



CROSS CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES IN THE NOVELS OF V. S. NAIPAUL AND AMITAV GHOSH ON DIASPORA THEME

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ABSTRACT

The proposed paper entitled cross cultural perspectives: In the novel of V. S. Naipaul and Amitav Ghosh, is a sincere attempt to explore their concern for the dislocated position of migrants. V. S. Naipaul and Amitav Ghosh both are Diaspora writers and witnessed the due to transcending of Diaspora. Being dislocated writers due to transcending Boundaries, and its consequences are much focused issues in the present-day literature. The border becomes a physical space that is the expression of historical contradiction and arbitrary decisions.

V. S. Naipaul and Amitav Ghosh novels which highlights the displaced positions of migrants and the representation of their struggle with different culture. The novels which are chosen for this paper include:

V. S. Naipaul's "A House for Mr. Biswas" published in (1961)

Amitav Ghosh's "The shadow lines" published in (1988)

Keywords: Diaspora, Nostalgia, Cross-culture, transcending, Boundaries.

"...Where the world has not been broken up into fragments By narrow domestic walls... into that heaven of freedom my father, let my country awake."¹

-Rabindranath Tagore.

Introduction

Indian English literature refers to the body of works by writers in India who write in the English languages of India. It is also associated with the works of members of the Indian Diaspora. Such as V.S. Naipaul, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Agha Shahid Ali, Rohinton Mistry and Salman Rushdie. Sir Vidiadhar Suraj Prasad Naipaul born on 17 August, 1932 in Trinidad. He won Nobel Prize, his work based

on migrated people and deals with their anxiety and their fight for their identity. He has published 30 books, both of fictions and non. fictions over some 50 years.

Amitav Ghosh was born in Calcutta in 11 July, 1956 is an Indian writer and the winner of the 54th Jnanpith award, best known for this work in English fictions nominated for Booker prize, International Booker prize, Neustadt International prize for literature. He has written 8 fictional books and 6 in the non-fiction genre. His fictional work centres on the southeast Asian population dealing with the identity crisis at different levels. Amitav

¹ Rabindranath Tagore from "Where the mind is without fear".

Ghosh was raised and educated in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Iran, Egypt, India and the United Kingdom.

Culture affect the human psychology and behaviour. The objective of the research is to trace out the impact of cultural diversity on the individuals and also on the contemporary Literature. The human dimension and the theme of displaced sensibility, provide ample scope for the literary reproduction of the event. 20th century post-colonial literature has under gone rapid changes due to emergence of new concepts, ideologies technical and scientific development and many other equally significant issues that accelerated the mutual interaction and opened up new avenues. Migration is one prominent factor that has increased the momentum of getting diversified exposure. Diaspora category comes under the broader realm of post-colonial literature the production from previously colonized countries such as India. Diaspora as the root cause the cultural clash and the theme of hybrid as well as fight with cross cultural to find the way of survival. Indian Diaspora with its eventful growth has a very powerful presence in literature.

The terms – ‘Diaspora’ ‘exile’ and ‘alienation’ are synonymous and possess an ambiguous status of being different, the diaspora writers attempt at doing justice to both. The writing occupies a place of great signification between countries and cultures. This movement causes the dislocation and location of cultures and individuals harp upon memories. Diaspora writers live on the margins of two countries and create cultural theories.

Migration takes place due to various reasons and in the Indian context the migratory movements were governed by historical, political, economic reasons including higher education, better prospects and marriage. However, the Indian community has shown greater sense of adjustment, adaptability, mobility and accessibility. The sense of homelessness which every immigrant suffer in genius and intense but in recent times it has been seen that this concept has been minimized and made less intense through their social networking and sense of solidarity.

As very beautifully said by Bhiku Parekh – the diaspora Indian is “like the banyan tree, the traditional symbol of the Indian way of life, he spreads out his roots in several soils, drawing nourishment from one when the rest dry up.”

The chief characteristics features of the diaspora writings are the :

- Quest for identity.
- Uprooting and re-rooting
- Insider and outsider syndrome
- Nostalgia
- Nagging sense of guilt, etc.

A famous American travelogue say of Indian – “India is the cradle of the human race, the birth place of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend and great grandmother of tradition.”

In the shadow lines, Amitav Ghosh attempts to display how cultures of different nations, intersect one another. ‘Away’ and ‘coming Home’ becomes ironical because the impression that emerges from Ghosh’s handling of experiences is that one can neither ‘go away’ nor ‘come home’ (Kaul 1988).

The title – the shadow lines itself reflects in the final analysis that there is no solid space either geographically or culturally. The title reflects the existence of various spaces only as abstraction – blurring into one another; alien space blurring into native space; cultural space into geographical space. As said by Meenakshi Mukherjee :

“Time in this novel can be illusory and concrete at the same time and like wise space can be fluid even when held solidity within the concrete scaffolding of a house or confirmed within the firm outlines etched national boundaries on a map. (1988)”

Displacement, the natural consequence of Diaspora, has been a perennial source of cultural conflicts. Migration to the alien land with indigenous culture of the migrant made is difficult to assimilate and accept the new environment. This mental strife has been revealed through the works of Naipaul and Amitav Ghosh.

