



RESEARCH PAPER

Migration, Alienation and Literature

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: June 22, 2021</p> <p>Accepted: September 20, 2021</p> <p>Online: September 23, 2021</p> <p>Keywords: Alienation, Immigrants, Migration, Othering, Postcolonial Literature</p> <p>*Corresponding Author: sultanulaarifeen@gmail.com</p>	<p>Ever since the world turning into a global village, it has witnessed large scale mobilization and movement towards centers of powerful economic zones. The dominant idea behind migration seems to be economic prosperity and happiness not only of migrants but also their dependents. There may also be other reasons associated with migration. So, migration along with its advantages and disadvantages has emerged as a topic of discussion in different fields of scholarship. Literature too has been documenting such themes. This research, touching upon selective literary productions from Britain, America, India, Pakistan and postcolonial literary perspectives, explores problems faced by immigrants. It is noticed that immigrants are treated as non-humans and immobile which exposes the superficiality of human relationships. This superficiality and biasness results in multiple and fragmented narratives and alienation. The causes of alienation may be numerous, but it has been on the rise chiefly amongst migrants belonging to third world countries. Its presence has also been seen in developed countries like Britain and America. It is, therefore, observed that migration and alienation go side by side.</p>

Introduction

The historic periodization of the theme of alienation can be located in the twentieth century with colonization of the world nations by the European countries on the one hand, and on the other with a large-scale immigration of the non-whites to the white civilizations. Consequent upon this immigration, immigrants faced numerous problems in settling themselves in the foreign lands. The major problem, however, remained the crises and issues of identity and the biases that it entailed. Another big problem that the immigrants, unfortunately, had to undergo was that they, in Sartre's phraseology, were considered 'being-in-itself' as contrary to their 'being-for-itself.' This realization on the part of the immigrants and those living in the colonized nations where resulted in the alienation of the people, it simultaneously resulted in the decolonizing efforts on their part too. One can, therefore, see it reflected in the literary works like that of Frantz Fanon, Homi. K. Bhaba, G. C. Spivak and many other postcolonial writers. A rough date, therefore, can set to be the year 1960 which brought to the limelight many postcolonial themes including alienation. The presence of such a significant theme and feeling involving a peaceful existence at the international level; especially for the immigrants who live thousands of miles away from their hearths and homes under different circumstances with different objectives, adds fuel to the fire and the sense of alienation intensifies manifold with positive or negative consequences both for the individual, his relatives and acquaintances in the host or one's own nation and the place or the nation he is currently living in. The alienation of the immigrants seems to be an old phenomenon which is still prevailing in the world. The presence of such an important and powerful theme can be found in the literatures of different countries but under different colors and shades.

Alienation and British Literature

Different societies have different reasons and causes to depict alienation in their literary art, but it is not possible that one writer will reflect all the types of alienation in his or her writings. But what is of immense importance here is that alienation seems to be as old as human beings and it might have appeared in literature much later but has now made its permanent place there. Its presence, therefore, can be felt and noticed in one form or another. Abuzeid (1987: 33) has tried to locate alienation in the Victorian Literature as he observes "Alienation, self-division, isolation, duality of experience, the deep unrest and the perplexity of nineteenth century Britain are impressed on all who study the period. Victorian literature is to a large extent the literature of alienation." Abuzeid also finds these feelings abundantly reflected in the writings of Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, Carlyle, Charlotte Bronte, Emily Bronte, Dickens, George Eliot, and Oscar Wilde. Similarly, Senekal (2008: 91) has also tried to explore the sense of alienation in McEwan's *The Child in Time* and describes "It depicts the individual consequences of loss and its effects on a heterosexual relationship, while exploring the concepts of time and innocence. The novels' themes are "uncontrollable life-factors and the social construction of gender"

London Fields by Martin Amis is another novel that Senekal (2008) has chosen for the description of alienation in it. This alienation is located in poverty, urbanized setting and superficial human relationships. Senekal (2008:118) says "*London Fields* makes many references to Thatcherite England and growing poverty "On the street the poor rock and sway, like burying parties. All their eyes are ice" (LF, 118)."

