
DIASPORA: DISLOCATION, DEVELOPMENT AND DRAWBACK

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Abstract

This study focuses on painful feelings and bitter experiences of diasporas while they are living in the host land. It stresses on their efforts to maintain connections with people in their homeland. Besides, the research talks about diasporas' attempt to assimilate, acculturate and integrate in the host countries in their dislocated and un-homely state. The study also explores the changing attitude of intellectuals, writers, journalists and politicians of host countries towards diasporas, that they have recognized diasporas' positive culture and economic contribution to host societies. Gradually and cautiously host societies and their governments accept diaspora members' affiliations as legitimate and sought for their permanence. Moreover, in some host countries, and in liberal circles, membership of such entities has been regarded as exciting and advantageous but not as an obstacle. Yet, the migrants constantly face criticisms and detriments. They establish networks back in their country of origin and try to influence homeland's politics and sometimes support the violent activities. On top of that, the continued migration and increase in remittances encourage chain of migration and brain drain, and create instability in homeland economy.

Keywords: *Assimilation, migration, permanence, detriments, irredentists, secessionists.*

Migrant communities bear the imprint of diaspora, hybridization and difference in their very constitution.

– Stuart Hall (232)

The imprint of migrant communities are evoked in the experiences and feelings of diasporas who are permanently residing outside their country of origin. These people maintain connection with people in their old homelands. Prima facie, they try hard to conceal their ethno-national origin at the beginning and minimize the importance of their contacts with their homeland. Besides, they try to assimilate, acculturate at least and integrate into their host countries in their dislocated and unhomeliness state. With their hard work, honesty as well as loyalty to the host societies, diasporas have been able to owe the host societies that their previously held negative and skeptical views have been gradually altered.

As a result of the reinvigoration and new assertiveness of the ethnic minorities of ethno national diasporas, the host societies have been compelled to change their outlook, their previous attitude of rejection and indifference toward diasporas. Needless to say, intellects, writers, journalists and politicians of the host countries are acknowledging the permanence of diasporas. They have recognized diasporas' positive culture and economic contributions to host societies. This paper delves into the concepts and definitions of diasporas and their state of dislocation followed by the

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development and drawback that diasporas may herald in both the host land and their country of origin.

Diasporas normally implies physically scattered religious groups living as minorities among other people and faiths. However, between 1970s and 1990s, this definition underwent more elaboration in their boundaries and concepts. Stephane Dufoix claims that the term diaspora, apart from others, applies to professional groups including scientists, intellectuals and engineers and even to French and Nigerian soccer players (1). Yet, diaspora is nothing more than the idea of dislocation and the maintenance of contacts with a real or imaginary homeland. The dislocation may be voluntary or involuntary, and the maintenance and recreation of identification. Robin Cohen agrees:

The destruction of Jerusalem and razing of the walls of its Temple in 586 BC created the central folk memory of the negative, victim tradition-in particular the experience of enslavement, exile and displacement . . . No mercy for him impudence was shown by the Babylonian King, Nebuchadnezzar . . . Jews had been compelled to desert the land promised to them by God to Moses and there after, the tradition suggest forever became dispersed. (3)

Jews were forced to dislocate from their own land and dispersed in a foreign place in a state of affliction, isolation and insecurity having been cut off from their roots losing their identity. (126)

It is obvious that diasporas feel dislocated, isolated and nowhere in an alien land. Jews became the first historic diasporas to have such feelings of being displaced followed by the modern diasporas formed by those who have elected to search for opportunities abroad.

In course of time, diasporas could not be confined to limited definitions and meaning in social sciences. They are to be defined categorically in terms of their type and category Robert Hettlage puts forward three kinds of definitions: Open, Categorical and oxymoronic (24). Nomadic Hunters and herdsmen, ethnic minority groups of migrant origin residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material link with their country of origin, fall under the first category of definition. The second type of definition stresses upon the total population of the country of origin and the absolute number of people who have left their homeland. The last type of definition is postmodern one. It confronts with the beliefs of modernity: reason, progress, universality and stability and dominates with doubts, fragmentation, the end of great narratives of truth and science, racial mixing and fluid identities, dispersion, non-center and hybridity (23)

William Safran's attempt to define diaspora is broad and encompassing. He comes up with six characteristics:

- (i) they or their families dispersion from a centre to at least two peripheral foreign regions;
- (ii) persistence of a collective memory concerning the homeland,
- (iii) certainty that their acceptance by the host society is impossible.
- (iv) maintenance of an often idealized homeland as a goal of return;
- (v) belief in a collective duty to engage in the perpetuation, restoration or security of country of origin, and
- (vi) maintenance of individual or collective relations with the country of origin. (83-89)

Sometimes in the formation diaspora whether voluntary or involuntary, the pull or the push factor is working actively. The following factors are regarded as pull factors : the appealing political and economic condition of host countries, easy access to those countries and weak regimes might attract the migrants . Similarly, certain factors are push factors like migrants are driven out of their homeland usually by a superior force or by harsh social political or economic circumstances, severe drought and famine .

