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A CRITICAL REVIEW ON DISSEMINATION AND ASSIMILATION OF INDIAN DIASPORAS

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ABSTRACT

This article intends a critical study on Indian Diasporas. Diaspora is the term given to the movement of people away from their homeland. There were different reasons behind the dispersion of the people to different parts of the world. Some people had a voluntary movement which was very tragic whilst there were people who made migration their choice. This dislocation of people can be categorized into different stages, based upon the period of migration. Such expatriates had a constant quest for self identity and faced innumerable challenges. A feeling of alienisms was imbibed in them due to problems like racism, hate speeches etc. This made the diaspora assimilate to the social set up of the host land. But the strong attachment which they had towards their culture and traditional practices made them adopt a dual identity. The first generation diaspora was very particular to pass on the cultural practices to the future generations. Literature is like a mirror as it reflects the attitude and perception of the society. Diasporic literature plays a vital role in portraying the conditions and nostalgic feel of the diasporas. Indo-Anglian writers were those expatriates who created various literary works based on the social and domestic problems of the native land. Some well known diasporic writers are V.S.Naipaul, Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Salman Rushdie, Raja Roa etc.

Key Words: Diaspora, self identity, nostalgia, Diasporic Literature, Indo-Anglian Writers.

Introduction

Human migration is the term referred to the movement of people from one place to another in search of job or a better livelihood. This movement or relocation of an individual may be a voluntary one or an involuntary migration. Voluntary migration is where people move on their own accord in search of better prospects. Involuntary migration is a forced one like human trafficking, bonded labors, slave trade etc. Such people who are relocated away from their homeland are generally given the term diaspora.

Diasporic literature : Literature is a mirror that reflects the life and conditions of the people living in a society in that particular period. Diaspora literature in a broader sense includes the works of Indian expatriates which

has Indian culture and tradition as the central theme. Indian writers who settled away from the homeland quenched their thirst for homeland through their works. The tone and opinion of the work entirely depends on the level of assimilation of the writer.

Diaspora literature is an inevitable part of Indian literature as there is an enormous contribution made by them towards various fields including literature. It gives a vivid picture of the diasporas and the conditions met to them in an alien land regarding language, tradition and culture etc. Travel writings and non-fictional studies are the tools taken by writers to express the existing condition of a people or a place. Diasporic literature deals with various aspects like Cultural survival, Social survival where one tries to maintain one's own identity, Psychological survival for gaining a sense of security and belongingness in an alien land. Various expatriate writers have given a clear picture of the challenges and experience of a diaspora. Diaspora literature brings out the hostility meted out to the immigrants in the host land and the loneliness experienced by them. This is again classified based on the period of settlement. The literature portrays the hostility and loneliness which alienation in the individual as well between the individual's homeland and host land. Vijay Mishra portrays the immigrants as caught in a complicated web of memories which includes confusion and rejection and a sense of dislocation.

Diaspora writers/ Indo –Anglian writers: Several writers in our land including the expatriate writers have ventured on penning down the experience of a diaspora. Some well known diasporic writers are V.S.Naipaul, Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Salman Rushdie, Raja Roa etc. Women poets from Southern Asia describes the struggle put up by an individual to maintain the struggle to maintain ones identity and an effort put by an individual to adapt and relocate in the host land. Salman Rushdie has expressed his exile like condition as a vivid description in his work "Fatwa". Memories of homeland or nostalgia serves as a major theme in the works of the expatriate writers. Salman Rushdie expresses that the memories of one's homeland are those which are to be recalled and relished repeatedly. R.K. Ramanujan another diaspora writer brings about every aspect of Indianess and Indian culture in all his works. The rich heritage in Indian literature is described in his work as, "A Flowering Tree and other oral Tales from India". In an effort to maintain originality the author has taken native tales and folklores of a particular region.

Causes for migration / Dislocation: Historically, migration of humans began about 1.75 million years ago where people from Africa spread to European and Asian continents. Migration of people was based on several factors like change of climate, poverty, flood, famine etc. Early humans or the period of agrarian economy were the days where people stayed within the vicinity of rivers for farming and feeding of their cattle. People also moved from their homeland to many other parts of the earth especially to places like Great Britain, Africa, and the Mediterranean lands as indentured laborers. Those were the days where slavery was legally abolished in the American continent and the wealthy colonies were looking for bonded slaves to work in their banana and tea plantations. People who moved so later happened to settle there as they did not find a better living condition in their own land. The other factors which led to the cause of migration of people were trade and several commercial activities.

Different phases of migration: Dislocation or migration of people can be classified into different phases based upon their period of migration. Accordingly Indian diasporas are categorized under three segments as ancient, medieval and modern. The early days when Indian laborers and skilled workers moved in search of job opportunities to the Mediterranean region is considered as the ancient stage. Historians state that movement of Indian diasporas can be traced back to Indus valley civilization and Harappa culture.

The expansion of powerful European empires as Asia and Africa during the medieval times aggravated the migration of people leading to the second stage of diaspora. During this stage Indians migrated to the East Africa and South-east Asian countries mainly for the purpose of trade. A remarkable relocation took place during the British rule. Abolition of slavery led to the migration of many people, which paved way for future generations of diaspora.

Twentieth century or the third stage of Indian diaspora saw a steep rise in the Indian migration for various prospects. The developed nations created fascinations in the minds of many people which led to an enormous extent of emigration. This stage is called as the "New Diaspora" or the postmodernist diaspora.

Developed nations like United Kingdom and United States were the most preferred destination for the people during the medieval and the modern stage.

Feeling of rootlessness or the Quest for self identity: Diasporas always have a sense of alienation, displacement and a quest for identity. The first and foremost problem that arises when an individual moves from the native land is identity crisis. This is of a major concern as it leads to an unsettled situation for a diaspora in a host land. This creates restlessness in the minds of a diaspora which makes them feel lost amidst the ocean of human beings. Migrated people were not able to follow their own traditions and cultural practices as they were not conducive to be followed in a foreign country.

Assimilation or Double identity: Some people have profound attachment towards the culture and heritage of one's own land and put up a lot of effort to maintain their individuality. The level of assimilation of an individual depends entirely on the circumstances in which they have moved to the alien land. There arises friction in a diasporic mind when they fail to adapt themselves to the host society.

Slowly Indian diaspora started assimilating themselves to the style of living of the host land, and at the same time practiced the cultural and traditional practice of their own motherland. Indians had a greater sense of increased adaptability and hence overcame racism and discrimination issues. Eventually the host nation also had to develop tolerance towards the immigrants due to various reasons. This was to the extent that they started following certain food habits and things like yoga in their living style. The cosmopolitan atmosphere that prevailed in developed countries attracted people from all over the globe to these lands.

Conclusion

The first generation diaspora strived hard to preserve their traditional practices by creating a habit in the younger generation or the second generation diaspora by inculcating certain practices. The second and third generation diasporas were successful in adapting themselves to the host environment and at same time followed their own traditional values which eventually led to their double identity. Indians generally have better adapting nature and hence succeed in their struggle for existence.

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