



THEME OF ALIENATION AND DISPLACEMENT IN DIASPORIC WRITING

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Abstract:

The research paper examines the Indian Diaspora as a case study for exploring the concepts of globalization and multiculturalism in relation to themes of alienation, identity, and multiculturalism. The term "Diaspora" is commonly used to describe the movement of people or populations from their traditional homeland to settle in a different place far from their original homeland. Diasporic literature has played a significant role in portraying the culture and history of nations, as well as shedding light on the realities faced by people in diaspora. Diasporic writing explores the constant struggle between memories of the homeland and the new land, as migrants find themselves caught between the traditions and customs of their old world and the freedom and allure of the new one. Migrants often find themselves torn between preserving their old traditions or embracing new values and cultures. Each category of diaspora highlights a specific reason for migration, often associated with particular groups of people. Diasporic authors engage in cultural transmission, effectively translating a map of reality for diverse readerships. They draw upon a wealth of memories and articulate a blend of global and national influences that encompass both real and imagined experiences.

Keywords : Multiculturalism, Diaspora, Alienation, Identity, Immigrant.

Introduction:

Diaspora Theory has had a significant impact on the literature of every language worldwide. This body of literature is commonly referred to as Expatriate or Diasporic Literature. Diasporic Literature encompasses a wide range of literary works written by authors outside their native country, yet these works are deeply connected to their native culture and background. Within this



broad context, any writer who writes outside their country while maintaining a strong connection to their homeland through their works can be considered a diasporic writer. Diasporic literature is rooted in the feelings of loss and alienation that arise from migration and expatriation. It often explores themes of alienation, displacement, existential rootlessness, nostalgia, and the search for identity. Additionally, it delves into issues related to the blending or fragmentation of cultures. Ultimately, diasporic literature reflects the immigrant experience that emerges from the process of settling in a new country.

Diasporic literature often explores themes of location, dislocation, and relocation, delving into the changing concept of home and the anxiety surrounding homelessness and the impossibility of returning. Expatriate literature frequently focuses on the internal struggle amidst cultural displacement, while immigrants grapple with crises and rebuilding their lives away from their families. These individuals experience a triple alienation from their homeland, their new residence, and their offspring. Diaspora literature engages in an ongoing dialogue with the idea of a metahome, with a yearning to recreate a lost sense of home leading to the formation of a new version of home.

William Safran utilizes the term 'Diaspora' to refer to expatriate minority communities that have dispersed from an original center to two or more peripheral or foreign regions. These communities consist of individuals who maintain their myths about their motherland and experience a sense of alienation in their new surroundings. The expatriate writer, undergoing cultural, geographical, and emotional displacement, develops a diasporic sensibility that reflects the writer's plural identity. Their writing is characterized by a pluralistic perspective, constantly oscillating between two worlds and voyaging between two locations. At times, the writer envisions their home country as a place of violence, poverty, and corruption, while also occasionally romanticizing it. Prominent contributors in this field include writers such as See Prasad Naipaul, Shiva Naipaul, V.S. Naipaul, Cyril Dabydeen, David Dabydeen, Sam Selvon, M.G. Vassanji, Subramanian, K.S. Maniam, Shani Muthoo, and Marina Budos.

Indian Writing and the Diaspora

The phenomenon of diasporic writing has significantly influenced Indian literature. The fusion of cultures, experiences, and perspectives has given rise to a unique genre within Indian writing. Diasporic writing in Indian literature explores the complexities of identity, belonging, and the interplay between different cultures. The diaspora refers to the dispersion of a particular group of



people from their homeland to various parts of the world. Indian diasporic writing encompasses the literary works of Indian authors who have migrated to different countries and have been influenced by their new surroundings. These writers often navigate the complexities of living in a foreign land while maintaining a connection to their Indian roots.

Diasporic writing in Indian literature offers a fresh perspective on themes such as cultural hybridity, displacement, and the search for identity. It provides a platform for authors to explore the challenges and triumphs of living in a multicultural society. Through their narratives, these writers shed light on the experiences of the Indian diaspora, capturing the nuances of their struggles, aspirations, and sense of belonging.

Furthermore, diasporic writing in Indian literature serves as a bridge between different cultures. It fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation of diverse perspectives, breaking down barriers and promoting cultural exchange. These literary works not only resonate with the Indian diaspora but also offer insights to readers from various backgrounds, fostering a sense of empathy and connection.