V. S. Naipaul's "A House for Mr. Biswas" is constructed around the facts of his father's life. It focuses on the protagonist desperate flight to have a house of his own to develop an authentic identity of Mohan Biswas: the protagonist – a universal figure transcending Shakespeare's King Lear. He presents post-colonial dilemmas. Like Naipaul, Amitav Ghosh also present conflicts of inter world of Diaspora. N. S. V. Naipaul's post-colonial literature and not only their fictional work even their short stories also present the consequences, mental conflicts, quest for identity, searching for utopia, escapism from Nostalgia from fight for survival in different culture.

The elusive word "nostalgia" is formed from two Greek words : nostos (return home) and algia (pain). The Oxford English Dictionary defines nostalgia as "a form of Melancholia caused by prolonged absence from one's home or country: severe homesickness". Nostalgia, is the psychological drive and that is why it is universal. And it is true because while reading novels of Diaspora writers we find that their characters show their psychological sufferings their mental conflicts. Home sickness and their confusion about different culture, their fight to establish themselves in different culture. Nostalgia culturalism lies at the heart of any Diaspora writer and Naipaul and Ghosh are no exception to that.

Such a sensibility suggests a new dynamism of power relation in which politics and selfhood, empire and psychology, prove to be profoundly interrelated. There is here an implicit disavowal of monologist nationalist identity. Similarity, when the Indian family in Naipaul's (A house for Mr. Biswas) tries to create a 'home away from home" in Trinidad by preserving Indian traditions and customs, their attempt turns into a fiasco. This narrative has been classified to construct an imaginary Indian homeland of East Indian cultural milieu. So this awareness of an original home is a new invention of a transnational identity. It is the inevitable fault of nationalism, asserts Amitav Kumar, where "the soft' emotion of nostalgia... is turned into the 'hard' emotion of fundamentalism", driving extremist over the edge to secure an idealized vision of the "homeland".

"A house for Mr. Biswas" published in (1961), in the novel the impact of colonization in everywhere. The family of laborers on a sugar-estate to which Mr. Biswas is born, are there directly as a consequence of the colonial enterprise much of Naipaul's novel is given to depicting the groups of Indians people in Trinidad, cut off from the land of their ancestors on the one hand, and their immediate social and cultural environment on the other, ceaselessly caught in the struggle for basic survival.

"A house for Mr. Biswas" presents masculinity under imperial stress and the death of Mr. Biswas at the height of Naipaul's achievement to show the struggle and stress of Diaspora person.

The shadow line (1988), Amitav Ghosh's second Novel deals with three families spread over three countries across the world viz. Dhaka, Calcutta and London. The three families narrate their own experiences of cultural, religious and national differences/indifferences along the generations. Written against the milieu of civil strife in east Pakistan (Now Bangladesh) and riot hit Calcutta, the novel reveals during its course the various traumas and crisis faced by the immigrants and left-over natives in east Pakistan. It also tries to show that such communal riots do not have borders, they spread like wild fire and cross territorial borders. The events in the novel essentially revolve around Maya Devi's family, their friendship with the English friends – the Prices, and Thamma, the narrator grandmother and Maya Devi's elder sister. The novel deals with the experience and links with her ancestral city Dhaka. The narration revolves around a number of decades and also covers the riots of 1964 which kills Maya Devi's uncle 'Jethamoshai'. Tridip the central character of the novel and Khalil the rickshaw puller. Their deaths seem to shroud the issue of inter-cultural understanding and friendship in contemporary social structures divided by vague time called national boundaries. The novel therefore, revolves around two families the Datta-Choudharies of Bengal and the Prices in London. A mirror-image the "upside-down" neighbour Ghosh, alongside his narrator, questions the ability of enforced borders to actually divide a place bound by such vast reserves of collective public memory, and

can such a partition ever be complete, for how does one divide a common memory? Nivedita Mazumdar believes that the cultural didactic of Amitav Ghosh, and that of the shadow lines in particular, represents this particular version of history, one that was derived from the often silenced voices of the nation – a version that nonetheless also repeats itself, a history we could still learn lessons from.

In both the novels the life of the protagonists become a long tale of suffering. They are caught between the inability to adjust to new environment and the nostalgia memories of their indigenous culture.

Conclusion

Diaspora, is therefore, a scattering of the seed in the wind, the fruits of which are a new creation and a fight to survive. Every diaspora movement holds a historical significance, as it carries within itself the kernel of the nation's history. Diaspora is a journey towards self-realization, self-recognition, self-knowledge and self-definition. There is an element of creativity present in the diaspora writing and this creations stands as a compensation for the many losses suffered.

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