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Lifelines: Diasporic Writing as an Autoethnographic Narrative

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Abstract

Literature or all pieces of writings is some way or other personal for it reflects the mind of the author or his perception towards a particular subject or entity. Through the narration of the story, the author communicates their idea and desires. An autoethnography, in this form of writing the author fix/, put himself/herself in their writing or accompanying to the subject/character in hand to explore their feelings and personal experience towards wider cultural, political and social context. Taking this into account, this paper attempts to focus on how Diaspora writing is an autoethnography, form of writing wherein an author triggered by consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural. On account of that, the author reconnoitres their personal experience in the culture submissively to look back on self and look more intensely at self-other interaction in the diaspora writings. Diaspora could likewise be considered as an autoethnography work in light of the fact that the diasporic authors constantly express their feelings, emotions and experience, longingness towards their native land.

Keywords: Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Diaspora, Immigrants, Displacement

Introduction

Autoethnography is a way to deal with research and writing that tries to depict and efficiently examine (graphy) individual experience (auto) so as to comprehend social experience (ethno) in order to know cultural experience (*ethno*) (Ellis, 2004; Holman Jones, 2005). Ethno" = culture. "Graphy" = writing. Autoethnography is writing that exhibit the multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the culture, i.e. "self-writing about culture." As such it utilizes personal experience to critically examine/analyze socio-historical impressive narratives and discourses in which we find ourselves embedded. In that capacity, it evaluates both oneself (our own actions and ideas) and social ones. This is something that autobiography doesn't necessarily do. Autoethnographers have written about everything from the familial relationship, the discourses of the identity, and rootlessness. A researcher or a writer uses precept of *autobiography* and *ethnography* to *do* and *write* autoethnography. It shows the authors' perceptions and preferences in their choices of topic, writing style etc. In this form of writing the author fix/puts himself/herself in their writing or accompanying to

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the subject/character in hand to explore their feelings and personal experience towards wider cultural, political and social context. The power of a story to grasping readers' attention lies in the narration of the story or how they communicate their ideas through the narration. Hence, the story can itself communicate the social, cultural or political. Autoethnography emphasizes that the writer explicitly story his/her experiences they go beyond the private and the personal and assume political import. Therefore, autoethnography writing is just solely flaking/shedding light on their overall communication with that plot setting by making their emotion and thought visible to the reader. It can allude to the ethnography of one's own gathering yet in addition to the utilization of personal/individual story in ethnographic written work. In some cases, these two implications cover, however they may not. In the two cases, in any case, autoethnography is a kind that places the self of the researcher as well as narrator inside a social setting. Works of Diaspora could likewise be considered as an autoethnography work in light of the fact that the diasporic authors constantly express their own feelings, experience and their inclination and longingness towards their local land. Being not in their own native land and not encountering their own native traditions and convention or culture, an immigrant confronts the issue of character emergency and social conflict and dependably thinks in the twofold established tree.

Diasporic or expatriate writing deals with native culture, language and identities written by the writers who live outside or away from their native country but their works would be related to their homeland, these writers are frequently lost in thought with the elements of nostalgia as they put themselves in a new place and culture which leads to a sense of loss and alienation. As a result, they started to record/narrate their experience in the form of writing which is labelled as Diaspora. Diasporic writing remains the outsider looking in at the new culture but it is also an outsider to the homeland, looking in at a part of space that has changed in their absence. Indian Diaspora becomes the centre of the stage in the last decade due to the theoretical formulation governed by their works; the Diaspora Indian writing penned by immigrants across the world among the other Diaspora writings i.e. African, Asian and European Diaspora. It is an interesting irony that most of the Indian writing in English is written not in India but in different geographical regions that is the contemporary Indian diasporas in the U.S.A., the U.K., Canada and South Pacific. Bill Ashcroft. Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin consider it as the crucial historical truth and characterize it as a "deliberate or forcible movement of people from their country/homeland into new regions/areas. They consider imperialism/colonialism as the diasporic movement, scattering and settlement of Europeans all over the world" (2006:68). Sathis Georgiadis, the historian contends in his study *The Concept of Diaspora in the Contemporary World* that generally/historically Diasporas are the consequences of relocation/migration since they don't need to be limited by the financial, political and verifiable points of confinement of any state. Numerous writers of Indian origin settling abroad and take on themselves in creating works in the countries of their domicile, although there are some common features in the literary representation of the experience of the writers of the indenture and the new

Indian diaspora, the responses and the narrative of the individual writers differ to a great extent. Writers such as Kamala Markandaya, V.S. Naipaul, Anita Desai, Bharathi Mukherjee, Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth and Jhumpa Lahiri etc.

