

Liminal Identity and In-Betweenness in Diasporic Literature

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Abstract

The influence of diasporic literature on literature throughout the globe is immense and transcends linguistic boundaries. Actually, any belletristic work written by a person residing outside of their home country but including tropes and themes relevant to their hometown is called diasporic literature. Elements fundamental to this literary style include a sense of estrangement, displacement, nostalgia, and the quest for one's true identity. Uma Parameswaran, an Indian poet, dramatist, and short story writer, argues that immigrants go through distinct stages. "First is one of nostalgia for the homeland left behind, mingled with fear in a strange land." One important thing to keep in mind is the generational divide among Indian diasporic writers. The older generation, like Jhumpa Lahiri, has a vibrant and modern nostalgia for India, while the younger generation feels wistful and regressive looking back. This generational divide is explored in *The Namesake*, which will be discussed in a few pages. It is worth noting that Jhumpa Lahiri sought to portray diaspora as a mixed blessing. Her characters purposefully strive to maintain family bonds while navigating the cultural norms and ways of life of their adopted nation, which their children have inherited, but it becomes a heavy burden for them. As a result of this study, we now have a better understanding of the Occidental Culture/Oriental Culture dichotomy that Lahiri examines in *The Namesake*, especially during Gogol's time at Maxine's house.

Keywords: Liminal, identity, in-betweenness, diasporic, literature

Introduction

The distinct and different qualities of India are equally divided and united by multiculturalism, which has become a problematic aspect in the country. The variety of India has always been admired by the global community due to the fact that it possesses unique and indigenous features in several domains, such as geography, language, culture, history, and politics. While simultaneously expressing micro and macro-level identities, the introduction of foreign influences challenges the essence of nativity, which has a history spanning centuries in terms of the culture and lifestyle of the people in the nation. Native and foreign cultures and ways of life are quickly merging due to the growing impact of globalization. Foreign powers' colonial interests, both voluntary and forced, had already begun to amalgamate with the land and its people, leading to a greater deviance from the naturally inherited culture and way of life, long before technology progressed and the Western world's possibilities were gradually expanded through globalization. Although, generally speaking, the idea that the diaspora is impacted by the host country's influences is widespread. The diaspora's focus changes from their home country's culture and traditions to the host country's, as they become more immersed in the unique characteristics of their new home and as time passes. Depending on the variables that influence the diaspora's

capacity to adjust to new circumstances, this integration process could be slow and steady. A lack of clarity on the projected identity in non-diaspora contexts has resulted from debates and discussions centred on the preferences of home country citizens, whether such preferences lean toward the foreign or their local culture and way of life. This study paper explores the current position of Indians who are not diaspora, who live inside their own country and are equally impacted by national and foreign cultures. It does so while keeping in mind the transformation that is seen in the diaspora population. Amidst the known and unknown impacts of colonialism's legacies and Westernization's growing influence in society due to globalization's myriad possibilities, the study analysis centers on the numerous aspects that shape their identity. The driving force behind this research is to uncover whether Indian residents, like those in the Indian diaspora, find themselves caught in a state of flux, where they are neither fully embraced by nor completely detached from their native culture and way of life. This, in turn, alters the essence of their identities. Salman Rushdie's discussion of diaspora is pertinent in this setting. "The past is home, and my present is foreign," he expresses. The cultural part of the country views its citizens as foreign, while the traditional aspects of culture, which were mostly authentic in the past, are disregarded as the true home. A feeling of estrangement from inherent and genuine cultural identity has developed throughout time as a result of colonial imperialism, its ongoing dominance, and the more profound impacts of globalization(Berry, John , 1997 p. 23).

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Elements fundamental to this literary style include a sense of estrangement, displacement, nostalgia, and the quest for one's true identity. Uma Parameswaran, an Indian poet, dramatist, and short story writer, argues that immigrants go through distinct stages. "First is one of nostalgia for the homeland left behind, mingled with fear in a strange land." The second phase is characterized by low levels of creativity due to people's preoccupation with settling into their new surroundings. In the third stage, diaspora members actively shape their own life by addressing ethnocultural concerns. In the fourth, they've made it and are actively involved in national politics and affairs. In terms of nostalgia, immigrants frequently feel offended when they visit places that remind them of their old lives; hence, emigration and nostalgia are sorrowfully intertwined. That "they continue to relate personally or vicariously, to the homeland in one way or another, and the existence of such a relationship importantly defines their ethnic-communal consciousness and solidarity" is William Safran's hypothesis. And as Stuart Hall puts it, "this New World is constituted for us as a place, a narrative of displacement, that it gives rise so profoundly to a certain imaginary plenitude, recreating the endless desire to return to lost origins, to be one again with the mother, to go back to the beginning." All of this stems from emigrants' innate desire to return to their motherland. Next, he poses an intriguing question and wonders, "Who among us has not felt, right now, the tidal wave of profound homesickness for distant origins, for bygone eras?" (Berry, John , 2006 p. 22)

