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Research Papers

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## THEME OF MIGRANCY IN THE WRITINGS OF INDIAN WRITERS.

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### Abstract

*This paper attempts to investigate the themes prevalent in the migrant of Indian writers. Every migrancy movement holds a historical significance, as it carries within itself the kernel of the nation's history. A migrant is filled with adventure and this is opening of new vistas for daily discourse. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines the term migration as "The movement of large number of people, birds or animals from one place to another". Therefore a migrant is a person who moves from one place to another, especially in order to find work.*

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Migration refers to the process of dispersion as it is the movement or scattering of people from their original homelands. The migratory movement takes places out of force or free will. The products of forced migration are those people running away from economic hardships, social/ political persecution and religious discrimination.

The second group is of those who voluntarily move out to other countries in search of a fortune and better prospects. In addition to this, marriage and academic pursuits have also encouraged migration.

Indians, today, are intellectually nourished on the thoughts of V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, Bharati Mukherjee, Anita Desai, Vikram Seth and many others.

Some of the themes of migrancy are identity crisis, displacement, multi-culturalism, alienation, cross-fertilization of ideas, nostalgia and feelings of guilt. Added to this, is the

emergence of new cultural forms, drift towards globalization and hybrid forms of social identity.

The notion of the centre and a home are essentially associated with the term and the images of journey / voyage, displacement seeking roots and finally seeking anchor in alternative homes are evoked.

The immigrants try to construct a home in the host land because there is a virtual break with the motherland.

The physical distance, psychological barriers and the 'not too frequent journey' back home is responsible for this break.

Makarand Paranjape in his work Indian Diaspora states:

"Because a physical return was virtually impossible, an emotional or spiritual renewal was an ongoing necessity. This was done through a process of replication, if not reproduction. (Paranjape 09)

The immigrant writer having exchanged his home for another attempts, at creating an 'alternative world'. He sets to compare both the homes and what he finds is the wide gap between the two. This throws him into a situation of intense dilemma and it is here that the immigrant undertakes a voyage of self discovery. This voyage is aimed at tracing the roots and reclaiming the past.

The immigrant writer experiences dislocation finding himself caught between a flux of opposing cultures and constructing worlds, he tries to negotiate a 'new space' for himself. The creation of this new space is in reality only an attempt at escaping from conflictual situations. His inability at negotiating alternative realities prompts him to begin a process of reconstruction. He is not born into, but acquired.

Another feature, very prominent in the migrant writing is the crisis of the identity construct. This crops up because people have abandoned their original setting. The effect of dislocation and the process that goes on in the rebuilding of one's identity is so intense that it continues to haunt the writer, even after several generations. What the migrant faces at the very outset is a sense of alienation and isolation in the new country. He tries hard to be a part of the main stream culture, but finds himself marginalized.

Many migrant writers voice their encounters with racial discrimination. This element is sharply reflected in the writings of Bharati Mukherjee and Vijay Mishra. When at home, it is the dreams of the western mosaic which prompts the immigrant to change sides. However on arrival in the new land, he finds multiculturalism fading in to the oblivion. A feeling of shame, anger, neglect and desperation overtakes the migrant. This feeling of disgust is brought out very aptly by Meena Alexander when she states:

'In India, no one would ask me if I were Asian American or Asian. Here we are part of a minority and the vision of being 'unsolved' comes into our consciousness.' (Alexander 26,27)

It is the wistful longing for the past which gives rise to the feelings of pain, betrayal and distress.

A mood of melancholy and mourning finds its way into the migrant writings. This is because there is nothing that can substitute the loss of the home. Replacing the original would be tainting its purity and originality. The mourning and melancholy and its traumatic moments go on to

elevate the migratory movements.

Nostalgia or reminiscing the past is yet something that a migrant is engrossed in. Being far away from homeland, he still continues to romanticize her. This aspect however stands as a barrier between the past and the present. The past still lingers in the subconscious of the migrant and these surfaces frequently through his memory. This is stated by Arnold Itwaru who says:

"This sense of estrangement... touches upon the very notion of home, the lands, and the places of our birth. For that land, that region lives in us as a memory and dream defines us as different, that to which we think we belong but no longer do." (Itwaru 202)

There are many questions which come to mind regarding the status of a migrant. However one question that looms large is: Does the migrant suffer from a nagging sense of guilt?

The truth is somewhere down the line the migrant feels that he has betrayed his motherland by going away from her. This is accompanied by an intense sense of loss. This is a sorry state of affair because there is never a near perfect compensation for loss. Few of the writers try to appear to be perfectly content with the new place and the new country, but reality speaks something else.

Every migrant writer turns to his mother land as per his needs. For example, Naipaul, who is twice displaced, voyages the realms of India in order to trace his roots. Bharati Mukherjee focuses on the women migrants their sensibilities and their capabilities at relating to the two homes. She travels homelwards merely to relax and rejuvenate herself. Salman Rushdie seeks refuge in India, its history and mythologies. For creative writers like Rohinton Mistry and Ashis Gupta, it is the memories of home which make them travel backwards in time and space.

The migrant writers explore and redefine themselves through their writings. They intensely give an account of how they feel and what they experience in the new land. The past is rebuilt and renovated in a magnanimous manner. We find a number of logical assertions, philosophical commentaries and confessional statements-all aiming towards the quest for the self.

Right from the Indian exotica to the new genres, the immigrant writers have been experiencing a lot. The global movement of migration has given rise to new narratives. We find an element of creativity in these discourses and it is this creation which compensates for the losses incurred.

A literature being a medium of expression from time immemorial, the writer brings home all the pent up passions and feelings to the reading public. An attempt has been made to revise the history of their homeland and recreate its ambience. The writer expresses his predicament in the new land which emerges out of the forces of the conscience and consciousness. The migrant writers very authentically portray the aftermath of migration. He also reveals an underlying moral purpose, a humanitarian concern and a positive commitment to justice.

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