

CHAPTER II

The Theoretical Framework of Diaspora

The preceding chapter deals with the postcolonial background and biography of Phillips. After examining the background some questions like: Is diaspora a postcolonial concept? What exactly comprise postcolonial diaspora? Why present literary scenario is occupied with diasporic issues? Is there any fundamental difference between ancient diaspora and present diaspora and their problems? are pertinent ones for the conscious readers. Therefore in the present chapter main endeavor is to discuss postcolonialism and its wide premise, with the special consideration of diaspora in detail.

There are a number of such questions that are in discussions. David Chariandy puts it as:

We are still struggling to develop adequate terms for the profound socio-cultural dislocations resulting from modern colonialism and nationbuilding, dislocations epitomized in the histories of indenture, transatlantic slavery, and the expulsion of indigenous peoples from ancestral lands.

Therefore, the notion of diaspora keeps on producing interest of numbers of scholars in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Number of scholars such as Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, Carole Boyce Davies, Rey Chow, Diana Brydon, and Rinaldo Walcott seem to agree: that diaspora studies will help to forefront the cultural practices of both forcefully exiled and voluntarily migrant peoples. Similarly, diaspora studies will help to undertake certain unchanging supposition about ethnic, racial, and national belonging. In other words, diaspora studies will help forge new links between emergent critical methodologies and contemporary social justice movements.

At first, we will examine postcolonialism and major issues in the postcolonial literature.

2.1- The concept of postcolonialism

One could look at postcolonialism from several angles. It is a means of studying political analysis and cultural resistance that deals with the history of colonialism. It is the study of, interactions between European nations and colonized societies, in the modern period. The so-called new literatures are 'products of change', refers to the rescue of native and their histories freed from the European ideologies and representations. (King 25) It has given rise to the concepts like liberation, social justice, protest against oppression, and exploitation. It explored the new ways of understanding 'culture' in broad sense beyond the acclaimed borders.

The field of postcolonial studies has been gaining importance since the 1970s and analysis of the colonial discourse has become a genuine area in the literary studies. It is believed that publication Edward Said's, *Orientalism*, critical text (1978) gave impetus to the postcolonial studies. In this book, Edward Said presented suppression of the non-western ways of life, forms of knowledge and constructions of reality, which are affected by empirical ideologies. (<http://www.english.emory.edu/bahril/orientalism.html>)

Further, the growing currency within the academy of the term "postcolonial" was consolidated by the appearance in 1989 of *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. According to, Ashcroft, et al.

....a principal feature of post-colonial literatures is the concern with 'place' and 'displacement'. It is here that the special post-colonial crisis of identity comes into being; the concern with the construction or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place. (9)

Further, they mentioned that:

...the development of new elites within independent societies, often buttressed by neo-colonial institutions; the development of internal divisions based on racial linguistic or religious discriminations; the

continuing unequal treatment of indigenous peoples in settler societies all these show that post-colonialism is a continuing process of resistance and reconstruction.(Ashcroft, et al 2).

The European empire is said to have held sway over more than eighty-five percent of the rest of the globe by the time of the First World War, having consolidated its control over several centuries. The sheer extenuation of the European empire and its disintegration after the Second World War has led to widespread interest in the postcolonial literature and criticism in our own times.

Homi Bhaba at a conference entitled '*Critical fictions*' argues about the postcolonialism that, "a social criticism that bears a witness to those unequal and uneven processes of representations, by which the historical experience of the once –colonized comes to be framed."(2).

To sum up,the postcolonial theory mainly focuses on the construction of 'other'. Gareth Griffiths accounts postcolonial as, "...refer to any kind of marginality ..."(qtd.in King,167). In the colonial period, the colonizers controlled the modes of expressions and they mainly deal with the colonizer's concerns. Therefore, after disintegration of Empire the circumstances changed .Now the colonized asserted to present their, distinctive cultural identity. They tried to wipe out the stereotype images formed by the colonizers and resisted to domination through the literature. Further, this chapter notes, the resistance reflected in the literature through the dominant themes.

2.2- Major issues pertaining to postcolonial studies

As noted previously, the theoretical investigations of scholars like Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, James Clifford, and the others have vitalized the Postcolonial and Diaspora studies. They are investigating impact of the power relations in the different contexts. It mainly deals with the issues like impact of colonialism on various fields as postcolonial politics, religion, economy ,culture , literature ,history, feminism ,and science . It endeavors to cover all aspects of the culture affected by imperialism like marginalization of victims of colonization

,subalterneity , hybridity, diaspora , exile , racism ,identity crisis, multiculturalism , slavery , transnationalism ,ethnicity, creolisation ,cosmopolitanism ,and globalization . Thus contemporary narratives centrally consist the diasporic notions of migration, displacement, traumatic exile, uprooting, home, memory, and belonging and unbelonging. In brief, the postcolonial issues are complex, intricate, and entangled .Moreover, they are difficult to understand.

