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DIASPORIC DIVERSION AND QUEST FOR IDENTITY IN MICHAEL ONDAATJE'S *ANIL'S GHOST*

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ABSTRACT

Diaspora theory is a branch of study in English Literature in particular postmodernism and Post-colonial studies, it is one of the wider spread research areas which has undergone in research by various research scholars in numerous aspects in the globalized world. Adequate information about diasporic consciousness can be seen in both Old Testament and New Testament. In *Anil's Ghost* Michael Ondaatje concentrates his attention on diasporic identity, dislocation, multiculturalism and merciless civil war that have been clearly pictured as kaleidoscopic view by the author. Michael Ondaatje dexterously drawn his attention for Sri Lankan people, in order to create an awareness among the people about civil war which was held in Sri Lanka in 1980s. Generally Diasporic Literature deals with the themes like translocation identity, multiculturalism, emigration, displacement, alienation, isolation, cultural differences and so on. The diasporic writers are defined as the groups of writers that they are distanced from their homeland and settled in an alienated land from where they have written about their glorious homeland.

Key words: Diaspora, postmodernism, post colonialism identity, multiculturalism and civil war

Diaspora, the term, derived from the Greek for 'scattering of seeds', it is used to describe population immigration and dispersal (voluntary and involuntary). Originally used to refer to the Jewish peoples' forced exile from Israel (as it is now known) in the pre-Christian era and their subsequent removals from Spain, Portugal, and Russia, where they had resided for well over a thousand years, diaspora is now used to refer to virtually any mass migration.(Oxford Dictionary of Critical Theory. 131).

From the above statement we can have a clear sketch of diaspora, that the term was derived from Greek which means scattering. The term diaspora first appeared in the Hebrew Bible later it was translated into Greek. So it is used to describe mass dislocation and dispersal that may be happened either voluntarily or involuntarily. At first it was used to refer to the Jewish people who forcefully exiled from Israel during the pre-Christian era. The old diaspora presents people emigrated from one place to another place that is not happened voluntarily, they have forcefully translocated from their homeland and they settled in some other alien territory either for their work or for their livelihood.

Philip Michael Ondaatje is a Sri Lankan born Canadian novelist, he can be considered as a versatile personality writer in Canadian Literature. He is endowed with many talents in his literary career which talents are the only passport for him to receive so many literary awards, which have been given to him in order to

enrich his multiple talents in literature. He has received so many awards such as the Governor General's Award, the Giller Prize, the Booker Prize, and Prix Medicisetranger and so on. *The English Patient* (1992) is the magnum opus novel of Michael Ondaatje that received three awards such as Booker Prize, the Canada Australia Prize, Governor General's Award, later it was adapted as a film in 1996. *Anil's Ghost* (2000) is also an award winning novel that drawn a clear sketch about the 1980's civil war Sri Lankan. His novel *Anil's Ghost* has won Giller Prize in 2000 and in 2001 Irish Times International Fiction Prize and Canada's Governor General's Award. His monumental works are *Coming Through Slaughter* (1976), *In the Skin of a Lion* (1987), *The English Patient* (1992), *Anil's Ghost* (2000) He has received the most precious award for his various works.

Anil's Ghost is a beautiful novel that was written by Michael Ondaatje during the hectic and heartless civil war that happened in Sri Lanka in 1980's. That was the only reason which made him to visit his native place in order to create some awareness among the people about merciless civil war. Anil Tisaara is the protagonist of the novel who was born in Sri Lanka and for the sake of improving her studies she needs to go some other alienated land where she has fought for her own identity. Before that she has created an identity as a young and energetic swimming player. During her visit to the western country where she fell in love with a boy. Later she visits her home land after some years as a foreign pathologist.

