

Indian Diasporic Writers In Canada

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Abstract: Indian Diaspora today constitutes a major force in the economy of the world. People of Indian Origin have been extremely successful in their countries of host. Today PIOs (People of Indian Origin) resides everywhere and have left their foot mark in almost all occupations and professions. Indian Diaspora is no longer seen as humble migrant but it acts as a community holding higher post in the world of politics, industries, professions and universities. In every part of the world the Indian community and overseas are given recognition, respect for their hard work discipline and thus for successfully mingling and integrating with the local community. Indian Diaspora has contributed significantly to the world economy of the country and thus added a considerable amount of measure to the knowledge and innovation. The era of globalization has ushered the age of global village, to the uprising politics. The Indian Diaspora has become the visible community in the world in general and particularly in Canada. The Ministry of External Affairs has estimated that the total number of overseas Indian Residents is more than twenty million who are settled in more than seventy countries including Canada, U.S, U.K, European countries, Australia, Middle East, South East and far eastern countries in 2001. Thus it is these overseas Indians that formulated the concept of Indian Diaspora aspect.

Keywords: Diaspora, Indian origin, PIO's, Canada

I. INTRODUCTION

The term 'Diaspora' was originally used to suggest the word displacement or dispersal of a group from their native land to alien territory under economic or political pressures, denoting the Jewish people. That is how the term Diaspora has been derived from the greek words 'dia' which means 'through' and 'speiro' which means to 'scatter'. Hence literal meaning of 'Diaspora' is 'scattering' or 'dispersion'. Demographically, Indian Diaspora comes under third largest ranking after the British and Chinese Diaspora. The Indian Diaspora is further divided into Non Residents Indians, (NRIs) –Indians who are not permanent residents and also Persons of Indian Origin, (PIOs) – Indians who have acquired the citizenship of another country, but traces their roots back India.

In the context of Canada, Indian Diaspora forms the second highest number of immigrants. They actually accounts for more than the half million, one in every 30 Canadians have their roots back from India. Canada has to promote at least 200,000 annual immigrants to promote sustainable growth of

population. Over the last centuries, thousands of Indians have moved out of the subcontinent and set up small communities. Today there are estimated ten millions "Indians" living outside India. Every sixth person of the earth today is of Indian Origin. Indian Diaspora who have better mind carry nostalgically the heart, the food, the clothes, the festivals, the music the films and even the literature. In recent years the term 'Diaspora' has been referred to the situations and experience of Jewish peoples outside a Jewish homeland. Many of today's diasporic groups (Africans, Palestinians, Chinese, Armenians, Jews etc.) have earlier history of travel away from their homelands. There are many Indian writers who wrote the works of the Indian Diaspora such as V.S Naipaul, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahri, Bharti Mukherjee, Salman Rushdie, who are of Indian Descent. The quantity and quality of literary writing by diasporic peoples need critical attention. Two books published by Greenwood Press examine literary contours of Indian Diasporic writing: -Reworlding: The Literature of Indian Diaspora and writers of The Indian Diaspora: A Bio-Bibliographical critical sourcebook. Emanuel S.Nelson editor of both books deserves praise for bringing to

our notice of an entire body of writers matching bibliography with critical commentary. Even earlier, in March 2001, in a consideration of the diasporic impact, Canadian Immigration Minister, Elinor Caplan, when announcing her trip to India, asserted that *'This visit will reinforce the importance that Canada places on its people-to-people links with India'* (CIC, 2001). The India Diaspora could be an attractive market segment for Indian exports and the notion of diaspora members as consumers may be somewhat cynical, but there is much more to be considered of value in the diasporic communities.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature of Indian Diaspora constitutes a major study of literature and other cultural texts in relevant fields of literature. It also contributes to diaspora theory in general and examining both of the old and new diaspora linked to movements of late capital. There are among 20 million Indian people who play various role of supplier, investor, customer, ambassador and philanthropist. The role of Indian Diaspora is varied and in past few years it has experienced considerable growth in the Indian Economy and in capital formation and major investment in future which could be in social infrastructure, new venture funds, business expansions and diversified portfolio investment.

