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'Illusionary Homelands' and In-Between Identities: Liminal Existence of the 'Indian (Non)-Diaspora'

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Abstract

The influence of colonialism and the emergence of globalisation have gradually induced a mixed culture that neither can be attached to the innateness of the traditionalist attributes of the home country nor the foreignness of the Western idiosyncrasies. Though not directly clipped into the identity of a diaspora in spatial existence, the residents in the country also experience an equal or more departure in the context of perpetuating the traditional culture through their lifestyle. There arises an in-between state of existence – neither traditional nor foreign. This research article explores how the residents in India possess alienation in their cultural identities concerning the hybrid forms of lifestyle followed regularly, qualifying to be termed based on the regularity of lifestyle as the 'Indian non-diaspora'. The argument about the liminal existence of the residents in India, similar to the Indian Diaspora, is substantiated with the help of various secondary sources that describe the three factors selected for analysis. The research article would provide insights on the residents of the country from the perspective of the still-prevailing hegemonic influence of colonialism, the ongoing globalisation effects and the traditionally existing multiculturalism in the country.

Keywords: diaspora, globalisation, hybrid, liminal, multiculturalism, postcolonialism.

Introduction

Multiculturalism in India has become a challenging factor that equally divides and unites the unique and diverse features of the country. Existing with distinct and native characteristics in various spheres, including the geographical, linguistic, cultural, historical, and political aspects, the diversity of India has always been appreciated by the world community. With the expression of both micro and macro-level identities at the same time, the essence of the nativity, with a history of centuries in terms of the culture and lifestyle of the people in the country is challenged by the advent of external influences. With the increasing influence of globalisation, there has recently been a rapid intermixing of native culture and lifestyle with that of the foreign. Prior to the development of technological advancements and the gradual expansion of the Western world's possibilities brought about by the globalisation process, the forced and voluntary amalgamation of colonial interests by foreign powers into the land and its people had initiated an increased deviation from the naturally inherited culture and lifestyle.

Though, from a general viewpoint, it is a common notion that the diaspora is subject to foreign influences exerted by the host land in which they live. Along with the intervention of time and active involvement with the distinguishable peculiarities of the host country, the diaspora is gradually shifted from the culture and practices followed in their home country to the newly discovered identity showcased by the host country. This process of inclusion is gradual and time-consuming depending on the factors that control the diaspora's ability to adapt to changing situations. Discussions and arguments based on the inclination of the residents of the home country – whether towards their native culture and lifestyle or the foreign – have created confusion about the identity that is projected in such conditions of non-diaspora. Keeping in mind the shift that is evident in the diaspora community, this research article discusses the current situation of the Indian non-diaspora who reside within the boundaries of their home country and are equally influenced by native and foreign cultures. The analysis of the research revolves around the various factors that define their identity as part of the known and unknown influence of the residues of colonialism and the increasing presence of Westernisation in society as a result of the various possibilities of globalisation. The underground factor behind the intention of this research is to determine whether the residents of India, similar to the Indian diaspora, experience the in-between state of living by becoming liminal entities having no static permanence in being attached to either their native or the foreign influence on their culture and lifestyle, thus altering the innateness of their identities. In this context, the very notion of diaspora touched on by Salman Rushdie is relevant. He says, "It's my present that is foreign, and that the past is home" (Rushdie, 1991, p. 9). The existence of the residents from the cultural aspect of the country is said to be foreign, while the traditional qualities of culture, mostly authentic during the past, are the actual home, which is ignored. With the passage of time, colonial imperialism, its continuing hegemony, and the more powerful globalisation effects have created a sense of alienation from innateness and authentic cultural identity.

Theoretical Review: Postcolonialism, Globalisation, and Multiculturalism

To provide the necessary clarity to the discussion on the research problem highlighted in the article, a brief idea of the correlation between postcolonialism, globalisation, and multiculturalism in the Indian context is required. It assists in tracing how the result of the three produces an identity crisis, leading to an in-between state of neither thrusting onto one nor the other, but having a significant influence on both in forming an identity that is not constrained by the limits of either native or foreign origin.

