

## Indian Diaspora: Cultural Ambassadors versus Ethnic Conflicts

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Diaspora is the most emerging trend of this era. It's unique role in international borders and development of Global village shows its significance and value in contemporary period. It's a binary issue and implementation of multiculturalism. Because multiculturalism is the ongoing process to extricate the interculturalism and cosmopolitanism. Dislocation degenerates and there occurs the Diaspora. The entry and exit from one nation to another, the transnationalism, the social connections and discrepancies', the assimilations, adaptations and acculturation all these are the byproduct of Diaspora fervor. Diaspora is the emotional attachment or investment from the home country to the host countries. The presenters of these emotional sensibilities are playing dominant role in the cultural exchange. The emotional sensibility presenters are the cultural ambassadors of India. Yet the ethnic conflicts cannot be denied due to Diaspora Identities, expatriates or immigrants in the Foreign Countries. All these cultural clashes as well as interculturalism are the parallel track of a single train. And this train is a 'Culture-train'. Culture can, do and will do the definite changes in dual communities of Diaspora and aboriginals (expatriates and natives). The role should be played by the emotional Presenters who are none other than the Diaspora writers of India. This particular research paper investigates the dominant Cultural ambassadors in real sense how they spread cultures or adapt the foreign culture regardless of ethnic conflict. So, here the theme of the Conference is worth justified. The title of the Conference 'Diaspora Governance in International Relations: Opportunities and Challenges for India' here opportunities are the Diaspora texts when they spread Cultural diversity means the cultural ambassadors do and challenges means the texts arouse the Ethnic conflicts when they denote the truth courageously with moral strength.

**Key words:** Cultural ambassador Aboriginals, adaptation/acculturation, identity crisis Assimilation, conflicting tendencies.

**Hypothesis of the Research Paper:** It is proved that the Diaspora writers spread the culture and adapt the foreign culture thus these cultural ambassadors are the contributors of Global village but blamed to evade ethnic conflict.

### **Indian Diaspora: Cultural Ambassadors versus Ethnic Conflicts**

This research paper investigates the cultural aspects of the Diaspora literature and its implementation in the foreign regions thus assimilating with the aboriginals or natives yet arouses ethnic conflict somewhere somehow in the course of time. The Indian Diaspora is closely dealing with the manifestation of the expatriate exhibition of creative work and art.

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The creative writers are tagged under the address of cultural Ambassador. These ambassadors are genuinely doing the administrative duties in the sense they really spread the culture. Cosmopolitanism has also developed a contemporary mode of understanding global cultures. Multinational and multicultural sensibility has particular culture travelling to South Asia. There are many diasporas writers seem to be found under the epoch making conflicting tendencies of ethnicity. There are South Asian critics who wrote many themes of cosmopolitanism and cultural relativism. ArjunAppadurai, VinayDharwadker, DipeshChakrabarty and many others have written essays regarding the role of cultural ambassadors and their tie up with ethnic conflicts. The culture can be distinguished and elaborated in Dr. RichaDewani's *A Handbook of Literary Terms*, "Many contemporary critics have added a dose of suspicion, so that culture becomes the bearer of an ideological bias meant to defend it against the foreign, the other. Often nowadays, culture is the key term that dictates the meaning of literary texts: an author's work becomes evidence concerning the culture of its time." (Dewani 94)

Here certain observations are done on a limited range of authors and fiction writers that I mean to say most of them are considered in the train of Culture speakers or culture mouthpieces as well as the conflict evaders. **BapsiSidhwa** had written the novel *Cracking India* which was about the subcontinent of the time of independence from British rule and the subsequent partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan. The story of *Cracking India* was presented and directed under the movie named *Earth*. The movie was directed by Deepa Mehta. The story of *Earth* centers on Lenny-baby, a polio-stricken child whose *Parsi* parents try to shelter her from the

violence of Lahore. The story shows the ethnic diversified conflict that has happened during the partition issues of India. It was the story of *Parsi* community girl living in the Hindu family as an ayah a care-taker of a small child. But later on the story twisted towards the religious riots the whole Lahore is burning under the religious riots and it happened that the story becomes the *masala* for the Ethnic conflict discussion and topic for the South Asian Diasporic Cultural writers. Here I have observed some of the paragraphs of the Original novel *Cracking India* about the religious conflicts of the novel, there is a dialogue between Dr. Modi and Colonel Bharucha,

Colonel Bharucha raises a restraining hand. "No, doubt the men in jail are acquiring political glory... But this shortcut to fame and fortune is not for us. It is no longer just a struggle for Home Rule. It is a struggle for power. Who's going to rule once we get *Swaraj*? Not you," says the colonel, pointing a long and accusing finger at us as if we are harboring sinful thoughts.

