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## INDIAN DIASPORA AND ITS DEVELOPMENT: A BRIEF STUDY

**Dr. T. RAJA SEKHAR**

Head, Department of English, Hindi Mahavidyalaya, Hyderabad  
[dr.rajasekhar.th@gmail.com](mailto:dr.rajasekhar.th@gmail.com)



**Dr. T. RAJA SEKHAR**

### ABSTRACT

Literature has a strong impact on human being's actions, thoughts, feelings, beliefs and faiths that form the basic themes of literature. Human being is described as a social animal and this social aspect of human being is what is reflected in literature. Literature deals with numerous sociological aspects and movements aesthetically. 'Diaspora' is one the sociological concepts that has its place in literature today. Diaspora literature deals with expatriated sensibility. Its main focus is on the lives of immigrants and their inner and external conflicts in a new and alien land. Diasporic literature highlights issues like cultural dilemma, thirst for identity, multiculturalism and universal aspects of human existence. Transnationalism, hybridity, cultural mongrelization also enrich the Diasporic literatures in the age of globalization. Topographical shifting, cultural transactions, multiculturalism which form a framework in the Diasporic literature are found to be major and recurrent themes in the writings of Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, V.S.Naipaul, Kiran Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahari and many others. It also addresses issues related to alienation, loneliness, homelessness, nostalgia, protest, disintegration of cultures and discriminating margins of two different social aspects.

**Key Words:** Diaspora, cultural dilemma, thirst for identity, multiculturalism, loneliness, homelessness, nostalgia, protest, disintegration of cultures

### KY PUBLICATIONS

### INTRODUCTION

The word 'Diaspora' is an origin from the Greek word 'Diasperio', meaning to distribute or to scatter. The term basically was associated with the Jewish historical experience and has now acquired a more expanded meaning. It refers to common ancestral homeland, migration that takes place voluntarily or involuntarily and a sense of marginality in the country of residence. The term discusses various disciplines like Sociology, Cultural studies and Political Science and so on. The term also raises questions related to assimilation, loss of identity or identity crisis. Lately, Indian Diaspora has

become a personal choice of individual, especially for academic pursuit or economic profits either towards Middle East or to the West. In almost all the cases, the expatriate had faced a clash of cultural opposite in nature, a sense of alienation that was followed by numerous attempts to adjust or adapt, to adopt, to accept and finally to form a unique but separate identity as a racial group ought to be assimilated. These have now been placed under the umbrella term of Expatriate Writing or the Diasporic Literature and have reached a state of being synonymously.

The Collins dictionary of sociology (1995) defines it as the “.... Situation of any group of people disposed, whether forcibly or voluntarily throughout the world, referring particularly to the Jewish experience”.

Diasporic literature generally deals with alienation, existential rootlessness, nostalgia and identity crisis and quest for identity. It also deals with issues related to disintegration of cultures. Uma Parameswaran has defined it thus:

-----first is one of nostalgia for the homeland left behind mingled with fear in a strange land. The second is a phase in which one is busy adjusting to the new environment that there is little creative output. The third phase is the shaping of diaspora existence by involving themselves in ethnocultural issues. The fourth is when they have ‘arrived’ 42 and start participating in the larger world of politics and national issues. (Parameswaran, 165)

During the last two decades, an increase in the number of the third world writers has been found. They still feel alienated in their new countries and tend to write of people and events that have been typical of their motherland. This uprooted or sandwiched mood of the writers has been very dominant and has given rise to what is now called Expatriate or Diasporic Sensibility. Many Indian writers like Bharati Mukherjee, Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh, Rohinton Mistry are seen dealing with Diasporic Sensibility and exploring its various issues through literature in English. Jhumpa Lahiri is one of the recent and internationally renowned writers of second generation Expatriate writers. She was born to Bengali parents in London in 1970 and brought up in USA. She won many awards that include the prestigious Pulitzer Prize 2000 for her collection of short stories ‘Interpreter of Maladies’. The novel ‘The Lowland’ of her is shortlisted for Man Booker Prize 2013. Lahiri won DSC PRIZE for South Asian Literature in the recently held Jaipur Litfest 2015. Lahiri in her writings deals with human relationships and helpless women who turned victims and portrays the need to go beyond the human made boundaries like culture, religion, nation and race and

brings in the universality among human beings through her writings.