The diasporic Indian writers' depiction of displaced characters gains vast significance if seen against the geopolitical background of the huge Indian subcontinent. That is accurately why such works have an international readership/circulation and a lasting demand. Naipaul's characters are not ruled by real displacement but by an innate memory of dislocation. For them, their inhabitant/native land is not a geographical space but a creation of the imagination. Their struggles can be explained in Rushdie's words as he remarks; "the past is a country, from which we have all emigrated, that its loss is part of our common humanity." (Rushdie, 1991). They dive deep into the realms of imaginations and the ocean of memory to paint something quite different and distinct from that portrayed/narrative by fellow novelists. The authors of the Indian Diaspora expound on India painting the inconceivability and the complexities of the nation of origin which contains everything in hoards – numerous certainties, various emergency, different substances and this assorted variety is depicted for the people across the world. Works of Anita Desai's *Bye Bye Blackbird*, Kamala Markandaya's *The Nowhere Man*, Bharati Mukherjee's *Wife*, and *Jasmine*, and Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*. In these novels we can find the characters suffering; an emotion which is so depth and extends their sense of displacement. Their writings also focused the positive characteristic of displacement. Through their characters and narrative technique, the authors convinced or make readers feel the realities.

The old generation of Diaspora Indian writers like Raja Rao, G. V. Desani, Santha Rama Rau, Dhalchandra Rajan, Nirad Chaudhari, Ved Metha, primarily look back at India and scarcely ever record/narrate their experiences/personal trauma away from India as expatriates. It is as if these writers have found out their Indianness as if it has hidden when they are out of India. Manifestly, they have the benefit of looking at their homeland from the outside. The distance creates aloofness that is so requisite to have a clear insight into their native land. Gradually, the old Diaspora of indentured labourers is replaced by the new Diaspora of International Indian English Writers exist in the materialistic world. These writers register their experience, trauma away from India and even if they look back at their motherland it is often in a melancholic tone rather than nostalgia. These modern Diaspora Indian writers can be grouped into two different categories. First includes those who have spent a part of their life in India and moved to a different place to spend the rest of their life. The second category comprises people who have been brought up from childhood out of India. They have had a vision of their country only from the outside as an extraterrestrial place of their origin. The writers of the previous group have a realistic displacement whereas those belonging to the latter group find themselves rootless. These writers while portraying their characters in their story or novel examines the theme of displacement, alienation, assimilation, acculturation, etc.