"Hindus, Muslims and even the Sikhs are going to jockey for power: and if you jokers jump into the middle you'll be mangled into chutney!"

Wise heads nod—Godmother's, Electric aunt's, Slavesister's—although Slavesister's can hardly be called wise.

"I hope no Lahore Parsee will be stupid enough to court trouble," continues the colonel.

"I strongly advise all of you to stay at home—and out of trouble."

"I don't see how we can remain uninvolved," says, Dr. Modi, whose voice, without aid of mike, is louder than the Colonel's. "Our neighbors will think we are betraying them and siding with the English."

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“Which of your neighbors are you not going to betray?” asks a practical soul with an impatient voice. “Hindu? Muslim? Sikh ?” (Sidhwa 56)

Bapsi Sidhwa was herself coming from a religious Parsi family and as she took shelter in Pakistan and their family had faced the problems and struggles of Hindu Muslim friendships and bonds. Her novel seems to be a bit auto-biographical self-conscious novel of the time. She has got the immense praise from all over the World. According to *New York Times Book Review*

“In reducing the Partition to the perceptions of a polio-ridden child, a girl who tries to wrench out her tongue because it is unable to lie, Bapsi Sidhwa has given us a memorable book, one that confirms her reputation as Pakistan’s finest English language novelist.” (Sidhwa 2)

The other great Cultural ambassador is the one who spread multiple impressions on three cultures. He is **Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul**. He is known to be one of the most controversial writers of the prolific period of time. Naipaul seems to be three impressions on him from Trinidad, British and India. His homeless identity, spiritual isolation and perpetual exile are the reign of supremacy in Naipaul’s work. His work was the doctrine of the social history and documentations about the Politics during the late 1930s and how Trinidad began to change during and after the World War II. Naipaul’s another work *Miguel Street* is a volume of three communities living together in the book. They are the black, brown and Indians. His most predominant work is *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961). This novel discloses the most controversial and unprecedented issue of remaining homeless. If an individual leaves the house, the things happen in different ways and protagonist proved to be powerless and defeated under the

hands of society and public this is well defined in Naipaul’s work. Naipaul’s travel books *The Middle Passage* reflected his keen observations about the life of West Indies life. He scornfully presented and commented the failures and frailties of British Colonial Powers who abundantly ruled over there for a period of time. Naipaul’s *Half a Life* is studied with diasporic concerns and postcolonial perspective by Satish Pradhan. He emancipated in his research about the culture, in *Half a Life* of V.S. Naipaul

In this novel Naipaul presents the anguish and predicament of “unanchored souls” (Nandan 2000:56). Willie’s predicament is that he does not know him well initially. He tries to explore his own self to know his identity. In India or London or Africa he is always the half-man, and therefore leads a half-life only. The book is therefore about the half lives of various people: “In a larger sense the novel points to various predicaments of various half and half people and of people uprooted from a way of life on account of factors often out of their own control. A war, an uprising, a change of government, ethnic hostilities that make people feel threatened, caste considerations are some of those factors.” (Dhawan 100)

The cultural ambassador exemplifies the regional cultural issue of human identity. Any human being is more or less connected with the region where he has born and brought up with. Yet, he/she is prone to feel about that particular region emotionally also. This sensibility annihilates him/her to adapt the host culture and so is the case with region. It seems that their negating behavior abolishing and dismantling the peace between the expatriates and aboriginals is the act of their revolt which is deep down in their psyche. As Sigmund Freud says about *unheimlich* or uncanny which means that unknown or the strange experience of some familiar rather

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than the simply mysterious kind of feeling. Let me quote here the important paragraph of the novel *A House of Mr. Biswas*.

He thought of the house as his own, though for years it had been irretrievably mortgaged. And during these months of illness and despair he was stuck again and again by the wonder of being in his own house, the audacity of it: to walk in through his own front gate, to bar entry to whosoever he wished, to close his doors and windows every night, to hear no noises except those of his family, to wander freely from room to room and about his yard, instead of being condemned, as before, to retire the moment he got home to the crowded room in one or the other of Mrs. Tulsis's houses, crowded with Shama's sisters, their husbands, their children. As a boy he had moved from one house of strangers to another; and since his marriage he felt he had lived nowhere but in the houses of the Tulsis, at Hanuman House in Arwacas, in the decaying wooden house at Short hills, in the clumsy concrete house in Port of Spain. And now at the end he found himself in his own house, on his own half a lot of land, his own portion of the earth. That he should have been responsible for this seemed to him, in these last months, stupendous. (Naipaul 4)

This paragraph emancipates the ongoing process of uncanny in human mind of the character Naipaul himself confessed,

"Of all my books *A House for Mr. Biswas* is the one closest to me. It is the most personal, created out of what I saw and felt as a child" (Sanga 143)

He presented the human aspirations and human absurdity as well as his adherence to the land and region elaborately.

