
Perspectives of Migration and Displacement in Diaspora literature

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Abstract:

The fundamental idea that **literature mirrors society** holds a profound truth: stories are how we process and share the reality of our lives. For the immigrant or diasporic individual, this reality often begins with **alienation**—a feeling of being perpetually outside, regardless of how long they've lived in the new country.

This sense of **not-belonging** isn't a simple homesickness; it's a profound identity crisis born from navigating two worlds that often refuse to merge.

Key words: Identity, racialism, alienation, migration, immigrants, diasporas.

Introduction:

This is the psychological weight of migration. The individual carries their entire cultural history, language, and worldview with them. **Alienation** is fueled by:

Cultural Shock and Refusal: The initial, stubborn **refusal to fully accept major changes** in the new culture. It's the deep-seated loyalty to the "old ways," which can create an emotional wall against true integration.

The State of Mind: The emotional toll of constant comparison. The immigrant may feel their identity is fractured—no longer fully belonging to the past, but not yet accepted by the future.

External Challenges (The Hostile Glance)

The hardest challenges are often those imposed by the host society. The biggest barrier for many, including Indians who migrated to places like the **UK** and **America**, has been **racialism** (racism).

Racialism's Impact: This isn't just about overt hostility; it's about subtle, everyday slights and systemic prejudice that reinforce the message, "You don't fully belong here." Whether it's discrimination in the workplace or being judged by skin color or accent, this external rejection seals the feeling of **alienation**, making it impossible to truly settle.

Evolving Narratives of Identity

While the trauma of displacement remains, the way we tell these stories evolves, reflecting changes in society.

In the 1970s, a novel like Ruth Praver Jhabvala's *A New Dominion* captured a shift. Where earlier generations were rigidly defined by colonial roles (like Adela Quested in *A Passage to India*), Jhabvala's Western characters, like Lee and Raymond, move through Indian society with a kind of ambiguous freedom.

This shift suggests that:

The Lines Blur: The rigid social boundaries of the "old dominion" (colonialism) are weakening.

New Connections Emerge: Today's stories explore complex, messy interactions—people from different races and cultures meeting not as adversaries, but as friends, family, and colleagues, finding **mutual influences** and forging new bonds.

Ultimately, diaspora literature is a space where the pain of displacement and the resilience of the human spirit meet, chronicling the journey from being an outsider to creating a new, blended sense of **Identity**.

At the conclusion of the novel, the westerners flee from India; get trapped in the ashram of a fake guru; are carried out homeless and rootless, or die in keen physical and mental distress. The ones who come in the hope of a genuine alliance fare the worst. Raymond, who had only wanted to see and understand the country, suffers shock and terror but can withdraw before it is too late and it saved. Margaret is physically and Evie spiritually destroyed and Lee, after experiencing the full term of the cycle of response—passing from delight to disenchantment and despair—is in the agony of a rebirth. It is not the seekers who comprehend and assimilate India but India that engulfs and extinguish them. Thus, the novelist's earlier optimism, visible in her depiction of Judy's assumption of India in *A Backward Place*, gives way to an acute pessimism and a sense of defeat in *A New Dominion*. One of the most powerful examples of blame was seen in India in *A New Dominion* is continued in Ruth Jhabvala's portrait of the damage, physical and psychic, that is done to the westerner in India. In this third phase of her Indian experience, the value systems of the two cultures appear incompatible to her. The delimitation of the encounter is drawn in terms of a conflict between Western affirmation of individualism and fostering of the self and Eastern encouragement of self-negation in the interest of reaching a higher state of being. Ruth Jhabvala believes that while conformity and adaptation are parts of the value system of the East, nonconformity and contention are integral to that of the West.

Jhumpa Lahiri is a notable second generation American writer of Indian origin. She was born in 1967 in London. She grew up in Rhode Island in America. The two main themes of the stories are the emotional anguish and nostalgia for the homeland. As a child of immigrant parents, Lahiri has undergone the experience of living two lives—one in India and the other in America. The *Namesake* throws light on the cultural dilemmas of the immigrant characters in foreign lands. Lahiri traces the shift of the immigrants who remain to stick to their own culture and then gradually imbibe the culture of their adopted land, too. She also portrays the difficulties of the immigrants who are groomed to be "bilingual" and "bicultural." They face the problems of cultural dilemmas and an acute sense of displacement. They are torn between the values of their motherland and the values of the

western world. In *The Third and the Final Continent*, Lahiri remarks that assimilation is the only solution to the existential situation of diaspora. Through her works, she seems to convey the message that in order to survive in an alien land, one has to adapt to the new environment. *The Namesake* is an attempt to bridge the gap between first and second generation immigrants. Ashima and Ashoke adapt and integrate into the ways of their adopted land. Gogol, who grows up in America tries to reject Indian things. His struggle represents the struggle of second generation immigrants. He was unable to live up to the ideals of his parents. He blends well with the American culture. In her collection, *Interpreter of Maladies*, the story "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine" has Pirzada yearning for his homeland. Yet a Muslim Pirzada and a Hindu Lilia harmoniously survive in America. "The Third and the Final Continent" is a story of a Bengali man who struggles hard to adapt to the alien environment of America. Many writers of the diaspora assimilate themselves to their host land so well that they disconnect themselves from their motherland. In their works they make no attempt to recall their lost land.

