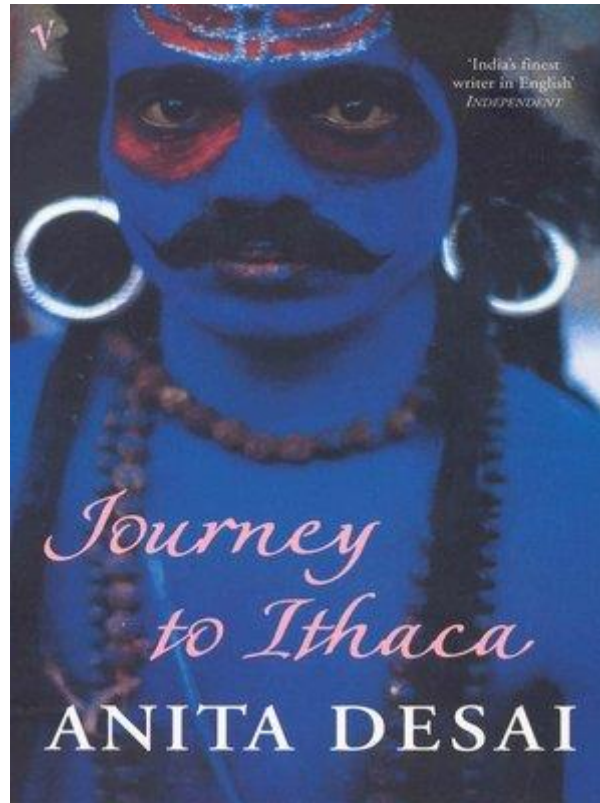


## Indian Diaspora and the Motif of Journey

Vivek Dinkar Khabde, M.A., NET

---

---



### Dispersion, Diaspora, Dreams

The term *Diaspora* and the motif of journey are closely associated. The term *Diaspora* began to be used in relation to Jewish dispersion. The global economy has resulted in large scale international movement possible. Journey and diaspora are interrelated terms as in the sense that Diaspora refers to movement, i.e., journey - be it physical or metaphorical. Diaspora refers to the dispersion or scattering.

People move out to different places for their own reasons. Some of reasons may be personal but some are forced. There are references in the history of diaspora of forced migration of people for slavery and the related causes. People move out for various reasons. Better prospects, better lifestyle, security, search of the true self, etc., are some of the reasons for which people migrate.

The movement, displacement and settling in a foreign land causes a hyphenated life. The host country is often reluctant to accept the diasporic community as their own and hence the hyphenated terms like Indian-American exist. The idea of home becomes much more significant for the migrated-diasporic being. They look for an eternal home. The idea of an eternal home is like an illusion, which they seem to exist but in true sense it does not exist or rarely exists. It is interesting to note that the difference between a person who has moved away from his native land to a different place for various reasons so to say, finds it difficult to settle down in an unknown or a less known country both psychologically or physically. He seems to be always in a dilemma, than a person who has not migrated at all. Most of the

### **Diaspora Writing**

Diaspora writing depicts the existential angst of the writers. The author of the Diaspora expresses themselves through their writing. Writing is considered to have a far-reaching influence and as it is more culturally sound and more civilized way to express oneself. The impact of such writing has far-reaching effect. The issue of their identity becomes crucial and there is loss of it or seems to be so, so they try to find their true identity.

### **Eternal Home**

A new hyphenated identity which is attached to them in the host country and hence there is search for an eternal home. The eternal home may not be always their native birth place. It becomes an imaginary place which exists only in their imagination. The displacement happens with the help of journey. The theme of journey is associated with displacement. Uprooting from one place necessarily brings in re-rooting to certain place. According to Usha Bande, "Transplantation connotes relocation and in its turn relocation presupposes the existence of a location, and dislocation therefrom" (Bande, p. 8). In the writings of the Diasporas, we find that there is often comparison between the homeland and the host country. The writings of the diasporic writers often have the elements of memory. The memory is like experiencing the same events again in our thoughts. Memories are connected to dreams & vision. Dreams too take us on a journey and have the power to introspect. This psychological condition makes possible experiencing the things which are not possible to experience in the real life. The stronger the element of memory and nostalgia the greater, deeper and psychologically sound the writing will be. Thus, diaspora writings are

being considered riper in that sense as it contains varied perspective form different cultures and surroundings. It is the true account culture of a country observed by a stranger.