**Badami Anita Rau's** *The Call of the Night Bird* was also touching the ethnic conflicting issues regarding India and Partition of Hindu and Muslim. She had clearly elaborated the

tension and suffering of the Hindu and Sikh community felt while there was an Emergency during 1974 in Delhi and many other places of India by Indira Gandhi. She elaborated the riots Amrutsar massacre and other Ethnic conflicting issues of Communities between Muslims, Punjabiz and Hinduz. The incident of the main characters visit at Amrutsar in the novel illustrates the massacre that had happened in the Punjab during the Emergency levied on by the PM Indira Gandhi.

The diasporic Indo-Canadian writer **Shauna Singh Baldwin** was famous for the cultural transformations and panorama of Pakistan India and Canada. Her novel prescribes the stories of Eastern and Western cultures within the context of women's role and survival. She had given the work of fiction and presented the displacement, exigency and historical engagements in her work. Shauna Singh Baldwin had presented the novel *What the Body Remembers*. Her book won the Commonwealth Writer's Prize. She had presented the story of two women married to the same person and the struggle and conflict between the two women frequently happens to be the part of it. Simultaneously there is another event of partition in India and it arouses the conflict a lot. The story is interwoven in marriages, parties, social gatherings, events of religious riots and all about Indian culture. There is a simultaneous depiction of the underprivileged girls and poor class people.

**Salman Rushdie** the man who no one can forget he achieved the literary genius and who aroused the International notoriety when he created *The satanic Verses*. This particular book is the story of massive protests against the Muslim and the event of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini of Iran to issue fatwa sentencing him to death. It was the most conflicting event of the century that the book

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was banned and even Rushdie himself had to be underground for a certain period of time. Yet, his *Midnight children* won the Booker of Bookers in 1993 and it talked about the signature style and historical re-imagination, hyper activity of language. Meenakshi Mukherjee had rightly reinscribed the case of Rushdie and his ideologies. She said in the edited version of *Rushdie's Midnight's children A Book of Readings*,

In *Midnight's Children* there is a double movement of time. First, the account of the events—both public and private—that brings Saleem to the verge of disintegration, where the novel ends. Then there is the second movement that starts the writing and traces the first movement. It is only because Saleem Sinai apprehends his end that the necessity to write arises. When he was in the middle of things (eg., when he crashlanded in the middle of a language riot) he did not need to reflect upon it, but his marginalization at the end, exacerbated by the impotence of all *the midnight's children*--- except one (Mukherjee 16)

His work *The Imaginary Homeland* is about the literary analysis and political journalism about England India and Pakistan. He is blamed to be the most outspoken in his views and having a strong moral courage. On the whole, the cultural ambassadors the diasporic writers undoubtedly spread the cultures regardless of the borders countries or continents they cross or hail from still somehow they arouse the tension in ethnic conflicts when we keenly nominate some of the sensitive works like Taslima Nasrin's *Lajja*, Salman Rushdie's *The satanic Verses* or Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*. Now, let us discuss the role of these cultural ambassadors how they prove to be the cultural ambassadors in real sense.

#### ❖ Food Culture

❖ The fiction *The Mistress of Spices* is thoroughly conspiring the Indian perspectives and aspects of using the spices and its vernacular impact on human life. The mythological impact of the spices and its combination with the love and life of the protagonist of the fiction Tilo. The way she helped and provided the spices to customers and at the same time she seemed to be the priestess of the secret magical powers of spices. She popularized the spices culture and magical power of Indian rituals and taboos through this novel and the character. Indian customs which are known under Hindu concepts of shukan, apshukun, luck, good luck, all these are delineated in this book and thus it became famous in USA. The spices represent the day to day life and culture of India. The author Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni presented the Indian food culture using the metafiction technique. She emancipated the ancient Indian traditional culture of food and spices using the modern novel writing technique of magical realism. The character of Tilo the *mistress of spices*. She helped and remedied the customers who were in trouble on the contrary when she herself was attracted towards the lonely American, she could not find the remedy to stop or control her desires and she was prone to the sexual appetite and bodily desires. Here is the list of ingredients kept in the store of Tilo the heroine. She kept *turmeric, cinnamon, fenugreek, asafetida, fennel, ginger, peppercorn, kalojire, neem, red chilli, makaradwaj, lotus root, sesame* etc. Tilo expresses her inner psyche when she talked about the Indian food and rich Indian people over there.