2.3 –Meaning of diaspora in the context of present study

Diaspora, a universal phenomenon, is strongly associated with migration. It may be compulsory or voluntary, willing or unwilling. The present diaspora is entirely different from the early diaspora. For example, the African Diaspora is referred to mass of Africans who,crossed the Atlantic to foreign land for slavery. The western world still traces an immense social, economic, and cultural consequences of the African Diaspora.

Currently, the diaspora is term used in literature for various people belonging to different political, national, cultural, geographical, and religious groups. It has lost the religious connotation .Formerly; Jewish experience is acknowledged as an archetype for the diaspora . It is originated from different cultural and linguistic contexts .Mainly from Roman legal terminology and Jewish theology .On the other hand socio-politically it is concerned with exiled groups.

Mainly ,the Diaspora Literature deals with an idea of a home i.e. a place from where the displacement occurs .Here the home not always refers to the physical place but may be the symbolic place of belonging.It describes hard efforts undertaken in the hope of better economic future. Basically,diaspora is a minority community living in exile. Cheran argues that “The diaspora usually articulates and create visions and memories of their homeland in their mind, while for others; memories of their homeland are just a figment of their imaginations”. Cohen points out “It typically maintains a strong ethnic group consciousness over several years.”(17)

According to Mark Shackleton diaspora is :

The notion of Diaspora in particular has been productive in its attention to the real-life movement of peoples throughout the world, whether these migrations have been through choice or compulsion. But perhaps of even greater significance to postcolonial theory has been the consideration of the epistemological implications of the term – Diaspora as theory. Such studies see migrancy in terms of adaptation and construction – adaptation to changes, dislocations and transformations, and the construction of new forms of knowledge and ways of seeing the world.

2.4 Some Definitions of Diaspora

The Diaspora is a Greek noun, originated from the compound verb ‘dia’ and ‘speirein’. It means to spread, disperse, scatter, and be separated. In the fifth century BCE classical philosophers and Hellenist writers commonly applied for negative connotation. According to Epicurus, Plutarch used Diaspora in context of his philosophical treatise to refer to processes of dispersion and decomposition ,a dissolution into various parts without any further relation to each other .(Unnik Van 86-7)

In 1960's ,the term diaspora is used to represent national, cultural or religious group living in foreign lands .However, the term diaspora used as practical term to interpret Jewish existence remote from the promised land, the dispersion of the Jews after the Babylonian and Roman conquests of Palestine, the Jewish communities outside Israel.

According to the New Testament , Christian are people of god ,dispersed on earth as seed to disseminate the message of Jesus and their real home was “heavenly city Jerusalem .”So diaspora is commonly used to refer minority people dispersed from common roots.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary 1989 edition (second edition) of the OED ,

"Diaspora," back to its Greek root and to its appearance in the Old Testament (Deut. 28:25). As such, it references God's intentions for the

people of Israel to be "dispersed" across the world. The OED entry in this case starts with Judaic history, mentioning only two types of dispersals: the "Jews living dispersed among the Gentiles after the Captivity" and the Jewish Christians residing outside of Palestine.

However, in the 1993 edition of the Shorter Oxford definition of diaspora can be found. While still insisting on capitalization of the first letter, "Diaspora" now also refers to "any body of people living outside their traditional homeland."

According to William Sarfan the term Diaspora can be useful :

....to emigrant marginal groups .The members of these groups have some unique characteristics ,as they have dispersed from common origin to different places , preserve a collective memory, vision or myth about their original homeland ,not entirely assimilated in host land and feel alienation ,there is hope of returning to motherland and they are tied to home through one or unother way.They try to preserve their own culture ,ethnic concepts in hostland . (qtd.in Nandan53)

While as Wickramasekara the critic says :

The term "diaspora" may have different meanings according to different subject areas; however, with regards to economics and migration, the diaspora is seen as persons who cohabit outside their home country. This includes different groups such as political refugees, migrant workers, ethnic, racial minorities and overseas communities.

According to Docker the diaspora is:

"a sense of belonging to more than one history, to more than one time and place, to more than one past and future". (vii)

Commonly Diasporas is the word has come to refer to historical mass-dispersions of , "the movement ,immigration, or spreading of people away from an conventional or

ancestral native soil "or "people detached by whatever cause to more than one location", or "people originally belonging to one nation or having a common culture settled remote from their ancestral homelands".