Trainspotting by Irvine – Welsh is yet another British novel that Senekal (2008) chooses to describe the presence of alienation in it. Identity crisis, fragile relations and drug-dependency are some the themes of the novel that convey a sense of alienation prevalent in contemporary British Society. Senekal (2008:147) writes "*Trainspotting* narrates loosely connected friendships in a youth subculture, interwoven with sex and heroin addiction." Furthering her argument, the writer says that multiple and fragmented narratives dominate the novel and there is a purpose in it. She (2008: 148, 49), therefore, opines "As such the fragmented narrative mirrors the fragmented lives and views of the main characters." The more somber picture of alienation in *Trainspotting* is however, presented by Childs (2005:247) which Senekal (2008:149) records that the novel "portrays a world of unemployment and social deprivation in which social and personal relations have deteriorated alongside economic decline."

Alienation and American Literature

As mentioned earlier, alienation is a human condition and behavior circumscribing the entire human being and it may result from a single cause or there may be multiple causes behind it. Usually, multiple causes and factors are involved in it and it is not locality or age specific. One can, therefore, see it reflected in American literature also. Swain and Das (2007:90) have shown that Toni Morrison's novels reflect alienation in the form of racism, sexism, isolation and identity. They, therefore, observe "Toni Morrison's novels revolve round the problems of isolation and identity. But the theme that cuts across her novels is that of alienation rooted in the most vicious form of racism and sexism." There is yet another facet of alienation which Finkelstein (1965: 146) points to while discussing Balzac's *Eugenie Grandet* in the light of Marxian's concept of capitalism and alienation "Thus Balzac, in *Eugenie Grandet*, presents a classic portrayal of the early 19th century miserly mind, money obsessed, exchanging for its miraculous possession its life and humanity." Thus, Old Grandet's passion for hoarding money destroys the potential happiness that he and his family might have enjoyed otherwise. Yet another ugly side of alienation resulting from wealth, in *Father Goriot* by Balzac, is described by Finkelstein (1965:147) in these words "the father lives only for his two daughters, who marry into aristocratic society. And yet this

very act which he has fostered alienates them from him." These examples reflect the inter-family alienation with wealth at its roots. Finkelstein (1965:149) gives us an insight into the more acute form of inter-family alienation with reference to Eugene O'Neill's play, *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1939-41). He says, "Set in the decade before the First World War, it shows an outwardly prosperous and happy family rent by fierce and apparently baffling antagonisms."

This dominance of alienation in American literature was mainly the result of Two Great Wars. Therefore Finkelstein (1965:243) observes "To an increasing extent, alienation has become not only the subject matter but also the style of American writing. The world, and with it America, holds out no hope." "No hope" syndrome naturally gave birth to atomization of the society and the individual and the situation appeared more oppressive and terrifying. David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* is an expression of that. Finkelstein (1965:214) therefore notes "Far more acute and widespread is the alienation disclosed in family and social relationships."

Because of this terribly pervasive alienation Finkelstein (1965:242) argues "It is a commonplace today to talk of the "no hero" novel." And this "no hero" is the product of the extremely antagonistic life which people find difficult to cope with. Another illuminating example of alienation can be found in *Rabbit, Run* (1960) by John Updike which Finkelstein (1965:243) describes as thus "The story is of a married man of 26, with a two-year-old child, who suddenly feels an overwhelming revulsion against the life he leads."

Alienation and Indian Literature

Similarly, South Asian literature too portrays alienation but in its own cultural and geographical milieu. And, since this area remained under direct colonial occupation for a long time and there ensued a struggle for its decolonization till many of the South Asian regions got freedom yet it is important to read Said (1994: 19) "The nations of contemporary Asia, Latin America, and Africa are politically independent but in many ways are as dominated and dependent as they were when ruled directly by the European powers;" and it is still true indeed. We, therefore, see that the alienation in South Asia is cultural and cross-cultural which is yet again asking for decolonization so that this menace may be overcome.