Literature plays a great role in the life of man. A poet or writer is generally inspired and influenced by his/her experiences and social surroundings. India is a place of various languages and literatures. Thus Indian writing is a rich experience of its people and their culture and traditions and also the way they lead their life. A unique quality of this literature depends on multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-racial aspects. The mixture of Indian literature with other Indian languages and dialects and simultaneously with western cultures, literatures, traditions enriches the true essence of the treasure of literature. A combination of two cultural traditions thus has made our literature immortal. This attempt of people from all walks of life in various ways would make the world know the cultural values and aspects and mode of living. In fact, it is an attempt to make the readers feel appealing and also to make one country empathize the other. With the emergence of post colonial literatures, contemporary Indian writing in English has been gaining momentum and wider importance throughout the world. Young writers are being recognized and encouraged through various awards like Booker and Pulitzer. This not only gives them identification but also spreads the culture and mode of living of their own nation and the other. Readers gain knowledge and will be familiarized and acquainted with the enormous body of the Indian literature and comparative study of literature, linguistics and so on which in turn also imbibe in the students a sense of cultural awareness.

Indian fiction in Indian writing in English is a vast area. Beginning with Rabindranath Tagore till the authors of recent times one can see Indian Literature being given a tremendous effect. The three authors, Raja Rao, R. K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand are among the initial successful authors of Indian English fiction. Raja Rao in the Foreword to *Kanthapura* says:

One has to convey in a language that is not one's own; the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement

that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word 'alien', yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up, like Sanskrit or Persian was before, but not of our emotional make-up. We are all instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our own language and in English. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us. Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colorful as the Irish or the American.

There are many contemporary writers like Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy, Rohinton Mistry, V.S.Naipaul, Jhumpa Lahiri, Sashi Tharoor and Upamanyu Chatterjee in Indian writing in English. Some books deal with author's biography with the rich experiences of his life while other books deal with the present day India's socio-political, economic and cultural or current issues. The concept of the writers whether they are in India or live abroad is all about India and Indians. Let us consider Salman Rushdie's *Midnight Children*. It explores the Indian history though he lives abroad at the UK. The novel explains and expresses his views about his motherland India. Rushdie attained global recognition with *Midnight's Children*, a fiction that spotlights on Indian writing in English. Rushdie tries to bring back the history of his home country, his community and family and thus Diasporic Consciousness. The novel gives a strong image of India as he migrated to a foreign land. As an immigrant writer, he gives every detail that has remained in his memory from his childhood.

*Midnight's children* is "about India, the country of Rushdie's own cherished childhood. What has given the novel its narrative amplitude is the connection with his autobiography - the baggage that memories that even a migrant carry".

"Rushdie's example-- his inventiveness, his irreverence, and above all his success-- became liberating for a large group of

Indian writers living either at home or abroad" (Mukherjee 178).

Rushdie uses hybrid English, neologisms and unapologetic Indian terms. His usage of syntax to convey Indian speech rhythms has been called "chutnification" of English by Rushdie himself and "biryaniisation" by others. Rushdie enjoyed great admiration and influence that in fact has not been seen in case of other writers of his generation. If we take Indian literature in English since 1980 we find that Rushdie popularized experimental writing and Vikram Seth promoted realistic fiction. Writers of this generation after Rushdie like Rohinton Mistry, Vikram Chandra, Upamanyu Chatterjee are sometimes referred to as "Rushdie's children" while writers like Jhumpa Lahiri, Arundhati Roy, Amit Chaudhuri, Kiran Desai are "Midnight's Grandchildren".