The symbolic, the reservoir of representation, the endlessly renewable source of desire, memory, myth, search, discovery—basically, the reservoir of our cinematic narratives—begins with this return to the beginning, which is similar to Lacan's imaginary—it cannot be fulfilled nor requited. The author's vivid visions greatly influence diasporic fiction, which relies heavily on recollections. In other words, these writers often blur the boundary between reality and their imagination, creating two universes that are inherently at odds with one another. In addition to missing home, immigrants work hard to uphold native cultural norms and customs in their new home. In the first generation of diaspora, these endeavors are more obvious and concrete than in the second, who have a stronger propensity to blend in with their chosen country and a far weaker impulse to adhere to the traditions and culture of their home. To put it simply, the first generation is rather particular about maintaining their ways of life in many areas, including food, clothing, reading, and communication (Bhabha, Homi K., 1994 . p 32)

Curiously, though, these people's descendants do not carry on their legacy. A former English professor at Himachal University and a well-respected writer and critic, Jaiwanti Dimiri asserts: For many reasons, second-generation immigrants from developing countries find the expatriate experience challenging. For this new wave of immigrants, who were born and raised abroad, expatriation is more of a figment of imagination than a reality. Unlike previous generations, they do not suffer from the common symptoms of homelessness, existential rootlessness, loneliness, or angst, but their plight is far more dire. Victimization and social exclusion persist despite their efforts at integration and acculturation.

Because of this complex situation, immigrants often experience a condition known as "double consciousness," in which they feel a sense of disconnection from both their home nation and their adopted one. The comment by Lois Tyson, who argues that colonialism's forced migrations exacerbated the problem of "Double consciousness, which often produces an unstable sense of self," deserves our attention. A person cannot be considered homeless if they are unhoused. Being "unhomed" means that you are experiencing a psychological refugee status due to your cultural identity issue; you are not at home anywhere, even in your own home. "In post-colonial societies, the rediscovery of this identity is often the object of what Franz Fanon once called a 'passionate research...directed by the secret hope of discovering some very beautiful and splendid era whose existence rehabilitates us both regarding ourselves and others, beyond the misery of today, beyond self-contempt, resignation and abjuration,'" Stuart Hall stated. Considering this phrase, diasporic literature tells the stories of people who live in a place where they don't belong. One of the first people to study diasporas, Avtar Brah, holds:

A house is... One the one hand, for diasporic people, home is a fantastical, idealized concept. This makes it a homecoming spot, even if it is feasible to go to the actual location that is considered the starting point. However, one's house is also an aspect of one's community. Through the medium of historically particular everyday social connections, we experience its noises, odors, heat, dust, pleasant summer evenings, and gloomy grey sky mid-day. To rephrase, it's the ups and downs of daily life that define culture; for instance, how much more bearable it would be to endure a chilly winter night in a mansion with a crackling fireside

than it would have been to endure it huddled around a makeshift fire on the streets of nineteenth-century England(Brah, Avtar. , 1996 p. 23)

Postcolonial Identity Evolving Hybrid of Native and Colonial Cultures in Predicament Liminal Space

According to Tyson, "many post-colonial theorists argue that postcolonial identity is necessarily a dynamic, constantly evolving hybrid of native and colonial cultures." This liminal area, inbetweenness, fosters a hybrid identity as a result of their plight. True, immigrants face the triple whammy of estrangement from their children, their new home, and their ancestral place. Not only that, but the list of famous diasporic writers is endless: Seamus Heaney, T. S. Eliot, W. H. Auden, Sylvia Plath, Ezra Pound, V. S. Naipaul, Kiran Desai, and countless more. And it's not just one region of the world; every country has its own unique diasporic writers who tell stories about the struggles and triumphs of diaspora. Knowing Safron's precise definition of "diaspora"— "expatriate minority communities which have dispersed from an original center to two or more peripheral or foreign regions, to people who retain their myths about their motherland and feel alienated in the new land"—is apt. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, "the movement of the Jewish people away from their own country to live and work in other countries" is the definition of "diaspora." Though it began in the 17th century, the exodus from India really took off in the 19th and 20th centuries (Caesar, Judith. 2007 , p. 23)