The rich Indian rarely speak, as if too much money has clogged their throats. Inside the store which they have entered only because friends said, 'O it's so quaint, you *must* go see

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at least once,' they point. And the chauffeur springs to fetch. Basmati rice, extra-long grain, aged in jute sacking to make it sweet. The finest flour, genuine Elephant brand. Mustard oil in a costly glass bottle, even though sitting right beside are the economy tins. The chauffeur staggers beneath the load. But there's more Fresh *lauki* flown in from the Philippines, and emerald-leafed methisaag that I have grown in a box on the back windowsill. A whole box of saffron like shavings of flame and, by the pound, tiny shelled pistas- the most expensive kind- green as mango buds.(Divakaruni 76)

- ❖ The fiction *Sister of My Heart* is the representation of the actual Bengali middle class people life. Their day to day schedule, way of living, customs, kitchen, recipes, their festivals, rituals, living and enjoying the festivals and basically their food habits and their food what they eat regularly is well described and mentioned frequently in the daily life of characters of Sudha and Anju. There are many incidents that depict the whole menu of the lunch, dinner and other ways how they serve food and what they are habituated to eat. The fiction is about the small town household and the new world of America. The story and household both move between the two worlds of India and America.
- ❖ Her another novel *The queen of Dreams* is the best answer to the American people who are obsessed with the Indian food and drinking habit. The scene of Rakhee's entrepreneur business of TeaPost and her father making many Indian recipe like Kashmiri cha, Singara, red-chutney, coffee, cinnamon peel, banana squash, boiled rice and many other recipes of Rakhi's mother. Rakhi the main character of the novel was quite impressed to her father's cooking different recipes to help her in the Tea-shop. He knew many Indian recipes and these food items are mentioned in

novel by Rakhi and Balwant. The reader either an Indian or Foreigner would certainly feel the taste of these mouthwatering Indian Recipes. Here is the description of a tea-shop where Rakhee worked previously.

"The tea shop was a small one – just a shed, really- at a cross-roads, no more than a few wooden chairs and tables set in front of two large clay firepits. On the first Keshto, the owner manager-cook, boiled tea all day in a large aluminum kettle. On the other, he would cook sweets, stirring the white granuals of sandesh in a huge iron wok until they became a smooth paste, or squeezing the dough of jilebis through a hole in a cloth onto sputtering hot oil." (Divakaruni 168)

- ❖ The collection of short stories named *Arranged Marriage* had the one story *The Disappearance* in which it describes the recipes of India in USA. The story is famous in USA. The heroine main character in the story had a specialty in cooking cauliflower curry, and yet there is an indication of making the food ready without the recipe *hing*. The extra spices and its utility is taken in the daily life of Indians living in USA.

#### ❖ Regional Culture

- ❖ Region plays a significant role in the fictions and the individual is accustomed to his/her geographical location where he is situated in the socio-cultural context. The personality has the hidden influence of the place and the place seems to be the living entity in the lives of human beings. E.g. Badami had presented the importance and impressions of place of Orissa where she is prone to see this. Place plays the Internal role in psyche, culture and emotions. The presentation of place is well described in Rohinton Mistry's *Tales from FirozshaBaag* (1987). This is the story of two lands Bombay and Toronto where description is presented of both places. There are recurrent themes of

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loss, displacement and eternal struggle between home and modern life. The stories of home and homelessness are pictorially defined by his character in the fiction. Even Mistry's work *Such a Long Journey* made the epoch making scene. It was about the Political issue of Indo-Pakistan war during 1971 when Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister.

