

A Brief Diasporic Articulation in the Novels of Four Indian Male Diasporic Writers

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Abstract: Indian diaspora is one of the major diaspora of the world. Diaspora means uprooted community who are living abroad and longing for their home land. Originally the term diaspora referred to the Jewish diaspora indicating the dispersal of Jews from Israel back in the sixth seventh century BC. Latest Indian diasporic writer are articulating their strong voice in the world.

Keywords: Diaspora, Articulation, Inheritance, Indentured, Negotiating, Migration, re-location.

Originally the term 'diaspora' referred to the Jewish diaspora indicating the dispersal of the Jews from Israel back in the sixth-seventh century B.C. and later in the second century A.D. from Jerusalem. Then from 200 A.D. to 900 A.D., there was large scale migrations between different countries for trade and people moved from one country to another for better prospects. Propagation of religions also became one of the important motives of migration. Colonial period witnessed migration due to war, slavery and imperial subjugation. People from colonized countries moved to other colonies as indentured laborers. The colonizers also captured the Africans and Indians and transported them as slaves. During the cold war era, people from Third world Countries became refugees in the UK, the USA and the other European countries. In postmodernist age, migration is mainly prompted by economic interests. The new diaspora in recent times generally hails from skilled professionals and upwardly mobile people. Indian diaspora is one of the major diaspora of the world.

There are many Indian diasporic writers but for my research M. G. Vassanji, Rohinton Mistry, Farrukh Dhondy and David Debydeen are considered the most important of them.

M G Vassanji was born in Kenya and raised in Tanzania, now a citizen of Canada. The focus of Vassanji's work is the situation of East African Indians. As a secondary theme, members of this community later undergo a second migration to Europe, Canada, or the United States. Vassanji examines how the lives of his characters are affected by these migrations. Vassanji looks at the relations between the Indian community, the native Africans and the colonial administration. Though few of his characters ever return to India, the country's presence looms throughout his work; his novel *The Assassins Song*, however, is set almost entirely in India, where it was received as an Indian novel. Vassanji is concerned with the effects of history and the interaction between personal and public histories. Public history is memory and folk history, as well as colonial history, all three of backdrop for much of his work. *The Gunny Sack*, *No New Land*, *Amrika* and *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* are the most important novels of Vassanji.

The Assassins' Song celebrates the rich spiritual heritage of our country. Physical and mental wreckage cannot destroy the spiritual powers both of Karsan and the Shrine. When Karsan's parents are dead and the shrine lies unclaimed, unattended, in ruins and his brother Manor has taken the militant course. On returning to the Shrine Karsan tries to take care of his younger brother Mansoor who has joined the militant group. Karsan's inner strength works wonders. He cannot sleep for three nights and is shocked at the savagery that is let loose in the village. He hears numerous stories of woes from the survivors at the relief camps. The conditions are at the lowest ebb. There is no prayer call from the mosque. But

Karsan's presence soon strengthens the confidence of the people. On the fourth day the singing of *ginans* resumes. Mansoor is brought back by the imam of the Mosque and Karsan takes the place of his father.

Most of all, the novels of Vassanji recognise that a cultural or religious inheritance is not a birthright; it must be practiced, like a song or a prayer, if it is to refine the crudeness of the world into beauty. The return to the roots of Karsan is due to his mystical spiritual strength and his eternal bond to the culture of his country. They in a way prove that their roots are deep and that wherever we are our culture still prevails over the forces of disparity, it dominates our lives and our umbilical chord never gets dissociated.

Rohinton Mistry, born in Bombay in 1952 migrated to Canada in 1975. He is keenly aware of his community's predicament. His fiction, therefore, may be said to depict ethnic atrophy syndrome. He captures in his writings the life and struggle for survival of Parsi community.

It is also true in case of Rohinton Mistry leaving India behind is his own choice for better perspectives in life. At the same time being a Parsi, the historical experience of double displacement imbibed with the author's sense of identification with an alienation from his new and old homelands. The recollection of memories is one of the ways of expression in diasporic writing. The expatriate builds a cocoon around herself/himself as a refuge from cultural dilemmas and from the experienced hostility or unfriendliness in the new country. However, Mistry has overcome the difficulties of human relations between people with different cultural identities. It is his art of balancing the mythical and realistic mode of his writing that helps him in recovering his past in a new land. *Such a Long Journey*, *A Fine Balance* and *Family Matters* are the novels by Rohinton Mistry.

Mistry's first novel *Such A Long Journey* was awarded Governor General's Award in Canada and the Commonwealth Prize in 1992. The novel not only problematizes the Parsi Diaspora in Indian context but also projects his anti-colonial resistance. In '*Such A Long Journey*', a large rhythm of patterns of empowerment and modes of resistance has been carved out through the lives of the central character Gustad Noble and his family.

