

Contemporary Issues in Diaspora Literature

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Abstract

Today diaspora has been made easier due to scientific advancement. The theme of isolation and cultural difference have become the matter of past. As people settle in foreign land, there happens cultural interaction among themselves and it results in multicultural societies. This paper deals with these issues. The authors conclude that the modern diaspora which is differed from old diaspora, is the diaspora of globalization.

Keywords: Diaspora, Multiculturalism, Immigration

Diaspora literature plays a vital role in modern English fiction. In the technological era, multiculturalism in diaspora literature is a significant one. The term 'Multiculturalism' can be defined as 'Global Phenomenon' because it has exceeded a large number of nations and countries. In the present era, Multiculturalism is helpful to describe 'world culture'. What is world culture?

According to ULF Hannerz, now there is a world culture. He gives a flexible meaning to culture:

"There is now a world culture, but we had better make sure we understand what this means: not a replication of uniformity but an organization of diversity, an increasing interconnectedness of varied local cultures, as well as a development of cultures without a clear anchorage in any one territory. And to this interconnected diversity people can relate in different ways". (Hannerz 106)

The term 'Multicultural' comprises diasporas; cultural minorities and first – nation people. In the past, the immigrants those who settled in the host land were torn between two cultures. They were torn not only between two geographical boundaries but also different cultures in the new land. Earlier the central theme of diasporic literature was alienation and adjustment of the individual in the host land. Now the scenario has totally changed. Today diaspora has been made easier due to scientific advancement. The theme of isolation and cultural difference have become the matter of past. Now – a – days, the migrants find the way between two or more cultural environments in the new land.

The term 'multiculturalism' describes the existence, acceptance of the alien land and new culture or promotion of various cultural traditions within a single rule. Usually, it is considered in terms of the culture mingled with an ethnic group. This will happen when two or more different cultures mingled together. For example French Canada and English Canada. When people immigrate to the alien land, they have to face different cultural environments and traditions.

In the twenty first century, diaspora is made by people not by compulsion but willingly due to economic prosperity and academic purpose around the world. For example, Australia. The United States, United Kingdom and many other countries. Immigrants those who settle in these countries have to face. various cultures and traditions and these result in multiculturalism.

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The modern diasporic writers reflect multicultural ethos and transformation in their writings successfully and beautifully. Moreover, they have shown a deep understanding of socio cultural and economic realities into their works. What the most important thing is the diasporic writers make effort to create a new form of cultural identity. Now – a – days, most of the people immigrate to foreign countries and settle down there. So they have to face multiculturalism in the host land. In the new land, people have different cultures speak various languages, and follow different religions. The immigrants have to face all these things in the alien land.

Unlike old diaspora, in modern diaspora, people accept multiculturalism and follow these things willingly. Multicultural writing is pragmatic today.

The twenty first century is considered as the transcultural networks. In modern times, people who immigrate to alien land is no longer considered as exile. As cultures and traditions get transformed, immigrants feel detached from the sweet memories of native land and past times.

Stuart Hall most effectively sums up this point as follows:

“Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference. It is because this New World is constituted for us as place, a narrative of displacement that gives rise so profoundly to a certain imaginary plenitude, recreating the endless desire to return to the lost origins. And yet, this ‘return to the beginning’ is like the imaginary in Lacan – it can neither be fulfilled nor required, and hence it is the beginning of the symbolic, of representation, in the infinitely renewable source of desire, memory, myth, search, discovery ...” (Hall 235 - 6).

However, immigration is not happy journey to most of the diasporic writers. They are torn between two cultures. In their writing, one can see the diasporic features like identity crisis, yearning for homeland, The sense of ‘otherness’, racial discrimination and nostalgia and these things are described in diaspora literature in detailed manner.

Salman Rushdie feels a sense of nostalgia for native land. He is far away from India and he feels India as an imaginary home land. In one of his essays entitled Imaginary Homeland, Salman Rushdie writes

“It may be that writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge – which gives rise to profound uncertainties – that our physical alienation means we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, India’s of the mind” (Rushdie 76).

Cultural globalization which is noteworthy in the present era, is the processes of hybridization and it is the center of our attention. Culture is the only area that needs no differentiations. Cultural boundaries can be defined along like race, ethnicity, religion, nationality and gender which are unstable.

“Cultural differences are so entrenched in our system that everywhere we find indrawn territorial lines based on culture or its differences, so that true national frontiers are not determined by mountains and rivers, but rather by language, the customs, the memories, all that distinguishes one nation from another”. (Hobsbawm 98).

The notion of cultural identity refers to sentiments associated to home, community and belonging. Cultural identity involves acceptance of similarity and difference from oneself to others. The study of cultural identities analyzes issues like the interpretation of fact and fiction expressed through the narrator’s live experiences in writings. According to the shifting locations and multiple existences diaspora writers represent self-interpretations of cultural identities. These identities are associated with misbehavior and rejection of national, religious, racial and gender identification. This prejudice is a process of literary self – creation.

Cultural conflicts have dominated all literatures. Diasporic culture is divided and shows difference. These gaps can be filled only through the socio – cultural assimilation. Therefore Edward Said states that cultures in exile treat plurality of vision and this is good for diasporic cultures too. Such a plurality of vision

“gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions actually acquiring together contrapuntally.”(Said 172)

He mentions that in the absence of any particular culture, the presence of many cultures within the diasporic culture are noticed. This kind of multiculturalism within the diaspora treats the issue of identity as an illusion.

Generally, migration leads a man to multiculturalism. As people settle in foreign land, they have chance to see different people and their cultures. A migrant has to accept these things in the new land. The twenty first century is the age of globalization. In the context of globalization, diaspora is changed fully. In the present era, the geographical boundaries which exist between counties have almost disappeared. So in diaspora various cultures amalgamate into multiculturalism.

In the present era, the term multiculturalism is regarded as golden opportunity rather than a problem. It is seen as the only anchor for stable social and political formation. The world has shrunk due to technological advancement. Today travelling to other counties has been made easier and distances has become shorter. The new diaspora has emerged in recent times.

The modern diaspora which is differed from old diaspora, is the diaspora of globalization. Its members live happily both in the adopted land and the host land simultaneously. They accept both cultures. According to them, there is no difference between homeland and adopted land. It is a kind of multiculturalism taking nourishment from both the native as well as the adopted land.

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