not be accepted by it. The cook, who is actually called by his name only once at the end of the novel, on the other hand represents a person from a lower class that follows Indian traditions but



sees the Western world as something of a higher standard and is proud of his son Biju, who lives in New York. The cook had thought of ham roll ejected from a can and fried in thick ruddy slices, of tuna fish soufflé, khari biscuit pie, and was sure that since his son was cooking English food, he had a higher position than if he were cooking Indian.

The Western experience helped Biju to understand where he belongs, helped him to find his own cultural identity and it also made him to question some stereotypes, often connected with race or nationality. Gyan, Sai's tutor, represents someone who is looking for his personal identity as he feels that he is being disadvantaged because of his Nepali nationality. When he joins the nationalist movement he at first seems to find his place in the society, but he later starts to question the correctness of his decision. His relationship with Sai represents the conflict between classes and nationalities; when their relationship encounters problems these differences are surfacing and by wording the stereotypes, they actually word the problems and differences between their classes and nationalities. Two sisters Noni and Lola are representatives of a wealthy higher class which is strongly influenced by British culture. This supports the view that the author's aim was not to describe the lifestyle of people in a remote part of India with their traditional culture, but rather to show the relationship between East and West as well as the reality of immigrants. On the other hand, Kiran Desai is the product of multiculturalism and post-colonialism, an immigrant, well read, well bred, whose rootlessness itself has become a kind of shelter.

DIASPORA AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN "THE NAMESAKE" BY JHUMPA LAHIRI

Jhumpa Lahiri's "The Namesake" manages increasingly complex ethnic and cultural problems as it portrays the life and problems of workers in the host country with a closer investigation of Indo-American cultural connections. The epic show cases encounters and cultural difficulties of around thirty years of life of the Gangulis in the United States, managing two unique ages. It is on account of Gogol

that the psycho-pathology of biculturalism gets showed unmistakably. Ashoke, who speaks to the original of transients and his better half, Ashima, have more found feeling of home and the way of life of country. Ashima, for example, tries to re-live Bengali culture when she peruses Bengali stories, sonnets and articles which she has carried with her. These magazines speak to the cultural things that the transients convey with them. She additionally sees the general society in the United States from the perspective of an Asian female subject in Diaspora. As a lady, who has brought forth a kid in an outside land, her views on psychological thought of network and support are connected to the startling knowledge of her conveyance. She yearns to return to Calcutta and bring up her youngsters there primarily as she feels that she would get the help of her relatives in bringing them up. Progressively, she figures out how to move about in the business sectors of the outsider land, attempting to make herself agreeable in the host country. And, after it's all said and done, the sentiment of being distant from everyone else frequents her and the most ideal way that she can relate this experience is to consider an existence without a network as an all-inclusive pregnancy.

Lahiri investigates through the analogies of pregnancy and distance the cultural part of relocation. Being an outsider is a kind of deep rooted pregnancy. A perpetual pause, a consistent weight, a persistent inclination unwell, It is an on-going duty, an enclosure in what had once been common life, only to find that past life has vanished, supplanted by something progressively confused and requesting. Like pregnancy, being a non-native Ashima accepts, is something that evokes a similar interest from outsiders, a similar blend of pity and respect. (Lahiri: 2003: 49-50)

Ashoke and Ashima attempt to develop a hover of Bengali colleagues when they settle down in Pemberton. They endeavor to manufacture fellowship with different Bengalis for the main reason that they all originate from Calcutta. Lahiri calls attention to how in Diaspora common ethnicity can unite individuals to frame a network of ethnic system however they don't share proficient intrigue.



Mita Biswas examines the cultural methodologies that Ashoke and Ashima deploy to feel comfortable or to be in a gathering. They commend these according to Bengali traditions, wearing their best customary clothing types, in this manner attempting to protect their way of life in another land. Truth is told, their convictions, conventions, traditions, practices, and values' alongside their 'assets and belongings' are conveyed by vagrants with them to new places.

