

EMERGING FIELDS OF STUDIES IN DIASPORA

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of Diaspora did not figure in the social sciences until the late 1960s. The word originated from Greek. The term earlier referred mainly to the Jewish experience. It primarily referred to the expulsion of Jewish people from their homeland to Babylonia and to the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple. In a way, the term conveyed a sense of loss implying that the Jewish population was dispersed with their loss of territory. However, the concept has also been used in a positive sense to some extent as well although not at a higher pitch. It referred to the Greek colonization of the Mediterranean lands from the shores of present-day Turkey and Crimea to the Strait of Gibraltar between the 6th and 4th centuries BCE. Diaspora refers to such population that includes members of an ethnic or religious group that originated from the same place but, over the period of time, has dispersed to different locations. This means that such Diaspora shares the original heritage.

The word Diaspora has been derived from the ancient Greek *dia speiro*, meaning "to sow over." The concept of Diaspora initially referred to the Greeks in the Hellenic world and to the Jews after the decline of Jerusalem in the early 6th century BCE. With the advent of the 1950s and 1960s, intellectuals started to use it with reference to the African Diaspora. Over the period of time the term has become popular in various fields.

TYPES

Various typologies of Diasporas have been created over the period of time. Some Diasporas are classified as victim, imperial/ colonial, trade, or labour Diasporas depending on the main motives of original migration. These focus on expulsion, expansion, commercial endeavours, or pursuit of employment among other things. Other typologies underline the factors such as historical or political events. They are classified as traditional/ historical such as Jewish, Greek, Phoenician or stateless such as Palestinian, Roma Diasporas. There were massive population movements since the middle of the 19th century, resulting in the creation of multiple Diasporas. These are well known with their presence all over the world especially in the late 20th century. The impact of migrations is quite felt across the globe.

POLITICAL IMPLICATION

Well known cases were also from the East developed in medieval and modern times, although such experiences were inherent in the Western tradition, as well. They have constituted stereotypes of Diasporas. To make the point clear, the spread of Chinese population can be cited. It has often been perceived as a positive or at least neutral phenomenon through China's long history. An ancient Chinese poem in this regard conveys the idea: "Wherever the ocean waves touch, there are overseas Chinese."

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The influence of India also witnessed a rise, especially throughout the Indian Ocean region when its population settled beyond its own borders. The major chunk of Indian populations comprising of unskilled labourers migrated to work in agricultural or industrial jobs since the 19th century.

The chief traits of Diasporas lie in the dispersion from a common origin. This means that such Diaspora shares the original heritage. For example, the black/ African Diaspora also has a common history. It draws the attention of the whole world through its collective identity that resides more in a shared socio-cultural experience than in a specific geographic origin. It is equally a fact that most of the Diasporas have not discarded their relationship with the place of origin. They have also a strong relationship between the scattered groups themselves. The origins of recent Diasporas are intact. Some scholars refer to these as ethno- national Diasporas to explicitly distinguish them from transnational networks in general that have emerged in the context of globalization.

LITERARY & CULTURAL TRADITIONS

For example, the Indian Diaspora also has a common history. It is equally a fact that most of the Diasporas have not discarded their relationship with the place of origin. Some scholars refer to these as literary and cultural representation to explicitly distinguish them from transnational networks. The present day generation remains connected to cognitive, affective and symbolic values of distant places through literature and culture. Literature along with cultural and relational assimilation is a welcome feature of the Diaspora. The Indian Diasporic writers mirror the society of the country in which they are living and where they or their ancestors have lived earlier. Indian Diasporic writers, who are living abroad, help India in spreading Indian culture and traditions through literature.

The Indian Diasporic writers are the ones who are keeping the spirit of India alive outside India, as well. There are more than a million Indians each in eleven countries. The Indian Diaspora is functioning as unlicensed ambassadors in the fields of literature, culture, education, arts, economic development, ICT, medical science etc. Their literary contribution has also led to a direct and mutually-reinforcing synergy between India and the international community. The literary works of the Indian Diaspora such as V. S. Naipaul, Kiran Desai, Nirad C. Chaudhuri, Jhumpa Lahiri, Kovid Gupta, Agha Shahid Ali, Rohinton Mistry and Salman Rushdie etc. are worth mentioning here. Their literary pursuit comes in the broader category of postcolonial literature.

