



REVIEW ARTICLE

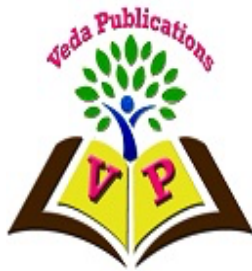


ELEMENTS OF DIASPORA

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ABSTRACT



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This paper explores the concept of diaspora, examining the intersections of identity, belonging, and displacement in diasporic writing. It highlights how the traditional notions of center and margin, home and exile, and familiar and strange are increasingly being deconstructed in the contemporary world. As boundaries based on geography, culture, and ethnicity give way to power, community, space, and time, the role of the citizen transcends national borders, calling for new frameworks of engagement with difference and justice. The paper also critiques the prevailing theoretical frameworks that often neglect the aesthetic and moral dimensions of literature, stressing the need to restore comprehensive readings of literary works that engage both the political and the artistic. Diasporic narratives provide a creative response to the complexities of migration, cultural assimilation, and the evolving dynamics of identity. The paper concludes that despite its socio-political underpinnings, diasporic literature remains inherently concerned with the universal aspects of human experience, offering both artistic and critical insights into the nature of belonging and transformation.

Keywords: *Diaspora, migration, postcolonialism, cultural assimilation, transnationalism, diasporic literature, exile, culture, ethnicity.*



INTRODUCTION

The present paper deals with the elements of diaspora. Diasporic writing draws our attention to an important aspect of our era in which responsibilities of citizens go across national boundaries. The earlier modernist notions of centre and margin, home and exile, and familiar and strange are falling apart. The borders defined in terms of geography, culture and ethnicity are being replaced by configurations of power, community, space, and time. Citizenship cannot any longer ground itself in forms of Eurocentricism and the language of colonialism. In our time, new spaces and identities and relationships have to be created which permit people to move across boundaries, to engage difference and otherness as part of a discourse of justice, social engagement, and democratic struggle [Desai].

ELEMENTS OF DIASPORA IN KIRAN DESAI WORK

Identity Crisis – In “Inheritance of Loss”, a literary work by Kiran Desai, Characters like Biju, an undocumented immigrant in the U.S., struggle to fit in, while others, like Sai, grapple with their hybrid identity in post-colonial India.

Displacement and Migration – The novel depicts characters moving between India, Nepal, and the United States, highlighting their struggles with alienation and belonging.

Colonial Hangover – The judge, Jemubhai Patel, embodies the internalized colonial mindset, rejecting his Indian roots while trying to assimilate into British culture.

Economic Struggles of Immigrants – Biju’s experiences as a low-wage worker in America expose the harsh realities of immigrant life and exploitation.

Cultural Conflicts – The novel highlights tensions between Western modernity and traditional Indian values, showing how diasporic individuals navigate these contradictions [Desai].

CONCEPT OF DIASPORA

Derived from the Greek word *diaspirein*, meaning to disperse, the term “diaspora,” since the nineteenth century, has been widely applied to the dispersal of the Jews throughout the Gentile nations and to the Jewish community that lives outside the frontiers of the biblical Israel. The term now has been extended to include other displaced populations due to slavery, colonialism, or forced migrations. After the Jewish diaspora followed the black or African diaspora to describe the history and experience of black people living outside Africa, especially those in America. We in India now have drawn attention to the experience of the dispersed Indians in America, England, Canada, or elsewhere. A sizeable stock of the Indian diasporic creative and critical writings has piled up over the years to merit serious critical attention, at least in our own country [Buford].

