

WWJMRD 2015; 1(6): 21-24
www.wwjmr.com
e-ISSN: 2454-6615

J. G. Ravi Kumar
Assistant Professor in English
Presidency University
Italgapura/Dibbur, Rajankunte,
Bengaluru, India

Diasporic men writers: An overview

J. G. Ravi Kumar

Abstract

In the literature of the Diaspora is of exact interest as the narratives speak about exile, displacement in space, time and history, the representation of the immigrant psyche, feminizing the postcolonial landscape, native critique of Male-Eurocentric history, theology of the oppressed and ethnographic feminisms etc., to drive home the point of displacement through the literature of resistance and subversion. It was in the 1990s that Diaspora literature was noted for its immigrant subjective and the angst of the displaced. Diaspora was extended to ensconce a multitude of ethnic, religious and national communities who found them living outside of the territory to which they were historically rooted. Diaspora is also ment to overcome and redefine essentialized assumptions regarding concepts like hybridity, nomadism and creolization. In terms of identity studies, these terms have risen beyond their essentialized terms of definitions; nevertheless, they also seek to celebrate the progressive of such positions.

Keywords: Diasporic Men Writers, Multitude of ethnic, Diaspora

Introduction

The literature of Indian Diaspora constitute of major study in the history of cross-cultural migration which spanned over three centuries. The insights gleaned from these historical facts and subjective narrations are general. Diaspora is examining both the old Indian Diaspora of early capitalism, following the abolition of slavery, and the new Diaspora linked to movements of late capitalism, the renowned critic Vijay Mishra argues that “full understanding of the Indian Diaspora can only be gained in relation to the locations of both the old and the new in nation states.” Applying a theoretical framework based on trauma, mourning, impossible mourning, spectres, identity, travel, translation, and recognition, Mishra’s term “Imaginary” to refer to any ethnic enclave in a nation-state that defines itself, Consciously or unconsciously, as a group in displacement. He examines the works of key writers, many now based across the globe in Canada, Ausralia, America and the UK. V S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, M. G. Vasanji, Shani Mootoo, Mukherjee, David Dabydeen, Rohinton Mistry and Hanif Kureishi, among them to show how they exemplify both the Diaspric imaginary and the respective traumas of Old and New Indian Diasporas.

V.S. Naipaul

Trinidad-born novelist of Indian ancestry has established his reputation as a novelist of colonial experience. Being a postcolonial writer of Diaspora, Naipaul mainly deals with the themes related to the problems of colonised: their sense of alienation, their identity crisis, the paradox of freedom, sense of dispossession, homelessness, mimicry and a relentless search for an authentic selfhood. The first four novels of Naipaul deal exclusively with the colonial society of Trinidad, the island where he was born and are preoccupied with the themes of alienation, dispossession, mimicry, homelessness and identity crisis. The characters in these novels are incessantly in search of a room of their own. But in the later novels Naipaul emerges as a novelist of post-imperial crisis and his critical attitude and uncompromising commitment to truth give explosive expression to the harsh realities about the ex-colonial societies.

Most of Naipaul’s literary output comes out his personal experiences as an expatriate and a desire to understand his own position in the world. Writing for him is an ordering of experience and the impetus behind his writing is a sort of compulsion to understand his own situation. Bruce King remarks, “Naipaul’s writing, with its concern for utility, consciousness of the material basis of society and culture, and identification with India and the Indian

Correspondence:
J. G. Ravi Kumar
Assistant Professor in English
Presidency University
Italgapura/Dibbur, Rajankunte,
Bengaluru, India

Diaspora, offers a thorough, if at times, too pessimistic, examination of the problems of late colonialism, nationalism and the post-colonial"1996:19. An undercurrent of melancholy runs through the novels of Naipaul and in his vision of the world, pessimism may be said to be a central strain. As his vision matures it becomes more pessimistic with his own sense of disillusionment and frustration. His personal anguish, helplessness, disillusionment and a sense of loss set the tone of his all novels. Naipaul's funniest novels are fraught with pain as he himself acknowledges the fact in an interview, "Even my funniest novels were all began in the blackest of moods, out of a sense of personal anguish and despair" (Naipaul: 18 Aug.1980:38). However, a deep study of his novels *A House for Mr. Biswas* reveals that there is optimism hidden under his pessimism and there is a ray of hope for fulfilment which demands constant efforts on the part of the individual. There is a marked difference in approach between the other novels and the novels under study as the latter endorses an alternative approach to the problem of rootlessness, homelessness and displacement.

