

## Concept of Home in Diaspora

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### Abstract

The notion of 'home' in the Diasporic imagination is ambiguous. It is a subjective imagination of the displaced individual. Home in the diasporic study raises the question of identity and belongingness of the displaced self. the feeling of belonging and nostalgia in the postmodern diasporic context triggers the 'homing desire' and an urge to return. But in the diasporic imagination relocating home is impossible. Thus the diasporic subjects always try to connect with their homelands and formulate an imaginary outlook towards their nation and home. The paper thus aims at defining home in a diasporic context and the outlook of the different dislocated and dissipated self towards their homeland. It also aims to investigate how the varied diasporic experience and cultural and ethnic cross fortification lead the immigrants of different generations to relocate their home.

**Key Words:** home, diaspora, belonging, culture, identity, nationality, space

The concept of 'home' remains a paramount discourse through human civilization. As long as the concept of migration rules over human civilization, the concept of the home remains ambiguous. In a world of transnationalism and multiculturalism, home becomes fluid. We live in a complex world where everyone is dislocated. Some are dislocated in a new land and some are

in their home itself. Everyone needs a home and a homing desire. Home is not the constructed building, rather an emotion, and environment. To understand home is to understand the factors that enable the homing ambiance and homely feeling in a world where location and belonging fluctuate with the ever-changing of integration and rupture. Home is not a particular place or location form where one belongs rather more than one place where one can feel secure and comfortable.

The answer to the question, Where are you from? denotes one's belongingness and identity. Home negotiates the sense of belongingness and nostalgia. Belongingness can not be attributed to one place because one can have different roots and belongingness. Thus, the home can not be fixed to one location. Concerning the modern age, where people have multiple roots and belongingness and living a nomadic life, home becomes an integral part to determine one's nationality, culture, ethnicity, and identity. Because of migration, deliberately or forcefully, people tend to move across the border and creates a sense of transnationalism. After relocating to a new land, they establish their temporal homes, full of insecurity and ambivalence. The dislocated immigrants always desired to remain connected with their culture and home to feel secured and familiar. The idea of the home both in its real shape as a place or homeland and in its imaginary semblance provides the various emotional determinants of identity. Thus the home is both a real and symbolic place that becomes synonymous with intimacy, security, familiarly, identity against the vast anonymity of unfamiliar categories and relations. Roger Silverstone argues in this connection:

Home, of course, needs to be understood in both literal and metaphorical senses. The defense of home is a defense of both the private spaces and intimate social relations and

domestic security- the household; as well as of the larger symbolic spaces of neighbourhood and nation- the collective and the community. (442)

Home is not a place rather an essence of rootedness and belonging. One can have multiple homes as one moves from one place to another. Some have occupied the homes from his ancestors as legacy and others through migration, dislocation, and relocation. Home identifies one's self and identity. It connects both the old and new culture of the land. It is a place of everyday lived experience negotiating the society, culture, and milieu and a place of desire. Avtar Brah in *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* describes this homing desire in a different perspective of trans-geographical representation:

... 'home' is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense, it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of 'origin'. On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of a locality. Its sounds, smells, its heat and dust, balmy summer evenings, or the excitement of the snowball, shivering winter evenings, somber grey skies in the middle of the day...all this, as meditated by the historically specific every day of social relations. (192)

The notion of home bridges the gap between the memories of the past and the present dislocated circumstances. It juxtaposes the abstract imagination with a bitter reality.

Home in the Diaspora is a very fluid concept. As in the diaspora, the notion of home is complex because of multiple homes and belonging. In diasporic imagination, extended cultural boundaries and transnationality enable to formulate of pluralistic homes and roots. Asa Wendy Walter has rightly discussed, "The notion of the diaspora can represent multiple, plurilocal,

constructed location of the home, thus avoiding ideas of fixity, boundedness, and nostalgic exclusivity traditionally implied by the word home”. (xvi) As the cultural boundaries and rootedness expand, the notion of home loses its purity, stability, and homogeneity. Home in any case of diasporic representation is always ambiguous and fluid. It is never fixed and permanent as the ideal notion of home is assumed to be in its essentialist position having the quintessential quality of privacy, security, and a habitual shelter to return to. This ideation of home is not similar to any kind of home anywhere in the late modernity where the boundaries of space and privacy between the real and the symbolic are infinitely blurred. The memory of home and homeland negotiates the sense of root and location. Memory emerges to a great degree when one is not at home. The feeling of nostalgia and belongingness enables the dislocated self to formulate an identity. But diasporic context, there is always a fear of losing the home and homeland and a desire to return. Home is a space where one feels safe and secure and needs no elaboration for a native and connotes community. It is a place, in Spivakian terms, “we cannot not want”.

