

## PORTRAYAL OF DIASPORIC IDENTITIES: CHANCES AND CHALLENGES

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### ABSTRACT

*The practice of migration does not run smooth rather it brings along a number of crucial factors. Among them the identity is fundamental one which brings huge change in diasporic community. Diasporic community meet both; the great opportunities as well challenges. On one hand side, migration results in improved version of life, freedom of expression and great cultural exchange while on the other hand it leads to crisis of identity and homesickness. The present study discusses the portrayal of diasporic identities in the context of South Asian diasporic community with reference to novels such as The Reluctant Fundamentalist and The Lowland along theorists. The study concludes that migrants experience both; chances and challenges in the course of migration.*

**Keywords:** Migrants, diasporic, literature, identity, chances, challenges.

### INTRODUCTION

The subject of migration plays a key role in various socially constructed fields, including economics, geography, anthropology, and politics. Additionally, it has had a noteworthy impact on the field of literature, specifically in the context of South Asian literature written in English. Migrant literature encompasses the manifestation of migration as a phenomena, encompassing diverse categories of migrants, the multifaceted obstacles associated with displacement, and the complex issues encountered within host countries. Therefore, migrant literature exhibits a substantial degree of richness, diversity, and breadth in both its thematic and structural dimensions.

The phenomenon of migration can be observed throughout the early stages of human civilization, as dominating societies would engage in conquest and assimilation of less powerful cultures. In a similar vein, the prevalence of colonialism compelled European populations to embark on journeys to various areas. The etymology of the term "diaspora" can be traced to its Greek origins, specifically derived from the word "diaspeirein," which denotes the act of dispersion. This phrase historically refers to the involuntary displacement and dispersal of the Jewish population, resulting in their forced exile. In addition to aforementioned colonial actions, early instances of migration entailed individuals relocating to various regions in pursuit of sustenance and access to natural resources.

The examination of human identity has always been a focal point in numerous academic fields. In the contemporary day, namely in relation to the phenomenon of migration, the cultivation of one's personality has gained increased significance and necessity. The concept of identity is highly intricate, without a widely acknowledged definition. Nonetheless, the ensuing discourse aims to broaden the discussion by presenting several referenced definitions. According to Gleason (1983), the concept of a "identity crisis" as proposed by Erickson pertains to a state of uncertainty regarding one's own character, origins, and aspirations during the transitional period of rapid developmental changes. In the postmodern environment, the formation of identity diverges from Erikson's conceptualization of

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identity. In the contemporary postmodern era, the concept of identity is commonly seen as a discontinuous, fractured, and fluid phenomena characterized by ongoing transformation.

Postmodernism can be understood as a reactive movement that emerged in response to modernism. It is characterized by its inherent contradictions, intricate complexities, and ambiguous connections, which contribute to its overall lack of a clear and definitive perspective. In essence, it represents the resurgence of discontentment with the contemporary era. According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, postmodernism is characterized as an elusive phenomenon that can be understood as a collection of strategic and critical ideas. These ideas include notions such as difference, repetition, the trace, the simulacrum, and hyperreality. The purpose of these ideas is to challenge and disrupt other concepts such as identity, presence, and historical progress. Relativism, pluralism, and subjectivism are considered fundamental characteristics of the postmodernist framework.

In the context of postmodernism, the concept of identity diverges from the conventional understanding of identity as a cohesive, integrated, and immutable construct. The concept of postmodern identity exemplifies the manifestation of identity within the framework of postmodernism. The majority of postmodern critics conceptualize identity as an unresolved inquiry, characterized by its malleability and susceptibility to transformation in response to the dynamic circumstances experienced by individuals in motion. Postmodern individuals exhibit fractured, dynamic, and fluid identities that frequently embody hybridity and experience crises in relation to culture, language, and other social norms. Consumerism has a significant role in shaping individual identities within the context of the postmodern era. Featherstone and Kellner elucidate the concept of postmodern identity within the framework of consumerism, wherein individuals' identities are shaped by their consumption of items offered by various sectors. In a similar vein, scholars in the postmodern tradition, such as Beck and Gernsheim (2002), direct their attention towards the notion of individualization. This concept serves as a catalyst for societal transformations linked to the advent of industrialization, ultimately leading to the emergence of a consumer-driven society. These critics believe that individuals inside a consumer society tend to prioritize their personal lives over their social connections when it comes to constructing their sense of identity. In essence, individuals tend to prioritize their own distinctiveness, perceiving themselves as separate entities rather than as part of a collective. Moreover, they also inspire others to cultivate their own sense of individuality.