By the use of communication technology and internet, members of diaspora communicate within and across groups behind national borders and transcend those governmental states that restrict freedom of speech, expression, and communication. They participate in international protests, human rights movements, and carve more democratic spaces. Diasporas in Canada "exert tremendous effort to raise awareness about issues and injustices in their source countries" as well as lobbying Canadian government. Obviously, the essentials of a politics by which Canada imagines itself, the multicultural politic, is much in accordance with this new conception of diaspora as a "global society" or a "world polity." With the wealth of knowledge, resources, and expertise that is present within these communities, diaspora groups are well poised to assist Canada to steer towards a careful, reasoned, democratic and secular future. The literature of Indian Diaspora constitutes a major study of the literature and other cultural texts of the Indian Diaspora. It also contributes to the theory of diaspora in general. After examining both of the 'Old' Indian Diaspora, following the abolition of slavery and the 'New' diaspora linked to the movements of late capital, Mishra argues that the aspect of diaspora could be fully understand if attention is paid to the locations of both the 'old' and the 'new' nation states.

In the novel of *A House of Mr. Biswas*, Naipaul writes about the diasporas' familiar temporariness to become the part of wide landscape and 'not to be at home 'feeling'. Failing to find the proper roots, and to build a home actually on a solid foundation –the house of his own and which become mortgaged, the house in which he dies, and this failure of him is totally the experience of diasporas. The house which he transformed the new route (temporariness) and the roots which he wants to make (familiar) is as unsteady as the sailing of

ship to the shore. The novel therefore begins and ends with the death and within the boundaries of the house that encapsulates the diasporic negotiation of space in terms of the history.

Indian English writing due to its origin of cultures, has been circulating around the theme of challenging and compelling about the two cultures, apparently in their values, approaches and attitudes. The experiences of the immigrant is very sensitive finding herself or himself attached to the memories of the past fraught with the memories of their homeland which are struggling with the hardships and difficulties of the new world. It is more in the case of women writers in English because they face more of the problems than men. To name few persons like Anita Desai has a German mother and a Bengali father, Kamala Markandeya is married to an English man and Bharti Mukherjee became one of the Americans. Around the world the women writers from the stream of Indian Diaspora has made its special space and carved their own distinctive niche. Bharti Mukherjee is one amongst them. She was born in Calcutta than in 1940, married a Canadian student Clarke Blaise, and lived in Canada from 1966 to 1980, she became a Canadian and lived in Montreal then lately migrated to U.S.A in 1980. While in Canada, she published two novels, *The Tiger's Daughter* in 1974 and *Wife* in 1975. She also co-authored a book with her husband in her fond memories entitled *Days and Nights in Calcutta* (1977) on their long stay in India in the year 1973-74, after the fire in their Montreal home.

There are many writers who did critical study about the Indian Diasporic aspect among them Rohinton Mistry is one. He came to Canada in 1975 from Mumbai and thus lived near Toronto. He worked in a bank as well studied in the University of Toronto. As a full time writer, he has published within a period of ten years, three works. He is the receiver of several prestigious awards. For instance his first novel *Such A Long Journey* was shortlisted for the Booker Prize and won the Governor General's Award, the Commonwealth Writer's Prize for the first book and the Smith Books First Novel Award which is given to Canadian novelists on the basis of merit of their first publication of the novel. His novel 'A Fine Balance' was also shortlisted for the Booker Prize and the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. In 1995 he got the prestigious Canada Australia Literary Prize. With only four works Mistry has gained immense recognition as a literary figure. One of the remarkable work he did in 'A Fine Balance' is that he brilliantly captures the crowded, throbbing life of India. His writings do reflect the social and political background. As a writer of Diaspora, he has carved a niche for himself. About his diaspora status, Nilufer Bharucha says:

As an Indian who now resides in Canada, Rohinton Mistry is a writer of Indian Diaspora. However, Mistry is also a Parsi Zoroastrian, as a person whose ancestors were forced into exile by the Islamic conquest of Iran, he was a Diaspora even in India.

The participation and contribution of Indian Diaspora could not be denied. The Indian diasporic writers belong to different category and country mainly India, they have Indian origins, but resides in a new country mainly Canada, England, U.S.A and others. A large number of diasporic writers has given expressions to the creative writings which have brought credit to the Indian English Fiction. The phenomena of

immigration to newer countries like Canada, their feeling of nostalgia attach to them for their mother country, their status quo is the major subject dealt by diasporic writers. There are various writers who have written a great deal of work in the diasporic writing like Vikram Seth, Jhumpa Lahiri, Bernard Malamud, Isa Babel, Bharti Mukherjee, Salman Rushdie, Vijay Mishra and others.