The postcolonial period continues to have its effect on the lands and the people who were once a part of the process of colonisation conducted by the countries that were powerful, dominant and imperialist. Though the countries that suffered under the rule of the colonial powers became independent, the imprints of colonisation in terms of architecture, language, culture, lifestyle, etc. still conduct their hegemonic rule on the victims. Therefore, the term does not mean the end of colonialism but rather denotes the continuity of a similar type of colonialism successive to the period of high imperialism and colonial occupation (Drew, 1999, p. 230). In the colonial history of India, the major share has been played by the British East India Company, which led to disturbances in the political, cultural, and economic spheres of the country. The influence of the

Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch cannot be excluded as the unfortunate inclinations towards domination were initiated on the people by them in the different selected parts of India. The imposition of the belief that it is the 'white man's burden' to revive the culture of the third world led to the practice of marginalisation that was produced at the high point of imperialism (Mishra and Hodge, 2005, p. 380).

Globalisation acts as an extension of the hegemonic influence of the residues of colonialism grounded in imperial ideology, signalling a higher level of economic, cultural, and social cross-border networks than before, with the peculiarity of appearing to be shrinking rather than the old method of expanding territories (Hoogvelt, 1997, p. xiv). It is hinged on the compression of the world and global consciousness, affecting national cultures and negating cultural boundaries, thus recreating the continuing history of imperialism of capitalist development and expansion (Akoh, 2008, p. 165). With the creation of a global village that promotes the exchange of various distinguishing factors such as culture and lifestyle, the identities that have a strong bond with nativity are altered concerning the proximity of influence exerted by foreign cultures. The imperialistic colonisation of the Western world, especially that of Britain, is more effectively continued through its hegemonic subjugation using language, culture, and many more direct and indirect attributes connected with its present existence as independent entities. Post-colonialism is an extension of capitalism for Frantz Fanon as it is strongly based on the theory and practice of exploitation (Fanon & Phicox, 2004). Globalisation goes in terms with the ideologies followed by the post-colonial world but on the view contended by Homi Bhabha that mutual recognitions are possible through interaction between people from different cultural backgrounds (Bhabha, 1994).

Multiculturalism has been argued as a critique of orientalism (Runnymede, 1997) as it has its roots based not firmly on the representation of the East as subordinate to the West. In a multicultural society, an amalgamation of every aspect of living that makes a community through the recognition of the variety of traits and identities occurs amid conflicts and tussles (Chettri and Tripathi, 2019, p. 6). This speciality of multiculturalism is most evident in the social situation of India, where several cultural identities within the nation are often separated from each other to be united as a whole. For example, the cultural characteristics of a person living in the state of Kerala differ from those of a person in West Bengal, who follows a different lifestyle. With geographic and linguistic differences, the other factors associated with it change, making it an entirely different experience to experience India's diversity.

The qualitative approach followed in this research article utilises descriptive analysis with the help of secondary data that substantiates the altered nature of the culture and lifestyle of the people who reside within the geographic jurisdiction of India. For analysis, certain factors that define the current status of people, such as language, food habits, and clothing fashion, are considered in the article. These three factors are selected for analysis as they are more closely related to the daily lives of people in India. Through the gathering of details about the present situation of the three factors among Indians who reside in their homeland, the shift from the innate roots of the traditional and cultural aspects of the country is traced. The discussions based on the altered characteristics of the three factors, and also its traditional roots as a result of the influence of postcolonialism and globalisation are conducted to state the presence of liminal existence of the residents in India similar to the alienation and identity crisis experienced by the Indian diaspora.

The Micro and Macro Identities

Due to the diversity that provides multiple identities for a person at the same time, the identity of an Indian citizen who resides in their homeland cannot be easily specified to just one. Being an Indian, the person might also be known based on the geographical distribution, as per the categorisation of different states and union territories, on linguistic terms, grounded on the peculiarities of the locality in which the person lives, and even also according to the cultural, religious, and racial characteristics. According to this perspective of intersectionality, a person having the macro identity as an Indian can also possess different micro identities such as south Indian, north Indian, Tamil, Brahmin, Punjabi, Hindu, tribal, and so on. Within a large frame of having the single identity of being an Indian who resides in the home country, the person will also be known based on several micro identities. As per the geographical and cultural peculiarities of India, the way of living changes with each hundred or two hundred kilometres. For example, even if one single language is spoken in a state, the accent and dialect change with each district within the state. Shashi Tharoor argues his points on the multiculturalism and pluralism of India to reveal that no one has the exact archetypal 'Indianness' as to how a Russian or British citizen can easily claim. These thoughts make all citizens in India unique in their own right, as well as, in some ways, confined to their own boundaries. He writes in his essay "The Idea of India: India's Mosaic of Multiplicities" that this availability of multiculturalism is unique and tolerant to an extent under the strict premises of the Indian constitution, democracy, judiciary, and legislature (Tharoor, 2014, p. 111).