A House for Mr. Biswas

Written in 1961, is a much discussed novel which deals with the theme of quest for identity in modern materialistic world where man feels all-alone and his worth is evaluated through personal achievements and worldly success. This novel focuses deeper into the psyche of an individual to reveal the major problems of the dispossessed individual to reveal the major problems of the dispossessed individual who ceaselessly tries to attain an authentic selfhood. It is the tale of relentless struggle of Mr. Mohan Biswas against the heavy odds to attain an independent identity. His struggle is a long and traumatic one but he is successful in his negotiation for space and ultimately he is able to fulfil his long cherished dream of having a house of his own, which is remarkable achievement for a man of his limited resources and circumstances. An optimistic attitude, a sense of self-respected and perseverance of Mr. Biswas enable him to fight against the forces that try to suppress his individuality.

The novel ends on a positive note, a rarity in the fiction of Naipaul. A perusal of this novel reveals that optimism is implied in pessimism. The protagonist, Mr. Biswas, struggle from the beginning to the end. His effects and plans to achieve selfhood are frustrated by fate, circumstances and postcolonial setup, but he hopes against hope and ultimately wins after a lot of setbacks and failures. A heroic struggle of the protagonist symbolises the affirmative stance adopted by Naipaul in this novel.

Edward Said's

Voice is also that of a Western intellectual whose scholarship on the Middle East and knowledge of the conflict between Palestine and Israel compels him to be a moral agent in objecting to both Israeli procedures against Palestinians and the imperialistic role some western powers still want to play in that region. Combining his Western erudition and Palestinian identity, Said reacts to being out of place by denying the fate imposed by injustice. In *Power, Politics, and Culture*, he states this position clearly and affirmatively: "I refuse that my fate as a Palestinian should be that of nineteenth-century African or American Indian where the white man gives the chief a few trinkets

and says, "Okay, now you're the leader, but we're the real power here." Analyzing particular cases of exile or displacement, the term allows us to see how authors' experiences provide instances of various positions on their forced departure from their homeland. A comparison between two Palestinian autobiographers (Said and Turki) will show us that displacement is neither an abstract concept nor a materialistic essence but a combination of both reflected in a creative text which merits analysis of its authors of its authors' tensions and sense of loss.

Displacement as a term is well-established in some modern theories and disciplines. Unlike the meaning given to it in Freud's and other – psychological texts, the concept stands, particularly in postcolonial studies, as a signifier for exile, forced immigration, and diaspora, which explain why it is sometimes interchangeably referred to as one of those concepts. For example, *Post-colonial studies : The essential glossary* does not mention displacement in an entry by itself(distinct from the existing diaspora).

In *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question*. Angelika Bammer sees displacement as "one of the most formative experiences" and defines it as "the separation of people from their native culture either through physical dislocation (as refugees, immigrants, exiles, or expatriates) or the colonizing imposition of a foreign culture." Furthermore, displacement as a concept adds further dimensions to the way we read or interpret works produced by or about displaced people, particularly in light of the modern crisis of identity and nationalism.

Said wrote *Out of Place* in 1999 just a few years before his death in New York City, far from Jerusalem, the city of his birth and childhood. *Out of Place* is a self-conscious response to his displacement or the state of being out of place. When he starts locating himself in Palestine, Said's intimate description differs greatly from his depictions of other places in which he lived after leaving Palestine: "It was a place I took for granted, the country I was from, where family and friends existed."

In the autobiographical text, Said establishes his displacement in a contrasting way. Said reveals that he coexisted with the Lebanese, Egyptian, and American communities that he encountered after, and even before, leaving Palestine. According to the critic William V. Spanos, who was teaching in Mount Hermon when Edward Said attended the school, Said's *Out of Place* is the story of an Arab young boy 'whose philo- American father, with the reluctant consent for his mother, had torn him out of exile context that had at least become safely familiar (the Cairo-Lebanon circuit) and dropped him into a geographically isolated and culturally alien north-eastern American environment".

Out of Place posits a complex moral situation where Said was able to fulfil himself in places other than (and different from) his original place, but he could not put the past behind him as suggested by his father, a merchant who perhaps looked at any loss as a missed chance that might convert to a gain if one keeps dealing and trying. *Out of Place* suggests that Said grew up to know that his past, his people's past, and the loss of the only country he felt the belonged to the determined his self-perception as a displaced Palestinian. Thus, Said's autobiographic narrative strongly demonstrates his reflection and contribution to new retellings of memories that belong to and create his displaced life.

Said presents a sense of loss of an original place that is eclipsed by the ability and even more by the will to coexist in other places—a coexistence stimulated by the postcolonial and the other intellectual lens by which he views concepts such as place and identity. Said's image as a depicted Palestinian is that of an intellectual person whose autobiography demonstrates the meaning of the self separate from the place, rather than the place as expressive of a presupposed, immediate meaning to him. Said's unwilling departure from one place to another enables him to return willingly to the concepts of place, exile, and dispossession and to analyze the historical, cultural and even personal contexts within which these concepts operate. That is why reading *Out of Place* gives the impression that Said has adopted to the Lebanese, Egyptian, and American communities that he encountered along his way during displacement. He never complains that he lives in Egypt not in Palestine or in the United States not in Lebanon, but he always suggests that he does not belong to either.