The concept of home is important to understand the diaspora and its multiple cultural and ethnic issues with the diasporic subjects. Diasporic sensibilities formulate a connection between the homeland and the host land. The dislocated and dissipated individual establishes a strong connection with their homeland in the diaspora. As Avtar Brah has rightly said that diaspora, “embodies a notion of the center, a locus, a ‘home’ from where dispersion occurs”(181). As the diaspora is an umbrella term, it includes all the diasporic issues from the point of dislocation to the point of relocation. The concept of the home also covers from the moment of dislocating home and homeland to the relocation to a new place. Diaspora elucidates the life of immigrants

in a new land, where they face cultural cross-fortification. Life in the diaspora becomes hybrid as the immigrants are torn between the old and culture. When the immigrants in a new land, neither leave their old culture nor accept the new, live in ambivalent.

A fundamental ambivalence is embedded... a dual ontology in which the diasporic subject is seen to look in two directions- towards a historical-cultural identity on one hand, and the society of relocation on the other. In a diasporic subject, then, we see in stark relief the hybrid and the dual characteristics that one most often associated with postcolonial discourse. (Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin 424)

The diasporic immigrants have a romantic notion of home and homeland. To be with that notion they prefer to relocate themselves to the immigrant community of their own culture. The fluidity of belongingness and identity enables the concept of home ambivalent. From this point of view, the concept of home has become indistinct and “miasmatic” thus challenging the fixity of origins underlining the homing desire rather than the aspiration for a homeland which is not the same. Consequently “homeland had become a homing desire and soon home itself became transmuted into an essentially placeless, though admittedly lyrical space” (Cohen 3). Giving a subjective attribution to a home is impossible because the home can be a location of origin, location of dislocation, location of relocation, and settlement. Thus home has no fixity rather fluidity.

The concept of homeland is being questioned as one has multiple belongingness. The notion of homeland and belongingness differs with different generations of immigrants. The first-generation immigrants, who physically leave their homeland negotiates a great sense of loss

and preserve a greater degree of sense of belonging and nostalgia. They remain in a state of ‘in-betweenness’ while relocating to a new land. While in the case of the second and third-generation immigrants, the feeling of the home and homeland is not so intense as some of them are not aware of their homeland or even never seen. For the successive generations, the memories of home become fairy tales and the image of the homeland, a fantasy land. For them, the host land is the home as they are born and brought up there and successfully accepted the new culture. When the idea of homeland is created through cultural bonds the notion of home is characterized by ductile homes where the revival of native land is relocated with fresh religious and cultural bonds.

Relocating home in the diaspora is a myth, as there is no evidence of relocating home in the diasporic context. In the diasporic context, everyone is dislocated, physically or psychologically, irrespective of location, and culture. There is always a strong attachment to the homeland and a desire to return home. But in the diaspora, return to home is impossible. One may physically return to his/her home or homeland, but the home is not there that he/she left behind. One may feel like a foreigner in his land. As Salman Rushdie has rightly expressed after revisiting Bombay after long years, “Bombay is a city built by foreigners upon reclaimed land; I, who had been away so long that I almost qualified for the title, was gripped by the conviction that I; too had a city and history to reclaim”(10). Salman Rushdie in “Imaginary Homeland” describes this diasporic self-refashioning from a fragmented past with the image of “broken mirrors” (suggestive of fragmentation) which ruled out the possibility of a complete and real return to the lost world and suggests the course of substitution and replacement in the process of acculturation aligning the mutated memory of the past with that of the present (429). Return to

home in the diaspora is a universal issue. Defining the Diaspora negotiating the emotional and psychological bond with home and homeland makes one nostalgic and weakness to relocate homeland. The nostalgic homeland bonds, sometimes, move beyond importance to the recurrence of stereotypical emphasis of ideal-type definitions. The return to the homeland or the connection to the homeland is more uncertain because the home space renovates beyond identification. Caught within modernization diasporas are influenced by globalization where the return to the homeland is severely impinged on. There are a circuitous route and no homecoming.

Thus difining home in the diasora is difficult as it is impossible to locate one's root after dislocation. Different critics and writers of the diasporic imagination has question the existence of home in postmodern diasporic context. in postmodern era where people are deliberately migrating different places leaving their root behind. No sense of nostalgia and 'in-betweenness' is clearly evident in postmodern diaspora. But some are haunted by a sense of loss and an urge to reclaim the displaced past with an afflicted wisdom of the incapability of reclaiming specifically the thing that was misplaced. This is the reason why they filled their world with a fragmented vision of rebirth and lost memory where the individuals have to reinvent a lost home in their fictive consciousness of diasporic sensibility and reconfigure their recollected identity.

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