Salman Rushdie comments about the Indian diaspora who are away from the geographical and cultural reachability of their home country that,

physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create, fictions, not actual cities or villages but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind. (Rushdie, 1991, p. 10)

The same multiple identities are present in the case of the eating culture followed by the resident Indians. On a wider platform of analysis, the macro identity of following the cuisine of Indian variety in foods is entitled to a person who resides in India. This differentiation is easy when compared with the food habits followed by countries like Japan or America, which have a monocultural food diet. But, on analysing the root of the person, it can be understood that there too exists a micro identity for the person which can be affiliated with any one of the states and that to a certain particular area with a difference in the food culture. A person who visits India to explore its food habits would get confused by the large variety of food cultures present in the country.

Linguistic In-Betweenness: English as a Global Language

These wide distributions of multiple identities and cultures that are unique to the Indians were disturbed by the encroachment of the foreign culture and lifestyle that were imposed using direct and indirect methods. Lord Macaulay, during the East India Company's economic and political invasion of India, commented on the need to form a class of interpreters from India who would

stand between them and Indians with a high inclination towards English morals and intellect. His words read as,

To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population. (Macaulay and Young, 1935)

This refining of the vernacular characteristics of Indian culture and lifestyle continues to happen even decades after the independence of the country from the colonial-cum-imperialist powers of the West. The best example of such hegemony is the English language itself, which is widely used even while conversing in the native mother tongue. From the definitions, the resultant code-mixing is identified as using two languages such that a third, new code emerges, in which elements from the two languages are incorporated into a structurally definable pattern. (Maschler, 1998, p. 125)

Many words do not even have an equivalent vocabulary in the regional languages. For better understanding and ease of conversation, the common word used in English is substituted for the required position. Also, the trend of intermixing languages has been common among people, which increases the possibility of degrading the right use of regional languages. An example of such code-mixing and code-switching is *Hinglish*, which is a mix of languages such as Hindi and English used in India. In an interview conducted among 24 people, they were asked to converse in their regional language. During the conversation, they were not able to continue using monolingual Hindi – instead, they included 18.5% English in their speech (Chand, 2016). In day-to-day use of regional language, certain words, such as bike, switch, mobile, bus, phone, etc., do not have an equivalent vocabulary. It has now evolved as the lingua franca irrespective of the various classes of Indians, giving an equal influence to the change in culture too (Barnali, 2017, p. 121).

Even though the seven decades of independence have been conflicting in many ways, the English language, which is mainly a colonial contribution of the British to India, continues to play a vital role in producing the agenda of its cultural hegemony in India. This particular language, which has become more essential to the world with the rise of globalisation, though helps to reduce the linguistic gaps between cultures, also injects the indirect imperialistic characteristics of the colonisers. Amidst the arguments about the hegemonic nature of English, it is also considered an endangering factor for the indigenous languages. From the standpoint of multiculturalism and multilingualism, it aids in breaking down class and caste barriers and can also produce a stable sociolinguistic environment (Vaish, 2005, p. 203). Thus, the author views that though the language has linguistically subalternised and disenfranchised many, it acts as a linguistic capital due to the updates on the market forces of globalisation. Moreover, the reluctance of the youth to promote their mother tongue has made it easy for foreign languages to invade, especially English, to influence even culture and lifestyle and become prevalent (Prakesh, 2018, p. 20). The language, which was imposed for colonial and imperialist purposes, has now become an inextricable part of the culture, particularly in workplaces and middle-class settlements. It links cultures through the process of controlling the global market.

Betwixt and Between: Altered Eating Habits

To an extent, the food and cultural identity of a country are closely linked as they can define changes in the generalised notion of a community. Food has been a major factor in understanding cultures within and beyond the boundaries of the division devised for the easy categorisation of areas into states and even districts. The peculiar food culture of a specific area is also linked to the memories and identities of a larger community. The food culture has its connections with the colonial past of India, where Anglicists like Macaulay encouraged Indians to be 'Englishmen' whereas the Orientalists recalled the natives to retrieve the lost history and civilisation through the authentic 'Indianness' (Narayan, 1995, p. 67). The early Orientalists, such as H. T. Colebrook and William Jones, who conducted research on Sanskrit literature, history, and philosophy, were keen on advocating the notion of a golden age that was prosperous in authentic Indian culture. When colonisation brought glimpses of moving toward Western notions, the later effect of the thought of the global community popularised the spread of the Western taste along with the other cultures and intrusions of the European and American cultures. Following vegetarianism from a long tradition, new studies have informed that only about 40% of India's total population, estimated at 1.2 billion people, is now under such a category (Bankman, 2013). This is most prevalent among middle-class urban settlers. Due to the ease of preparation, rather than limiting themselves to functions and special occasions, 79% of Indians cook western food in their kitchens (Sarin, 2019). The interest behind such encroachments on food culture was supported by corporate interests to widen their business. The establishments of global brands such as McDonald's, Pizza Hut, Burger King, and KFC have to be considered as part of this global extension. Food globalisation has been worldwide with the spread of these American food brands that allegedly began to eliminate local cuisines and floodway (Turner and Holton, 2015, p. 478).