According to contemporary study, there are different types of diaspora resulting from different causes as colonialism trade or labor migrations by the kind of social reason within the diaspora community and its relations to the ancestral lands. There are some common things like thoughts of return and need of full integration to the host country, which bind them together.

2.5- The Construction of African Diaspora

The African Diaspora was the movement of Africans and their descendants to places throughout the world ,predominantly to the Americas to Europe, the Middle East and other places around the globe. The term has been historically applied in particular to the offsprings of the Africans who were enslaved and shipped to the Americas for slavery. In current times, it is also applied to the Africans who have emigrated from the continent in search for employment, education, and better living for themselves and their children. The people from Sub-Saharan Africa, including many Africans, number at least 800 million in Africa and over 140 million in the Western Hemisphere, representing around 14 percent of the world's population. (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)

There are two most important reasons of displacement as follows:

i)The Scattering through Slavery

The Atlantic and Arab slave trade resulted in scattering of the African Diaspora in Europe, Asia, and America. In 9th century, Arab slave traders transported African slaves from African continent to Eastern Asia, where they sold them. Further, in 15th century, European slave traders started to imprison or buy African slaves from West Africa to sell them, first in European markets and then in the American markets. The slave trade comes to end in 19th century. This scattering due to slave trade is a major cause of forced migration, ever recorded in

the history of human being. The displacement caused terrible economic consequences on the Africa as well as it gave rise to two different situations in Europe. In the first ,some communities created by the descendants of African slaves survived in host land while in the second ,it formed a hybrid culture.

The mixture of different ethnic groups produced multicultural society in America. It can be noted that in central and south America the majority of people are descendants of African , European and Indian origin . (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)

ii) The Scattering through Migration

Mainly, the migration is of two different types the first is voluntary that is controlled, deliberate and the second is involuntary instinctive that is spontaneous migration. In recent times black Africans are present both as expeditionary and as involuntary laborers. The modern Diaspora is result of emigration from sub-equatorial Africa. People left their places in the search of better economic prospects and in hope of peaceful life. They left the continent to get rid of warfare and social disruption in several countries over the years . Recently the population of African immigrants to the United States is estimated over than 600,000 .The immigration of African population can be also traced in other counties all over the world as the UK, France.

2.6 - The Different Types of Diaspora

The different types of diaspora are based on historical experiences of migrations. According to Cohen , there are five types of diaspora. The types are as : Victim Diaspora , (exile)consists African Diaspora forcefully torn away from home due to slavery ,the Armenian Diaspora who are victims of genocide (the systematic killing of all the people

from a national , ethnic or religious group), Irish Diaspora who suffered from great famine (extreme food scarcity). The diaspora discussed are victims of events which left lasting effect on not only that generation but also on future generations .

Then there is Labor Diaspora that is due to indentured labor system in the 19th century in India and China and the last one is Imperial Diaspora: in Venezuela, Boliva, and Peru.

2.7- The Common features of the Diaspora

The common features of the diaspora have been analyzed by several authors (Clifford, 1997; Cohen, 1997), while Safran's (1991) list may be summarized accordingly:

- (1) dispersal from an original "centre" or "centers" to a foreign region or regions;
- (2) The survival of a collective memory, vision or myth about the erstwhile homeland;
- (3) The production of a ghetto or the acquisition of an isolation mentality;
- (4) The idealization of the home of their ancestors;
- (5) The belief that all descendants must remain somehow linked to the original homeland;
- (6) A strong ethnic mentality based on distinctness. Not all six criteria are required at any one time to characterize a group as diasporic.

2.8 - The Caribbean Diaspora : A Brief Review

Caribbean Diaspora , is the descendants of Sub-Saharan African peoples living anywhere in the Western hemisphere . Overall these movements are chiefly involuntary in nature.

The Caribbean has been created from migratory flows of people into the region.

Evidence of this goes as far back to the rediscovery of the Caribbean in 1492, which made an indelible mark on the region's demographic composition.

The Caribbean diaspora falls into the category of a cultural diaspora as it is held together by a common culture and identity. Wilson (1998) says the Caribbean culture is:

The result of the violent mixture of indigenous people from Quisqueya, Xaymaca, Borinquén and Cuba, European immigrants who invaded these territories and African slaves brought to work in the gold mines, sugar plantations and sugar mills.
www.ashgatepublishing.com/.../Caribbean_Diaspora_in_the_USA_Ch1.pdf

When we examine the Caribbean cultural identity, Halls (1996) postulates:

“‘cultural identity’ in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective ‘one true self’, hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed ‘selves’, which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. Within the terms of this definition, our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as ‘one people’, with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history. This ‘oneness’, underlying all the other, more superficial differences, is the truth, the essence, of ‘Caribbeanness’, of the black experience. It is this identity which a Caribbean or black diaspora must discover, excavate, bring to light and express...” (222- 237)

So it can be clearly noted that at core of Caribbean diasporic theory there are questions of identity, culture, belonging and unbelonging, traumatic memory, notion of home and feeling of alienation. The suffering in postcolonial thoughts is connected to grief as well as shuttling back and forth between the past and the present.

