

DIASPORA AND ITS OBSTACLES: AN ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED WORKS OF JHUMPA LAHIRI, KIRAN DESAI AND CHITRA BANARJEE DIVAKARUNI

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Abstract

*Mankind has always strived for a better life since its creation. World-age technology has evolved from the Stone Age in search of a better living. Man has always been compelled by this quest to travel, frequently leaving his native country. Because of the extreme and agonising uprooting from one's native land, such movements have evolved into forms of exile. Language, identity, location, and home are all interconnected; they are merely distinct aspects of belonging and non-belonging. - Jhumpa Lahiri. Diasporic literature emerged in the universal literature against the backdrop of the post-colonial context, developing concurrently with post-colonial literature and inspired by the widespread migration, immigration, or emigration. The act of transplanting causes "rootlessness" in the immigrant. This essay examines how *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri, *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai, and *The Vine of Desire* by Chitra Banarjee Divakaruni deal with the challenges of transplanting into a new culture. The study compares and contrasts the situations of female protagonists in immigration as they are depicted in the chosen novels from a feminist and cultural perspective.*

Keywords: Native Land, Home, Rootlessness, Identity, Diaspora

The term "Diasporic Literature" is very broad and encompasses any literary works that are authored by authors who are not from their home country but are yet connected to their culture and heritage. Within this expansive framework, all those authors can be recognised as diasporic writers—those who write abroad yet maintain a connection to their native nation through their works. In Diaspora Literature, the concept of a homeland, the location of the relocation, and accounts of arduous travels made due to financial constraints are all included. Diasporic literature originated from the feelings of alienation and loss that came with migration and expatriation. Diasporic literature typically addresses themes such as identity quest, existential rootlessness, displacement, alienation, and nostalgia. It also covers topics pertaining to the blending or breaking apart of cultures. The experience of immigrants as they leave the immigrant settlement is reflected in it.

The occupancy of liminal space is a prominent theme in diasporic writing. Diasporic writing is, in actuality, twice as liminal. This writing continues to be that of an outsider looking in at the new culture, but it also looks in at a past of space that has changed in their absence as an outsider to the country. The term "exile" has a bad connotation, but it takes on a more nuanced meaning when it refers to a self-imposed exile. An exile might take on various tastes. Compared to émigrés, immigrants belong to a lower class. He is not the same as a "refugee" or a "expatriate." A person who freely departs from their own country in order to establish permanent residency in another is considered an immigrant. Regardless of their motivations—financial, social, political, or otherwise—immigrants have certain things in common as well as differences based on their circumstances of migration and length of stay in the adopted country. These differences can be found in the cases of religious preachers, labourers, prisoners, soldiers, expatriates, refugees, or exiles (voluntary or forced). The majority of migrants experience mental agony from being separated from their homes, memories of their homeland, and the sadness of leaving behind everything familiar.

Indians who live abroad also maintain their ties to their ancestral homeland. An attempt is being made to trace their roots by searching for continuity and the "ancestral impulse." They feel dislocated while settling in a foreign country. One way to conceptualise dislocation is as a rupture from the previous identity. They encounter discrimination based on their ethnicity and feel abandoned in their new country. The goal of the immigrants' attempts to integrate into the host nation's society is assimilation. They are concerned about preserving their original culture and identity even as they make these adjustments and adaptations. When it comes to the dominating host group, the peripheral groups attempt to protect themselves. Preservation of social customs and cultural practices is the most essential insulating method. Keeping their social and cultural baggage, which includes, among other things, their attire, cuisine, language, music, art, and religion, is a constant worry for first-generation immigrants. Dispersed groups actively work to preserve their customs for the coming generation.

A diasporic sensibility that reflects the writer's multiple identities develops as the foreign writer navigates cultural, geographic, and psychological dislocation. A pluralistic outlook is evident in their literature. Moving back and forth between two locations, there is a continuous shifting between two worlds. Only in few instances does the author romanticise or portray his or her own nation as a haven of poverty, bloodshed, and corruption. In the floating world, we also witness hostile forces pressing him or her from all directions, desiring to cling to long-gone traditions, customs, and ways of life, only to be trapped in a world where his or her own path—rather than the one he or she had hoped for or left behind—is not the one he or she truly intended.

A minority group that is exiled is known as a diaspora. The term "diaspora" describes a group of people who are dispersed over the globe yet have a similar heritage. Conversely, migration describes the movement of individuals to other locations in quest of settling down. Some migrate abroad in order to pursue employment, further their education, or be with family. A few others believe they have no choice but to leave due to dire conditions such as gang violence, poverty, political upheaval, natural disasters, or other pressing issues. The economic development of the countries where diasporas originate can be significantly impacted. Diasporas can foster entrepreneurship and commerce, establish new businesses and encourage remittances, and convey new knowledge and skills in addition to their well-known function as remittance senders.

