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New Diaspora: Carving a Space Beyond

By

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Research Report

Purpose of the Research

This research aims to explore Diaspora with a new perspective in the present global context and to discuss the seminal elements of new-age migration in the process of recasting the 'New' diaspora. The **Objective** of the research is to survey the newly emerging phase of Diaspora and marking its 'newness' in terms of themes and treatment in the wake of the transnational era of migrants in the selected novels. A subtle attempt is made to differentiate between old Diaspora and new Diaspora, which serves as a background to this study. Transnationalism can be called a revival of Diaspora, and it is emerging with new historical, cultural, and literary dimensions. A culture of multiplicity has emerged with these new aspects, and this project intends to explore the sustainability of such multiple identities or localities or cultures.

The Purview of the New Diaspora

We have often interpreted Diaspora in broader terms of literature written by immigrants revolving around the diasporic motifs of nostalgia, past and memory, home and belonging, seeking identity and nationality. The journey takes us further to a discourse of preserving ethnicity while converting into a cosmopolitan being. This tug of war between

global versus local is also not new, but it has new perspectives with the arrival of new writers and contexts. With the main keyword of the time that is globalization and outlook about Diaspora has undergone a sea change over the many years, relating the notion of the Diaspora with fast pace technology, migratory patterns, and international events that severely impacted upon it in terms of loss and gain. Diaspora has a legacy of displacement. It has travelled a distance from the longing for the 'roots' to the confession and agreement to the fact that migration is a permanent state today. Hence, the new Diaspora encircles the process and idea of human migration as an experience and expression of exploring a broader horizon of space and identity, diasporic double consciousness, the existing uncertainties, and the changing perception of the world.

Like many historical events, the recent tragedy of September 11, 2001, re-challenges world peace with the troubling questions of dividing the world with an 'iron curtain,' remapping the geopolitical sense of belonging and the issue of citizenship. It also gives a blow to a plethora of doubts about them, for instance, unamicable relations, the suspicious identity of immigrants. Hari Kunzru and Mohsin Hamid being representative diasporic novelists of South Asia, question upon the malfunctioning cosmopolitanism of the West that identifies immigrants as an 'other' especially after the 9/11 incident. The select works of the authors above: *The Impressionist* (2003), and *Transmission* (2005), by Hari Kunzru and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) and *Exit West* (2017) by Mohsin Hamid, depict that post 9/11 consequences shake their foundation of faith in coexistence, though, the authors always wish to restore it. Their fiction carries glimpses of the lived human experience.

Primary Sources

Hari Kunzru's *The Impressionist* (2003) and *Transmission* (2005)

Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) and *Exit West* (2017)

Kunzru's *The Impressionist* set in British India in the early-twentieth century, and *Transmission* is a story about an Indian computer programmer in California, covers the span of the developing era of the internet during 1990-2005. The former is a dark commentary about race and identity, which Kunzru drags in terms of multiculturalism. While describing the identity formation of the protagonist Pran, race becomes an essential factor in the novel to impact an individual's identity, and Kunzru reexamines it from a global and cosmopolitan perspective. His second novel, though set in an entirely different time, defines the culture we live in. It narrates the story of protagonist Arjun as a 'cyber coolie' in America of the late twentieth century and changing the shape of his identity in piecemeal. *Transmission*, a seminal work on the migration and nativity issues, critically explores the neocolonial influences on contemporary migrants' lives.

Mohsin Hamid has accepted the human condition as 'forever migrants' in the world concerning time and place, yet he has concerns about the tension between the global and the local. His novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* notifies a consequent change is the perception of Muslim Diaspora after the 9/11 terror attacks. Whereas *Exit West* features human migration, transformations, nativism, and immigrant threats and envisions the world as a transnational space with porous borders, it represents a transnational sensibility in the coming age diaspora. Lives in Diaspora are affected by a continuous struggle between global versus ethnic 'self,' and that makes the new thrust area of studying Diaspora. In the previous work, Hamid kindles the discussion based on the September 11, 2001 tragedy and aftermath upheaval in the U.S. regarding immigrant's status in the nation and the later work, Hamid presents an imaginary war situation and focuses on the war refugees and their plight to be considered.

Chapterization Scheme

The entire research work runs into five chapters. The chapterization is based on the five major chapter model which includes the introduction, review of related literature and methodology, analysis of the selected literary texts, findings and conclusion followed by a list of works cited. The first chapter on the introduction brings out the theoretical framework and the importance of the study and states its objectives and hypotheses. It also includes methodology and limitations. The three subsequent chapters lead the discussion based on the conceptual outline, and the primary texts draw to a close with the chapter as the conclusion. At the end of the dissertation, a list of works consulted i e the Bibliography completes the thesis structure.

