

Prominent Writers of Indian Diaspora: A Bird's Eye View

Showkat Hussain Dar

Research Scholar, Glocal University Saharanpur, (U.P.)

The diasporic writings in English are apparently produced by persons of Indian origin who are currently residing outside their home country. The Indian diasporic writers are dispersed throughout the globe, and are found in different countries such as Canada, Trinidad, Australia, Malaysia, America, Africa, Fiji, Britain, Germany, Spain and France. The renowned Indian personalities including M. K. Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Sarojini Naidu, Jawaharlal Nehru and to name a few expressed themselves in English with ease and command. But all these persons returned to India after their short stay in the West. The diasporic writing proper has, however, a worldwide context; and it includes writers of both old and new generations, who have left India and settled abroad. Expatriation is the subject that has been dealt with by number of Indian and Asian writers like V. S. Naipaul, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Bapsi Sidhwa, Allen Sealy, Micheal Ondaatje and Ruth Praver Jhabwala. The brief profile of eminent Indian diasporic writers is discussed in the following pages.

V. S. Naipaul

Sir Vidiadhar Surajprasad "Vidia" Naipaul, popularly known as V. S. Naipaul, is one of the distinguished contemporary diaspora writers of Indian origin. Besides being a novelist par excellence, he is also a short story writer, essayist and travel writer. His genius was duly recognized when he was awarded Nobel Prize for literature in 2001. The rootlessness/dislocation is a profound subject matter prevalent in almost all of Naipaul's writings. His works such as *A House for Mr. Biswas*, *An Area of Darkness*, *India: A Wounded Civilization* and *India: A Million Mutinies Now* depicts acute sense of anxiety born of displacement.

Salman Rushdie

Salman Rushdie is a celebrated postmodern English novelist and essayist from India. He won Booker Prize for his tour de force work *Midnight's Children* in 1981. The protagonist of this novel Saleem Sinai is portrayed as a troubled and fragmented soul for he suffers from a sense of identity crisis. Rushdie's works are primarily concerned with the treatment of history, religion and migrations between Asian and Western civilizations. His writings beautifully reflects how exiled and emigrants are caught between the native tradition and foreign culture.

Kamala Markandaya

Kamala Purnaiya Taylor famously known as Kamala Markandaya is a very popular Indian English novelist. She has number of novels and short stories to her credit. Her well known novels are *Some Inner Fury*, *The Nowhere Man*, *A Silence of Desire*, *Two Virgins*, *Possession*, *The Golden Honeycomb*, *A Handful of Rice and Nectar in a Sieve*. In Markandaya's writings one can observe that inasmuch as one has roots one survives. If one's roots are deformed or injured one expires. The conflict between tradition and modernity or foreign culture and native culture, East and West and the quest for self are the popular themes of her works.

Amitav Ghosh

Amitav Ghosh is a well-known Indian English fictional writer of our time. His novels mainly belong to the genre of historical fiction. He won Sahitya Akademi Award for his 1988 novel *The Shadow Lines*. Racism, nostalgia, isolation, cultural shock and dislocation are the major problems expatriates experience in the foreign country. His works particularly *The Circle of Reason* and *The Glass Palace* beautifully describes these problems of diasporan people. One important feature of his writing is that he is an internationalist i.e. he disowns the theory that culture is rooted in a single place.

Agha Shahid Ali

Agha Shahid Ali, a bosom friend of Amitav Ghosh who pays tribute to him in his work "The Ghat of the Only World", is an illustrious Kashmiri-American poet and translator. His poems through and through exhibits the pain and trauma diasporic experience brings in an alien land and the yearning for his homeland. *The Country Without a Post Office*, *The Half-Inch*

Himalayas, Call Me Ishmael Tonight: A Book of Ghazals, Rooms Are Never Finished, and In Memory of Begum Akhtar and Other Poems are the most popular poetic collections of Ali.

Anita Desai

Lately, Anita Desai who won Sahitya Akademi Award (1981) for *Fire on the Mountain* has become a diasporic writer of distinction. She is regarded as one of the champions of Indian feminist writing. *Cry, The Peacock, Fire on the Mountain, Voices in the City* and *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* explore pathetically how women are victims of alienation, depression, loneliness in a phallocratic culture. One of the Anita Desai's noteworthy and repeatedly used themes is cross cultural contact between the East and the West and the corollary sense of isolation and exasperation in her female characters.