Iqbal Ramoowalia,

Indo-Canadian novelist, focuses on diasporic literature reflects challenges, aspirations, and anxieties of a person who migrates to a new land. Like many other Diasporic writings, the novel portrays quite sensitively the precarious predicament and angst to the illegal's in Canada who do not want to be caught and deported but “sniff around for ways to secure salvation from uncertainty”. Their assumption of new identity to circumvent the immigration laws is one of the survival strategies. The protagonist Seema Malhotra is one of the myriad instances of parents undiminished craze to marry their daughters to the immigrants from Canada, America, U.K etc., After marriage to the Anmol, Seema reaches Canada on tourist visa, the marriage falls apart, and she is deprived of the custody of her infant son and the immigrant status. She reaches Toronto to face rigorous and travails of illegal stay.

The Death of a Passport (2004) chronicles the immigrant anxiety and quest for identity for Seema, an illegal immigrant in Canada who meanders whose lustful obnoxious behaviour scars Seema psychologically and fiscally. The author a prominent Punjabi poet immigrated to Canada in mid-1970's, and like any new immigrant, earned a wealth of experience through odd jobs as labourer, a dishwasher, and a taxi driver. His protracted encounters with the bitter and brutish realities that obtain in the “Promised Land” of milk and honey, and his exposure to the academic milieu of Waterloo, Dalhousie and the York universities left an indelible imprint on his mental make-up. No doubt, Iqbal Ramoowalia” suffered a lot of racism and discrimination” in the multicultural milieu of Canada. There is no visible bitterness or rancour in his portrayal of the series of agonies, physical abuse, financial exploitation and mental torture experienced by Seema. The novelist alludes to the stark naked reality which robs an individual of the last vestiges of humanity, respectability and identity in an alien milieu.

Alien places pose innumerable challenges for survival, and being illegal makes one doubly vulnerable. That's a universal truth. Seema symbolizes immigrants of all shapes and hues: They, like Seema invariably suffer mentally, physically, emotionally and financially. Seema rolls from place to another and in this process she loses her name, her aspiration and her family....fear loss of identity....constantly

torments new immigrants. The ephemeral marriage to Anmol had transferred Seema Malhotra into Seema Malik. It had also plunged her into a life of uncertainty marked by a constant fear of being caught and her trivial quest for fulfilment:

We all are tiny Buddha's with our trivial quest for fulfilment of our frivolous desire. The proportion of salvation we seek in our perfect correspondence with the size of the Buddha our trivial selves grow into (50).

The angst of an illegal immigrant find no better illustration than Seema's abandoning of her assumed identity as Reeta Gill. Her description to be free from uncertainty takes her to Patricia's restaurant whose compassion gets better of her thinking faculty. At Patricia's restaurant Seema meets Sodhi, an agent of her salvation who files paper for marriage with Seema, as her marriage to an authentic immigrant could lend legality to her stay in Canada. Sodhi, orphaned at seven, had his tryst with the criminal world, amassed money through cheating, smuggling opium and pimping and mastered the art to hoodwink the insurance companies thought false and exaggerated claims. Living in Sodhi's house in new avatar Seema's mantra was to “please the devil.... and get nirvana from the ferocious jaws of the law-enforcing hawks” (200). As Seema Sodhi she would let him unleash his slime into her passive body every night because through him throbbled Seema's hope “to achieve salvation from her tortuous state of uncertainty” (203). What Seema longs for does not happen, and what happens so suddenly she did not anticipate. At this point of time “cursed sigh and sobs formed an eternal bond with Seema”(238).

Her quest for salvation and a legal residence gets halted traumatically with Sodhi's tragic untimely death. Thus her journey from Seema Malhotra to Seema Malik to Reeta Gill to Susan Shaw to Seema Sodhi halts abruptly, and the novelist successfully emphasizes that “immigrants” struggle never ends as life itself is open ended.”Towards the conclusion of the novel Seema is all set for “an another blind flight without wings in quest of another passport with a landed stamp before the cruel noose of immigration closed around her neck for a quick deportation. “Seema may be exhausted a bit in her interminable quest for identity yet the narrative reveals her bracing up for quest to know “Who am I?”

