

**LITERATURE OF DIASPORA – AN AMBIVALENT CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONALISM****DR. PRADNYA K KALE**Associate Prof. Of English,  
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Auranagabad**PRAJAKTA K KALE**Assistant Professor Of Law,  
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Sonipat, Haryana.**ABSTRACT**

*Nationalism as a concept can be analysed through myriad dimensions and contexts. In this paper we analyse nationalism through multiple lenses of globalization, multiculturalism and decolonization. The term “diaspora” can be used as theoretical framework to critique the concept of pure and fixed home, place and notion. Diaspora writers used the term ‘diaspora’ to interrogate the hegemonic nationalist construction of home, space and cultural and national identity. The literature produced by Diaspora writers- Amitav Ghosh, Bharti Mukherjee and Salman Rushdie signifies the exploration of the possibility of redefining the Nation in their individual way. This has proved immensely popular in western literary criticism and the critical theories established by Derrida, Foucault, Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall. Literature of diaspora examines Nationhood as a socio-political, cultural construct in the post colonial perspective. Diaspora writers historicize their existence in today's world without dismissing the impact of colonialism or understanding the threat of neo-colonial projects.*

**Keywords:** Nationalism, Globalization, Diaspora, Liminality, Post-colonialism

Globalization and multiculturalism are common concepts in the fast moving modern world. Globalization has accelerated free trade, new technologies of communications, information and increased capital flows which eventually have resulted in forcible or voluntary movement of people, commodities, ideas and cultures across the world. The recent years have been witnessing an amazing spur in Diasporic studies that have emerged as a strong and subtle way of expressing and exploring oneself against the background of physical, psychological and cultural dislocations. Over the past decades, the concept of Diaspora and Transnationalism have served as prominent research lenses through which one can view the aftermath of international migration and shifting of state borders across populations. Changes in the world since 1989 have refocused attention on the displaced person, the Diaspora and the people dispossessed and separated from their identity and their history. Diaspora is not new: it has its root in history and religion. Diaspora is an old concept whose uses and meanings have undergone dramatic change. Older notion of Diaspora refers to forced dispersal and this is rooted in the experience of Jews, but also more recently of Palestinians. Newer notions of Diaspora often refer to any kind of dispersal. Older notion of Diaspora implied that its members do not fully integrate socially—that is, politically, economically, culturally, into country of settlement. This notion of Diaspora is also often associated with boundary maintenance by a dominant majority through discrimination against Diaspora groups. Newer notions of Diaspora emphasize cultural hybridity in the wake of dissemination (Bhabha 1994) which owes something to the wit and wisdom of Jacques Derrida.



When the people cross the national boundary and enter the other nation, their language and culture are transformed as they come into contact with other language and culture. Writers living abroad live on the margin of two societies and people who live on the margins are creating cultural theory. Literature of Diaspora raise questions regarding definition of “home” and “nation”. “Where are you from? To which country you belong?” Answers to these questions are ambiguous today. In the age of globalization, the concept of “nation” has to be redefined with reference to the theory of Hybridity and Multiculturalism. Oxford Dictionary defines the nation as: “a country considered as a group of people with the same language, culture and history, who live in particular area under one government” (1017). The meaning of nationalism according to same dictionary is: “the desire by group of people who share the same race, culture, language, etc. to form an independent country.”(1017)

The ‘nation’ is a western concept. In the west, nation was product of the disintegration of feudal hierarchical social order almost coinciding with the Enlightenment Project. In this project, the nation formation led to domination, exploitation and occupation of the other that is colonization. Europe reaped the harvest of crop of its nationalism and colonization until it encountered its ugly manifestation in the form of World Wars. European humanism was shocked to see the consequences of its misdeeds as these wars were fought to a good extent in its own courtyard and neighborhood. The western notion of nationalism has been decried by scholars from the West and also by scholars from the rest of the world including India.

The Indian concept of ‘rashtra’ has altogether different meaning. The ‘rashtra’ is a geophysical entity, a psychic and physical reality with unique pluralism whereas nation as a ‘solidarity of interest’ or ‘community of interests’ proposes homogeneity- one language, one literature, one religion with one entity. According to Avadesh Kumar Singh, ‘rashtra’ is:

“a federal concept based on *chakra* that has many spokes with circumference and center. All these spokes are equally important, as they constitute the *chakra*. In a *chakra* some spokes may become old and be replaced but it has to go on. In the process of its motion certain spoke goes up and opposite one bears the burden. Then the other opposite one goes up. (...) In the Greek mythology, Zeus is the central God but his Indian counterpart Indra is not always the central God. In the Vedic discourse, the Gods are many but without any hierarchy among them.”(Singh-278)

This plurality without hierarchy is different from the Western pluralism that retains hierarchy in practice and principle as well. According to Homi Bhabha:

“Nations like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind’s eye. Such an image of the nation or narration might seem impossibly romantic and excessively metaphorical but it is from those traditions of political thought and literary language that the nation emerges as a powerful historical idea in the West. An idea whose cultural compulsion lies in the impossible unity of the nation as symbolic force.”