The second generation diasporic Indian writers like Meera Syal, Shashi Tharoor, Hari Kunzru, Sunetra Gupta, Jhumpa Lahiri, etc. have faithfully demonstrated/narrated the lives of both first and second generation immigrants in the US. This is conceivable on the grounds that huge issues like religious segregation and racial narrow-mindedness are never again the primary worry of these writers. What makes a difference now in the present world are the little things. Minimal overlooked things increase gigantic noteworthiness in changed conditions. It is here that the distinctive responses by the Indian, westerns and diasporic characters towards comparable circumstances will undoubtedly vary just obviously. It uncovers that the inward needs of every single person are the same. Now, the diasporic writing deals with more personal narrative autoethnography /self than the earlier works. Writers like Salman Rushdie's *Midnight Children*, Rushdie disguised himself as Salim Sinai, and Nirad C. Chaudari's *The Unknown Indian* where he portrays his own personal life experience and everything, Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*, and Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* are some other works which come under autoethnography writing. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys puts herself in the place of Antoinette Cosway Mason Rochester in order to give voice to the voiceless so-called, "subaltern" and in fact, it is Rhys underwent or experienced a similar kind of identity crisis in her life due to creolization, hybridity and all. Lahiri expressed her own experience and feelings through the character called Gogol who suffered due to the identity crisis and cultural clash etc. Lahiri also experienced the similar kind of situations in her life. As a matter of fact, it is she who just disguised herself in the character called Gogol. The writers put themselves in the place of the character or masked to express their feelings and emotions or their own personal life through the narration of their work. Paul Theroux penned of V.S. Naipaul that he was maybe the main writer today in whom there are no echoes of influence. In spite of the fact that Conrad, another acclimatized immigrant attracted to the dark, unfinished spots of the world, is a great occurrence in Naipaul's work, Theroux was keen in distinguishing how Naipaul has constantly endeavoured to put himself outside ideology/context and away from influence, literary or something else. He said "I come from a small society" and "I was aware that I had no influence in the world; I was apart from it. Also, I appertain to a minority group, I moved away, became a foreigner, and became a writer; you see the degrees of removal from direct involvement". Naipaul's work-*A House for Mr Biswas*, based on childhood reminiscences/memories of his father or in light of the abstract strivings of his father - a novel in the genuine feeling of the word: new, form-breaking, exploratory, a half breed of life account/autobiography, social enquiry, reportage and innovation. Which makes *Half a Life* such astonishment and a delight, Set in India, London and an anonymous African nation that is unmistakably pre-independence Mozambique, that huge gallery neglecting the colossal emptiness of the Indian Ocean, *Half a Life* peruses as a study in rupture and internal exile. Willie Somerset Chandran - cheerfully named after the author Somerset Maugham - is the child of an learned Brahmin who, in a manifestation of Gandhian renunciation, gets some distance from the material world of desire and self-progression to wed the devastated, low-status/caste girl of an

eager radical, 'the torch of the regressive'. As a young man, humiliated by the breakdowns of his father, Willie lands in 1950s London resolved to redo himself through study and writing. He is, just like the young Naipaul, loaded with dreams of the writing life. In any case, his encounters as a pilgrim in the city - firmly educated by those of the young Naipaul himself - are a chain of failures: his first book of stories falls stillborn from the presses, he is not happy in sexual life and troubled by feelings of ill- legitimacy, a 'stranger here with the nerves of an outsider', as Naipaul described himself in *The Enigma of Arrival*, his elegiac pastoral about the post-war decrease of England. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* pursues the life of a child, born at the stroke of midnight as India picked up its freedom, who is supplied with exceptional powers and an association with other children born at the dawn of a different and chaotic age in the historical backdrop of the Indian sub-continent and the birth of the India modern. The character of Saleem Sinai has been contrasted with Rushdie. However, the writer has disproved having penned any of his characters as personal/autobiography expressing, "Individuals expect that in light of the fact that specific things in the character are drawn from your very own experience, it just moves toward becoming you. In that sense, I've never felt that I've written an autobiographical character." In Lahiri's *The Namesake* we might observe how Lahiri veiled/disguised herself in the novel through the imaginary/fictional character called Gogol, the hero of the novel who is born for American Indian parents, Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli who settled in the United States. Here, whatever the character experienced are literally faced by the Lahiri, she has some kind of character issue with her real name and much recognized by her nickname, who was born in London and grown up in South Kingstown Rhode Island and America with mother who wish to bring up her kids to be Indian, she discovered about her Bengali legacy from an early age.

The authors reflect their very self and own experience in the novels through their characters. Some way or another the writers fulfilled their desires or wants through this kind of depiction or self-insightful story style the writers' constantly reflect their own special feelings and experiencing, emotions and dissatisfaction which they couldn't express straightforwardly to the world by using this ace of making the journalists are conveying their mistake and disappointment towards the general public completely through their fictional characters by masking their self. A personal narrative autoethnography a form of writing wherein an author uses self-reflection/replication to reconnoitre their personal experience in the culture submissively to look back on self and look more profoundly at self-other interaction.

Conclusion

Autoethnography is nothing but the author writes their personal experience as a story, in that case, the writings of diasporic literature are autoethnography too for it reflects the individuals/writers experience and their personal feeling and emotions indirectly through their writings. At present, Diasporic writings are more personal and deal with

the writer/ author his/her self (personal life incidents or experience) in a disguised form through their fictional characters which are by some means devastated by the community. We could observe that contemporary diasporic writing turns out to be more personal narratives than the past.

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