

Review

De-Constructing Borders in Diaspora: Exploring Horizons through the Hybrid

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As the use of the Diaspora has proliferated from the last few decades, its meaning got stretched in various directions. Dispersion of an established system brought about by the crisis, coercion, catastrophe and other forcible movements is called Diaspora. In Diaspora the immigrant is caught in an in-between position that lives border lives on the margins of different nations where his identity is questioned because identity has been shown as central to the discourse of Diaspora. *Location of Culture* addresses those who live border lives on the margins of different nations, in-between contrary homelands and in this book Bhabha claimed that borders are important thresholds, full of contradiction and ambivalence, acts as a kind of medium that both separate and join different places. Bhabha claimed that identity is a discursive product that can be made and remade in new and innovative ways creating hybrid identities and the concept of hybridity had proved very important as a possibility to remade and remodel identities in new and innovative ways.

Keywords: Dispersion, Diaspora, Hybridity, Identity, Location of Culture

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INTRODUCTION

In past times the condition of immigrants after dispersion of their established institutions was very wretched and they were always nostalgic about their homelands. Not only had those who were displaced but also their descendants who have certain vague memories about the dispersion of their parental homeland. After scattering of the established system the immigrants are caught in an in-between position which creates certain traumatic events in the lives of the immigrants and living the

border lives was seen as an end of a productive life. But with the passing time through the concept of *Hybridity* provided by Homi K. Bhabha the condition of immigrants started getting better and better by performing well into these in-between situations where they started challenging the certainty of unchanging circumstances and understood that a new meaning could be made from the vague memories by bringing the resources of the past to bear upon their lives in the present.

For through the ages Diaspora has a very specific meaning, the exile of the Jews from their historic homeland and their dispersion throughout many lands, signifying, as well the oppression and moral degradation implied by that dispersion. From the 1960s and 1970s the specific meaning was systematically extended, becoming more common as a description of the dispersion of Africans, Armenians and the Irish. With the Jews, these people conceived their scattering as arising from a cataclysmic event that has traumatized the group as a whole, thereby creating the central historical experience of victimhood at the hands of cruel oppressor. (Cohen 1)

With the passage of time as we go along the various directions and at the different depths of the problem we discover that the dynamics of the discourse of Diaspora has gained stupendous magnitude in its vast range of meanings and in the 1980s and onwards as William Safran notably argued in "Diaspora in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return" that:

Diaspora and more specifically "Diaspora community" seem increasingly used as a metaphoric designation for several categories of people: expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants and ethnic and racial minorities *tout court*. (83)

More over the term Diaspora now designated a vast array of different peoples who either applied the term to themselves or had the label conferred upon them. Their number, their historical experiences, collective narratives and differing relationship to homelands and host lands seemed that they were clustered variedly.

From the mid 1990s social constructionist critiques that, despite their recognition of the proliferation of the groups newly designated as Diasporas and the evolution of the new ways of studying them, were still seem as holding back the full force of the concept. Influenced by the postmodernist readings, social constructionists sought to decompose two of the major building blocks previously delimiting and demarcating the Diasporic idea, namely 'homeland' and ethnic/religious community'.

By the turn of the century, the current phase of consolidation set in. The social constructionists were partially accommodated,

but were seen as in danger of emptying the notion of Diaspora of much of its analytical and descriptive power. While the increased complexity and de-territorialization of identities are valid phenomenon and constitutive of a small minorities of Diaspora, ideas of home and often the stronger inflection of homeland remain powerful discourses. Identity is shown central to the discourse of Diaspora and in the postmodern world, it was further argued, identities have become de-territorialized and constructed and deconstructed in a flexible and situational way.

One most important thing should be noted that whatever the reason for migration is, the immigrants experience a sense of un-belonging and up-rootedness in the new lands. The immigrants try hard to get assimilate in the new cultures but always remain ambivalent and bewildered and are treated as other. So, living in the peripheries of the host cultures the immigrants undergo complex experiences of anxieties, confusions, yearnings and aspiration, because, the nature of the Diaspora, and its cultural location, politics and its behavior not only depends on Diaspora but also depends on the nature and the behavior of the host countries. As Stuart Hall in "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" writes:

Realistically speaking, living in the new locations Diaspora identities do not remain isolated, static or pur, rather in interaction with the representative culture and other cultural communities they constantly produce and reproduce themselves "anew through transformation and difference" they also intervene in the cultural discourse of the dominant culture. (Hall 235)