The literary art of both India and Pakistan clearly reflects this trend which at times appears to be implicit while on other occasions it is explicit. In both its shapes, alienation has quite dangerous effects for the socio-psychological make-up of an individual. It is, however, not devoid of positive results. We, therefore, see that Pokhriyal (n.d:1) speaks of a wide Indian diaspora and locates its survival between "home of origin" and "world of adoption." Furthering his argument, immediately thereafter, he says that "The process of the survival of the diasporic individual / community in between the "home of origin" and the "world of adoption" is the voyage undertaken in the whole process from "alienation" to final "assimilation." It is evident thus that wide the diaspora, greater is the cycle and spectrum of alienation. It is, however, not necessary that this alienation finally results in "assimilation" although the desire to assimilate oneself in the "world of adoption" is usually there. While talking about the foremost concern of Bharati Mukherjee as a postmodern writer, Pokhriyal (n.d: 2) shares with us that it is "the life of South-Asian expatriates and the dilemma of 'acculturation' and 'assimilation'." Having altered different citizenships and experienced assorted milieus, Bharati Mukherjee herself went through alienating experiences which one finds reflected in her two novels; *The Tiger's Daughters* (1972) and *Wife* (1975); which were written during the period of her alienation in Canada. Pokhriyal (n.d:3) throwing light on *The Tiger's Daughters* observes "Bharati Mukherjee's first novel *The Tiger's Daughters* is a materialization of the diasporic community and hence alienated. " Yet another example of a writing reflecting alienation is the *Wife* by Bharati Mukherjee. Pokhriyal (n.d: 4) discusses *Wife* as thus "Bharati Mukherjee's characterization of Dimple lends a divergent and an intricate perspective to the theme of immigration and subsequent alienation."

There is nothing perhaps as intricate (yet easy) and mobile as is migration in the global world. With the advent of each day, it is rising and kindles in millions of hearts, every moment, with the prospects of bettering one's life. With its fruits both sweet and sour it tempts relentlessly and this temptation has become almost a part of one's psyche. In this respect, Saha (2010: 1) writes "The psyche of the Indian immigrant fed on the mythologies of movement and exile is preconditioned to succumb to the sense of estrangement, alienation, non-belonging and dislocation at the slightest pretext." *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri is another Indian novel that portrays the sense of alienation in the backdrop of "home of origin" and the "world of adoption." Saha (2010: 4) notes:

In Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Namesake* the Bengali diasporic community in Boston religiously celebrates Durga puja and Saraswati puja. But for characters like Ashima such celebrations are less about religion and more about rejuvenation of the link with the old world – the home they have left behind.

There is yet another Indian novel which reveals alienation rearing its head in the event of migration. Saha (2010: 8) describes it as follows:

Anita Desai's novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird* has the Indian migrant Dev disillusioned by an England represented by the London of the 1960s because his mind has the image of an England as depicted in English literature studied in schools and colleges. Dev's psychology aggravates his exilic condition because his aesthetic sense cannot identify with reality.