- ❖ Region plays the important role in the novels of Bharti Mukherjee. Her fiction with a Bildungsroman technique in *Jasmine* there is presentation of dialectics culture and acculturation. The character of Jasmine grows in the bildungsroman way as she is the representation of the duality of culture the fusion of east and west a simple village girl Jyoti to Jasmine and Jane, the Journey of her growth of character from traditional to Urban parallels the down fall of her chastity. Her metamorphosis of many names from *Jyoti* to *Jasmine*, *Kali*, *Jassy*, *Jase*, *Juhane* and Jane shows the dialectics of history, culture and the influence of place on her name. Here is a paragraph from Bharti Mukherjee's *Jasmine*, This was a three-room frame house. He rents out the three hundred acres for hay. We added a new living room with an atrium when we moved in, and a small bedroom when we got word from the adoption agency in Des Moines that Du had made it out to Hong Kong. The house looks small and ugly from the dirt road, but every time I crunch into the drive away and park my old Rabbit between the rusting, abandoned machinery and the empty silo, the add-ons cozy me into thinking that all of us Ripplemeyers, even us new ones, belong. (Mukherjee 13)

#### ❖ Relationship Culture

- ❖ The Indian Diaspora authors are cultural ambassadors in the true sense when they are inclined to subjugate the relationship syndrome on their characters' psyche in their

fictional works. No one not a single character is free to sustain the breaking of relationships anyhow in almost all the diasporic texts. The family bondage, fidelity, and strong emotional bondages are in contrast to the polygamy, mother-daughter relationship issues, and intersexual affairs in relationship as well as in equal genders. Here the scenario changes, the cultural ambassadors adapt the foreignness of the culture and mould their characters to assimilate themselves into the New world either they be the victim of the break ups and ditched off.

- ❖ Lack of parental control in relationship is also found when it is discussed in so called texts of Diaspora. V.S. Naipaul's *Half a Life* the protagonist Willie Chandran was on the adventures between three countries, he moved from India, London and Portuguese Africa the novel divided into three parts whereas it seemed to be the Picaresque kind adventurous novel and the protagonist quest of lust and sexual desire which is the main diasporic characteristic of most of the texts. T. Ravichandran commented in his scholarly paper about V.S. Naipaul's *Half a Life* that was in an edited version of Jaina C. Sanga, Willie runs from one country to another to define and reinvent himself, yet wherever he goes, he is painfully reminded of the country that he came from. His outcast status remains unaltered, and he cannot fully participate in any of his lives in India, in England, in Africa. (Sanga 134)

#### ❖ Garment culture

- ❖ In most of the Indian Diaspora feminist fictions there are depictions of famous Indian traditional Textiles known as Banarasi draped sarees, red Banarasisarees, heavy gold jewellery, wedding garments like *Chaniyacholleiez*, *safaz*, *sharara suits*, *shervaniz* basically worn by Bride and groom

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and yes depiction of the *Hyderabadi silk sarees* frequently worn in Divakaruni's heroines, Badami Anita Rau's heroines and Bharti Mukherjee's heroines in the fictions. The famous Indian tapestry, descriptions of heavy marriage suits loaded with expensive golden jewelry is many times delineated in Indian Diaspora texts. The Foreign women are even enchanted to wear Indian Gujarati, Bengali Sarees of different types.

❖ **Folk Culture** The folk culture, Indian dance as *Bharatnatyam* is mentioned in the fiction *Hero's Walk* of Badami Anita Rau and Punjabi *Bhangra* dances are taken in some of the Punjabi stories of these Indian diaspora writers. As well as the folk dance like *garba* and hindibollywood movie songs are sung and prescribed by the characters in the fictions. As in Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams* there is a song *Mere Sapnoki Rani kab Ayegit* taken from Bollywood movie *Humrahi* picturized on Rajesh Khanna and Sharmila.

❖ **Festival and Religion Culture**

❖ The Indian diaspora is always enthusiastic to present the customs and rituals in their fictions. The rituals like Indian wedding, baby-shower are the concepts and ways of Indian life style and culture which is adapted and represented in the Diasporic texts. Certain movies like *Monsoon Wedding* prescribes the Indian wedding culture how the Indians are prone to do the wedding and take it as if it's a festival of four-five days. Contemporary wedding scenario is different the upperclass society is interested to arrange wedding on a particular resorts and nearby beach areas of sea under the new name of 'Destination wedding' this is mostly found in the NRI groups. The texts of contemporary Indian Diaspora like Bharti Mukherjee's *wife* Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *sister of my heart* and

Badami Anita Rau's *Tamarind Woman* intensify the wedding scenes in the novels.

❖ Thus, Avtar Brah in his *Cartographies of Diaspora* defines the idea of home in two ways,

On the one hand, 'home' is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of 'origin'. On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of a locality (Agarwal 33)

He means to say that the contemporary conditions of transmigration of people, capital, commodities and culture. The transcultural identities are constituted here belonging and otherness is appropriated and contested here in the diaspora space.

**Conclusion:**

The cultural ambassadors either assimilate or dissolve the culture but any how they are absorbed in the Diaspora fervor meanwhile they ejaculate the ethnic conflicts which can be taken as a byproduct of their creative genius.

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