Anil's Ghost is a wonderful novel which presents a clear sketch about the 1980's crucial civil war that happened in Sri Lanka. Though the writer was in Canada before he started to write this novel, he wants to give an account of 1980's civil war among the people that happened in Sri Lanka that was one of the reasons which made him to visit his native place. That searing war makes the people get into fear because most of the people were dead and many of them have lost their family members and their relatives, in particular most of the spiritual places, people houses were desecrated. Being a Sri Lankan born writer he wants to create some awareness among the people about the remorseless civil war. In 1980 there was a huge war among three defense forces, as a result the Sri Lankan Government has won the battle. During the war time there was a vast atrocities were committed by the each army soldiers which creates fear among the people about their peaceful life as well as people have fear of war and there is no space for any peaceful situation. Despite these disadvantages the Sri Lankan people have thought to leave the place in order to live a peaceful and fearless life in their future. Due to uncharitable civil war most of the people wanted to immigrate from that place as well as they are seeking for a peaceful life so that they have decided to leave that place and scattered somewhere else to live a peaceful and prosperous life.

M.L. Raina gives an appropriate consideration in the following words: "Dislocation can occur as a physical movement from home into alien territory forced by war and persecution. Displacement and exile have enjoyed a special privilege in literature." (Singh, 18) The above lines clearly manifest the state of dislocation in a kind of physical movement, in order to escape from the war people are immigrated from their home land and enter into an alienated land, it was done by them either voluntarily or forcefully they have left their homeland. As well as translocation or exile can be done by political events too.

Anil Tisara is the protagonist of the novel *Anil's Ghost*, the author has beautifully portrayed her as a sign of diasporic diversion who belongs to Sri Lanka and emigrated to some other alienated land for improving her academic career that is exactly depicted as a diasporic diversion in this novel. The author has given more importance to Anil than other characters in this novel, because this novel is roundabout within these five characters, they are Anil Tisara, Sarath Diyasena, Gamini Diyasena, Ananda and Sailor. Anil Tisara is an intelligent Sri Lankan girl, who has a multiple talents while compared with other characters in her school. She was not only a brilliant student in academic studies but also she was very much fond of sports too. Being a fabulous student she needs to leave her homeland in order to enrich her educational qualification. And she returns to Sri Lanka after long back as an Investigative Officer. The author has elegantly pictures that the protagonist is the best example for the diasporic diversion because by birth she belongs to Sri Lanka later she emigrates abroad for improving her educational career, again she entered into her homeland too.

Most of the renowned writers wanted to leave from their homeland and they have decided to settle with their family in foreign countries either for an international recognition or to earn more money. The prominent writers from Asia and Africa want to leave from their homeland and they have settled in the UK or the USA for the sake of western life. A few writers once again came back to their homeland or country because

of unforgettable past goriness. Due to this immigration they have confused with themselves whether they have followed their own culture or to followed western culture because of immigration they are giving more importance for their western culture than homeland culture. Where as in language aspect they are varied because of western influence. The author has shown beautifully about the writers who emigrated from home country and settled in an alienated country, again they came back to their home country. It is possible not only for the writers but also for the people those who are immigrated to other countries, as a result they come back to their homeland after achieving their goal. It is one of the witnesses for the diasporic diversion.

Anil Tissara is not only an intelligent student in her academic career, but also an energetic and dynamic sports player. During her school days she was interested in academic career as well as extra-curricular activities. In particular she was passionate in swimming so that she has gone for a regular practice which made her to participate in many swimming competitions; as a result she won many awards. Now she has created her identity as a remarkable swimmer in her school as well as her area too. The author has undoubtedly shown that she has created her identity as a swimmer in her homeland especially in Sri Lanka. She left her homeland in order to develop her educational qualification. When she moved from her homeland into an alienated land where she has lost her identity there. Now she has quest for her identity in both western country and her homeland too.

Diaspora traditionally refers to “the movement of the Jewish people away from their own country to live and work in other countries” (Hornby, 421). In *Anil's Ghost* author beautifully portrayed the diasporic diversion and quest for identity by using the protagonist such as the displacement of an individual or a group can be occurred in two ways one is voluntarily or forcefully and some of the reason they are moving from their homeland and return to their native country after achieving their goal. Due to the heartless war and atrocities of defense forces that made people get into fear so that most of the people have voluntarily emigrated from there and settled somewhere else. Generally diasporans are following two cultures, and two language sand so on. In spite of these disadvantages the diasporic writers and characters have lead their life in foreign countries in order to get success in their aim after fulfilling their aim they will return to homeland in order to lead a joyful life.

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