CITIZENSHIP

It is widely assumed that around 10 percent of human beings lived in a Diasporic situation in the early 21st century. The number of individuals who have the dual citizenship has swelled phenomenally in a short period of time. Just for an instance, some countries in Latin America granted dual citizenship in the 1980s. The number of the countries granting permission to the dual citizenships had reached 10 by early 2000. Many countries have come forward to establish their organizations, institutions, procedures, and devices of all sorts so as to reach and capitalize on their expatriates.

It is noteworthy that not only first-generation but even the successive generations are not lagging behind in financial remittances to their countries of origin. This amount has reached several hundred billion dollars per year. This capital is being used for productive collective projects, not just for individual consumption purposes. Home countries also receive social remittances that have a positive bearing on technology transfers, information or knowledge exchanges, and democratic values transmission.

But there is a flip side of such a development as well. The strong interest of Diasporic populations in their home countries has given rise to concerns in host countries as there is an issue related to loyalties. A section of the countrymen eye such people with an air of suspicion. They have such a view that these people are involved in delinquent or terrorist activities. However, on the whole, the host countries support Diasporas and their organizations. Besides, cooperation through Diasporic groups creates opportunities abroad for the receiving countries. Some cases, however, have come to light when Diasporas come from countries of origin where their members are not welcome. In such countries, free circulation is limited, making cooperation impossible. On the other side, xenophobia and an unwillingness to accept foreign people have not gone away. It can assume alarming proportion in crisis situations.

PROBLEMS IN WAKE OF DIASPORA

Diasporas have sometimes created problems. It is alleged that expatriates had divided loyalties. However, when such conflicts arose earlier, expatriates were eager to identify with the countries where they lived, worked, and raised children. Now-a-days, generally such individuals and groups put up combined identities, creating an impression that they belong to both home and host countries. They also create this impression that they can mix both easily in their daily life in a non-exclusive and productive manner. Many people assert to be living in a Diaspora that is a part of a minority, or to have ancestors from a different ethnic group from that of the majority.

The present day generation can afford to keep in touch with relatives and maintain contacts abroad and at home. It also remains connected to cultural, cognitive, and symbolic values of distant places. Information and communication technologies have also played a positive role in bridging this gap. At the same time, host countries' evolution from homogeneous conceptions of citizenship toward more

pluralistic, multi-ethnic approaches has also been a crucial factor to strengthen this. Political, socio-economic along with cultural and relational assimilation is a welcome feature of the Diaspora.

LITERATURE

It is a fact that literature mirrors the society and the Diasporic writers also mirror the society of the country in which they are living and where they or their ancestors have lived earlier. The literature expresses the experiences or the fancy a writer may have in the course of his life. The overseas writers of Indian Diaspora have based their literary creativity on such experiences and themes. Indian Diasporic writers, who are settled abroad, help India in spreading Indian culture and traditions to all the corners in the world. They contribute their literary talent for India wherever they are. The reality is that the Indian Diasporic writers are the ones who are keeping the spirit of India alive outside India, as well.

The Indian Diaspora is used as a generic term to identify the people who migrated from Indian territories. It is used for their forefathers, as well. The Indian Diaspora is practically present almost in every part of the world. There are more than a million Indians each in eleven countries. Twenty-two countries have got at least a hundred thousand ethnic Indians. Three categories of overseas Indians are as follows:

- Indian citizens falling in this category stay abroad for indefinite period for whatever purpose and a sizable number live in the Gulf countries. Such Indians are known as NRIs.
- Such overseas Indians who have got the citizenship of the countries of their settlement are known as PIOs.
- Stateless Persons of Indian Origin (SPIO) are such Indians who do not possess documents to substantiate their Indian Origin and a large number of them live in Myanmar and Sri Lanka.

The Indian Diaspora is functioning as unlicensed ambassadors in the fields of literature, culture, education, arts, economic development, ICT, medical science etc. The role of the Indian Diaspora needs to be further expanded. Their literary contribution has also led to a direct and mutually-reinforcing synergy between India and the international community.