The Greek word "diaspeirein," which meaning "to scatter" or "to spread about," is where the word "diaspora" comes from. In the past, it was used to describe the Jewish population's dispersion from Israel after their captivity in Babylon in the sixth century BCE. Nonetheless, its use has broadened to encompass any community that has been forced or willingly uprooted from their own territory and relocated to different regions of the globe. Globalisation, cultural dispersion, and migration are closely related to the idea of diaspora. It depicts the flow of people, ideas, and civilizations across national boundaries and continents. Diasporic communities frequently adjust to the environment and culture of their new place while yet preserving close ties to their original country. A common feature of many diasporic experiences is this dual identity.

Diasporas have developed historically as a result of a number of factors, such as economic migration, political persecution, slavery, and colonisation. The Indian diaspora that spanned the British Empire and beyond, the African diaspora brought about by the transatlantic slave trade, and the Armenian diaspora that followed the Armenian Genocide are a few examples. These populations frequently have a big impact on the political, social, and cultural landscapes of both their home nations and their places of origin. Through their customs, dialects, cuisines, and artistic manifestations, they enhance societies and contribute to a variety of cultural landscapes. In terms of trade and investment, diasporas frequently act as links between their host nations and their home countries, remitting money and encouraging entrepreneurship in the process.

Diasporas do, however, suffer difficulties as well, such as prejudice, pressure to assimilate, and loss of cultural legacy. Striking a fine balance between overcoming the challenges of integration and preserving ties to their roots can be challenging. Advances in communication and transportation have made diasporic societies more connected in today's world, which makes it simpler to interchange commodities, services, and ideas. For example, social media platforms are now essential resources for diasporic communities looking to connect globally and feel a part of the community. As a whole, the idea of diaspora captures the complexities of cultural exchange and human mobility, emphasising the persistent relationships that cut across national lines and influence people's identities all over the world.

Diverse writers from the diaspora have written on immigration in their works, including Kiran Desai, Meena Alexander, Bharathi Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee, Anita Desai, and Jumpa Lahiri. Writers who are immigrants from India who have lived in the United States have garnered a great deal of critical attention in recent years. They speak out against the psychological suffering, cultural alienation, and identity crisis that the people who have been uprooted from their own India are experiencing. The writers from the diaspora listed above have written on immigration issues in their writings. The works of Indian immigrants who have made the United States their home have garnered significant critical attention in recent years. They speak out against the psychological damage, cultural alienation, and identity crisis that the individuals who have been uprooted from their own India are experiencing.

One of the most well-known authors of diasporic writing is Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, a writer from Bengal who came to the United States. Indian ancestry traces Chitra Banerjee's American Asian heritage. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, an author, poetess, and activist from the US who is a devotee of Tagore classics, grew up reading powerful female writers like Mahasweta Devi and Ismat Chughtai. And that undoubtedly inspired her own writing and made a lasting impression on her mind. Living in the United States has made her more conscious of cultural differences, which motivates her to fully investigate. According to Divakaruni, Indian women immigrants experience the effects of the cultural split brought about by displacement earlier than males do. As a result, she finds that even as she transforms into a new person in the diasporic environment, she often looks back.

Women of various ethnicities and faiths who share a common feminine experience are the subject of Divakaruni's works. The disparate cultural and religious barriers are where all of her heroines have to find themselves. "My characters struggle in the balance between individual happiness and family responsibilities, which is in part, at the centre of conflict between our Hindu culture, which always shows the mother as the

giver, nurturer, and self-sacrificing person for the good of the family, and the western concept of self-happiness," the author asserts.

The novel "The Vine of Desire" by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni depicts women battling complex issues that are representative of modern Indian society. The book tells the story of their struggles against patriarchal standards that limit their freedom and ambition by keeping them in conventional gender roles. They have to deal with social norms that control their conduct, frequently compromising their personal happiness in order to serve their family's needs.

The struggle between modernity and tradition is ever-present as women adjust to shifting social environments. They encounter internal conflicts and outside pressures that put their perseverance to the test as they try to balance upholding long-standing traditions with embracing recently acquired freedoms. Women bargain over power dynamics and face problems like infidelity and domestic abuse in intimate relationships, which turn into battlefields. Cultural norms and family expectations frequently obstruct their path to self-realization and love.

Further aggravating their problems and widening the gaps they encounter is the confluence of gender, caste, and class. In addition to limiting women's options and influencing their experiences, economic inequality and social hierarchies also marginalise women. To assert their agency and regain their identities in a complex and contradictory culture, the women in "The Vine of Desire" show fortitude and tenacity in the face of these obstacles. The novel portrays women in modern India's ongoing struggle for emancipation and empowerment through their own stories.

Jhumpa Lahiri is a significant writer of Indian diaspora who has expanded the corpus of worldwide writing in English. Nilanjana Sudeshna, popularly known as Jhumpa Lahiri, is well-known for her essays, novels, and short stories written in both Italian and English. Lahiri was born in 1967 to West Bengali immigrant parents in London. Interpreter of Maladies, her debut collection of short stories, earned the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1999. The Namesake, her 2003 debut novel, was made into a well-liked movie of the same name. Lahiri examined Indian immigrants' experiences in America in these writings.