With increased globalization, transnational's diaspora studies have emerged as a wide area of research in the field of humanities and social sciences. In the book of 'Fractured Identity' there is comprehensive overview of Indian Diaspora in Canada and the issues related to the identity of the diasporic people who migrated there. The term diaspora has been approached in various ways. Cohen (1997) proposes a typology in which he classifies diasporas as: labor diasporas, victim and trade diasporas, imperial diasporas, cultural diasporas, and global-deterritorialized diasporas.

We may speak of the 'drama of the diasporic' writers of Indian authors but in real meaning its absent from it. This is evident where the critical work is done by the authors in the field of diasporic writings. In his editors to preface for the writers of Indian Diaspora: A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook(1993), Emmanuel S. Nelson lists poetry, fiction, biography, travelogue, formal essay, and autobiography as the forms in which artists included in the study express themselves, excluding theatre altogether. Phil Cohen (1999) shows his academic interest in diaspora by measuring of articles and books that have a diasporic title or theme. A vast literature traces the traces of slavery, but the outcome of cultural trade is best explored in Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1993a) and Ronald Segal's *The Black Diaspora* (1996). In the relationship between 'home and away' that marks out diasporic understandings away signifies some sort of loss, and can be generalized into a representative typology or definition of what a diaspora might be. Robin Cohen (1997) builds upon the framework developed by William Safran (1991) to provide a list of conditions which, when satisfied, allow for the application of the diaspora label. Robin Cohen's *Global Diasporas* (1997) spends a lot of time describing groups of people, their movement, their subsequent settlement and social engagements in exact way. There are five different forms of diasporic community:-

- ✓ Victim (African and Armenian)
- ✓ Labor (Indian)
- ✓ Trade (Chinese and Lebanese)
- ✓ Imperial (British)
- ✓ Cultural (Caribbean)

Even though Cohen is not simplistic in the application of these divisions, acknowledging as he does and that things can change on with time. Vertovec also offers these definitions as types:

- ✓ Diaspora as societal form.
- ✓ Diaspora as a type of consciousness

However, the models of diaspora presented by Vertovec may serve well to categorize the literature of Indian Diaspora. The Saga of Indian Diaspora from their distinctive experiences of negotiating the two worlds of their origin country and the host country have given them the unique position of viewing both the two cultures from a birds view; has inspired many writers among the Indo-Canadians community.

Rohinton Mistry has won many prestigious awards for his renowned work like the Canada Governor General's Award, the Hart House Literary Prize, first Novel Award, the Giller prize, the Royal Society of Literature's for fiction Winfried Holtby Prize, the Common Wealth Writer's Prize for Best Book, and the 1996 Los Angeles Times Award for fiction. *A Fine Balance* made the short-list of nominees for the Booker Prize, on which a film was also made. Moyez Gulamhussein Vasanji or M.G. Vassanji is a well known as Canadian novelist and editor. He has come to Canada from East Africa and has the experience of developing countries as well as developed countries as a host country for immigrants and which has been *The Assassins Song* (2007). His other works have also received critical acclaim. There are other novels 'The Gunny Sack' won a regional Commonwealth Writers Prize in 1990. In 1994 he won the Harbor front Festival Prize in recognition of his achievement and contribution to the world of letters. That was the year when he won Maclean's Magazine's Honour Roll among twelve Canadians. Vassanji also won the inaugural Giller Prize in 1994 for *The Book of Secrets*. He again won the Giller Prize in 2003 for *In-Between-World of Vikram Lal*. He was the first writer to win the Giller Prize more than once. He was made a member of order of Canada in 2005. The role of these Indian Diasporic writers is very wide and they play very significant role in encouraging Indian Literature in Canada.

III. DEFINITION AND RATIONALE

The diasporic writers have shown a remarkable work in a field of literature. If Diaspora implies a relation between the works of more than one society, a group of people or culture, then we can visualize how it has impacts on the economics and politics. The Indian Diaspora is a term used to describe the people who have migrated from their original homeland to the newer countries. The Diaspora generally accounts for over twenty millions composed of NRIs (Non Residents Indians) and PIOs (Persons of Indian Origin). Staying away from their Motherland Indian Diaspora has achieved worldwide success in their relative field of literature.