Meena Alexander

Meena Alexander is considered one of the finest of contemporary diasporic poets of Indian origin. Along with Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni she belongs to younger generation of diasporic writers in America. Her poems are notable for depicting the complex journey of the poet who has shifted from despair and hopelessness to reconciliation and affirmation. *Atmospheric Embroidery, Indian Love Poems, Raw Silk and Illiterate Heart* are her well-acclaimed works of poetry. Meena's *The Shock of Arrival: Reflections on Postcolonial Experience*, a collection of essays and poems, deals with theme of migration, memory, rootlessness, alienation and so on.

Kiran Desai

Kiran Desai is the daughter of globally acclaimed Indian English novelist, Anita Desai. She won the 2006 Man Booker Prize and The National Book Critics Circle award for her widely acclaimed novel *The Inheritance of Loss*. Her writings uphold the fact that exile affects the man socially, economically, culturally and psychologically. *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* is another important novel written by Kiran Desai.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an Indian-American poet, essayist, novelist and short story writer. Like Salman Rushdie, her novels belong to the genre of fantasy, historical fiction and magical realism. Her novels as well as non-fictional works describe the conditions or experiences of South Asian immigrants in America. They also portray the menace of domestic abuse through which women have been going through since ages. *Sister of My Heart, Arranged Marriage: Stories, One Amazing Thing, The Lives of Strangers* and *The Palace of Illusions: A Novel* are some important fictional works of C. B. Divakaruni.

Bharati Mukherjee

Bharati Mukherjee is an outstanding Indian diasporic women novelist. Her almost all fictional and non-fictional works primarily deal with the theme of immigration, multiculturalism, feminine sensibility, identity crisis, racism, conflict between traditional values and modern life exile and nostalgia. Her writings also expose women's silence, defiance, oppression against the order of masculinity, horror of molestation and their love for native culture. Bharati Mukherjee's widely praised novels include *Wife, Jasmine, Desirable Daughters, The Tiger's Daughter* and *The Holder of the World*. *Darkness and The Middleman* and *Other Stories* are her notable short stories. She was awarded The National Book Critics Circle Awards in 1988 for *The Middleman and Other Stories*.

Jhumpa Lahiri

Jhumpa Lahiri is a prominent contemporary American novelist of Indian (Bengali) origin. She won Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for *Interpreter of Maladies* in 1999. *The Namesake* is Lahiri's first novel which was published in 2003. *Unaccustomed Earth* and *The Lowland* are the other two significant books Lahiri wrote till date. She essentially writes about the human condition of Indian immigrants in America. Lahiri's writings elegantly tell us the stories of Indian's in exile, of men and women navigating between the strict cultures they've imbibed (Indian) and the enigmatic New World (West) they come across day in day out. She represents the Indian diaspora stressing on the disturbing sense of dislocation in her writing. She gives voice to the displaced and dislocated. The immigrant psyche is very much pronounced in her works. Her characters are more often caught between the Bengali tradition and new home environment (USA).

In the conclusion, one would like to assert that the aforesaid writers have been the outstanding and evocative voices in the world of diasporic literature. Their delightful novels and short stories are universal in character. These writers through their scintillating prose will everlastingly capture the attention of public/readers in general and scholars in particular.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [1] Anand, T.S. *Literature of Indian Diaspora*. New Delhi: Creative Books, 2004.
- [2] Agarwal, Malti. *English Literature: Voices of Indian Diaspora*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2009.
- [3] Agnew, Vijay. *Diaspora, Memory, and Identity: A Search for Home*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005. Das, Bijay Kumar. *Critical Essays on Post-Colonial Literature*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2007.
- [4] Das, Nigamananda. *Jhumpa Lahiri: Critical Perspectives*. New Delhi: Pencraft International, 2012.
- [5] *Dynamics of Culture and Diaspora in Jhumpa Lahiri*. New Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers & Distributors, 2010.
- [6] Desai, Anita. *Voices in the City*. Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1965.
- [7] Dhawan, R, K. Ed. *The Fiction of Bharati Mukherjee: A Critical Symposium*. New Delhi: Prestige, 1996.