### **Reasons for Displacement**

Indian diasporic conditions have various reasons for displacement. In the recent days, it is mostly for 'better prospects'. There are large scale migrations of the Indian technos to move to the Western countries as these countries give better opportunities. The diasporic literature is gaining world-wide readership as 'moving out for better prospects' has become a trend in the recent times and we all are heading towards the terms like 'global citizens'.

Journey is the crucial metaphor, motif of diaspora literature. It is the most coveted theme in literature as elements like adventure, surprise; opportunities to discover the self have been at the core of the very human existence. The quest for self-exploration began with the very beginning of the literature itself has continued till today. Perhaps it has become more poignant, because the complexities of modern life got worsen with the passing of time so the deeper probe in to the human psyche is needed. The other word frequently used as synonyms to journey is voyage. Journeys can be categorized as physical and metaphorical.

### **Movement**

The bodily movement, i.e. moving away from one place to another is the physical whereas the metaphorical journey refers to inward journey i.e. the journey within. It involves dreams and vision. Journey is often related to mythology. Various mythologies have journeys as the basis of their stories. So, often spirituality is also related to journey. The search of God, the search of the 'true self' and the journey for it is termed as 'pilgrimage'. The very basis of movement is journey. The use of journey motif in literature is not new to literature, perhaps it is the oldest tool with authors. In terms of diasporic literature, it has gained new significance in the recent years. The changing policies of the governments in various countries, the changing and demanding lifestyle of the current masses have given rise to large scale migrations which resulted in the diasporic literature. The literature with journey motif has the element of surprise as the journeys to the unknown places arouses interest and surprise as one may never know what may happen in the due course of journey. The very human life is like a journey in the sense, like in journey one may not know what may happen in its course so in human life the future is unknown and hidden.

## **New Wave of Migration**

The colonial and the post-colonial period of India, there could be seen migration of literate Indians to the western countries. There were varied reasons for it. The writers of the Indian diaspora have used journey motif in their writings. Prominent among the Indian authors, are Rohinton Mistry, Amitav Ghosh, Anita Desai, Gita Mehta, V.S. Naipaul etc. these authors have used journey motif in their writing which is the prominent motif of diaspora. Anita Desai's *Journey to Ithaca* is the best known example of journey motif. The search for identity with spirituality and the quest for it takes the novel to far greater heights. The novelist brings out the disparities of the diasporic situation. There is both physical as well as metaphorical journey in the novel. The Indian characters who settled in western countries return to India in the search answers to the questions posed by diasporic situations. *Ithaca* is the metaphor of eternal journey. It is the journey towards fulfilment. The journey itself is joy. The destination is always not sought for.

