

A Discovery of Self and Space in TanujaDesai Hidier's Novel 'Born Confused'

Author: Arif Mohd. Shah

APS University Rewa

Email: arifgull.shah@gmail.com Cell: +7006148239

Address for correspondence

Residence: Turka-TachlooAnantnag

Tehsil & District: Anantnag-192124, State: Jammu & Kashmir India

Abstract

It is attributed that every human being is a prisoner of one's particular society and societies are an amalgamation of different races, cultures and ethnicities. Society plays a prominent role in the identity formation of a particular human being. Human being needs to have certain societal relations, which in turn will keep him confined within the norms and the established societal set-up. But due to certain compulsions, by self will or by any external catastrophe, the established social set-up gets dispersed. This dispersion of the people, language, or culture that was formerly concentrated on one place is called Diaspora, (originated from the Greek word "Dia" means through and "Speria" means dispersion or sow).

Keywords

Self-contained environment, Social set-up, Dispersion, Catastrophe, Diaspora,

Introduction

The sense of displacement or dispersion signifies the location of the fluid human autonomous space involving an agreement and exchange between the homesickness and desire for the homeland. It also includes making of a new home while adapting to the power relationships between the majority and the minority and significantly transacting with a new sense of place, a new unknown geographical space. After establishing themselves in the new alien geographical space, human being needs some private space, a space of confidence where he can fully represent his subject, object, his material body and psychic being. Domesticity is the devotion to or familiarity with 'home' life or it is the state of being domestic, domestic character, household life (Hawker).

David Seamon argues that home is an intimate place of rest where a person gathers grace and withdraws from the complaints of the world outside. Home is where you can be yourself. In this sense home acts as a kind of metaphor for place in general. When people migrate from one place to another place either forcefully or by their own will, they own relations of different systems of cultural passages, then home plays a significant role in fragmented space, where people see different cultural and historical elements when they are put out of their own place. In other words, cultural re-homing suitably recognizes the fragmentation associated with the difference in the articulation of Diasporic identity and includes otherness in the discourse of the self. As Avtar Brah says in particular that we inherit a host of spatial terms with potential for analyzing Diasporas, including "cartographies of inter-sectionality", the homing of Diaspora, the Diasporising of home, and of course Diasporic space itself. Like a

number of other blackBritish- Asian and African-American scholars, AvtarBrah uses spatial language to exploreher Diasporic subjectivity (McLoughlin 80).

AvtarBrah referred to Diasporic space as: "The inter -sectionality of Diaspora border anddislocation as a point of confluence or meeting of economic, political, cultural and psychicprocesses". Diasporic space as a conceptual category is "inhabited" not only by those whohave migrated and their descendants but equally by those who are constructed andrepresented as indigenous. Some critical issues such as cultural, racial and the generationalarise which create conflicts inimmigrant's ideology when they start living in other countriesand to deal with that, we will look in Tanuja Desai Hidier's debut novelBorn Confusedinwhich almost all significant issues are broadly maintained.

Born Confused (A self discovery)

Born Confused is an enlightening novel (written by Tanuja Desai Hidier, born in Boston andgrew up in Wilbraham Massachusetts US), which offer readers an engrossing personalaccount of the Indian-American experience through the eyes of an insightful narrator DimpleLala, a New Jersey teen interested in photography, who has been confused about her identityever since she entered the world the wrong way causing her mother "twelve treacheroushours of painful labor." Her fascination with photography reveals Dimple's keen sense ofperception as well as her role as an observer rather than a participant. "Not quite Indian, andnot quite American," Dimple unsuccessfully tries to blend in, riding on the coattails of herblue-eyed, blonde best friend, Gwyn.

The author nimbly describes the shared outsider statuthat drew together the two, "the rich little girl who lived like an orphan and the brown littlegirl who existed as if she were still umbilically attached to her parents." During Dimple's17th year, it was the summer when her life fell apart. In that summer she learned about familystrengths and family secrets and it was the summer she began to see herself, her family, herworld through different eyes, and finally she discovered herself in that summer. Till that timeshe did not know who she was. In America, she was too Indian; in India she was tooAmerican. She does not fit in any world completely and felt like she was been born confusedand things had gone from bad to worse. The only time she felt realand genuine was when, shewas taking pictures, looking at the world through the eye of her camera, capturing momentsin time. Her best friend Gwyn was always positive to her negative, the cool one contrasting toher geekiness, the confident one contrasting to her shyness. It was her friend Gwyn whohelped her to define life. She has always been there for her and she was in most of thepictures she took. She shared every secret with Gwyn.

Her parents wanted her to meet Karsh son of a friend of her mother's the kind of the nice

Indian boy her parents wanted her to marry. Dimple becomes furious at the decision of herparents, did not notice how attractive Karsh was and finally kept herself away from this. Sheshared this secret with her friend Gwyn. By the end of the evening Karsh and Gwyn wereitems and Dimple had been left in the dust. In the process, the heroine embarks on a

journey of self-discovery. On one level, the book explores the growing pains, rebellious phases, peer pressures and first love experienced universally by teens.

On a deeper level, it celebrates a harmonious blending of cultures as it traces one adolescent's bumpy trek towards self-actualization. If a few sub-plots take the main action on a slight detour (e.g. Gwyn's relationship with her high school college boyfriend etc) the sparkling prose will carry readers along. The author seamlessly integrates descriptions of Indian food, dress and customs, often spiced with Dimple's sarcastic commentary. But even as Dimple distances herself from her family's traditions, her sense of respect and genuine affection for her accomplished parents (both doctors) are never far from the surface. The author poetically captures the essence of her characters and the richness of seemingly insignificant moments. Absorbing and intoxicating, this novel surely leaves the lasting impression.

Objectives

1. Understanding the terms Self and Space within the sphere of Diaspora.
2. Transformation of space into place amid Diaspora.
3. Cultural conflict within the domestic space and outside domestic space
4. Nostalgia or trauma related to the culture, language and other belongings.

Literary Assessment of the novel

Born Confused is at par in theme and content, equally diasporic, which portrays the American reality: the souring of American Dream, fears and anxieties that the Americans are vulnerable to, and the immigrant Indian's response to the emptiness and loneliness that haunts the inhabitants of this modern wasteland. The novelist has dramatized the protagonist's search for identity in a strange country. The novel manifests that the migrants are placed alongside the Americans who have already undergone the first stage of settlement and transformation. If one were to thread the stories by underlining an aspect common to them, then it might be possible to suggest that it is the theme of immigration and transformation which is at their centre. The immigrants dream of wedding themselves to the American soil and becoming Americans, the troubles and tribulations they have to go through for achieving this goal notwithstanding.

On one hand America holds out to them the promise of a bright future, a world free from inhibitions, racial differences based on multinational customs, religions, traditions, languages, etc. On the other hand the novelist depicts the problems of the people emigrating to America and the dream of new life which tempts them to go there. The novelist has portrayed characters with close resemblances who socially and culturally position themselves as immigrants. They neither acculturate nor assimilate but just adapt or adjust life around them without changing or transforming themselves. Their adaptation and their will to be an authentic Indian are portrayed thoroughly in both the novels.

The novelist has chosen the landscape i.e. California for depiction of her novel and a lot of Domestic and spatial elements are portrayed by her with great keenness. She has tried to deal with the problems which lie within the spheres of domesticity amid Diaspora, and has tried her utmost to deal with cultural, linguistic and certain other important aspects “within” and “outside” the domestic space. The novelist has made an effort to show how the major characters in new alien country seek to transform space into the place. Nostalgia, trauma, ordeal, suffering related to culture and other personal belongings are shown in a very startling manner by the writer.

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