- ❖ Chapter 1: Remapping the New Diaspora: Rethinking Transnationalism
- ❖ Chapter 2: Portraying a Myth of Cosmopolitan Space in Hari Kunzru's Works
- ❖ Chapter 3: Shrinking Space for 'Other': Reflections in Mohsin Hamid's
Works
- ❖ Chapter 4: Diaspora at the Crossroads: Coexistence and Precarity
- ❖ Chapter 5: Conclusion: Relocating the 'New' in the Present Diaspora

Synopsis of Chapters

The introductory chapter, "Remapping the New Diaspora: Rethinking Transnationalism," presents a comprehensive research argument regarding the new phase of Diaspora significantly visible after the 1990s and continues to flourish in the twenty-first century asserting migration as a permanent human condition and human identity in flux. The chapter begins with briefly defining Diaspora within a historical- social context. Etymologically the word diaspora has come from the Greek version of Hebrew Bible made from Greek Speaking Jews. The word "diaspeirein" as mentioned suggests, "dia" means

across, and “speirein” means scatter, refers Jewish exodus from the homeland Palestine in 597 BCE, however, in the contemporary context it designates people who either forcefully or voluntarily leave native land and travel to foreign lands to live. With reference to the definitions of diaspora by critics like William Safran, Robin Cohen, Steven Vertovec and others, the Chapter discusses the position of South Asian Diaspora in the colonial period as indentured labourers, explorers and travellers and in the post-colonial period as voluntary migrants. It reports that South Asian diaspora writings have moved from the traditional pattern of discussing marriage, family ties, identity, home, and nostalgia to the multiplicity of identity and belonging.

A significant shift in imagining Diaspora has been noticed in its acceptance of migration as a permanent state of human beings, and this 'new' Diaspora does not seek a fixed abode anywhere, thus marks the 'new' feature of diaspora writings. The older notion of diaspora has a sense of loss of the origin and implies a desire to return. It also believes that cultural and social boundaries are maintained by migrant minority and dominant majority. The New diaspora accepts the impossible return but concerned about continuing the connection of migrants with the homeland. It emphasizes cultural hybridity. The discussion draws attention to the recent aspect of Diaspora, where it stands on the junction of being transnational. The terms have fuzzy boundaries and often interchangeably used. However, Transnationalism refers to the modern migration process after the 1990s studied under the impact of globalization. Transnationalism as a term is a recent engagement. Or, one can say that diaspora today embraces many global phenomena shaping economic and cultural realities. Though the world seems borderless now when money, people and culture ‘flow’ or exchange, it is far from being united which Arujn Appadurai addresses as “disjuncture”. In this respect, it introduces the primary texts that reinforce not only transnational characteristics but also underlines certain flaws with the theory and gives a blow to contemporary hot button

issues, for example, illegal migrants, the impact of the tragic 9/11 incident on migrants from the Global South and all.

In chapter two, “Portraying a Myth of Cosmopolitan Space in Hari Kunzru’s Works,” the discussion thrives attention on the new aspect of the Diaspora with cosmopolitan elements underlining certain flaws with the theory and gives a blow to contemporary hot button issues. Such topics involve the current debate on illegal and legal migrants and their clash with natives. A critical observation of cosmopolitanism in the context of the new diaspora helps us to see two dimensions of this view. On the one hand, redefining diaspora suggests in terms of developing or emerging countries’ economic conditions and makes it beneficial to them. However, on the other side, developed and advanced countries observe this flow of migrants as havoc to them. Critics like John McLeod like to explore the absence and silences of cosmopolitan theory in the context of diaspora. Bruce Robbins mentions about cosmopolitanism from below which suitably analyses the protagonists of both the novels who being an outsider struggle a lot to discover their space and sustain through it.

Chapter Three, “Shrinking the Space for ‘Other’: Reflections Mohsin Hamid’s Works,” relates to the tragedy of 9/11 and the repercussions in the context of non-western immigrants in the western lands. The above novels are an exemplar to survey the discrimination faced by the non-American character of the narrative, which is typically identified as a radical because of his Muslim origin. When Hamid writes back to the most powerful nation of the world, America, he writes with a post-colonial sensibility as well as a citizen of Pakistan. The basis of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is portraying aftereffects of 9/11, which turned the western world doubtful about the immigrants. Out of them, Muslim immigrants were primarily targeted. Being an immigrant ‘other,’ Changez, the protagonist, tries to secure his space among the natives. Hamid’s next novel *Exit West* at once powerfully documents deterritorialization and also draws attention to the present situation of being a

refugee and the problems of their life during the emergency. The history of terror attacks fears natives objecting to the entry of immigrants in the city. This brief introduction of the primary texts helps to locate them in the context.