However, many Indian emigrants were disheartened and saddened to find that their adopted nations were almost identical to their home countries in terms of poor pay, persecution, and prejudice, much like their home countries. Consequently, these repressed Indians who had emigrated to the United Kingdom formed a rebel group to oppose British control in India, which they dubbed Ghadar. In his suspenseful 1997 book *Maluka*, Punjabi nationalist and independence activist Sadu Singh Dhami described the exodus as follows: "a novel respect of this life in exile was added in the postindependence era in India when abundant people in the sixties and seventies started to move towards advanced lands of their own volition either to refrain from the political or economic hardships of their motherland or to study as experts," a phenomenon that Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak refers to as a "braindrain." This tendency of international migration has persisted in subsequent years. Note that emigrants often feel dislocation and a lack of belonging regardless of their motivation for leaving. No matter how hard they try, they will always be seen as foreigners in new cultures.

Objectives of The Study

1. To study on Process of inclusion gradual and time consuming to control the diaspora's ability to adapt to changing situations.
2. To study on Linguistic In-Betweenness: English as a Global Language

Emergence of State-of-The-Art Technologies and The Development of The Humanities

"They can make us perceive and feel ourselves as other," as Stuart Hall has sadly argued. Embracing the fringes of most civilizations, they will navigate complex emotions of longing, ambition, and bewilderment. This "mythic place of desire in diasporic imagination" is the

homeland that these exiles long for, and the in-between condition that they find themselves in is a heavy burden. Among the most significant challenges faced by immigrants in a new country is the overwhelming sense of isolation that often accompanies it. This is especially true for diasporic characters, who often feel unwelcome in both their adopted home and their homeland as a result of leaving their roots behind. As a result, even when surrounded by others, they may still feel lonely and disconnected from reality. Prior to the 20th century, people paid little attention to some of humanity's most fundamental needs, including those pertaining to identity, subjectivity, community bonds, and nation. But these ideas have become enormous with the rise of cutting-edge technology and the progress of the arts and sciences. Therefore, for immigrants who end up living nowhere, the search for identification takes on greater significance. In other words, diasporic works inherently deal with the problem of identity, and factors like language, cuisine, clothes, and culture make it worse. "Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference," Stuart Hall argues in his work on diasporic identity.

We tend to underestimate how opaque and complicated identity may be. Identity is not something that is ever finished; rather, it is something that is always being constructed inside representation rather than outside of it. Perhaps we should reframe identity as a "production," rather than an established reality that new cultural practices just reflect. The word "cultural identity" claims to be authoritative and authentic, yet this viewpoint casts doubt on that assertion (Dimitri, Jaywanti 2000 , p 45)

Given that the present study intends to examine a diasporic book written by an Indian, it would be instructive to be familiar with the works of Indian writers who have contributed to diasporic literature. Renowned writers from India's diaspora include, among many others, V.S. Naipaul, Jhumpa Lahiri, Sam Selvon, Cyril Dabydeen, Marina Budhos, Dean Mohamed, and Sammy Selvon. One important thing to keep in mind is the generational divide among Indian diasporic writers. The older generation, like Jhumpa Lahiri, has a vibrant and modern nostalgia for India, while the younger generation feels wistful and regressive looking back. This generational divide is explored in *The Namesake*, which will be discussed in a few pages. It is worth noting that Jhumpa Lahiri sought to portray diaspora as a mixed blessing. Her characters purposefully strive to maintain family bonds while navigating the cultural norms and ways of life of their adopted nation, which their children have inherited, but it becomes a heavy burden for them. Lahiri leans toward the idea that a third space might emerge when two cultures collide, and that this space wouldn't be so bad for the diaspora—after all, it could give them great opportunities to learn about politics, social graces, family relationships, and more from the locals they interact with on a daily basis (Hall, Stuart , 1996 p. 34)

There are two subsets of Indian diasporas in the US: first, those who were born in India but have emigrated to the US for whatever cause, and second, those who were born in the US. The fact that their ancestors were born in India ensures that they are still considered to be of Indian descent. Most people in the United States assume that members of the Indian diaspora are well-off, urbanites who have overcome the language barrier with relative ease. This is because Indians were formerly a colony of the British Empire and thus learned and

internalized English. Indians began migrating to the United States in large numbers in the early twentieth century, beginning in 1904. You may be aware that the Ganguli family's relocation to Massachusetts in 1968 is the major focus of this research, which mostly addresses the wave that started after 1965. It entices well-educated people who want to be better off socially and intellectually in America. Here are a few of Bharati Mukherjee's seminal diasporic books that stand in stark contrast to Eastern mores and customs and urge readers to question their own values: *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1999), *Jasmine* (1989), *Darkness* (1992), and *The Tiger's Daughter* (1971).

