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THE FEMALE DIASPORA: MARRIAGE AS A METAPHOR OF MIGRATION

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ABSTRACT

What actually is diaspora? It is the movement of people from their original homeland. There lies a tendency for everyone in the field of academics to speak about diaspora always in a very wider sense. The concept of diaspora has thus been connected with imperialism and post colonialism. Since theory provides ample generosity, it is possible to point out the local dislocations as diasporic experiences. Discussions must be taken place on the female diaspora to locate the effects of displacement due to the practice of marriage. Is marriage a form of migration for women? The feminization of migration is a less explored area though the challenges encountered by women migrants in this sense are not negligible. It is not the wider migration to a foreign nation, instead a kind of physical and mental shift within the borders. Women leave their home after marriage in normal Indian social context. Various discriminations and exploitations are common in the case of a woman when she transferred to a new cultural background. They are at a risk to tackle the tangled situations in their new land. The present paper is an attempt to highlight the problems and dilemmas encountered by the female sections of the society during the process of their marriage and it practically observes the patriarchal notions of married life as metaphors of migrant experiences.

**Key Words:** Diaspora, homeland, marriage, migration, displacement, dislocation, feminization.

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Diaspora is always associated with postcolonialism. It is colonialism which made countless people voyage out from Britain, most often settling around the world in many different nations. But even before the colonial period, migrations and settlements were recorded in history. The existence of African people in Britain can be traced back to the Elizabethan times. So it is sometimes awkward to describe diaspora always connecting it with the British imperialism and colonialism. The experience of being migrated and living in a diaspora have animated much recent postcolonial literature, criticism and theory. Indeed, there must be problems in locating these concepts in the historical contexts. Nobody should never treat the dislocated

feelings of any section only in the postcolonial historical context, because diaspora exists before and after postcolonialism.

Secondly, there is always a tendency for almost every scholar to contextualize the concept of diaspora in a wider sense. They say it is associated with the concept of nation and nationality. An individual or section of people experiences the 'living in-between' problem not only as issues related to the national identity. There are much more possibilities for dual existences in the local social scenarios, and those experiences are actually some sort of diasporic complexities. Since theories provide ample scopes to generate new readings on any social events, scholars should not limit the constructive power of every philosophical attitude. From a comparatively wider framework of nation, the notion of diaspora must render its logical denotations to a smaller framework of local issues. The question is why the scholars shouldn't explore the regional issues related to gender, caste and class as diasporic experiences.

The concepts of home, exile and dislocation have been interpreted in a very stereotypic manner in all academic discussions of diaspora. Fortunately, these terms get link with cyberculture and they are no longer segments of the conventional diasporic experience. It is the same technical chance which enables these concepts to have a different dimension. Home in a regional sense has got nothing to do with nation. Home is only home itself. Exile in the regional sense is something associated with the psychological displacement of the common people.

Let us probe deeper the ways in which 'home' is *imagined* in diaspora communities. The concept of 'home' often performs an important function in our lives. It can act as a valuable means of orientation by giving us a sense of our place in the world. It tells us where we originated from and where we belong. As an idea, it stands for shelter, stability, security and comfort (although actual experiences of home may well fail to deliver these promises) To be 'at home' is to occupy a location where we are welcome, where we can be with people very much like ourselves. (McLeod 210)

When the term migration is referred in the context of diaspora, in the scenario of theory or politics, one may often talk about Homi. K. Bhabha or some other writers and about their migratory experiences. Bhabha is always quoted as a migrant from Bombay to Britain and who now lives in America. This consideration also has got a national perspective where Bhabha's identity is equated with the feeling of nationality. Can migration be always a shift from one nation to the other? Why it can't be a regional or local shift? When theories focus beyond the borders, why should they marginalize the issues sprouting within the borders as local and regional which never demand the touch of diaspora?

There are gendered experiences of diaspora on regional identities. The relation between diaspora and feminism is to be located in this area. Female subjectivity forms the primary side of dislocation. In contrast to the mobility of men, of course, the function of women is to be stable in the conventional sense. At the same time, there exists some practice of forced mobility or better call it forced migration in all patriarchal societies. Forced or not, marriage is such a system of migration in Indian context. The emphasis must be provided to the given specific male dominated rules of marriage and the post-marital residential laws which shapes the female diaspora. A woman after marriage is forced to believe that she has been transformed permanently from her actual home to the new one. Just similar to the experience of a migrated individual, she faces the question of homelessness to certain extends. The new home accommodates her as a refugee and provides her much comfort, but she struggles to identify herself with the sudden displacement. Her displacement can be valuable, but not immediately acceptable. It is possible to compare this real life situation with that of Salman Rushdie's diasporic experience as McLeod points out:

In registering his displacement from the Bombay home of his childhood, Rushdie does not dwell nostalgically upon this loss, although he registers loss in his remarks. Instead he makes a virtue from necessity and argues that the displaced position of the migrant is an entirely valuable one. (214)

In marriage, there is always a process of hybridization. This can be positive for men, but marriage for women entailed a new home and work environment and possibly even different types of work, structured by new people, relationships and authorities to submit to. The new incomer is expected to follow the local mores and

ways of doing things rather than those of her natal family or locality. She becomes an epitome of permanent migration. The new home doesn't have, or can never establish blood-relation with the new comer. In a sense she loses her real home and fails to achieve a permanent and genuine presence in the newly provided space. The question of identity haunts her. The new space restricts her freedom. She feels an in-between space of selfhood and creates meanings from the discontinuous scraps of fragmentary remains of her nostalgic emotions.

Gradually the woman has to face several types of fall back positions from their 'homes'. Her ambitions to have academic degrees and to secure a good job are probably neglected. In most of the places in rural Asia, not only in India, a woman after moving away from her natal home is prevented to inherit her parent's land even when it is legally recognized by the state. Her widowhood may lead to the marital breakdown and she may again in all sense witnesses the shock of alienation. These are all some forms of patriarchal oppression through which the man forcefully empower himself and creates a space of his own. Women's diasporic experience can be horrible in the case of inter-caste love marriages. Here, the cultural change witnessed by the female will be much more vibrant. In all these cases, the traditionally denoted meaning of nation is to be deconstructed:

Migrants tend to arrive in new places with baggage: both in the physical sense of possessions or belongings, but also the less tangible matter of beliefs, traditions, customs, behaviours and values. This can have consequences for the ways in which others may or may not make migrants feel 'at home' on arrival in a new place. (McLeod 211-12)

What kind of colonization exists behind the female diaspora? It is absolutely the patriarchal mode of colonization where rules and prescriptions of family and society is exclusively designed and marketed by the male. Marriage thus is proved to be a metaphor of female migration. The power structure being framed in the system of marriage is both challenging and confusing.

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