



About Us: <http://www.the-criterion.com/about/>

Archive: <http://www.the-criterion.com/archive/>

Contact Us: <http://www.the-criterion.com/contact/>

Editorial Board: <http://www.the-criterion.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.the-criterion.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.the-criterion.com/fa/>



ISSN 2278-9529
Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal
www.galaxyimrj.com

Trauma and Rehabilitation in the Selected Fiction of Indian Diaspora Writers: A Psychoanalytical Study

Sachin Sampatrao Salunkhe
Research Scholar,
Shivaji University, Kolhapur.

Abstract:

Trauma Studies in literature is a recent development which explores the trauma in literary texts in terms of psychological, familial, racial, social, communal and collective traumatic domains. Similarly, Psychoanalytical study deals with Freudian theory of human behavioral patterns during trauma and psychological disturbances, inner conflicts, stress, injuries and rehabilitation. Trauma Theory is basically associated with psychological treatments of the people who are either ill or have passed through traumatic conditions. Trauma Studies also touches upon Culture Studies and Gender Studies. Similarly, the term 'rehabilitation' means restoration to normal life by training oneself with the circumstances he or she is put into. It is an act of schooling or preparing oneself after illness, stress, imprisonment or trauma. The Diaspora citizens rehabilitate and reinstate themselves in the unaccustomed land, they originally do not belong. Rehabilitation is a term used in Psychology, Medical Science, and drug addiction, Criminology, International Relations, Slum Studies and Literature as well. The writers of Indian Diaspora selected for the present research are Meena Alexander, Anjana Appachana and Jhumpa Lahiri who epitomize the psychological upheavals, trauma and rehabilitation of the migrants, through variant themes like multiculturalism, dislocation, isolation, loneliness, alienation, nostalgia, homelessness, the problem of assimilation, frustration, hybridity, exile, cultural displacement, and loss of belonging through their subjects. These writers are critiqued as Diaspora writers by many scholars, academicians, critics and writers in various books and journals.

Keywords: Trauma, Rehabilitation, Diaspora, Multiculturalism, Dislocation, Nostalgia

Introduction:

The present times showcase abundant increase in psychological narratives. These narratives signpost complicated scenario of human life, complex human relationships and the intricacies of human psychology. In the era of Post globalization the means of transportation have increased, sources of income boosted up; and people have become more vocal regarding their emotions and feelings. Women are seen more vocal about their pleasures, agonies, angst, stress and trauma. In past women were subjugated in the parochial society which is evident even today to certain extent. In India, the patriarchal cryptograph puts women under certain restrictions, but as the women get out of the geographical borders of India they begin to breathe free like men. The space in the host nation caters the Indian female subjects to explore their femininities by sometimes comparing and contrasting the culture of the host nation with that of their home country. This freedom from the homeland and home culture does not sustain for long as the host nation brings them the notion of loss of homeland, culture and identity. The notion of geographical, social, political, lingual and cultural dislocation haunts the female subjects of the Diaspora community. Further, Indian women are the cultural bearers as they are the protectors and custodians of Indian culture and ethnicity. The geographical dislocation brings them the

trauma of loss of homeland. This physical dislocation disconnects the Diaspora subjects from their home culture as they find themselves in alien culture. Further, they find a clash in their identity as in the alien land they are not known fully to the people of the host nation. These fractured identities, thus, invite psychological trauma for women. Men, on the other hand, assimilate easily with the culture of the host nation as compared to women. Therefore, the issues like trauma and rehabilitation of women in the Diaspora space becomes an interesting study.

Trauma:

It is also necessary to trace the origin of the term “trauma” as a prerequisite of the present study. Trauma as a term has been used since the Greek times which was used to convey, ‘wound’ or some ‘harm’. Although the precise definition of the modern concept of trauma varies according to context and discipline, there is a general agreement that if trauma is a wound, it is a very strange kind of wound. Elissa Marder in her resourceful article entitled, “Trauma and Literary Studies: “Enabling Questions” explicates the term in the modern times as it is not related to the physical wound but it is asset of challenges to understanding certain social forces. Marder expounds:

There is no specific set of physical manifestations identifying trauma, and it almost invariably produces repeated, uncontrollable, and incalculable effects that endure long after its ostensible “precipitating cause.” Trauma, therefore, presents a unique set of challenges to understanding. Further, because traumatic events often happen *due to* social forces as well as *in* the social world, trauma has an inherently political, historical, and ethical dimension. (Marder: Web)