The backdrop of the novel *Such a Long Journey* deals with the historical movements such as : partition of India and Pakistan, 1962 Indo-China war, falling of Nehruvian dream of a secular India, scam of sixty lakh rupees during Indira Gandhi's rule, and 1971 Indo-Pak war giving birth to Bangladesh. Along with the historical events as its setting and background, the novel is more of inward voyage of the chief characters, inhabiting in the Khodadad Building. In this particular novel the writer employs images and symbols more decisively for the reconstruction of his past memories. It is commonly agreed among critics that *Such a Long Journey* largely deals with the marginalization of the Parsi community.

A Fine Balance consists a lot of paradoxical situations, which move the reader to deep pity and even draw tears from one's eyes. However, with the help of an alternate reality the writer seems to make his best efforts to balance the critical life of each of his characters. Mistry confronts, interrogates and challenges the authoritative voice of history. The main symbolic significance of the novel is that life is a struggle in which a courageous individual may win a moral victory against the difficulties and problems of existence. The novel upholds the integrity, dignity, and invincibility of the human mind. The superficial study of the novel makes it difficult to find out nostalgia, but the in-depth reading confirms 'a fine balance' between memory and desire, myth and reality, internal and external reality. The novel, in fact, highlights a crisis of balance where one character is identical with another in his/her struggle and capacity to survive. They retain a collective memory, vision, or myth of their marginalized group - its traumas, sufferings, and struggles and collectively share the efforts of balancing their lives in their different specific ways. The narrative depicts reality of the multi-ethnic groups in the society and their misfortunes and hardships seem exaggeration for those who do not have sensitivity to feel their pain and agony.

In *Family Matters*, Mistry weaves the lives and memories of one Parsi family into a novel of humanistic dignity, as individuals kick against decay; the decay of flesh into death, the decay of family into death, the decay of surrounding morality, and the decay around and head of us in time. He is succeeded in maintaining 'a fine balance' between scepticism and affirmation, faith and bigotry, family nurture and control, and once again given something absolutely painfully pleasurable, a bitter sweet rendition of life in its most ordinary intimate setting. The title's obvious double entendre speaks not only of the duties and responsibilities, the matter of a family's workings, but also of how many family matters to us.

David Debydeen's first novel, *The Intended* the story of a young Asian student abandoned in London by his father, won the Guyana Prize for Literature. *Disappearance* tells the story of a young Guyanese engineer working on the south coast of England who lodges with an elderly woman. *The Counting House* is set at the end of the nineteenth century and narrates the experiences of an Indian couple whose hopes of a new life in colonial Guyana end in tragedy. The story explores historical tensions between indentured Indian workers and Guyanese of African descent.

Farrukh Dhondy was born and brought up in Poona. His first novel *Bombay Duck* is a diasporic novel with several cross cultural identity. The novel is divided in two parts. The two principal narrators of *Bombay Duck* are a black English man, Ali Abdul Rahaman and the Parsi Xavasxa. In the first part the novel gives us the story of strange family, life of Rahaman whose wife is in love with a Pak weapon supplier. The greatest moment comes when David Steam choose him to play the role of Lord Rama in his dream project, a stage adaptation of the epic `the Ramayana`. In the first part of the novel, the focus is on India's rich cultural heritage and a messy present of communal tension and riots. Dhondy criticizes Rahaman for treating Indian culture as a commodity for commercial purpose.

In the second part, the Parsi protagonist Mr. Xavasxa's involvement in the international traffic in babies is a serious offence from criminal point of view. The novel ends with Mr. Xavasxa's retrospecting as he counts his days for deportation to India. In this part Dhondy explains the rituals, customs, and various ceremonies of the Zoroastrian religion. From thematic point of view the novel presents a harmonious blending of country with Parsi community. His focus does not remain on one particular point of the novel but he deals with culture, religion, communal disharmony, politics, child smuggling, Parsi theatre, sex, religious fundamentalism and overall Parsi ethnicity. In this way Dhondy highlights the voices of the Parsi ethnicity by mingling the East and the West.

Farrukh Dhondy might resist being, in his own words `typecast as one of the multi-cultural writers in Britain,` this has remained one of postcolonial Britain's most powerful and recognizable voices. Always concerned with the complexities of race and identity politics, Dhondy has sought to portray Britain as a melting pot in which characters see the same events from different social and racial perspectives. A marked theme is Dhondy's notably positive reading of the nature and future of race relations. Racism, he argues, is "not historically important," but rather a `cultural outbreak` in the overall structure of society. And what might be termed a post-racist outlook shines through in the warmth of his best works. *The Siege of Babylon*, *Bombay Duck* are the novels of Farrukh Dhondy. The nature of the diaspora depends on the nature of the host country. Diasporas, despite their common origin, may behave in a totally different manner depending on the country of their re-location.

Diaspora Literature produced by Diaspora writers of such diversity as M G Vassanji, Rohinton Mistry, Farrukh Dhondy and David Debydeen explores problems and possibilities endangered by experience of migrancy and diaspora life. In the process of engaging and negotiating notions of history, identity, gender, cultural and racial purity, the works of these writers graphically portray their purity; the works of these writers graphically portray their ethnic, cultural and religious situations.

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