Alienation and Pakistani Literature

Similarly, South Asian Pakistani literature in English also depicts alienation; yet given a history of colonization, decolonization and the Imperialism and its concomitant effects, one observes that alienation seems to have been one of the dominant themes in the literary annals of Pakistan. Ever since the globalization of the world the canvas of alienation has broadened beyond measures and it has taken different shapes having different reasons. Given this background, *Ice – Candy – Man* by Bapsi Sidhwa, a pre-partition novel highlights amongst many other themes the sense of alienation experienced by the characters of the novel because of the geo-political situation of the subcontinent, the atrocities committed in the name of the partition, forced segregation of the diverse communities which had since long been co-existing happily, fostering and fanning the Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Parsee differences and many other upheavals perpetrated in the name of religion and partition. It is, however, not the characters of the novel who go through acute alienation but the same is transmitted to readers as well who equally find themselves caught up in the vicious cycle of alienation. Such a sense of alienation is, for instance, conveyed by the conversation between Sharbat Khan and Ayah which Sidhwa (1989:75, 76) writes "Sharbat Khan cautions Ayah: "These are bad times – Allah knows what is in store. There is big trouble in Calcutta and Delhi: Hindu Muslim trouble. The Congress-wallahs are after Jinnah's blood" Likewise, the ensuing fight over the ownership of the subcontinent between two major communities - Hindus and Muslims through their leaders and their English masters results in the alienation of the common folk like the butcher, Masseur and the Government House gardener. Sidhwa (1989: 91, 92) narrates "The butcher . . . says: "That non-violent violence-monger – your precious Gandhijee – first declares the Sikhs *fanatics!* Now suddenly he says: "Oh dear, the poor Sikhs cannot live with the Muslims if there is a Pakistan!"

Abdullah Hussein is another Pakistani English novelist who has very skillfully depicted alienation of a whole generation in his famous work *The Weary Generations*. The very title of the novel suggests and conveys an acute sense of alienation. The story of the novel revolves around the protagonist – Naim who makes us go through the important historic events of the Indian subcontinent woven into the pre and post partitioned India. Herein we see the description of the First World War, how Indians are thrown into this manger and made a war-fodder, how the conscripted Indian youth fight and die in the

battlefields set in foreign lands and the mental trauma the soldiers and their families have to go through. The maltreatment of the Indians at the hands of the British Raj and its supporters foments the sense of estrangement amongst the masses and they find themselves in complete mayhem and the exit out of this imbroglio does not appear in sight. Such a state of affairs deepens the sense of chaos and frustration and the protagonist is found drowned in muddy pools of circumstances to the extent that his compassionate soul cannot even help him come out this troublesome state. The riots, strikes and police and military brutalities produce devastating and gruesome results for all and sundry. The unrest and frustration prevails so powerfully throughout the atmosphere of the novel that the protagonist cannot heave a sigh of relief even in the company of his beloved Azra whom he marries after confronting so many problems of acute nature.

Of the many instances of alienating scenes in the novel, Hussein (1999: 131) describes one such scene "MORE THAN USUAL it had been a time of distress: drought that burned the earth and whatever green it held to a dirty pale color and then to ashen grey, followed by rains that fell without ease." Furthermore, Hussein's (1999: 196) description of the most famous and historic Jalianwalah Bagh massacre scene creates an intense alienating atmosphere when one reads "Suddenly the heads of soldiers appeared above the walls on all sides as if from nowhere. They started shooting . . . within moments we became aware of people being hit and bleeding and falling."

Mohsin Hamid's debut novel *Moth Smoke* is yet another brilliant literary piece by a young Pakistani in English. He has his own peculiar way of looking at things that causes alienation. The novel is full of class consciousness and alienating circumstances; inter family alienation and most importantly alienation in extra-marital relation which we see being established between Daru and Mumtaz. Almost every other character is seen as alienated not only from others but from his / her own self also. Ozi-the husband of Mumtaz is alienated from her and his own self and likewise Mumtaz is estranged from Ozi as well as from her own self. Similarly, Daru appears to be as much alienated from Ozi in the first instance and in the second by Mumtaz whom he loves and most of all from his own self. This alienation is so terribly acute that the life of all the characters in pursuit of happiness ends in turmoil at the end and this factor alone causes the readers to be estranged from the growing complexities of life. The characters, unable to cope with the problems of life, take to drugs in the false hope that it may make their lives easy, but the things aggravate and the shreds and tatters of their hopes and desires are seen eddying above their heads in the form of a chaotic and uncertain smoke that life generates in the event of uneven distribution of wealth, distrust, mistrust and deprivation of any kind. The novelist, beautifully, depicts a feeling of alienation being produced in the heart of the protagonist- Daru and it appears to be the result of the uneven distribution of wealth. Hamid (2001: 25) describes the event through the mouth of Daru as: "I sit in the back of Ozi's Pajero. I've never been in a Pajero before. Costs more than my house and moves like a bull, powerful and single-minded." The uneven distribution of wealth does not just alienate people but makes them feel powerless and because of this powerlessness one does not remain single-minded but one's mind is thronged with millions of questions of an eerie nature that kill the deprived person many a times before his / her natural death. And this is what we see in the novel that Daru goes through. Hamid (2001: 105) gives us another example of inter-family and inter-marriage alienation when we know that "Aurangzeb loved ACs" while on the other hand his wife "Mumtaz hated ACs with the sort of hatred one normally reserves for members of other religions and ethnic groups." So, when things were like 'one man's meat is another man's poison' it could not be possible for the couple, despite their deep love for each other, to live a smooth life. Hence feeling alienated both find escape into drugs and extramarital friendship and parties.