Salmon Rushdie says: My novel *Midnight's Children* was really born: When I realized how much I wanted to restore the past to myself.... What I was actually doing was a novel of memory and about memory, so that my India was just that: My India a version and no more than one version of all the Possible versions I made as a narrator. Saleem, suspect in his narration: his mistakes are the mistakes of a fallible memory and his vision is fragmentarily. It may be that when the Indian writer who writes from outside India tries to reflect that world, he is obliged to deal in broken mirrors, some of those fragments that have been irretrievably lost" (199:10-11).

The three other Indian authors who have won the Booker Prize for fiction are Arundhati Roy for her debut novel "The God of Small Things" in 1997, Anita Desai's daughter Kiran Desai's novel "The Inheritance of Loss" in 2006 (Man Booker Prize) and Aravind Adiga for his debut novel "The White Tiger" that has won 40<sup>th</sup> Booker Prize in 2008.

Diasporic writers ought to keep a collective memory of their past and keep their links strong with the mother land alive so that they can qualify for a Diasporic identity. Roots are of course very important. But when people are prevented from getting adjusted to new changes and endless

changing conditions, it is highly possible that they become chaotic. Hence Diasporic writers always must keep a constant watch on the details of their homelands, the reason for the immigrants for their migration be it, financial, social, political or for trade and commerce causes, religious preaching or as labourers, soldiers or refugees or exiles or even guest employment in search of better life and the period of stay in the adopted land. It is already evident that the migrants suffer from pain of being far off from their homes leaving their memories of their motherland. As Salman Rushdie puts it,

“--- one physical alienation from India at almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of redeeming precisely the thing that was lost, that will, in short, create fictions not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indians of mind.”(Rushdie, 1991:10)

Salman Rushdie further maintains, “The immigrant, the man without frontiers, is an archetypal figure of our age.” (Rushdie, 2002:115)

The Diaspora Indian is “like a banyan tree, traditional symbol of the Indian way of life he spreads out its roots in several soils, drawing nourishment from one when the rest dry up. Far from being homeless, he/she has several homes, and that is the only way he has increasingly come to feel the home in the world”(qtd in Indian Diaspora 10).

Aravind Adiga was born in Chennai in 1994. His career began as a financial journalist with the financial times. The debut novel, *The White Tiger* won him the Man Booker Prize in 2008. He is also the fourth Indian to receive this honour. The novel studies the rural poverty, corruption, Indian society and politics, religious chaos between Hindus and Muslims, the experience of returning to India after living in America and the tensions between India and China as Asian super powers. We find the novel taking the form of a series of letters. Wen Jiabao was the premier of the state council of the People's Republic of China. On his eve of visiting India, Balram Halwai writes to him in which he writes about his rise from that of a downtrodden position to that of his current position of an entrepreneur in

Bangalore. India's caste system and its political corruption have also been dealt with in the letter. The protagonist Balram lives in the village of Laxmangarh, a fictional village in Bihar. The location is in the 'Darkness' of rural India. He is the son of a rickshaw puller. He could not finish his school because of his poverty conditions. He has to work in a tea shop, break coals and clean tables. Balram gets a change in his life when he meets a rich man of his village. He is hired as a chauffeur by the stoic and is allowed to live in Delhi. These experiences throw Light in his dark life that helps him to move towards revelation. He accompanies his master and his family to shopping centers and malls and becomes increasingly aware of human wealth and opportunities to grow. His worse situation makes him feel that there is only one way to come out of his problems and that would be murdering his master's son Ashok. Ashok on his return from America is initially conflicted by the corruption in India. His involvement in corruption leads to his demise and Balram avails himself an opportunity here to become an entrepreneur.

The novel is full of satiric tone and high sarcasm, irony and mockery. Observe the terms like “Darkness” that describes life in rural villages and “Light” for the life in city. Thus the book aims to look into the issues in the contemporary Indian society as presented by Aravind Adiga.