Trauma, thus, is related to variant social causes with its prime origin in the social environment in which a person lives. Society and culture trigger trauma. Also, trauma is also due to political situations. For instance, the change in political scenario or political leadership may also inflict trauma in the lives of many persons. The writers like Meena Alexander, Anjana Appachana and Jhumpa Lahiri which are selected for the present corpus of research work ruminate a series of trauma in the lives of the characters due to political reasons in their fiction. Similarly, historical events add to the trauma of the characters in the fiction. A historical instance may equally invite trauma in the lives of the characters. The fiction of the women writers of the present research also showcase an array of traumatic events in the lives of the characters of their narratives. Furthermore, the ethics and ethical beliefs of a culture and nation also influence the mindset of a community. Indians, when placed in a strange location, behave in a different way. Especially the first generation of migrants feel it a more complex area to face the transition of ethical setup.

Rehabilitation:

The term ‘rehabilitation’ means restoration to normal life by training oneself with the circumstances he or she is put into. It is an act of schooling or preparing oneself after illness, stress, imprisonment or trauma. The Diaspora citizens rehabilitate and reinstate themselves in the unaccustomed land, they originally do not belong. Rehabilitation is a term used in Psychology, Medical Science, and drug addiction, Criminology, International Relations, Slum Studies and Literature as well. Trauma and rehabilitation are wider terms used in many disciplines. The writers of Diaspora deal predominantly the psychological issues of trauma and

rehabilitation which results due to dislocation, loss, identity crisis, cultural hybridity, frustration and the problem of assimilation with the foreign culture. The Diaspora literature produced in the last two decades explicates the trauma and rehabilitation of the migrant subjects in the international space which invites a psychoanalytical inquiry in the behaviour of the Diaspora subjects.

The writers of Indian Diaspora selected for the present research are Meena Alexander, Anjana Appachana and Jhumpa Lahiri who epitomize the psychological upheavals, trauma and rehabilitation of the migrants, through variant themes like multiculturalism, dislocation, isolation, loneliness, alienation, nostalgia, homelessness, the problem of assimilation, frustration, hybridity, exile, cultural displacement, and loss of belonging through their subjects. These writers are critiqued as Diaspora writers by many scholars, academicians, critics and writers in various books and journals.

A psychoanalytical study of the works of these writers regarding traumatic conditions and rehabilitation of the characters would definitely give a different dimension to the works of the select writers. For the proposed research the researcher has selected the fiction of Meena Alexander, Anjana Appachana and Jhumpa Lahiri. The researcher has delimited the proposed study by selecting two representative literary texts of each writer - two novels of Meena Alexander, two novels of Jhumpa Lahiri, one novel and a collection of short stories by Anjana Appachana for the present research. The Research paper proposes to study these texts from psychoanalytical perspective and will attempt to trace variant elements of trauma and rehabilitation in the selected fiction.

Meena Alexander (b. 1951)

She is a writer of Indian Diaspora and a well-known Diaspora poet and a novelist whose writings reflect psychological trauma and rehabilitation through her own diasporic experiences such as uprooting and exile, migrant memories, separation and loneliness – all the way from India to Sudan and America. Alexander was born in Allahabad, India, on February 17, 1951. She has produced two novels *Nampally Road* (1991) and *Manhattan Music* (1997), and she has also been the recipient of numerous awards, including awards from the Fulbright and Rockefeller Foundations. In *Nampally Road* Alexander focuses the issue of a gang rape by police in Hyderabad leading to psychological, personal and communal trauma. The novel is a narrative of the social, psychological and collective trauma, observed and narrated from the lens of a Diaspora subject, the focal character, Mira. Alexander's second novel *Manhattan Music* is infused with power of myth, poetry and the inner life. In this novel Alexander articulates the trauma of transgressing the physical distance between India to Manhattan. It brings to the fore the traumatic situation of Indian Diaspora, fanaticism, ethnic tolerance, interracial affairs, love, sex and marriage. Sandhya, the focal character faces trauma as she loses her love, Gautam in riots and further marries Stephen. She is stranded between her memories of the past and the existence of the presence in the new land. It captures the love and death of Gautam, the lover of Sandhya which leads to the psychological trauma in Sandhya's character. The novel very well depicts the trauma of identity, existence and rehabilitation of the focal female character.