Indian Diasporic writers have achieved tremendous amount of success by dint of their single mindedness and dedicated hardwork. Diaspora actually is a Greek word that means scattering or sowing of seeds. It is used for the people who have left their native homeland and moved to other parts of world in search of employment, trade, business and other relative field. The Indian Diasporic writers today constitute a distinctive image in the field of literature and in good respect unique force in world of culture. These diasporic writers as Rohinton Mistry, Salman Rushdie, Bharti Mukherjee, M.G Vassanji, Jaspreet Singh have achieved tremendous amount of world-wide success in field of literature. They have explored much of the diasporic writings in their related novels. As in 'Such A Long Journey' Rohinton Mistry has done a remarkable work for which he won prize. Indian Writers attempt to locate diasporic voices in the interstitial spaces of countless ideologies. There are various diasporic subjects attached to their writings as why they left their original homeland and migrated to a new country, what

troubleshooting situations they faced to get mingled with the host countries, those who have chosen hybrid spaces for empowerment, those who were forcefully dragged from their native countries oppressive while others find it romantically Indianess. The authors of the essays find it debate in examining literary criticism in an attempt to understand the often complex narratives of diasporic Indian subject to various territories, and yet those who gleefully inhabit translocal spaces. As more of the female writers have come up with the context of diaspora aspect both from the South and the North, particularly in the era of globalization and in the aftermath attack of 9/11 in the United States, raises the question of how the Gotherg, the subaltern is read and represented. Some writers uses an assimilationist approach to the cultures of the West that they find Indian Culture.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The majority of empirical studies on the diasporic writings in the field of literature have focused on the behavior pattern of various Diasporas in Canada and the great authors have done major work as V.S.Naipaul in his novel 'House of Mr. Biswas' has depicted the experiences of the immigrants to settle in a newer country leaving their homeland behind. Rohinton Mistry in 'A Fine Balance' depicts the throbbing lifestyle of immigrants in India. For the purpose of field of study it is important to, delineate the behaviors, patterns, free life style, way of living of Indian Diasporic people who have migrated there and what does Indian diasporic writers think about it in the field of literature .

For the purpose of this particular proposed research the descriptive, qualitative, analytical reasoning followed. Primary sources considered for the study of Indian Diasporic writings in Canada and participation and observing the activities and programs of the organizations are observed consequently. Some unpublished thesis/dissertation and other material is used for the propose study. Primary sources to the related data of Indian Diasporic writings produced by the various institutions, libraries such as Shastri Indo Canadian Institute and Indian Official Documents are analyzed. Relevant Publications, news paper clippings, reports, research journals and also data collected from the internet sources particularly the websites of the governments of both Canada and India is followed in the Indian diasporic writings in the field of English Literature. In addition, Indian Newspapers Hindustan Times, Times Of India, Internet Sites are observed carefully.

V. FINDINGS

Here, in this paper the object was to analyze how literature gave new ways for the meeting point of the different cultures and traditions of the world through encounter and exploring of newer countries. The creativity lies in these great Indian authors in the field of literature who immigrate from their original homeland carrying and employing their cultural, as well as their racial past, familiar past for the recurring theme. Having unique and distinctive identities abroad and being subjected to different socio economic conditions; the

Indian communities abroad have adopted distinct diasporic entities. The study of Indian Diaspora in the field of literature has varied rich area in the multidisciplinary area of research interest. By the study of well known writings of authors and scholars readers will come to know more about the empirical reality of Indian Diaspora and the theoretical concept and the issues raised by it. Between that they cover a wide range of aspects such as assimilation into host societies, change of family, language, culture and ethnicity.

Nevertheless as these diasporic people survive in different climatic conditions their persistence to several social culture and patterns differs accordingly. However, their roots lies back to their native country India. Many conferences, seminars are organized on Indian Diaspora under the agencies of Global Organization of people of Indian Origin (New York), Indo-Canadian Shastri Institute, Indian Sociological Society, and India International Centers beside universities in India and abroad. Recognizing the significance and relevance in area of academic study the university grants commission established in 1995 to promote Indian English writings and their field of work in English Literature.

This paper deals with Indian diaspora writings and its ideological aspects with the popularity of renowned authors in the particular field of literature. Here, the researcher pictures critically on the writings of Indian Diaspora and focus on immigrants and their ongoing journey to Canada in the field of Indian English Literature. This paper visualizes how the voices of various writers are depicted and how these voices are perceived and reflected in mind of readers.

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