Linguistic In-Betweenness: English as a Global Language

Direct and indirect attempts by non-Indians to impose their culture and way of life disrupted the widespread practice of Indian multi-identity and multi-cultural practices. During the political and economic conquest of India by the East India Company, Lord Macaulay noted the necessity of training a new generation of Indian interpreters to mediate disputes between the colonizers and the more morally and intellectually inclined native population. The tone of his speech comes across as,

We may let that group work on improving the country's vernacular languages, adding scientific terminology derived from Western nomenclature, and gradually making them more suitable for communicating with the general public (Leyda, J. 2011. P. 51)

Decades after India gained its independence from colonial and imperialist powers, the vernacular features of the country's culture and way of life are still being refined. An excellent illustration of its dominance is the widespread usage of English even in native mother tongue conversations. According to the definitions, code-mixing happens when two languages are used to create a third language, with features from both languages combined into a pattern that can be defined structurally.

There is a severe lack of etymological correspondence in many regional languages. Substituting the commonly used English term for the required position makes the discussion easier to

comprehend and utilize. The likelihood of devaluing the appropriate usage of regional languages is further increased by the widespread tendency of individuals mixing languages. The Indian language Hinglish is a good illustration of this kind of code-mixing and code-switching as it incorporates elements of both Hindi and English. The interviewers requested that the 24 participants speak in their native tongue for the course of the interview. Rather of maintaining monolingual Hindi throughout the chat, they managed to include 18.5% English. Words like "bike," "switch," "mobile," "bus," "phone," etc., do not exist in the regional language's everyday usage. It has now become the de facto language of all Indians, regardless of social position, and it has contributed significantly to cultural shifts as a whole (Nayer, P.K , 2015. P. 56)

Discussion

As previously stated in this thesis, Ashima has a sense of inbetweenness while in the United States. To paraphrase, she finds it extremely difficult to adapt to American culture and

practically impossible to let go of her past. It is evident from the following passage how mired down in her history Ashima is; to rephrase, it's as if her physical body is in the United States, but her spirit is in her native Calcutta: She uses her hands to determine the Indian time. She stops in the middle of the third rung on the brown ladders etched onto the backs of her fingers after hitting each one with the tip of her thumb: half past eight in the evening, nine and a half hours ahead in Calcutta. The servant at Marie's parents' Amherst Street apartment is currently setting out a tray with Marie's biscuits and pouring hot cups of after-dinner tea. Her mother, who will soon be a grandma, stands in front of her vanity mirror, fingers tangled in her waist-length hair, which is still more black than grey. Ashima hosts parties for her Indian friends in the US and is a staunch adherent of Bengali traditions, but she also makes an effort to understand and appreciate American culture. Some of her accomplishments include learning to drive, working in a library, going grocery shopping alone, and befriending American women (Pal, Adesh Chakrabarti , 2004 p. 67). According to Bhabha, "a double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority" (imperialism), and Ashima's attempts to assimilate into American culture represent this idea. Gogol was allowed to load up the cart at the grocery with products that he and Sonia enjoy, but not them: hot dogs, tuna, mayonnaise, and cheese slices that are individually wrapped. They get cold meats from the deli for Gogol's lunches, and Ashima cooks bologna or roast beef sandwiches first thing in the morning. He begs her to give in, so once a week she whips up an American meal—either Shak 'n Bake chicken or Hamburger Helper with ground lamb—for him as a pleasure. Reminding readers of the 'hybridity' that arises at the junction of two cultures, her struggles to adapt to American culture and her strong desire to maintain the family's Bengali heritage are remarkable. The result is that hybridity poses a challenge to colonial representation and individuation by allowing previously "denied" information to into the dominant discourse and undermine its foundational norm of recognition(Parmeswaran, Uma , 1998 p. 34)

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The protagonist, Ashima, in this excerpt, returns to the Northeast in the spring and summer to spend time with her son, daughter, and close Bengali friends; this lack of a permanent home is another theme prevalent in diasporic literature, which follows characters who also struggle with an unstable sense of identity. As her name suggests, she will be a resident of both the