Homi Bhabha shifts the focus of Nationhood to culture, from historicity to temporality; a hybridity, which cannot be, contained either in hierarchical or binary structure. Bhabha questions the historical certainty and settled nature of the term ‘nationalism’. The focus of temporality provides a perspective on:



The disjunctive forms of representation that signify a people, a nation, or a national culture: It is neither the sociological solidity of these terms, nor their holistic history that gives them the narrative and psychological force that they have brought to bear on cultural production and projections. It is the mark of ambivalence of the nation as narrative strategy – and an apparatus of power- that it produces a continual slippage into analogous, even metonymic, categories, like the people, minorities, or ‘cultural difference’ that continually overlap in the act of writing the nation. What is displayed in this displacement and repetition of terms is the nation as the measure of the liminality of cultural modernity. (Bhabha -1994)

Ambivalence is the precondition of the national culture. Idea of the nation as an autonomous and sovereign is questionable. The structure of cultural liminality of the nation – space would ensure that no political ideologies could claim transcendent or metaphysical authority for themselves. According to Bhabha, Nationalism has to be understood by aligning it not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which as well as against which it came into being. In Hannah Arendt’s view, the society of the modern nation in the modern world is “that curiously hybrid realm where private interest assume public significance and the two realms flow unceasingly and uncertainly into each other like waves in the never ending stream of the life-process itself” (Bhabha 1994)

Homi Bhabha describes the formation of Diasporic literature in *The Location of Culture*:

What is politically crucial is the need to think beyond narratives of imaginary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural difference. (Bhabha 1994)

In *The Location of culture*, Bhabha observes how ‘difference’ disturbs hegemonic discourses, which discriminate and exercise their power over the suppressed. But Bhabha also points out that from the point of view of suppressed cultures, ‘difference’ forces a confrontation, an opposition and brings out resistance. The Diasporic writers constantly intervene the dominant culture and interrogate their own culture to carve their own root in new culture. Thus hybrid identities are born. According to Foucault, liminality of the nation space removes the threat of cultural difference. The great contribution of Foucault’s last published work is to suggest that people emerge in the modern state as a perpetual movement of the marginal integration of individuals. Foucault raises the ethnographic question ..... ‘What we are today?’ (Foucault-1988) to the west itself to suggest that the ‘reason of state’ in the modern nation must be derived from the heterogeneous differentiated limits of its territory. It is this location or “in-between” space which has turned in an advantage to Diasporic writers. The new subjectivities, new identities which are produced in this space are liminal and hybrid.

Literature of Diaspora is an explorations of contemporary histories- Western and subcontinent and contemporary societies that are in the state of transition. Writers’ today are rewriting history from the perspective of nation’s margins and migrant’s exile. Almost all literary fiction today is cultural functions which are written from the affective experience of

social marginality from fragmented, displaced agencies and from the perspective of the edge. The address to nation as narration stresses on political power and cultural authority in what Derrida describes as the 'irreducible excess of syntactic over semantic'. The Deconstruction theory introduced by French philosopher Jacques Derrida has helped me to configure the term nation/alism in the modern context. As it is difficult to answer- what is nation?- it is equally very difficult to answer the question- what is Deconstruction?(even for Derrida) M.H. Abraham defines it for us:

Deconstruction as applied in the criticism of literature designates a theory and practice of reading which 'subvert' or 'undermine' the assumption that the system of language provides adequate grounds to determine the meaning of a text.(Abrams-2000)

Deconstruction generally tries to demonstrate that any text is not a discrete whole but contains several irreconcilable and contradictory meanings; that any text therefore has more than one interpretation. Deconstruction is a technique of de-sedimenting the text in order to allow multiple possible interpretations of the text. The most crucial aspect of Deconstruction is its concept of 'Aporia'. An 'Aporia' is state of the possible-an affirmative state where multiple choices are made and discourse is freed from the bondage of explanation. As nation is not homogeneous, unified, words are merely 'traces' or indicators of meaning. Deconstruction is an approach which can be deployed in philosophy and any other field along with literary analysis.

Mikhail Bakhtin also stressed the multi-layered nature of the language which he called heteroglossia. According to Bakhtin, writing of any length inevitably contains the carnivalesque- the expressive, random, individual viewpoint. Language may be saturated with ideology, but it never represents the one, monolithic viewpoint. The society of modern nation is heteroglossal in which different identities connect with each other and become hybrids. Diaspora has multiple homes. They have affinity with various countries they belong. As they belong to many countries, their patriotism is not confined to one country. Transnationalism is the process of deterritorialization. As Diaspora communities transcend geographical and political territory they do not need nation/alism, they are a citizen of a global /transnational world. They have multiple consciousnesses. These floating citizens are changing the history of modern nation. Ernest Renan in his essay "What is nation"? Tries to define nation:

Man is a slave neither of his race, nor his language, nor of his religion, nor of the course of rivers, nor of the direction taken by mountain chains. A large aggregate of men, health in mind and warm of heart, creates a kind of moral conscience which we call nation. (Bhabha- 1994)

Renan believes that uniformity and homogeneousness of nation is myth. Nation is always and will remain ambivalent. The literature of Diaspora is an attempt to produce an act of re-inscribing, of revising and hybridizing the settled discursive hierarchies by constructing third space beyond existing political, social and cultural binaries: it is a space of evaluation.



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