Before the analysis, a short account of the selected concepts and themes is given. The selected concepts and themes try to sum up the different aspects under study. Since Modern Diaspora is analyzed from a postcolonial perspective, the current research discusses various important sociocultural terms as displacement, slavery, racism, exile, identity, marginalization, and hybridity.

2.9 - Some Key Conceptss

i) The Concept of Displacement

The concept of the displacement is not a new one. However, in the contemporary literary world it covered a large space .The displacement is a very vital term in the postcolonial theory, as it can be used for different migrant conditions. It is not only signifies physical displacement but also a logic of being socially or culturally "out of place". Tayyab Mahmud comments, "the spectre of the migrant haunts the modern world"

Consequently, migration, displacement, and exile have become major preoccupations of recent South Asian literature in English. However, while exile and Diaspora may have become central motifs in much contemporary literature.

Literature of displacement often focuses on feeling of nostalgia. It deals with dilemma of displaced people between country of origin and country of arrival. It exposes experiences of racism and hostility, and on the sense of rootlessness and identity crisis which consequences from dislocation as well as cultural diversity.

ii)Slavery as an Emergent Phenomenon

Slavery is social institution defined by law and custom as the most supreme form of human servitude. It is based on possession, authority, and exploitation of one human being by another.

Historically, slavery was tradition documented in many societies; in more

recent times slavery has been outlawed in most societies but continues through the practices of debt bondage, indentured servitude, serfdom, domestic servants kept in captivity, certain adoptions in which children are forced to work as slaves, child soldiers, and forced marriage. In pre-industrial societies, slaves and their labour were economically extremely important. Slaves and serfs made up around three-quarters of the world's population at the beginning of the 19th century.

iii) Racism the Consolidation of Bleak Past

The concept of race, I believe, is a synthetic category created by the society in order to maintain the position of supreme power and to facilitate conquest. In the Prologue to his book about slavery *Many Thousands Gone*, Berlin Ira identifies race as not only being a social construction but rather a particular kind of a historical construction. Berlin also claims that race “is the product of a history and it only exists on the contested social terrain in which men and women struggle to control their destinies” .

This kind of construction, in Ron Eyerman’s words, provided white people with a “means for justifying the new subordination of blacks, as a segregated group, but also for asserting their own right to dominate”. Thus, the institution of slavery originates in conceptions about the intellectual as well as moral inferiority of the black people.

Many stereotypes about black people were created and maintained as “justifications for [their] subjugation” (Eyerman 36). In researching the methods of oppression and white domination, it is essential to consider the history of American and Caribbean people of African origin and their Racism is a stronger form of stereotyping where the ideas that one holds about others makes a person dislike or hate members of that particular group. Some people feel that certain races are better than others. It affects the group that is marginalized. If you are not a member of the “superior” group you may come to dislike yourself since these ideas about who is believed to be better or minor are often known and common in society.

iv)Hybridity

Hybridity refers in its most basic sense to mixture. The term originates from biology and was subsequently employed in linguistics and in racial theory in the nineteenth century. Its contemporary uses are scattered across numerous academic disciplines and is salient in .The history of hybridity and its major theoretical discussion are amongst the discourses of race, postcolonial identity, anti-racism and multiculturalism, and globalization. The development of hybridity expression can be seen from biological to cultural discussions.

Hybridity in respect to culture is outcome of cross-cultural encounters, in other words it is intermingling of different cultures, and it is a common human experience .There is nothing like 'pure'because every culture is influenced by other but the proportion is different. According to Ashcroft in *The Postcolonial Studies* ,hybridity commonly refers to, "the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization".(118)

v)The Concept of Marginalization :

When a person is marginalized they are made to feel like they are different and not in a good way. For example discriminated against and they may begin to feel pushed out alone because of whom they are and where they are. This is a clear idea of Marginalizations.

A scholar Aditya Anupkumar in his "The concept of Marginalization" says:

The term "Marginalization" generally describes the overt actions or tendencies of human societies whereby those perceived as being without desirability or function are removed or excluded (i.e., are "marginalized"...) from the prevalent systems of protection and integration, so limiting their opportunities and means for survival.(3)

These key terms are very useful in the present study . As they play pivotal role in Phillips' writings . It is essential to draw attention to these concepts as they explain many features of diaspora. This will help to analyze the novel thoroughly in the next chapter.