The above account of diasporic writers lends voice to the experience of immigrants and migration in their own respective manner. They bring forth nostalgia, memories, exiles, marginality, alienation, detachment, hybridity and celebration experienced between displacement and relocation. A study of the above stated diaspora writers provide an opportunity for seeing how they see themselves on the alien land and their relationship to the host country. It enables us to see how these writers grapple with their consciousness of identity as a minority community, what strategies they employ to identify their homeland and its presence in the psyche, what are the effects of their migration and how a new integrated cultural identity is formed.

Although the diasporic writing depicts the traumas of alienation, isolation and sense of belonging for the native land, yet it is about the intermingling of different cultures. It is about open spaces and not about closure. It is the joy of double vision and the pain of being split. The diasporas writers belong to the in-between space, the cultural no-man's land. The diasporic writers relish the discomfiture and the adventure of exploring their new land. The diasporic writers penetrate the culture/ nation/ language boundaries and celebrate their hybridity without need of a specific space. There may be a great loss and much yearning in rootlessness, but there is also much gain. It is not only geographical boundaries that they go beyond, but it is also a mental leap that enables them to see things from a global perspective. It enables them to have a transcultural approach to life.

In contrast to her Canadian experience of being constantly forced to see herself as part of an unwanted visible minority, she sees herself as an immigrant in America. In *An Invisible Woman* (1981), she has written there in about how she felt "less shocked, less outraged and shaken to the core" by a "purse snatching in New York City" in which she lost all her "dowry gold" than by "a simple question" asked of her by three high school boys in Toronto in the summer of 1978 "why don't you go back to Africa?" She told Sybil Steinberg of *Publishers Weekly* (25 August, 1989) that "diversity is accepted in America and the

"Melting Pot" helps the newcomer feel more welcome". And as of now, she prides herself on being the "Salad Bowl" or "Melting Pot" lady.

In her illustrious career as a writer spanning well over three decades, Mukherjee has had the experiences of orientation and disorientation with a marked transformation in her creative thinking and writing evincible there in her fictional works right from the place of expatriation to that of the immigration is an ongoing quest for the discovery of lives as being lived by South-Asian expatriates/immigrants in Canada and the USA along with their problems of "Acculturation", "Assimilation", "Cultural drift", "Cultural survival" and "Cultural conflict". The theme of expatriation is dominant in her writings of Canadian context and that of immigration in those of the American context.

The Tiger's Daughter (1972) and *Wife* (1975) were followed by her autobiographical non-fictional work *Days and Nights in Calcutta* (1977) she wrote in collaboration with her husband Clark Blaise. These works deal with the problems of immigrant characters, i.e. the theme of cultural conflict, strain, drift and survival with cross-cultural encounters. Misunderstanding, confusion and incomprehension are the inevitable markers generated by the cultural drift and conflict owing to the transculturation of the protagonists of the *Tiger's Daughter* and *Wife*. There is an instability and disquietude owing to the misbalance in the process of their transculturation consequent upon the conflict of their will to accept or to not accept a new culture. Bharati Mukherjee has projected *The Tiger's Daughter* her exile preoccupation with her native city Calcutta through the self-same experience of her protagonist Tara Banerjee Cartwright, who is in Calcutta for a visit after having been away in America for seven years.

Tara finds her early experiences in America very harsh. In Poughkeepsie, she feels homesick. The immigrant writers have registered their protest and their feelings against discrimination and denial of the rights of immigrants. Apart from other issues, they raise their voices against the discrimination and oppression of the immigrants. Bharati Mukherjee in her works presents Indians in Canada who have been subjected to racist assaults, physically and psychologically as the major theme of her works. She identifies with these victims of racial discrimination and their traumatic sense of entrapment and claustrophobia while living in Canada.

In the novel, Mukherjee shows that one's homeland is a myth to which the immigrant can never return. Once tradition is denaturalized it loses its meaning and naturalness. It becomes impossible to recover. So, Tara's quest for self proves frustrating slowly leading her to disillusion, depression and alienation ending in a tragedy. The greatest irony of the story of Tara is that she survived the racial hardships in a foreign country but becomes a victim in her motherland. The place which she had longed to see since her stay in New York and where she comes to seek peace became foreign to her. Tara's journey to India is best represented in following line, "It was so vague, so pointless, so diffuse, this trip to India."

The research paper is the supreme example of sense of rootlessness, identity, displacement and alienation of an immigrant. The writers of diaspora feel the same pains of immigration. It talks about the perspective and vision of Indian immigrants in abroad who are torn between two cultures or mingling of cultures.

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