As a Diasporian subject there are maximum possibilities and chances of transformation in the subjectivities and modes of thinking of Diaspora because, they have the advantage of living on the border zone of two cultures and having relationship with two geographical spaces which overlap each other in their internal space. In the above context the Diasporic subjects always remain in dilemma whether to get transformed in host country culture or to continue with their own culture. This space formed in Diaspora consciousness is called "Diasporic space" because there is always a double mindedness that comes into prominence and the problem of assimilating

into “what” is always thought of. Avtar Brah in *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* referred to Diasporic space as:

...a conceptual category is “inhabited” not only by those who have migrated and their descendants but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous. In other words the concepts of Diasporic space include the entanglement of genealogies of dispersion with those of ‘staying put’. (Brah 205)

Living in-between can be painful, perilous and marginalizing for immigrants because, the dominant narratives of belonging and identity cannot accommodate those who live in-between. But for immigrants new transitional modes of identity and belonging are possible which challenges the certainty of *roots* with the contingency of *routes* (Gilroy). The dilemma or the in-between position of the migrant and his or her random or unsteady impartial perceptions of the world has been used as the starting point for creating new dynamic ways of thinking about identity which go beyond older static models, such as national identity and the notion of rootedness.

Homi K. Bhabha, one of the prominent exponent of this line himself a migrant collected certain essays in his book *The Location of the Culture* advocate new exciting ways of thinking about identity born from the great history of the languages and landscapes of migration and Diaspora and describes these as new forms of postcolonial identity, making a slippage between migrant and postcolonial, which is not free from problems.

Homi K. Bhabha’s *The Location of the Culture* addresses those who live border lives on the different nations, in between contrary homelands. Bhabha considers that living at the border, at the edge, requires a new art of the present and depends upon embracing the contrary logic of the border and using it to rethink the dominant ways we represent things like history, identity and community. Bhabha claims that borders are important threshold, full of contradiction and ambivalence, acts as a kind of medium that both separate and join different places. Borders are intermediate locations where one contemplates moving beyond a barrier. As Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* defines it:

The ‘beyond’ is an in-between site of transition: the beyond is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind the past...we find ourselves in the movement of transit where time and space cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion.(1)

Bhabha describes border as the place where conventional patterns of thought are disturbed and can be disrupted by the possibility of crossing. At the border, past and present, inside and outside no longer remain separated as binary opposites but instead commingle and conflict and with this emerges new shifting complex forms of representation that deny binary patterning. So, it is argued that imaginative border crossings are as a much a consequence of migration as the physical crossing of borders. Bhabha urges that we must think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and focus on those moments and processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These in between spaces provide the terrain of elaborating strategies of selfhood, singular or communal that initiates new signs of identity. Bhabha claims that identity is a discursive product and therefore it is possible for it to be remade and remodeled in new and innovative ways.

Identities are ever-changing and impossible to fix: the need to negotiate identities is therefore constant. (Bhabha 73)

The best possibility for an immigrant to negotiate with identity is the refusal to think of cultures as pure and holistic, with received wisdom handed down from generation to generation in a way which preserves knowledge. Instead culture should be regarded as intermingled and manifold and a means of performance where an immigrant can flourish him/her self in exploring the horizons. As Bhabha stresses the importance of performance in his essay ‘Dissemination’ as the means by which new hybrid identities are negotiated.

Bhabha claims that the migrant must empower to intervene actively in the transmission of cultural inheritance or tradition rather than passively accept its venerable

customs and pedagogical wisdom. The immigrant should question, refashion or mobilize received ideas in a very ardent manner and should empower to act as an agent of change deploying received knowledge in the present and transforming it as a consequence. The immigrant should receive the traditional knowledge and should be able to re-inscribe and give it new and unexpected meanings. Bhabha calls this action 'restaging the past'. This process alienates any access to an originary identity or a received tradition (2).

CONCLUSION

While concluding it can be said that the borders provide certain opportunities for new hybrid forms of knowledge which doesn't demands fixity, limitation and definition. Bhabha's notion that the immigrants are produced from the process of hybridization and the immigrant's subjectivity is deemed to be composed from variable sources, different materials, many locations and demolishing forever the idea of subjectivity as stable,

single and pure. The concept of hybridity has proved very important for Diasporic people and indeed many others too as a way of thinking beyond exclusionary, fixed, binary notions of identity based on ideas of rootedness and cultural, racial and national purity. Hybrid identities are never complete and total in themselves; instead, they remain perpetually in motion; pursuing errant and unpredictable routes, open to change and re-inscription. Hybridity opens up a new way for immigrants where they can fashion or explore themselves to the new ways of thinking about identity, community and knowledge suitable to the changed world.

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