worlds— everywhere and nowhere at the same time. For Ashima, "feeling too old to learn such a skill, she hates returning in the evenings to a dark, empty house, going to sleep on one side of the bed and walking upon another," the worst part of being trapped between two worlds gradually becomes estrangement. The reader who is astute will notice the connections between Gogol's experiences in *The Overcoat* and *The Namesake*. A poor copyist named Akaky Akakievich Bashmachkin is the hero of the novel *The Overcoat*. He works tirelessly, yet nobody in his department appreciates him. After donning his new overcoat—created by a drunken tailor named Petroviech—Akaky undergoes a profound transformation, becoming an enthusiastic clerk who is well-received by his coworkers. This transformation sets the stage for the story's captivating climax. Similarly, after changing his name, Gogol's identity and character go far away from his Bengali roots in Lahiri's novel. For example, he has a string of exciting relationships with Ruth and Maxine that elevate his life from its dull previous condition. But because these connections don't lead anywhere, Gogol is confused, and his cultural identity is affected again and time again throughout the story. This unease is outlined by Judith Caesar, an English professor at the University of Sharjah, who argues that "the novel is much more an elucidation of the causes and meaning of that confusion, which comes not only from having a multiple cultural identity, but from some of how people in modern American society tend to view identity." The protagonist, the son of Gangulis named Gogol, is the primary theme of the narrative (Prakesh, M. , 2018 p. 11) In *The Namesake*, the protagonist, Gogol, endures terrible hardships in his quest to establish a relationship between his name and his identity. The story behind his name needs to be unraveled. According to Bengali traditions, Ashoke was waiting for his son to be blessed with a good name. In the meanwhile, he decided to give his son the name of a famous Russian novelist named Gogol. The mysterious motivation behind this decision was that Gogol miraculously survived a train crash by clinging to a page from a short story called *Overcoat*. Ashoke gave his baby the name Gogol to honor his own rebirth or survival, but Gogol sees it as a monstrous killer who has stolen his joy during his formative years. He prefers to be called an American rather than an Indian, but his name gets in the way. It's like a heavy burden that makes him feel self-conscious. To elaborate, he begins to isolate himself from the

world and from other people since he believes his name isn't grand enough and doesn't belong in either India or the United States (Rushdie, S. , 1991 p.34). Noteworthy, to illustrate the depth of his humiliation caused by his name, he begins to feel concerned when his English instructor, Mr. Lawson, asks the class to read Nikolai Gogol's *Overcoat*. Nonetheless, not a single one of his fellow students gives a hoot about this group. Warmth radiates from the nape of Gogol's neck to his cheeks and ears, as stated by the narrator. He silently cringes every time the name is said. None of this has ever been shared with him by his parents. While Mr. Lawson continues to talk, his clumsy handwriting covering the board, he glances around at his pupils, who appear unconcerned as they faithfully write down the facts. Anger at Mr. Lawson hits him out of nowhere. He feels deceived in some way.

Conclusion

At its heart, this diasporic novel revolves on themes of isolation, displacement, longing, and the search for one's true identity, as discussed throughout this research. The second

generation of diaspora, which includes Ashoke and Ashima, makes a far more noticeable and tangible effort to maintain their traditions and native cultural codes than the first. The first generation is more inclined to assimilate into their adopted country and is remarkably weak when it comes to conforming to their origin culture. Through Gogol's remorse for changing his name, marrying Moushumi, and choosing to read the literature that his father, Ashoke, had earlier suggested, the data also shows that the second generation shifts from assimilation to integration. It should be mentioned that emigrants are caught in a whirlwind of feelings, not belonging to either their home country or their adopted one. This is called "double consciousness," and it manifests itself in the fact that neither their home country nor their adopted one welcomes them with open arms because they've left their roots. As a result, these characters may feel isolated, even though they have someone by their side, which helps to explain their sense of detachment from the world around them. As a result, a liminal space is created—the in-betweenness—that gives rise to a hybrid identity. Lahiri hints that this meeting of cultures could create a third space that isn't bad for the diaspora—a place where they can learn a lot from the people they're close to, whether it's about politics, family relationships, culture, or anything else. In contrast to his wife Ashima and son Gogol, Ashoke finds it easier to adapt to the new circumstances brought about by migrating, as is mentioned throughout the article. As the story opens with her getting about to give birth to her son, Gogol, this difficult circumstance becomes quite clear. Emigration is more challenging for women; in other words, Ashima becomes a victim of emigration when she marries Ashoke and loses her subjectivity. Her attempts to adopt American culture while still strongly wanting to hold on to her Bengali family's heritage demonstrate Bhabha's mimicry and hybridity, which arise from the meeting point of two different civilizations. Going back to Bhabha's "mimicry," we see that Gogol tries to change his name so he can fit in with American cultures, but in the end, it just makes him feel more alone. Lahiri examines a binary opposition—the Occidental Culture/Oriental Culture—in *The Namesake*, especially during Gogol's time at Maxine's house. This research has also

illuminated that topic. By unfairly focusing on some parts of Indian culture, Lahiri has painted a number of negative pictures about the country.

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