Hamid (2001: 152) presents another vivid picture of inter-marriage alienation when Mumtaz justifies herself against her husband's behavior "Ozi began drinking my milk and talking like a little boy when we made love . . . Not that I minded. What I mind was that we

had no time to talk about ourselves anymore. . . I felt nothing for him. No wonder, no joy, no happiness. Nothing.”

Alienation and Postcolonial Literature

In all the examples mentioned above alienation appears to be a common human trait that results from one's interaction with a society and its people. It is, indeed, debatable whether or not alienation is a common humanly trait yet one thing is for sure that its major cause – the 'Othering,' is given a common currency for the purposes of making it appear as natural which is otherwise not. And because of its all pervasiveness the theme of alienation is, therefore, common in postcolonial literature yet it is deeply rooted in the constructs and concepts of 'Othering' produced and propagated by the West against the East with an aim of taking advantage over the former by foul and unfair means. The reflection of this theme can also be, therefore, seen in modern South Asian English writings. One can sort out different reasons and causes behind alienation but Mohsin Hamid and H. M. Naqvi both, have located it in the 'Othering' that cross-cultural migration; especially of an Eastern to the West, results in, driven by economic factors, mainly. This cross-cultural migration can, in the words of Bhabha (2007: 13) foster “the unhomeliness – that is the condition of extra - territorial and cross - cultural initiations.” Alienation, however, is not just a single theme, though dominant, in postcolonial writings. Nayar (2008: 38), therefore, highlights three different themes in postcolonial interrogation of colonialism and they include cultural alienation, nationalism, and the making of mimic native men. Similarly, throwing light on the postcolonial writing and its themes Nayar (2008: 22) writes:

Ashcroft et al (1989: 5-6) characterize writing emerging from the once-colonized nations as postcolonial. They identify three major characteristics of this postcolonial writing:

- (a) The silencing and marginalization of the postcolonial voice by the imperial center.
- (b) The abrogation of the imperial center within the text.
- (c) The active appropriation of the language and culture of that center.

But these major characteristics of the postcolonial writing that Ashcroft et al identify need further explanation in order to understand alienation more clearly. It is not, therefore, the postcolonial writing alone that exhibit these characteristics. The postcolonial individuals, whether fictional or real characters, by virtue of their being indirectly colonized by the empire / imperial center unconsciously appropriate its language and culture and such an appropriation of the individuals, if and when they happen to be in the imperial center, takes them towards assimilation into the dominant culture. And this assimilation does not remain or go unnoticed by the natives of the empire and so does start the silencing and the marginalization of the postcolonial individual and his voice by the imperial center. It happens because the postcolonial individual starts acquiring a hybrid identity which creates a fear, fever and fret in the 'Self,' using the words of Goldberg (2005: 79), that "white or European-based purity, power, and privilege would be polluted, and in being polluted diluted." Confronting this situation, the postcolonial individual experiences alienation and self-alienation. And it further leads the postcolonial individual towards the abrogation of the imperial center in that he starts retreating to his own culture. The journey from assimilation to retreatism is, however, a bitter experience and the postcolonial individual keeps facing the pains and pangs of alienation and self-alienation till retreatism is complete.