Hall explored this particular theme in his analysis of the battle between civilizations. The diaspora paradigm holds significant relevance for scholars and critics such as Avatar Bra. Hall asserts that there exists a perpetual realm beyond the confines of the individual's dwelling, so ensuring that we remain apprised of this reality. Diaspora cultures are commonly perceived as constituting a shared experience across dispersed populations. Diaspora studies examine the various aspects of dispersal, including the mechanisms and patterns by which individuals migrate between their homeland and diasporic communities. The Diaspora effectively motivates individuals to actively contribute to their country of origin, fostering a sense of unity that is inseparable from its existence. This concept elicits within individuals a sense of a hybrid existence influenced by shifts in geography, cultural dynamics, linguistic variations, and frequently, artistic transformations. Bra asserts that the concept of diaspora offers an alternative approach for examining the social standing of migrants and marginalized communities, such as ethnic minorities. The concept of diaspora class offers a framework for understanding the contemporary phenomenon of global mobility, wherein individuals migrate across geographical and cultural boundaries for many reasons, including economic and political factors.

Diasporas endeavor to maintain their cultural identity within their own society, however experience a loss of social identity upon migrating from their country of origin to a host nation. Individuals are observed engaging in the process of developing a novel sense of self by using their unique capacities in terms of intelligence, financial resources, physical capabilities, and psychological prowess.

Diaspora writers originating from developing nations have effectively provided a platform for marginalized migrants to express their experiences and challenges associated with the intricate process of relocating from their country of origin to a foreign continent. Expatriate authors adeptly craft compelling narratives that explore the intricate process of reconstructing the identities of migrants. The expatriate writers are perceived as engaging in a process of negotiation between historical and contemporary contexts, as well as between their nation of origin and their adopted homeland. In essence, individuals exhibit a sense of disconnection from their country of origin while concurrently displaying

a degree of affinity towards their host nation. Notably, they concurrently acquire cultural perspectives from both countries. This study examines the challenges and experiences encountered by migrants in South Asian English fiction. The development of identity is given significant emphasis in light of the substantial transformations resulting from globalization, as well as the economic dominance observed in China and Japan. When the aforementioned ideas are extended to the context of migrants, it becomes evident that several persons have not been granted fundamental rights, namely pertaining to their overall identity and self-identity.

The issue of migrants facing unfavorable circumstances raises significant inquiries regarding their prospects based on factors such as their geographical location, background, and cultural identity within their newly embraced socio-cultural environment. The experience of homesickness, nostalgia, displacement, alienation, and exposure to a new way of life presents numerous challenges for migrants. However, the most significant issue, which holds great psychological significance and ultimately influences human well-being, is the crisis of identity. Within this particular setting, migrants endeavor to repair their identity that has been disrupted or dismantled through a range of strategies, with the ultimate aim of adapting and thriving within their host country. The primary factor contributing to the survival of migrants is their profound sense of assurance in adapting to life in unfamiliar territories. When individuals are displaced from their original environment, they are faced with the task of rebuilding their lives with determination and optimism for a brighter future. In this context, the achievement of migrants is contingent upon the cooperative and kind disposition of the host community. Furthermore, the establishment of a sense of coherence plays a significant role in shaping the identity of migrants inside their host countries.

