



## New directions in diaspora studies: revisiting past, reviewing present and looking at the future

edited by Nilufer E. Bharucha, Sreedhar Rajeswaran and Klaus Stierstorfer, Mumbai, CoHaB IDC, University of Mumbai, 2021, 388 pp., INR900.00 (eBook), ISBN 9781639444250

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## BOOK REVIEW

**New directions in diaspora studies: revisiting past, reviewing present and looking at the future**, edited by Nilufer E. Bharucha, Sreedhar Rajeswaran and Klaus Stierstorfer, Mumbai, CoHaB IDC, University of Mumbai, 2021, 388 pp., INR900.00 (eBook), ISBN 9781639444250

The book is a collection of 25 essays divided into three major parts. Truthfully, diaspora is a much-discussed area of research, but investigations of the past, present, and future and understanding the continuity and connectivity in the process of diaspora have hardly been explored. Arranging a methodological prism, the essays in the book try to answer the questions of identity, trans-nationality, hybridity, crises, media, society, politics, and culture in the diaspora. This book is an attempt to fill the gaps by assembling chapters from experts of literature, sociology, history, anthropology, and economics who are occupied in new research in this field.

The first section of the book subtitled 'New Directions in Diaspora Studies' is conceptually the most interesting one which delves into the issues of 'identity'. The perception of diasporic distinctiveness in the four essays of this segment understands it through 'fluidity of identity' as 'in constant flux' and carefully makes the readers cautious of 'falling in the trap of essentialism'. Identity is 'refigured' and 're-negotiated' facing trauma and fractures through novels and personal experiences by the characters in diaspora. Understanding experiences and trauma are not a novel theme but depicting the post-traumatised re-life of the subjects makes the writing in this part a unique study. Number of issues have been raised in the third essay regarding trans-nationality, nation-state, minorities, immigration policies leading to influence the identity in new diaspora. It provides a theoretical base to the book. The 'nation' and 'trans-nation' become mobile in their positional shift and in course of time the change in the geo-political location is relative in diaspora, which is de-territorialised. The writing is thought breaking in terms of 'home', 'mobility', and 'belonging'. Literature in studying diaspora is very essential and its importance lies in crossing the boundaries of nationality and connecting the 'Third Space' from the periphery. An essay in this part emphasises on the development of diasporic literature as a literary canon by challenging pseudo-set borders.

Migration and migrant identities have been addressed and recognised in the second part of the book titled 'Revisiting the Past'. This section deals with the past experiences of diaspora in which emigration moved from their country of origin to the host countries but sometimes, situation compelled the emigrants to return home. The returnees mostly develop a third space in between the host country and the home country. The first essay speaks of this dilemma, insecurity, chaos, frustration, and distinct crisis of returnees while drawing reference of Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* and V.S. Naipaul's *The Writer and The World*. Understanding 'roots' through 'routes' has been depicted in a comparative look into the culture, history and people of two countries of Africa and India narrating from travelogues and an extraordinary connectivity is produced through the next distinguished writing. Indentured system replaced slavery and indentured labourers effectively became international proletariat. In the course of time, they entered into a struggle between the descendants of slaves and the descendants of coolies of Guyana, which is portrayed and analysed in David

Babydeen's *The Counting House*. A reconsideration of Indian diaspora in Commonwealth nations and British policy has been focused in the last chapter of this section. The importance of diasporic nationalism is often overlooked in the pages of history and the significance of Komagata Maru must be recognised in Canada.

The third section titled 'Reviewing the Present' is novel in its approach and thought with attention on the present issues of diasporic studies. It contains three chapters on diaspora in Romania, with the first one exhibiting post-communist diaspora in Romania leading to hybrid identity and ruthless experiences of being away from homeland. Romania is discussed again in violence and media and its representation as shown in Italy and immigrant country Romania. A cultural religious identity of Indians in Romania is the focus of another chapter leading to a strong community identity in Europe. There are few essays on films and the representation of diaspora in media, including perception of South Asian Muslims post 9/11 period by Indian directors and the construction of diasporic subjectivities through films. Deepa Mehta and her perception of Gandhi's concept of Truth are seen in one of the essays in the context of Derridas's notion of Lie of the State and State of the Lie. A chapter on the short-term visiting parents in Indo-Canadian diaspora is a notable new arena of research with sociological perspective. It analyses intricately how the bond in diaspora actually crosses the family to the nations. Essay on issues on surrogacy and transnational mother-child relation gives a refreshing thought to the readers in understanding motherhood. The recovery of 'another voice' is reflected in the essay on queer diaspora, which focuses on the deprived reality space of the 'third gender' and forces them towards the virtual and cyberspace. The Sikh Diaspora, Nigerian diaspora, South Asian Diaspora, Britain's referendum of 2016 on European Union membership and its impact on immigration forms a part of this section of the book. These chapters widen the area of reading in diaspora. A feminist outlook is presented by the essay on hollowness and homelessness of Taslima Nasreen's journey to 'other' nation protesting against patriarchy. The book is summed up again with essays in search of identity and problems of distinct crises through the novels of Chitra Banerjee and Bharati Mukherjee.

Overall, it is a very well-conceived, documented and scholarly work of research on diaspora. The book does not conventionally focus on the economic and social aspects of diaspora but looks into the problems and dimensions of trans-nationality and hybridity. It fills the void of a long-needed reference book covering an extended well-connected history of emigration and problems and issues of communities involved in it. Readers would benefit from the addition of a noteworthy foreword and an analytical introduction by Nilufer E. Bharucha, one of the editors. However, some chapters in the third section have repetition in thoughts, and relevance in certain areas would make the book more focused.

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