Since this post-colonial perspective results in alienation of different kinds so a sort of liberation seems a plausible solution to this problem. Nayar (2008: 10), therefore, writes:

- (i) Individuals and peoples are fundamentally equal.
- (ii) They are free.
- (iii) Social and political arrangements should be such as to promote the well-being of individual groups in the manner that they conceive of it.

As this postcolonial liberalism is not easy to achieve so it causes alienation and self-alienation to the extent that the individual opts for retreatism. Identity, in postcolonial writings, is yet another contributive factor towards alienation. Fanon (1986: 112) recalls his blackness of complexion noticed by a child in a crowded train "Look, a Negro! . . . Mama, see the Negro! I am frightened!" Such an unfortunate making of a human like oneself as someone inferior or labeling him to the extent of his or her absolute estrangement from one's self or the society one's lives in is the hallmark of postcolonial writings. Tyson (2010: 420) observes below:

This practice of judging all who are different as less than fully human is called *Othering*, and it divides the world between "us" (the "civilized") and "them" (the "others" or "savages"). The "savage" is usually considered evil as well as inferior (the *demonic other*).

Sinari (1970: 127), similarly, records "Alienation . . . implies "an awareness of the other and a felt estrangement from it, accompanied with a feeling that this ought not to be so." And Ziller (1969: 295-96) speaking about the stigmatization of the American Negro contends that "alienation is most characteristic of those individuals who are deprived of full and equal participation in American society."

Immigration is yet another important postcolonial theme that carries in it the seeds of alienation. About the rise of immigration, Modarres (2005: 4) is of the view that "We stand at an interesting moment in the history of humanity. By now South Asian, East Asian, Middle Eastern, and Latin American immigrants can be found in every continent." And because of this immigration and transnationalism Modarres (2005:6) observes "It is fascinating that various literary pieces produced to reflect the daily life of transnationals' . . . contain characters that portray their alienation from their multiple "homes"." The immigrants thus face different problems and all result in their alienation. Modarres (2005:3), further, writes "What remains are nostalgic backward gazes, mixed with the trauma of immigration, leading to landscapes of wounds whose meanings cannot be shared either with people at "home" or those in the new country." Modarres (2005:3) portrays another acute alienating scene that the immigrants go through because of identity and hybridity as "Desiring the "other," yet longing for the lost "we," immigrants are nomads of the identity landscape, occupying the fringe until there is nothing left but the fringe." The nostalgic backward gazes or the longing for the lost 'we' may be one of the many forms of alienation that the immigrants experience but all may not necessarily feel nostalgic. For example, those who become migrants for assimilation into a foreign culture for better prospects of life may not feel nostalgic. Yet, speaking in postcolonial context, a migrant because of being an 'Other' always remains prone to multiple dangers in the foreign lands.

Conclusion

It may be concluded that world literature has been highlighting both migration and alienation from different perspectives and dimensions. If we talk about the presence of alienation in British literature, it may be seen in the writings of Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, Carlyle, Charlotte Bronte, Dickens, George Eliot and Oscar Wilde. Similarly, McEvan's *The Child in Time*, Martin Amis' *London Fields*, and Irvine's *Trainspotting* also reflect the concept and feelings of alienation. Likewise amongst American literary writers it is Toni Morrison whose works focus on alienation. On the other hand, Balzac's *Eugenie Grande*, Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*, David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* and John Updike's *Rabbit, Run* reflect alienation. From the Indian side, the theme of alienation may be seen in

Bharati Mukherjee's *The Tiger's Daughters and Wife*, Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* and Anita Desai's *Bye – Bye Blackbird*. It is Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice – candy – Man*, Abdullah Hussein's *The Weary Generations* and Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke* which raise concepts of alienation. When we talk about postcolonial literary productions it is noticed that the concepts of migration and alienation are abundantly explored and discussed especially in the writings of Indo-Pak writers. The reasons and factors behind alienation however vary and would vary because of difference in approaches to life worldwide.

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