## **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

Prominent literary figures hailing from South Asian nations, like Bharati Mukherjee, Kiran Desai, Mohsin Hamid, Nadeem Aslam, Jhumpa Lahiri, Khalid Hosseini, and Muhammad Hanif, have documented the phenomenon of a hybridized existence experienced by diaspora writers in their individual literary works. A contradiction has been shown in relation to the living conditions experienced by migrants in both their imagined homeland and the host country. Migrants are faced with the task of reconciling and reconciling their memories of their previous identities, which are shaped by their origins, while simultaneously being required to embrace and assimilate new experiences in the host country. Bhabha critically examines the concept of identity in his seminal work, "Location of Culture" (1994). The author perceives the displacement of migrants as a constructive circumstance, serving as an intermediary or "Third Space" where the opportunity arises to redefine one's sense of self.

Diaspora authors can be classified as those who migrate from their nation of origin to a host country, motivated by either push forces, as previously discussed, or pull causes. These writers, likely belonging to the diaspora or migrant communities, have likely encountered circumstances such as homelessness, isolation, and a sense of nostalgia towards their origins. In the contemporary era characterized by post colonialism, the field of diaspora studies has emerged as a prominent topic of discourse, notably in relation to South Asian literatures written in the English language. The discourse surrounding the concept of identity has been continually ongoing for nearly nine decades. Diaspora studies primarily centers on the question of migrant identity, elucidating the multifaceted nature of their identities through several dimensions such as linguistic diversity, geographical factors, religious affiliations, and the blending of their native and adopted cultures. Since the attainment of independence by India in 1947, the Indian diasporic population has undergone a process of self-construction and assimilation into their host countries, resulting in the formation of a distinct identity. Diaspora writers engage in the creation of encounter narratives or dialogues that explore the pluralistic dimensions of existence, including the interplay of languages, cultures, thoughts, and individuals. Homi K. Bhabha refers to this complex situation as 'hybridity'. The concept of hybridity refers to the amalgamation of many elements of identity, cultures, or other facets of existence, wherein they coexist and operate in a dual manner rather than being purely or exclusively singular.

### **Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist***

A comprehensive examination of the text "The Reluctant Fundamentalist" authored by Mohsin Hamid is undertaken, employing the theoretical framework previously mentioned. Changez exemplifies the concepts of mimicry, hybridity, and ambivalence. The literary work explores the interplay of diasporic negotiations between the country of origin (Pakistan) and the receiving country (America). The

aforementioned statement highlights the distinct civilizational, social, and cultural disparities that exist between the First World and the third world. This study examines the concept of diasporic suspended identity and elucidates its evolutionary, developmental, and escalating nature when confronted with disruptive events. There is also skepticism regarding the diaspora's genuine allegiance to either the host country or their country of origin. Against the backdrop of the September 11th terrorist attacks, the matter of cultural distinctions and the sense of self among South Asian Muslims and Arabs underwent a multifaceted metamorphosis. According to Redfield (2007), the events of 9/11 have afforded U.S. policymakers the opportunity to initiate a surge of aggression against any perceived 'Axis of Evil' since the autumn of 2001 (p. 55). The main character and other individuals were previously regarded as admirers of America, but they have now been portrayed and categorized as "terrorists and fundamentalists" within the prevailing colonial narrative. This characterization has subjected them to immense suffering due to the oppressive tactics employed by powerful entities and institutions, such as the state apparatus. The present analysis aims to investigate and comprehend the process of identity change, namely the shift from a pro-American orientation to a non-American perspective, as well as the transition from a non-American stance to an anti-American position, sometimes referred to as "radical fundamentalism." This inquiry examines the underlying forces that significantly influence the formation of new identities. The focal point of the textual study revolves around the themes of discrimination and marginalization, as well as the phenomenon of Othering. Specifically, the text examines the Othering of minority groups, particularly Muslims, based on their ethnic and religious backgrounds. Furthermore, the discourse centers its attention on topics such as American imperialism, multiculturalism, interculturalism, and transnationalism.

**Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland***

The concept of diasporic identity emerges from the assimilation process between the cultures of the homeland and the host land, with its identity being shaped by the presence of differences or pluralism. These variations occur due to the individual's unique perceptions throughout the process of assimilation. Jhumpa Lahiri, as a writer of the diaspora, explores the complexities of a multicultural culture from both internal and external perspectives, as she navigates the search for her native identity while adapting to her new environment in the host country. Individuals have the capacity to assimilate into the host country, adopting its socio-cultural norms, while also encountering a sentiment of longing for their Indian heritage and sensitivities, resulting in feelings of alienation and displacement. The novel portrays Subhash and his wife Gauri as two diasporic identities, both of whom were born and raised in India. Despite being raised in India, individuals in their twenties often choose to depart from their home country and thereafter reside in the United States for the remainder of their lives. The protagonist, Subhash, exhibits a strong attachment to his native culture while progressively adapting to the new cultural environment in his relocated setting. In this particular area of the city, there existed various hotels where one may potentially partake in the consumption of whiskey or beer, and engage in casual conversations with unfamiliar individuals. In order to suppress the memories of his parents' behavior and the hurtful remarks made by Gauri, the individual sought to forget these experiences. The citation provided refers to a specific page range (134-135) from the novel "The Lowland," published in 2013.

Gauri, the second character, through a similar experience to Subhash. Upon Gauri's arrival in America, she gradually acclimates herself to the unfamiliar cultural milieu. Within a relatively short period, she rapidly assimilates the cultural aspects of America and successfully adapts to the American way of life, thus opting to forgo traditional attire such as the sari in favor of more Westernized clothing such as jeans. The majority of the remaining Indian women were observed donning saris. However, despite her choice of attire consisting of jeans, boots, and a belted cardigan, or Gauri's awareness of her distinctiveness may have been influenced by the presence of those others. According to Lahiri's novel, "The Lowland" (2013: 206),... The aforementioned quotation provides evidence of Gauri's sense of pride in her self-representation. She appears to have distinct characteristics compared to other individuals from India. The individual residing in the United States holds the belief that there is no cause for apprehension, as they possess the capacity to freely articulate their thoughts and opinions. This newly assumed persona engenders She exhibits increased levels of courage and positivity. The individual in question has disassociated herself from her prior identity, perceiving it as a constraining force upon her.

The concept of "nativeland" refers to the land that is inherently and historically connected Likewise, on a particular occasion, she found herself in a scenario where she was scheduled to be

collected by a chauffeur for the purpose of attending a lecture, although the driver failed to arrive. The individual mistakenly perceives her as a domestic worker and so instructs her to notify the proprietor of the residence about his presence. On one occasion, she was extended an invitation to do a presentation in San Diego, and thereafter, she was provided transportation by a chauffeur. The university had dispatched a vehicle to alleviate her from the task of driving. Upon his arrival, she extended a warm greeting to him. The door was opened when the bell was rung. However, the driver had failed to recognize the fact that when she greeted him with a "good morning, the woman in question served as a passenger to the individual in question. He had erroneously identified her as the individual employed to facilitate the opening of a different individual's door. Communicate with her. He stated that he will be prepared anytime she is ready. The citation provided refers to a specific page of the novel "The Lowland" published in 2013. This demonstrates that the Indian Diaspora in The Lowland does not merely ignore their culture in the host land, but rather relinquishes it.

## **CONCLUSION**

It can be inferred that the information provided supports the notion that diaspora writers originating from Third World nations have effectively provided a platform for marginalized migrants to express their experiences and challenges associated with the intricate process of relocating from their country of origin to a new host nation. Expatriate authors craft compelling narratives that explore the process of reconstructing the identities of migrants. The expatriate writers are perceived as engaging in a process of negotiation between historical and contemporary contexts, as well as between their nation of origin and their adopted homeland. In essence, individuals exhibit a sense of disconnection from their country of origin while concurrently forming a limited sense of connection to their adopted nation. Notably, they concurrently acquire cultural understanding from both countries. This study examines the challenges and experiences faced by migrants in South Asian English fiction. The study posits that migrants encounter both opportunities and obstacles throughout the process of migrating. Migration has been observed to yield positive outcomes such as enhanced quality of life, more opportunities for self-expression, and significant cultural interchange. However, it is important to acknowledge that migration can also give rise to challenges related to personal identity and feelings of longing for one's place of origin.

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