Her book The Namesake explores the difficulties faced by immigrants in a foreign country, the emotions involved in cross-cultural quandaries, and the longings of exile. The topics of identity loss and cultural alienation are developed further throughout the book. She attempts to imprison the Ganguli family's thirty-year battle with cultural tribulations and their assimilation and integration into the foreign community. The immigrants from the continent who are Lahiri's protagonists go through periods of cultural reflection. They are experiencing a conflict of consciousness between their native and alien identities. Through alienation, cultural conflict, and hybrid culture, they are recognised as an unpleasant race as they travel towards their home and identity. Her topics are made universal by the way she meticulously outlines the identities of her tortured characters. Consequently, via creative reconstruction rather than the normal cacophony of rage, her stories serve as the true societal documentation of anguished souls.

As a novel that chronicles the lives of an immigrant Indian American family, The Namesake is an example of a diasporic work. Critical praise was bestowed upon Jhumpa Lahiri for her nuanced and poignant depiction of family life and the struggles faced by Indian immigrants as they attempt to balance their Indian heritage with the American ambition. Lahiri has struggled with her surroundings and with herself since she was a little child, trying to figure out who she really is in the world. An immigrant faces constant challenges. In her book The Namesake, she explores the topics of cultural alienation, identity loss, and diaspora that immigrants encounter while relocating abroad. The story of Ashima and Ashok Ganguli, an Indian immigrant couple who moved to Boston's University of Suburbs in search of better chances, is the focus of The Namesake. In The Namesake, she considers the Indian diaspora and crafts a story that exposes the ambiguity of the notion of identity and cultural disparity within the diaspora.

Identity in life is symbolised by one's name. In addition to being useful for interpersonal communication, names are crucial for self-identification. The significance of names increases when identity emerges as the central concern. There are numerous naming rites and ceremonies that are customarily observed in Indian culture. The significance of names in life cannot be overstated. Names appear as emblems of identity in literature that deals with the collision of nations, civilizations, and races. Good names are said to signify honourable and wise attributes in Indian culture. Occasionally, pet names are absurd and have no significance. Gogol Ganguli's struggle to come to terms with his odd name is reflected in the title The Namesake. A very particular, unnamed community's experiences are portrayed in the story. The lives of first- and second-generation Indian immigrants to the United States are depicted in The Namesake in a compelling manner. A common sensation among the Indian diaspora is alienation, and even in places where individuals feel at home, they may yet have feelings of estrangement.

Kiran Desai, the highly acclaimed novelist, is an Indian writer residing in the diaspora who features Indian characters as main protagonists. She typically writes about Indian immigrants who find it difficult to adapt to a foreign land—usually America—in her novels. Originally from India, American novelist Kiran Desai received the 2006 Booker Prize for her second book, The Inheritance of Loss, which quickly rose to international bestseller status. Indian civilization serves as the setting for Kiran Desai's 2006 book The Inheritance of Loss, which she based on her personal experiences moving between diasporic identities and relocation. Rather than

writing the book in Indian English, she wrote it in English. In her novels, she embodies the fresh voice of contemporary Indian fiction and presents a completely original vision. Salman Rushdie, a well-known Indian English writer, has praised her for her masterful portrayal of the hardships faced by exiles. She is one of the finest writers of modern India who examines Indian society and daily life. He also conveys the novel's blend of political shrewdness and personal breadth. The majority of the novel's characters are greatly influenced by non-native culture. The novel's protagonists serve as metaphors for a variety of problems relating to confused identities, and the author explores many facets of the split identity on a separate life narrative experienced by people attempting to deal with significant foreign influences.

"The Inheritance of Loss" uses the stories of characters like Sai, an Indian woman navigating post-colonial India, and Biju, an immigrant from India, to illustrate the struggles faced by the diaspora. The novel's diaspora, divided between the longing for their native country and the quest of opportunity overseas, must deal with the difficult problem of displacement. The hardships of immigrant life, such as exploitation, loneliness, and the need to fit in, are reflected in Biju's journey. Conversely, Sai tackles the intricacies of cultural identity and the aftermath of colonialism, finding it difficult to harmonise her Western education with her Indian background. Desai explores grief, longing, and the need for a feeling of home in a fractured world through the eyes of these characters, therefore poignantly illustrating the diasporic struggle.

In expatriate writing, memories are still a major influence. Though they may have changed much since the writer experienced them, the memories are of people, places, and moments from the past as they were at that time. In addition, nostalgia and fantasy have now tainted these memories. Imaginary and real worlds are negotiating each other in these authors' creative universes. Second-generation immigrants from the third world face unique challenges as a result of their expatriate experience. For this new class of immigrants, who were born and raised abroad, expatriation is viewed as an imagined reality, free from the stigma of homesickness and the common signs of depression, loneliness, existential rootlessness, or homelessness. Therefore,

Notably, early writing by expatriates was typically that of a visitor spending a little time away from home. Nowadays, a large number of expats have made the decision to live overseas. The setting and inspiration for diasporic writers' works nowadays, however, invariably come from their own country.

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