

BINARY ELEMENTS IN POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURES



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Imaginary Homelands of the Expatriate Indian Writers of English

- N. Sangeetha Rani & M. Esther

...When I am in one city, I am dreaming of the other. I am an exile; citizen of the country of longing.

- Suketu Mehta

Expatriate is a legitimate term that has gained significance in Common wealth literature. It deals with Diaspora, emigration, nationality, ethnicity, marginality and hybridity. It signifies the strong feelings about the country of origin for the migrants of first generation. Expatriate writing is the result of globalization and mass migration. An expatriate writer clings to the ethnic identity when he undergoes the trauma of rejection in an alien culture. He focuses on the past, the native country that has been left behind. Salman Rushdie has applied the term 'exile' to both emigrants and expatriates. According to Rushdie, exiles or emigrants or expatriates are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back. But when they look back, because of their "physical attention" from India, they create fiction about imaginary homelands, India of the mind. It refers to the imagination that plays a major role in recalling memories of the homeland. Therefore an expatriate Indian writer living abroad aims at Indianness. His sensibility as a diasporic writer forces him to select Indian sensibility as his theme in his works. A number of Indian writers in English have received international recognition. Their works are well received in the world. They have created a unique form of literature with new themes and diverse techniques in their works.

Expatriate writers can be classified into two types. The first type of writers are people who left their home countries and whose texts dealt with the pain of living in another country. The second type is made up of writers who left their home country voluntarily with a sense of dissatisfaction. The problem with their writing is that there is some kind of ambivalent attitude in their works which expresses their conflict whether to stay or to leave their country. Most expatriate writing delves into memories and nostalgia of the past and their homeland. The 'Mother Country' is always at the core of expatriate writing, the country left behind is evoked with a measure of regret. The list of expatriate or diaspora writers in India is extensive; many writers from various parts of India are settled outside the country and select the themes that are based on Indian context, whereas the second kind of them are born outside India and settled in India. They too select the themes relating to Indian culture, tradition and values. Everything that relates them to their land affects them, and influences them. The traditions, customs, family values, cultural and community rites, relatives, memories every minute detail affects them being away from their home. The feeling of nostalgia, alienation and yearning for 'Home' varies from person to person therefore varies from writer to writer.

The Indian diasporic women writers such as Bharati Mukherji, Ruth Parwer Jhabwala Chitra Banerjee, Anita Rau Badami, Geeta Mehta, Jhumpa Lahiri and Kiran Desai have unveiled the complexities of discrimination, assimilation, social and demographic change, which not only affected the society itself but the lives of the various ethnic groups and the immigrants. The cultural barriers, identity crisis, racism, and violence faced by the immigrant is expressed in all the Diasporic literature. These writers are deeply attached to their centrifugal homeland and are caught physically between two worlds. Their experiences as living in-between condition is very painful and they stand bewildered and confused. In their aim at self-definition and the expression of their expatriate experiences, women from 1970s onwards chose literature to pour out their passions. Diaspora women writers sought to find words and forms to fit their experiences and