Cohen, in *Global Diaspora* gives some more examples in redefining diaspora. His definition works as supplementary to Safran's view. Cohen argues:

First, diaspora may include groups that scatter for aggressive or voluntaries purposes, including revolutionary minorities struggling for an imaginary homeland as well as those travelling for commercial trade;

Second, diaspora or diasporic consciousness are predicated on a strong tie to the past or block to assimilation in the present and future;

Third, diasporas are defined positively and diasporic consciousness involves a recognition to the positive virtues of retaining a diasporic identity and fourth, members of diaspora characteristically sense not only a creative identity in a place of settlement nor again only a relationship with an imagined putative or real homeland. (23-24)

Diasporas are narrowly connected to the migration of Jews from Israel to all corners of the world. The history was represented through narratives of retribution and loss and often symbolized in European text through the iconography of a wanderer or way farer whom even God had rejected (Mishra: 24) Mishra further argues that in the English language, as cited in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), diaspora came to be a very culture specific term. However, the recent opening up of the word is to signify the lives of any group living in displacement (Clifford: 302).

In the modern era, the study of diaspora has become more open ended field of enquiry less clear cut and no longer principally based on the Jewish paradigm of expulsion and return. It refers to communities of individuals residing and working outside their country of origin usually mediated through family and friends in their homelands. Barbara et al., put forward three trends which are strongly influencing both immigration policy in receiving nations as well as migrants' ongoing relationship with their country of origin. They are:

. . . the brain drain that often results well educated citizens of developing countries who leave for higher paying jobs in a wealthy nations; the increased scrutiny of financial flows in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack in the United states and deepening concern about the perceived intrusion of foreign cultures and values in home countries". (12-13)

Despite all these, the rate of migration has increased during the recent years, especially the migration of better educated citizens from developing countries to wealthy nations. Meyer and Brown write that "approximately thirty of fifty percent of science and technology professionals from developing world are now living in industrialized countries" (12).

The dislocation of communities from their homeland into another geographical and culture region has made them culturally, linguistically and spatially lost. Because of these feelings of loss and isolation, the diasporic communities developed their own distinctive culture to preserve their own

culture. Pramod K Nayar agrees that diaspora culture is the effect of migration, immigration and exile, existed since the arrival of humans on earth" (187).

The diasporic writings capture the invariables of diasporas experience, their state of exile and homeland. The diasporas literature is an attempt to negotiate between these two polarities. The writings of exile immigrants undertakes two moves: temporal and spatial. Meena Alexander says, "diasporic writing is a writing in search of a homeland" (4).

Diasporic literature often projects the consciousness of the communal or racial collective such as Asian American, Non-Resident Nepal (NRN) Non-Resident Indian (NRI) and Black. Diasporic writing is an expression of shared identity of being dislocated and is a principal theme from Caribbean, Asian, American and other countries. What this means is that national ethnic or communal identities are constituted in the absence of a territory. NRN are Nepalese residing outside the political and geographical territory of Nepal. They retain their Nepalese identity now with dual citizenship despite the loss of a homeland. Nepali outside the territory of Nepali claim solidarity with other similar Nepalese despite their differences. In a similar circumstance, Nayar opines that Indian diasporas across the world have unity despite their linguistic, cultural, regional, caste and class background (203).

In the Occasion for speaking the Caribbean novelist George Lamming stresses on the Solidarity of Indian diasporas provided that they are scattered in different parts of the globe. He argues:

What the West Indian shares is a common political predicament: a predicament which we call colonial; but the word colonial has a deeper meaning for the West Indian that it has for the African. The African in spite of his modernity, has never been wholly severed from the cradle of a continuous culture and tradition . . . language of his colonizer which have given him a special relation to the word colonialism . . . (34)

Indian migrants in the West Indies and in different parts of Europe and America have united gradually and expressed their solidarity of the preservation of their culture, language and religion. As Stuart Hall writes, "What we have seen in such a complex relation of solidarity and difference is a process of cultural diasporization.

Sense of exile, nowhere-ness, isolation and state of loneliness have rooted in the heart of diasporas. Rjaagopalan Radhakrishnan captures there above rooted feelings thus:

My eleven year old son asks me, "Am I Indian or American?" . . . agonized over the question of identity through their multivalent narratives. I tell him he is both and offer him brief and down-to-earth definitions of ethnicity and how it relates to nationality and citizenship. He follows me closely and says", I am both. (203)

This sort of dual nationality feeling of insecure and in-between -ness are the prominent features of diasporas. Radhakrishnan's son, a representing personal could be an example passing through these uncertainties for being dislocated. There are many such protagonists who have similar experience of loss and wounds.