Though India is already diverse in its traditional food culture with thousands of varieties, they all can be categorised under the macro expression of the innate identity. However, the recent popularity of fast food and tastes similar to those found on western plates demonstrates Indians' keen interest in tastes beyond their borders. Colonial influences have initiated the assimilation of foreign tastes into Indian food culture. Indian food varieties like the *bohri dabba gosht*, *salonee broccoli*, *nargisi kofta*, *shami kebab*, *dak bungalow chicken curry*, *culcutta bhetki*, *vindaloo*, *galouti mousse*, *jamun ceviche*, *samosa*, *khichdi*, etc. are very few among the long list of adapted, integrated, and inspired tastes from European colonisers (Prabhu, 2019). The colonial transition in food culture that was followed by the people who tried to imitate the Englishness rejected their identity so as to become elevated into the British culture. The memsahibs of the nineteenth century had an interest in developing a British lifestyle in the sub-continent for which they tried to invite the foreign food culture into their diet by collectively refusing the intake of Indian dishes in their colonial homes. At the same time, the interesting part is that the Victorian homes of England were decorated with Indian objects, and they began to include curry in their diet (Chaudhuri, 1992). The term 'curry', for the British, does not only point to a specific dish variety but denotes the Indian diet as a whole. The quest to transit from the existing identity to another can be seen as an influence of the idea of inferiority and repression injected into third-world colonised countries like India. With these transitions and transformations in diet, the food culture of Indian society as a macro entity has been separated from the

permanence of innate identity, from being exclusively Indian to the condition of practising a mixed food culture, not only from the West but also from other parts of the world.

Beyond the Threshold of Indian Lifestyle: Clothing and Fashion

The distinction between modern fashion concepts and traditional ones is more regarded as adaptations of Western culture versus the other, respectively. The incorporation of Westernised notions into Indian clothing culture is part of a tendency to become physically attached to the West's cultural dominance, which continues through the process of still existing hegemony. The reminiscence of colonialism, mainly due to the intermixing of cultures, has created a tremendous change in the clothing culture of India. Within the micro and macro identities of the nation, there are several forms of clothing trends that are followed and updated from the traditional roots as part of both regional and national uniqueness. This mentality of blind adaptation to western fashion is evident from the use of clothes that do not match their climatic conditions. For example, in the Mediterranean climatic conditions of India, the use of blazers, coats, and thick woollen dresses does not match the needs of the person, but are worn to match the Western status and style. The most commonly used dress, i.e., jeans, among all genders does not fit the climatic conditions of the dry zones in India. But, irrespective of such health issues and comfort, they are widely used among the youth. The use of luxury brands, mostly the fashion followed in western countries, is said to symbolise modernity, economic, and social development. Though Indians prefer to wear modern dress as a symbol of being Westernised, they continue to wear ethnic outfits proudly. The consumer approach is more established with Western cultural values (Wong and Ahuvia, 1998), where the brands mainly influence the psychological attitude towards such altered identities and cultural aspects of the Indian customer. Therefore, the subjugation based on clothing continues to take place where globalisation effects in the country have at the same time brought western brands into India and have a substantial effect on the lifestyle of the people in the country (Handa and Khare, 2011, p. 1). The percentage statistics of the men's western wear market in India account for approximately 93% of the market size. It was estimated at around 1,33,246 crore rupees in 2018 for the Indian western wear market for men and women together (Dhir and Bhatia, 2019). Increased urbanisation and a middle-class population, along with the intrusion of the influence of globalisation, have helped the western wear market prosper in India. These are more prevalent in societies that have the possibility to get into multiculturalism, with an inclination towards European and American cultures.