The next chapter four, “Diaspora at the Crossroad: Coexistence and Precarity,” primarily foregrounds the confusions and contradictions observed in the understanding of the new Diaspora in these works, laid on the foundation of the idea of cosmopolitanism and post 9/11 consequences which by and large changed the perception of the world and gives a new worldview. Based on Hari Kunzru and Mohsin Hamid's representation of migration at a different level, the chapter moves the discussion ahead of explaining the way cosmopolitanism and transnationalism unstable the world society and creates a contradiction. It attempts to explore the new diaspora and discusses some of the primary missing links under the rubric of the nature of world hospitality and difference. Kunzru and Hamid add to the genre of post 9/11 diasporic fiction's transnational and transcultural perspective, which indeed begins a discussion on the intersecting nature of diaspora theory and experience. With this backdrop, the new diaspora arrives at a system of the world in an era of globalization and to reconsider the question of identity and the 'other' in the post 9/11 epoch. The 9/11 afterwards is also a period primarily influenced by the thought of global belonging. In this context, the present-day diaspora discourse also features violence and precarity along with theories of harmonious coexistence. The chapter also interrogates the validity of the Diaspora in the context of post-colonial justice.

Taking together the given chapters, I proceed to the core understanding and findings of the research in terms of the closure. Chapter five, “Relocating the ‘New’ in the Present Diaspora,” traces the reimagination of Diaspora, including the challenging voices. It agrees to the fact that the desire to migrate is almost a human condition now, which is very difficult to avoid. Mohsin Hamid expresses in *Exit West* that “we are all migrants through time” (209),

which is a very pertinent reminder that people keep advancing with time and circumstances. In fact, every one of us is in diaspora. Today, migrants and their accommodation are an engaging debate for almost the whole world. Where nations have to maintain their image as open to others, at the same time, they have also drawn restrictions on hospitality. There are questions raised against the true and false nature of cosmopolitanism, which promises assimilation of outsiders into the vast community on the theoretical ground but also discriminates among them in practice. The 9/11 also drew a significant line between the mighty West and the developing world. Mostly post 9/11, the diaspora has brought a dynamic shift in the broad world perception of the diaspora community. Thus, this 'new' Diaspora does not seek a fixed abode anywhere. It counts the continuous process of shaping the diaspora beyond 'fixity' and marks the 'new' feature of diaspora writings.

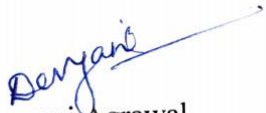
Discourse and Possibilities: Towards Decolonizing Diaspora

The research attempts to take the discourse to the next level. Several issues can be addressed under this purview. Diaspora is not only physically moving out of boundaries, but also it is a great responsibility of academicians to bring out the concept of post-colonial justice associated with that. There are generations of writers dealing with the issue of Diaspora: first-generation diaspora writers have been replaced by second and third-generation writers, and they have been searching the meaning of the term 'lost'; not just its dictionary meaning but related with loss of aspiration, which was to go back to roots. They no longer wish to assert the identity which the first generation wanted to preserve. These new generation writers enjoy their identity in Eurocentric and metropolitan locations. With that, there was a need to go beyond the nations, hence trans-nations. They thought Diaspora is now an obsolete term and popularized transnationalism. Hybridity is celebrated now, multiplicity is celebrated, but for being hybrid, willful amnesia has taken place. There is a Eurocentric migration, and it is like third world migrants have joined the camp of their colonizers.


Announcing the new phase as transnationalism is hiding some of the flaws of the term cosmopolitan. Therefore, this research seeks the possibility to understand it from a different perspective and also suggests opportunities for future research.

Methodology

The methodology employed for the present research is speculative and critical. It is primarily a textual criticism based on the analysis of select texts which examines the primary sources and the milieu. The literary review extends a knowledge base in the field of research. An interpretative and analytical approach to research supports to study transnational diaspora theory through primary and relevant secondary texts. MLA Handbook 8th Edition is referred to for the technical conduct of the dissertation.


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