They sit in circles on the floor, singing tunes by Nazrul and Tagore....Contend wildly over the movies of ,Ritwik Ghatak versus those of Satyajit Ray. The CPIM versus the Congress Party. North Calcutta versus South'. (Biswas: 2008:30)

Ashoke and Ashima, who speak to the original foreigners, endeavor to clutch their ethnic and cultural past with an end goal to save a cultural legacy that is slipping quickly in an outsider land. Mita Biswas clarifies how these original foreigners attempt to develop a cultural convention in their youngsters. These endeavors, she watches, contact upon dialect, religion and writing:

So as to protect their way of life in the remote land, the original migrants train their youngsters in the Bengali dialect, writing and history and confession them to their religious traditions, customs, convictions, nourishment propensities, and cultural characteristics. Along with this, they additionally train them in the methods for the new land and cultural traditions. In the novel, Ashima encourages Gogol to remember a youngsters' ballad by Tagore and the names of gods enhancing the ten-headed Durga. (Biswas: 2008: 31)

Sustenance and religion are two huge markers of culture in *The Namesake*. Lahiri ventures the changing nourishment propensities for the Gangulis to follow relating cultural change. She additionally centers on the way religions and myths get hybridized with regards to the second era outsiders.

The migrants depicted in *The Namesake*, in their own specific manners, include to the multicultural mosaic of the United States by hinting at obvious socio-cultural development, other than

their psychological advancement toward digestion. Ashima, for example, starts as a culturally found Indian foreigner yet her long visit in the host country constrains her to consider her own cultural and religious convictions into inquiry and to change them trying to strike a harmony between two cultures. Gogol also has a complex cultural adventure. He starts as an Indo-American subject who endeavors to delete the initial segment of his hyphenated character.

To build up this cultural explanation, he grasps American young ladies and way of life alike. In any case, he also takes a sharp turn in his life and when his conjugal existence with Moushumi goes for a hurl, he comes back to the cultural practices and familial qualities which he had been maintaining a strategic distance from up until this point. His adventure is a cultural endeavor as it takes the per users through various networks, for example, that of the Asian Americans, the understudies of American Universities, the network of craftsmen, white American people group and the Bengali Americans in Boston. He likewise travels through the networks which speak to various geographic designations, for example, those of Boston, Paris and Calcutta. His association to these networks is a transitory issue and it demonstrates how, as cultural character, one's affections for network additionally change crosswise over time Shashikant Mhalunkar (2013).

CONCLUSION AND FINDINGS

Kiran Desai's "The Inheritance of Loss" is an artistic picture of the consequences of immigration and illegal immigration on other land. Illegal immigration has been discussed with critical endeavour. The old cook and his son Bju, retired judge Jemubhai Patel, his orphan granddaughter Sai have been depicted with cross-cultural theme and phase of problems. The novel, "The Inheritance of Loss" is showing not only the reality of the mutual influences of both the Eastern and the Western cultures but pictures also the very different ways of perception of the Eastern culture in the West and the Western culture in the East. These differences in perception of Westerners in the East and Easterners in the West had an impact on the self perception of the characters in Desai's



novel. The greatest influence is shown on the characters of the judge who after encountering the Western culture despises himself as an Indian, and in a search for a new identity clings to his former habits, and strangely adopted cruelty .

On the other hand Jhumpa Lahiri's works are the portrayal of Indian culture and society. In this specific context, it is says that Lahiri is here chronicling a general society during the change in time. As it had occurred in Indian scenario that Indians who were presented the culture that were outsider to them embraced and affected the new culture, a similar case occurs for Indians in different nations (Khilnani Sunil 1997). Lahiri's "The Namesake", the most acclaimed novel deals with conflict in relationships between couples, families and friends. The main theme of the novel is about the name, a name is probably the first and foremost thing which gives identity to the person. She explores the ideas of cultural and personal isolations and identities through her various characters. The novel conveys the experience of alienation of the migrants from their roots. Multicultural and quest for identity is the struggling issue of the novel.

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