Development/Contribution

As noted, the negative attitude of host societies is gradually modified. In host societies new, mutually reinforcing, forces and process have emerged. Diasporas' economic contribution and positive culture have been recognized by many observers. Gabriel Sheffer retorts that many host societies and their government are accepting diaspora members' affiliation as legitimate or at least as tolerable (4). Similarly, migrant's remittances constitute one of the most important forms of financial transfer in their homeland. With the increase in the number of migrants especially of workers from developing countries who are currently working in affluent countries have contributed directly or indirectly in the development of their countries of origin. Both formal and informal flows of remittances hold significant position. David de Ferranti and Anthony J. Ody agree:

. . . formal flows of remittances place. Significant demands on national authorities and financial institutions. . . Informal flows may travel through any number channels from the relative or friend who carries bank notes home on periodic visits to the organized informal sector. One crude indicator of the importance of informal channels is the fact that for some countries recorded remittances through formal channels increased sharply between 2001 and 2003 in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. (56-57)

In sum, diaspora have contributed in the development of the host land through their hard labour, dedication and by providing cultural and linguistic inputs, religious norms and social values. Also, the diasporas have significantly contributed to the homeland through the financial and technical support. (96 words)

On the balance, one of the recurring themes in Mikhail's Bakhtin's work is related to the construction of self and other relationship: society and the individuals, and forces that unify and divide the group, the institution or the society. Bakhtin in Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics, believes that the dialogic battle is between the centripetal and centrifugal forces of language of life. The centripetal forces, the unite and impose norms, regulation and monolingual discourse of dominant social groups, on the other hand, the centrifugal forces interrupt, scatter and create fragments in the unifying forces of language, Bakhtin assumes:

The centrifugal forces are the forces of heteroglossia that stratify and offer multiple fragmentary and decentralized views of the world. The Indian accent and her friends are a great part of the centrifugal forces of everyday life that cause small interpretations and ripples in the normative centripetal forces.

The host societies have realized the sacrifices the diaspora have made for the development of the host country. Hence they on the spirit of centripetal forces so as to make the diasporas feel that they are no more outsiders but a part of host land.

Drawbacks: The Janus Face

Despite the fact that diasporas' role has been celebrated through out host lands as well as their country of origin, their darker aspects are becoming more apparent as well. Like Janus, the Roman God represented with faces each looking in opposite directions, diasporas have shown

themselves to have dual nature philanthropic as well as hostile in both the host lands and the homeland as well. Gabriel Sheffer writes, "Tamil from southern India migrated and settled in Sri Lanka, and those simultaneous migration led to the long lasting ethnic conflict in the island (62-63). Negative effects also stem from overseas networks and flow of ideas. The flow of ideas could be greater than the flow of money. Sometimes these ideas could be equally harmful and may create negative impacts. Devesh Kapur stresses that diasporas are the key drivers of global criminal networks and contribute to increase in crime worldwide and the country of origin.

People in developing countries depend much on the remittances which might fluctuate with a change in circumstances of the host countries. This is because of worsening economic conditions in host countries, shifts in the global work market, dwindling numbers of diaspora members as a result of assimilation and full integration in their host countries, return movements to homelands. On top of that continued migration and remittances will increase homeland's dependence on their diasporas, encourage further chain of migration and consequently brain drain and create instability in homeland economies. Meanwhile, stateless diasporas as well as organized groups of refugees that support irredentists, secessionist and national liberation movements can use the translate networks to transfer the fund.

In Sri Lanka, Overseas Tamil communities are estimated to provide around 80-90 percent of their annual income estimated at nearly 100 million dollars from Switzerland, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom and the USA. The LTTE draws significant financial and political support from more than 250,000 Canadian Tamil community In London, the Tamil Tigers and Groups linked to them have pressed individual families to pay them approximately 3,000 to 4,000 US dollar each. Business owners have been asked from amounts rummaging from 15,000 to 150,000 dollars many are told that is if they do not pay they will face "trouble" when they return to Sri Lanka. Dissident Tamils are subjected to death threats and smear campaigns. (379-85).

On its own no diaspora could over through a repressive regime in its homeland. Yet through the activities of their translate networks, through cooperation with other interested parties and by lobbying in their host countries, diaspora can help foment internal instability and tensions in their homeland and this increases, the difficulties with which such government and rulers have to deal with.

Conclusion

The history of diaspora goes back to the Jews after their temple, their faith was destroyed. They scattered in different parts of Europe American and Asia. In course of time, the number of migrants from Asia, Africa to financially better off countries like the USA, Canada, Australia, United Kingdom increased. The purpose of these migrants was to gain financial advantage, technical skill, knowledge and higher level of research. In turn the merchants and other skilled people from the above mentioned migrant receiving countries started penetrating in the developing countries. They established their own diasporas known as imperial diaspora.

Having found the positive aspect of diasporas, the host societies highlighted their importance and sought for their permanence. They believe that diasporas are not only helping them by their blue coloured Jobs but by providing them cultural and linguistic inputs religious norms and social

values yet, there is another part that is darker, emotional and sublime. Diasporas are accused of maintaining their connections with their country of origin, and finance and support extremist organizations which are more prone to using violence. Diasporas are, further blamed for attempting to influence politics in the country of origin through financial contribution to political parties and candidates where direct participation of diaspora is ruled out.

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