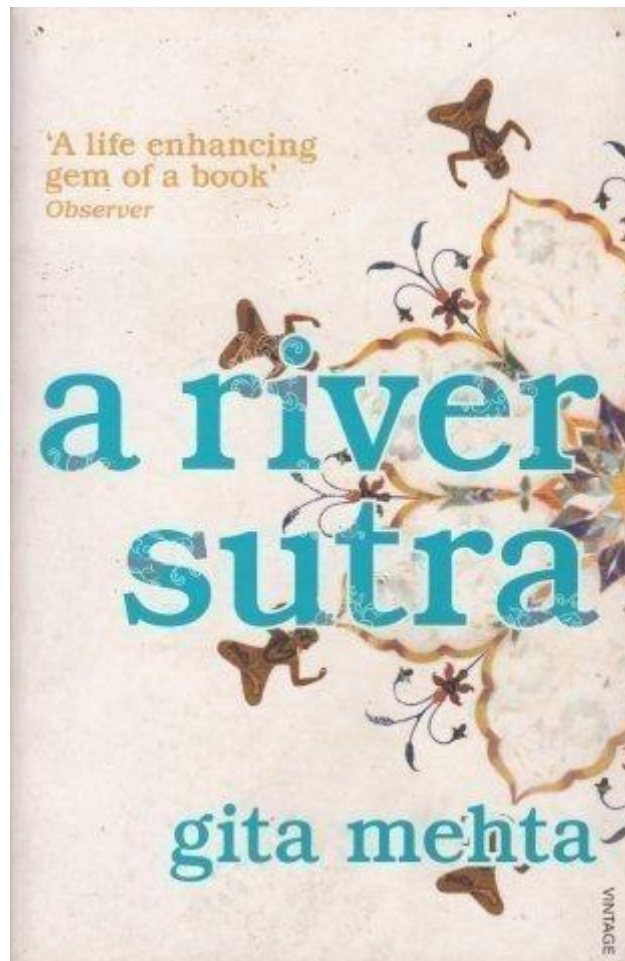
Usha Bande in her seminal book is of the view that journey motif is the driving force in the diasporic writing. She says, "In diasporic writing the journey motif becomes the driving force to find meaning in one's location at a particular time in history, to come to terms with cultural deprivation, and by moving away from the chartered locales to expose the quintessential incompleteness of all reality and inauthenticity of all worldly experiences so as to magnify the general human condition" (Bande, p.10). Thus journey becomes an instrument to bring out varied complexities in the life of the expatriate. The analysis of different cultures depicts certain observations can be made like women were given or rather got rare opportunities of journeys. The patriarchal attitude in most of the cultures of the world might be the prime reason which has affected the movement of women.

### ***Journey to Ithaca***

The title of the novel is inspired by C. P. Cavfy's poem 'Ithaca'. The poem stresses the importance of journey and stresses that the journey itself is more enlightening than the destination itself. The journey to Ithaca and the riches it gives is more important than the destination. The three characters in the novel are on quests of different sorts. Sophie, Matteo and the Mother undertake journeys for their own reasons. Desai successfully records the dilemma of the diasporic condition through these characters. She represented India as a capital of 'spirituality'. The search for one thing leads to a search for a different quest. Matteo

finds India as rich in spirituality. Sophie travels with her husband to India, initially she was reluctant to leave her own country. Sophie does not believe in Indian spirituality and doesn't like to stay in India even though her husband Matteo has decided to stay in India. Further feeling dejected, she decides to leave India with her children to Italy. Desai delineates her female characters as quester as opposed to the traditional male questers.

### *A River Sutra*



*A River Sutra* is an example which has apparent journey motif. There are multiple narratives in it which are connected through the river. The novelist uses Narmada River as a symbol of journey. The novel focuses on life as a journey which flows like river Narmada. The river becomes a destination for purification of soul to the Indians and provides solace. The novelist brings out the Indian spirituality related to the rivers in India through the river Narmada. The characters in the novel take on journeys towards the river Narmada to find solace and answers to the questions. The search for identity is at the core of narrative. Mehta successfully depicts the Indian spirituality and the rich heritage of Indian spiritual mythology.

## To Conclude

Thus, various novels in Indian diasporic literature uses journey as a motif to project the true diasporic situation. Journey as an inevitable human condition in life serves to answer various quests of human life. The Indian diasporic literature projects complex diasporic dilemma and hence it uses journey motif to find answers to it.

---

## References

Anita, Desai. *Journey to Ithaca* New Delhi: Minerva, 1995

Gita, Mehta. *A River Sutra*

New Delhi: Penguins India 1993

Usha, Bande. *Journey Metaphor in Indian Women's Writing. Dissemination of knowledge series Cultural Space and Diaspora*. Shimla, Indian Institute of Advanced Studies 2003

Pramod K Nayar *Postcolonial Literature An Introduction*, New Delhi, Pearson 2008

---



Vivek Dinkar Khabde, M.A., NET

Assistant Professor

S. S. Dhamdhare Arts and Commerce College

Talegaon Dhamdhare, Tal-Shirur, District: Pune. 412208

Maharashtra

India

[Vivek\\_mail@rediffmail.com](mailto:Vivek_mail@rediffmail.com)

[vivvek@hotmail.com](mailto:vivvek@hotmail.com)