Benyamin's Goat Days,

He deals with cultural dilemmas and displacements, identity crisis, dual identity, are explored the extreme realism and that remained unique. It becomes the story of 1.4 million Malayalis migrating to gulf countries with stock of dreams. “When I started writing I was struck by how Malayalee writers in the Gulf wrote about everything but the reality of our life here—they wrote of distant trees, fields and rivers of their homes, as though their real life is a fallcy and the dream a reality. The migration of people from Kerala to Gulf countries in 1970's has changed socio-cultural scenario of Kerala.

Najeeb Mohammed

The protagonist of the novel is a modest sand miner from Kerala, who travels to Riyadh via Bombay in 1990s with huge heap of dreams and in search of his fortune. He was willing to accept any assignment given to him “when a friend from Karuvatta carelessly mentioned there was a

visa for sale, he felt a yearning that he had never experienced before. After a long wait in Bombay, Najeeb lands in Riyadh one evening with a companion. They waited a long time in the air-port. Nobody came to pick them up. Misfortune followed them from there. After very long time they met their destiny a Shabby Arab in an old pick up. Their journey ended in a dark desert, from expectation to despair. Najeeb separated from his companion and dumped brutally in a *masara*, a goat farm in the middle of the Saudi desert. He met his boss, his *arhab*, a scary figure, a stinking, unkept, long bearded fellow with the dirtiest Arab clothes. He also saw a person there working for Arab in the barbaric attire. This one was completely covered with the dirt and he was stinging. With shock Najeeb recognised that it's his future. Najeeb's duty was to look after goats he is slave of Arab, he also makes sure that Najeeb doesn't escape. The treatment was extremely horrible. Najeeb was all alone in this hostile sand country with just the goats for company. Najeeb name the goat in his own colloquial tongue like Pochakkari, Ramani, Maryamaimuna, and Chakki and so on.

When one of the goats gave birth he has considered it as his own son. He remembers that Sainu (his wife) was pregnant when he left. When the Arab made the little goat impotent, he considered this has happened to his own kid. He was deprived of food, water, and all the basic necessities. He slept under sky in the hot sand, only bath he is allowed is when freak rain arrives in the desert. He was not allowed to clean even after toilet. The barbaric person whom he met in that *masara* tried to escape; later Najeeb found out that he was killed by Arab for trying to escape. Pain and panic becomes routine for Najeeb. He was trapped between burning sands and freezing nights, punished cruelly, wracked by loneliness, finding no way to escape. But Najeeb survived by sticking his faith in God, by identifying his loved ones in goats. They become everything and everybody for him, his friends, son, relatives, neighbours even lover. When one goat died, he identifies with his own unseen child.

Goat Days gives a vivid account of slavery of Indian nationals is forced into. This is highly intensive narrative. Each word is true. No exaggeration. The real life story of Najeeb, the story has many migrated Indians in Gulf countries experience. The author never criticizes their system in the novel because of its realism. Like other Indian diasporic writing deals with identity crisis but more in a realistic way. Najeeb tries to recognise himself with goats. Just because he did not have any other option to survive. He had recurring thoughts about his home, wife and kid whom he has not seen. But the reality covers them all. When all other diasporic writing dealt with mental alienation, here Najeeb's alienation was both physically and mentally in a more brutal way. Nobody around him felt himself away from the living world.

It is for sure that every Malayalee will be related to this book through himself, his family, friends and they find out their own Najeeb. *Goat Days* has proved that the diasporic life is not as fantastic as it seems to be. There are tears behind their richness. This novel can also be considered as a grotesque contempt of the gulf prosperity and modernism we assume when we see shiny urbanity. It is for sure that every Malayalee will be related to this book through himself, his family, friends and they find out their own Najeeb.

Conclusion

Diaspora Literature produced by Diaspora writers of such diversity as V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Iqbal Ramoowalia and Benyamin and many others, explores problems and possibilities endangered by experience of migrancy and diaspora life. In the process of engaging and negotiating notions of history, identity, gender, cultural and racial purity, the works of these writers graphically portray their purity; the works of these writers graphically portray their ethnic, cultural and religious situations.

References

1. V. S. Naipaul, 1961, *A House for Mr. Biswas*, Penguin.
2. Benyamin, 2012, *Goat Days*, Penguin.
3. Edward Said, 1999, *Out of Place: A Memoir*
4. Ramoowalia Iqbal, 2004, *The Death of a Passport*. Delhi: Ajanta Book International
5. Paranjape, 2001, *Indian Diaspora: Theories, Text, History*. Delhi; Indialog.
6. N. Jayaram, ed. 2004. *The Indian Diaspora: Dynamics of Migration*. Vol.4 Sage: New Delhi
7. Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. *Modernity at Large: cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
8. Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London Routledge.
9. Edward Said, 2003, *Reflection on Exile and other Essays*: Cambridge: Harvard University press. P.182.