Discussion and Findings

To be liminal is a state of being in-between, betwixt and between, and living through the threshold. The above discussions conclude to the point of stating the presence of liminality in the people who, unlike the Indian diaspora, directly and indirectly, become neither a part of the Western nor the traditional Indian culture; but experience the attributes of both the cultures when living within the multicultural limits of the home country. The anthropological discussions on liminality as a theoretical concept are defined as neither here nor there; that usually is betwixt and between the positions often slipping through the network of classifications that normally locate

states and positions in cultural space (Turner, 1969, p. 95). Though discovered and discussed mainly in the ritual contexts, the concept contained in the theory of liminality is more relevant in finding the relationship between the non-Indian diaspora, western culture and the traditional 'Indianness'.

The three factors: language, food habits, and clothing fashion have made their transition from authentic nativity to a state of amalgamation with the influences from western cultures. It is not possible to conclude that the natives living within the land of India have completely disregarded the importance and practicality of these factors that immensely contributes to develop, sustain and inspire the traditional culture of India. Colonisation and globalisation have contributed much to manipulating and adulterating the authenticity of being in the traditional and cultural attributes of the country. The Indian diaspora, as they have to survive in a distant host country, is forced to adjust to the culture and lifestyle of that country. It is natural to get gradually incorporated into the new host conditions and way of life. The article discusses the unlike and unfortunate situation of the cultural diaspora, as followed by the natives situated in the homeland. The discussions about the three factors that influence the culture and lifestyle within the home country give rise to the notion that the people who live in the homeland, those who haven't received the status of an Indian diaspora, are also affected by the influence of foreign cultures. Though Indian food, clothing, and music are emotional attachments and powerful reminders of home for immigrants (Lessinger, 1995, p. 32), the availability of the same, as well as the intense desire to lead a westernised lifestyle, leads residents of the home country to prefer the non-traditional. It happens as a continuation of colonial hegemony and globalisation effects. In such circumstances, with the help of the analysis of the conditions faced by the people, it can be understood that the non-Indian diaspora, specifically the citizens who reside in their homeland, is experiencing an in-between state, which is a betwixt and between situation. It is because the amalgamation or pure inclusion of Westernisation of these three factors has given rise to a situation where the people can neither be called completely followers of traditional culture nor strictly transitioned to the culture of the western world. They live in a liminal state in which they speak both their regional language/mother tongue and English, intake both diets, and dress in both ethnic and western clothing on appropriate occasions. Thus, both the western and the traditional cultures are followed by people residing in the country, claiming to be different from those of the Indian diaspora. This instability and irregularity of liminal existence point to cultural hybridity, third space, and interstitial passage between fixed identifications (Bhabha, 1994, p. 4). It allows the people involved "to elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of their selves" (p. 38).

Conclusion

Multiculturalism in India, consisting of many micro-identities giving rise to a single macro-identity, would be a perfect ground for foreign cultures to invade. Though multicultural, the micro identities that are spread in every geographical space of the country have to be considered as part of a single *thali* without the intervention of an external cultural hegemony. The discussions and findings of the research lead to the conclusion that even though native Indian citizens reside in their home country, they too possess equal alienation through the liminal existence of neither being able to completely attach to the traditional culture nor the western. In a way, by analysing

the existing and increasing cultural instability among the native Indian citizens residing in the country, they can also be quoted under the same term – Indian diaspora, with certain exceptions in their geographical existence.

Salman Rushdie's thoughts on the in-betweenness of being a part of the Indian diaspora provide the right state for people who are physically away from their homeland for various reasons of their own. Nevertheless, recent technological developments in communication, information exchange, transport, and travel have contributed to the advancement of transnational networks and even virtual communication. It has reduced the intensity of distance, alienation, and diasporic existence of people who migrate from their home country, thus reviving the local in a global context (Sahoo, 2006, p. 84). But his words can also be discussed from the perspective of the Indians residing in their home country, who, through various cultural aspects, are equal to the Indian diaspora. Rushdie mentions,

Not Western and not Indian, we are also partly of the west. Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes, we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times we fall between two stools. (Rushdie, 1991, p. 15)

This straddling effect between two cultures – the Indian and the Western – gives rise to the liminal existence of being and not being an absolute part of both cultures. Thus, the term 'Imaginary Homelands' used by Rushdie in his essay and book can be revised while looking at its contemporariness in thirty years of its use. With the more powerful tools of hegemony, the instabilities related to the cultures give rise to illusionary homelands as authentic and innate culture rooted in the pure traditional contexts of the nation has gradually become an illusion to the residents who are betwixt and between the two/many cultures.

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