Contemporary diasporic Indian authors can be categorized into two distinct groups. One group consists of individuals who have lived in India for a portion of their lives and have carried the weight of their homeland with them abroad. The other group is made up of those who have been brought up outside of India since childhood. They have only seen their country from an external perspective, viewing it as a foreign place of their origin. The writers in the former group experience a tangible displacement, while those in the latter group feel disconnected from their roots. Both sets of writers have produced an impressive body of English literature. Through their depiction of migrant characters in their works, these authors explore themes such as displacement, alienation, assimilation, and acculturation. The portrayal of displaced characters by diasporic Indian writers takes on great significance when viewed in the context of the vast Indian subcontinent's geopolitical landscape. This is precisely why such works have garnered an international readership and enduring appeal.

Anita Desai's *Bye Bye Blackbird* and Kamala Markandaya's *The Nowhere Man* are among the earliest novels that effectively portray diasporic Indian characters. These novels shed light on the racial prejudice faced by Indians in 1960s UK, which leads to their isolation and a deepening sense of displacement. Bharati Mukherjee's novels, such as *Wife and Jasmine*, depict the lives of Indians



in the United States, a country known for its immigrants, both legal and illegal, before the era of globalization took hold. In *The Satanic Verses*, Salman Rushdie explores the theme of migration through the use of magic realism. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's novel, *The Mistress of Spices*, presents Tilo, the protagonist, as an exotic character, revealing the anguish experienced by migrants. Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* delves into the profound rootlessness experienced by individuals who are born and raised in a foreign land. Amit Chaudhari's *Afternoon Raag* portrays the lives of Indian students in Oxford. These writers also highlight the positive aspects of displacement, such as the opportunity to have a dual perspective and experience diverse cultural modes.

Bharathi Mukherjee's novel *Jasmine* vividly portrays the dynamic nature of American society, where individuals and their relationships are constantly evolving. Jasmine is depicted as a rebellious, adaptable, and resilient character. She boldly states, "There are no harmless, compassionate ways to remark oneself. We murder who we were so we can rebirth ourselves in the image of dreams," showcasing her unwavering confidence. Jasmine's ability to turn her dreams into reality not only empowers women but also inspires those seeking liberation from traditional constraints. The shifting identities of Jasmine symbolize a woman's journey in search of her true values, a theme celebrated by Mukherjee as she navigates through various personas in the novel. From Jothy to Jasmine, Jazzy, Jase, and Jane, the protagonist embodies the struggles of illegal immigrants facing adversity in a foreign land. Mukherjee highlights the spiritual transformation necessary for cultural assimilation through Jasmine's evolution with each new identity. Each new relationship Jasmine enters brings forth a new name, with Jasmine representing love, courage, and Jane symbolizing cunning. The character of Jyoti, who later becomes Jasmine, initially embodies innocence and love for her husband, Prakash, before embarking on a journey to America as an illegal immigrant. Her marriage to Du reflects her adaptability to American culture, transitioning from her Indian roots to embrace a new identity. The novel's exploration of assimilation and resistance underscores the complex interplay between acceptance and rejection in Jasmine's transformative journey.

Meena Alexander, born in 1951 in Allahabad, first moved to Sudan before eventually settling in America. In her novel *Manhattan Music* (1997), Alexander skillfully explores themes of immigrant life, identity crisis, racial intolerance, international affairs, and marriages against the backdrop of both Manhattan and India. On the other hand, Sunetra Gupta's novel *Memories of Rain* (1992) follows the story of a female protagonist who immigrates to England for love, only to



discover the true nature of her British husband. Disillusioned by his behavior, she returns to India with her children. Similarly, Gupta's novel *A Sin of Colour* (1998) delves into the challenges and isolation experienced by Indian immigrants in a new and unfamiliar environment.

Conclusion:

Indian Diasporic writers frequently explore the recurring themes of Home and Dislocation in their writings. The experience of being part of a diaspora often stems from a deep sense of loss, leaving behind one's home and lacking a profound connection with the host country. Consequently, Diasporic literature serves as a vital bridge, connecting and reconciling two distinct cultures.

In conclusion, diasporic writing has become an integral part of Indian literature, enriching it with diverse narratives and perspectives. It serves as a powerful tool for exploring the complexities of identity, belonging, and cultural hybridity. Through diasporic writing, Indian authors have created a literary landscape that transcends borders and fosters a deeper understanding of the human experience.

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