The famous literary works of the Indian Diaspora include that of V. S. Naipaul, Kiran Desai, Nirad C. Chaudhuri, Jhumpa Lahiri, Kovid Gupta, Agha Shahid Ali, Rohinton Mistry and Salman Rushdie. Their literary pursuit comes in the broader category of postcolonial literature. The literature from previously colonized countries here relates India. Travels of Dean Mahomet, a travel narrative by Sake Dean Mahomet was the first book by an Indian in English that was brought out in England in 1793. At its infancy, the overseas literature was greatly influenced by the Western literature. Initially Indian Diasporic writers would make use of such English that was pure for an Englishman to convey an experience which was essentially an Indian. It is worth mentioning that Dhan Gopal Mukerji (1890–1936) has the honour of being the first Indian author to win a literary award in the United States. Nirad C. Chaudhuri (1897-1999), a non-fiction writer, is popularly known for his *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* (1951). He has narrated his life experiences and influences in the autobiography. Lakshmi Holmström has commented about the trend thus, "The writers of the 1930s were fortunate because after many years of use, English had become an Indian language used widely and at different levels of society, and therefore they could experiment more boldly and from a more secure position."

One of the most notable figures as the post colonial writer is Salman Rushdie who was born in India. Rushdie earned fame with his work *Midnight's Children*. *Midnight's Children* has portrayed the journey of India from British rule to independence and then partition. The book

elicited an overwhelming response, winning the Booker Prize in 1981 and the "Booker of Bookers" Prize twice in 1993 and 2008! The book has mentioned various parts of the country including Kashmir, Agra and Mumbai, incorporating many real historic events. The book has secured place in the List of 100 Best Novels of all time.

The *Golden Gate* (1986) and *A Suitable Boy* (1994) of Vikram Seth have earned great name and fame for him. However, his remarkable achievement as a versatile and prolific poet remains mostly unrecognized. Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason*, *The Shadow Lines* (1988), *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1995), *The Glass Palace* (2000), *The Hungry Tide* (2004), and *Sea of Poppies* (2008), the first volume of *The Ibis* trilogy are among his major works. His latest works of fiction *River of Smoke* (2011), the second volume of *The Ibis* trilogy are also very popular. Rohinton Mistry has earned a Neustadt International Prize for Literature laureate in 2012 and his novels *Such a Long Journey* (1991) and *A Fine Balance* (1995) brought him a laurel. Vikram Chandra has also got critical acclaim for his debut novel *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* (1995) and collection of short stories *Love and Longing in Bombay* (1997). Suketu Mehta is another writer currently based in the United States who has written *Maximum City* (2004) that is an autobiographical account of his experiences in the city of Mumbai. Arvind Adiga got the Man Booker Prize for his debut novel *The White Tiger* in 2008.

The Diasporic literature depicts the microcosms of India reflecting Indian conditions. Agha Shahid Ali, Sujata Bhatt, Richard Crasta, Yuyutsu Sharma, Tabish Khair, Vikram Seth etc are some popular modern expatriate Indian poets who also write in English.

CONCLUSION

Due to various reasons the twentieth century had to witness massive population movements. Some migrations occurred due to avoid conflict and

warfare. Other Diasporas came into being as a consequence of political decisions. During World War II, Nazi Germany deported and killed millions of Jews including Ukrainians, Russians and other Slavs. Some Jews left Germany to avoid persecution and reached unoccupied parts of Western Europe and America before borders were closed. Hundreds of thousands of these anti-Soviet political refugees took refuge in Western Europe, Australia, Canada and America. After World War II, the Soviet Union and Communist- controlled countries retaliated for the German Nazi invasion and their pan-German attempts at annexation. Most of the refugees moved to the West, including Western Europe, and America. Prior to World War II anti-Jewish pogroms caused many to flee, mostly to Israel. The 1947 Partition caused the migration of millions of people between India and Pakistan. Thousands of former subjects of the British Raj reached England from the Indian subcontinent after India and Pakistan became independent in 1947. From 1910, Japan made Korea a colony. Millions of Chinese fled to western provinces not occupied by Japan and to Southeast Asia. Over 100,000 Koreans moved to Eastern Russia away from the Japanese. The Diasporas have many dimensions such as sociological, political, cultural, literary etc to name a few. Today Diasporas are a hard reality and to know them properly a proper study has to be well versed in all the aspects related to Diasporas.

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