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: DEMYSTIFICATION AND CRITICAL INQUIRY

The most illuminating mode of theoretical inquiry in our era has, of course, been the demystification of the established canon and its critical credo. All those who promote the new cultural politics of difference must perforce adopt the demystificatory mode of



critical enquiry and interpretation. The stable springboards for the most desirable forms of critical practice which take history seriously include political and social analysis of empire, determinism, class, race, gender, nation, and region. This mode attempts to trace the complex dynamics of institutional and other related power structures for disclosing options and alternatives in the service of transformational praxis. It also tries to grasp the manner in which representational strategies become creative responses to changing circumstances and conditions. No doubt, this method is partisan, partial, engaged, and crisis centred. But it also keeps open a sceptical eye so that it can avoid dogmatic traps, formulaic formulations, or rigid conclusions. It is decidedly anti-canonist and anti-essentialist. It is, however, not without attendant dangers or traps, the most formidable of which is reductionism, be it sociological, psychological, or historical sort. One way to avoid this trap is to stay attuned to the best of what the mainstream has to offer in terms of its paradigms, viewpoints, and methods, and yet to maintain an orientation in affirming and enabling subcultures of criticism. The demystified critics must be models of what it means to be intellectual freedom fighters, striking their position within or alongside the mainstream critics while clearly aligning with those who vow to offer resistance to the homogenizing discourse of globalization and the like [Dawesar].

THE ROLE OF THE DIASPORIC WRITER

Diasporic writing brings into focus, as a matter of fact, not merely the role of the intellectual or the relationship of teaching to the evolution of

democracy, but also the intellectual's need to move away from a mere language of critique for a redefinition as part of a language of transformation and hope. It is only on this premise that the struggle against racism, class structures, sexism, and other forms of oppression would gather new momentum. This necessary and inevitable shift indicates that literary, writers and critics combine with other cultural activists for inventing languages and providing critical spaces that offer new opportunities for a coming together of different social movements [Ghosh].

LITERATURE AND THE AESTHETIC DIMENSION

However, after we have said all this; it seems equally necessary to emphasize here that literatures like the diasporic are not perforce anti-universal or anti-value. Any art, if it is great and good, would transcend the transient and rise to whatever is universal and valuable in man and life [Dirlik].

What is being insisted upon here is the fact that despite our cultural concerns and political polemics in the study of literature, more so the diasporic, the aspect of literariness or artness of literary work would always remain a relevant and valuable consideration. Equally relevant and valuable will remain the concept of good and great art as against the bad and frivolous art. No amount of deconstruction can demolish the difference between a Shakespeare and a Shobha Dey [Rushdie].

THE NEED FOR A COMPREHENSIVE LITERARY CRITICISM

The problem with theory is that even though high sounding, higher than even philosophy, it has



confined literary criticism to the surface of whatever is expressed in art. The questions being addressed today by theory of difference and deferring, of otherness and orientalism, of politics and ideology, are not, in fact, new; they have always been addressed by creative writers as well as critics from the time of Homer and Plato to our own time [Gupta]. The only difference is that while earlier than the advent of theory literary criticism was inclusive of all questions arising out of literary work, including the political, moral, and aesthetic, the theory prefers to remain confined only to the political and ideological, disdainfully excluding the moral and aesthetic. We need, therefore, to restore to our reading or criticism of literature the earlier comprehensiveness of concerns, subjecting them finally to the moral and aesthetic. To do this, we have to admit that literature, including the diasporic, is art, not journalism or politics, nor sociology or psychology, nor linguistics or anthropology, but a combination to all these, brought under the laws of poetic beauty and poetic truth, as Arnold puts it [Clifford].

CONCLUSION

The term 'diaspora', derived from the Greek word, meaning 'dispersal', 'distribution', or 'spreading' has been applied for many years to the worldwide scattering of the Jews; in more recent times it has been applied to a number of ethnic and racial groups living distant from their traditional homelands; and it has been used With particular application to people from the former British India-a result of the colonization, though of late one occasionally hears or reads of the African diaspora [Hall]. When we speak of the Indian diaspora, writers generally refer to

persons of Indian birth or ethnicity living abroad. Emmanuel S. Nelson defines the Indian diaspora as the "historical and contemporary presence of people of Indian sub-continental origin in other areas of the world." Many are first generation expatriates who continue to consider India their true home, the place of their nurture, values, and extended families as well as their deepest sympathies and attachments [Mishra]. However, this is not universally the case; accommodated to overseas lifestyles, many members of the diaspora experience a distinct dissonance when reintroduced to their former sub continental culture [Appadurai].

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