A Diaspora writer can be independent and can select themes of Puritanism or historical stories or stories related to political and social life of the country which he belongs to. The author more often creates characters who suffer in accepting a new culture and tradition. The list of Diaspora writers in India is extensive. They are from various parts of India who settled outside the country and would select the themes based on Indian context. They select the themes related to Indian culture, tradition and its values. Let us observe V.S.Naipaul's characters like Mohan Biswas from “A House for Mr. Biswas” or Ganesh Ramsumair from the *Mystic Masseur*. They stand as characters who are generations away from their homeland India. Naipaul's characters are inherited by memory of dislocation. The native land in India for them is not

a geographical space but a creation of the imagination. Rushdie's remarks:

"-- the past is a country, from which we have all emigrated, that its loss is part of our common humanity." (Rushdie, 1991:87)

Writers like Kamala Markandya and Shanta Rama Rau tapped the culture and tradition in their works. Observe the following paragraph from "The Ground Beneath Her Feet":

And so farewell, my country, Don't worry; I won't come knocking at your door. I won't phone you in the middle of night and hang up when you reply. I won't follow you down the street when you step out with some other guy. My home is burned, my parents dead, and those I loved almost gone away. Those whom I still love I must leave behind for good. "I go -I hunt- alone. "India, I have swum in your warm waters and run laughing in your mountain meadows. [...] I have eaten your independent salt and drunk your nauseatingly sugary roadside tea. [...] India, my terra infirma, my maelstrom, my cornucopia, my crowd. India my too-muchness, my everything at once, my Hug-me, my fable, my mother, my father and my first great truth.[...] "India, fount of my imagination, source of my savagery, breaker of my heart. Goodbye. (Rushdie 248-49)

Rushdie brings our thoughts to life with a great source of inspiration every time. He cannot write unless it is about India. Let us for example observe his latest work 'Shalimar the Clown,' focused on India, the part of recent Kashmir, the state to which the author belonged. Observe the following remark of Rushdie.

"There are two movements in my writing-home and away, going back to India and away from it," he says (outlook.India.com).

The novels by Anita Desai 'Bye Bye Blackbird' and 'The Nowhere Man' By Kamala Markandaya effectively depicted Diasporic Indian writers. These novels speak of racial prejudice against Indians in the UK in 1960s. Bharati Mukherjee's novels like 'Wife and Jasmine' depict Indians in the US, the land of immigrants. The

Satanic Verses by Salman Rushdie is an approach to the migration by adopting the technique of magic realism. Tilo is a character in the novel The Mistress of Spices by Chitra Benerjee Divakaruni who as an exotic character to reveal the migrant's anguishes. The Shadow Lines by Amitav Ghosh portrays the extent of rootlessness faced by character born and brought up on a foreign land. Similarly in his novel 'Afternoon Raaga', Amit Chaudari portrays the lives of Indian students in Oxford. The second generation Diasporic Indian writers like Shashi Thakor, Sunetra Gupta and Jhumpa Lahiri have successfully and truly demonstrated the lives of both first and second generation immigrants in the US.

### CONCLUSION

The paper thus is an attempt to examine the impact of Diaspora Theory and its various aspects in literature. It discussed features of Expatriate or Diasporic literature analyzing the Indian contribution to Diasporic literature in English. The paper is a focus of new writers who contributed their literary genius to highlight this ever-growing Diaspora through their poems, dramas, short stories and fictions. This attempt of these writers has resulted in a very fast development of Diasporic Literature.

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**AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY**

Dr. T. Raja Sekhar is the Associate Professor and Head of the Department of English in Hindi Mahavidyalaya, Hyderabad. He did his M.A., M.Phil and Ph.D in English from Osmania University. He is qualified in UGC-NET. He has been teaching English language and literature to graduate and post graduate students for the past 25 years. He received many credentials from Osmania University in ELT. His major research interests include War Literature, American Literature, Oral Literature and ELT. He has been teaching Communicative English to students at various levels of Graduate Post Graduate students at the University. He has taken part in various seminars and conferences at Osmania University and other Universities as well.

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