Nampally Road primarily deals with the socio-political trauma in the 1970s postcolonial India. The political leaders who are elected democratically behave in autocratic manner during Emergency by exploiting their subjects. The novella concerns with the personal and social trauma during the Emergency in India. Alexander through this text attempts to throw light upon

the rise of neo-feudalism and the exploitation of the commons during Emergency declared by Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the first female Prime Minister of free India. The political authorities, like the Prime Minister of India and the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, in the text, enjoy autocracy creating a greater amount of exploitation and displacement of their own natives. Indians who are free from the colonial rule are made to feel dislocated within their own homeland. Meena Alexander observes how the basic human rights are denied to people due to Emergency in the country. Mira, the narrator in the novel observes the psychological and social trauma during this period. She experiences the pangs of displacement within her homeland. Alexander touches upon the issues like nation, race, gender and identity.

Meena Alexander's *Manhattan Music* (1997) epitomizes predominantly the collective trauma, sufferings and maladies of three major female characters-Sandhya Rosenblum, Draupadi Dinkins and Sakhi Karunakaran located in New York and Manhattan Island in the turmoil of socio-political unrest. Alexander unfolds the trauma of the diasporic lives of male characters like Jay and Chandu Sandhya's cousins. Eventually, she introduces the diasporic, dislocated life of Rashid, an Arab American. The novel, hence, presents a collage of traumatic experiences of diasporic characters. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, one of the celebrated writers of Indian Diaspora compliments the novel, articulating the psychological trauma and inner conflicts in the characters, "At once violent and erotic, and somber, *Manhattan Music* is infused with the power of myth and poetry and the inner life, the electric intersection of characters who illuminate for the reader both the Old World and the New." (Net) Here, Chitra Banerjee triggers the notion of dislocated of the characters in two worlds. Her prime area of interest is the psychological sufferings of the characters. Similarly, Jessica Hagedorn, another writer of repute, critiques the novel as "An insightful look at the multiculti, trendy New York downtown art scene of the troubled '90's." (Net) This remark of Jessica triggers the social trauma and the political unrest of the 1990s. Also her remark unfolds the foregrounding of the novel as a multicultural document exploring the decade of 1990s in the international space.

Anjana Appachana (b. 1951)

Anjana Appachana settled in the USA, is the recipient of an O' Henry Festival Prize and a National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Fellowship. Her *Incantations and other Stories* (1992) is a collection of short stories set in India, but the characters in them seem somehow displaced within their own society. Appachana explicates the emotional trauma and re-establishment of her characters in the collection of these short stories. Each story presents a new life or lives in trauma, stress and fatigue. Similarly, *Listening Now* (1997) a novel by Appachana which unfolds the inner and finer layers of a woman's love story with its agonizing secrets, complexes, fears, trauma, strain and rehabilitation. The novel explicates the experiences and trauma of an ordinary Indian woman; her dreams and passions, frustrated and realized through the domestic pattern of her life.

Anjana Appachana's *Incantations and Other Stories*, a debut collection of eight short stories saw light in 1991. The stories in this collection showcase a number of characters who feel psychologically tormented and dislocate in their own land and home. The domestic relations in the familial norms get strained as a result; characters feel alienated, marginalized and frustrated. This displacement of Appachana's characters is psychological and internal. On the cover page of the collection of these short stories a comment by one of the leading magazines in India, *India*

Today is printed which critiques the theme of Appachana's writings, "Collectively these stories portray the tragedy of those caught in the whirlpool of modern India." All stories are set in India, but the people in them seem somehow displaced within their own home and society, though it is very modern and vibrant society. Appachana manages to capture the enveloping sufferings, agonies and frustration of her subjects. Minutely she gives her readers the account of stress, worries and trauma of her characters that are common. Though her characters seem common the trauma they undergo is certainly uncommon. Her characters are everyday characters representing the middle class Indian ethnicity who face some unexpected moments of trauma in their lives.

Listening Now (1998) is a collection of seven stories which has different narrators. All the narrators in these narrations are females who narrate their inner conflict to the other female in an attempt to lessen the burden of the trauma with which they suffer. These stories tied together give a peculiar touch to the plot and structure of the novel. Appachana is inviting her readers to go back to the past where women shared their sorrows, agonies and happenings with other women. The writer epitomizes the problems of women which in ancient times were shared orally, in the modern style of narration. *Listening Now* also indicates the act of listening by other women the sufferings of the narrator who chronicles her past. The use of interior monologues, flashback and stream-of-consciousness techniques to spotlight the complexities of human nature, the shift of the characters from their regular chores of life to their fantasy world and the sensibilities of the female protagonists in the present situation which invoke the notion of alienation, dislocation, loss of identity and exile contribute to the intertwining of the multiple narratives in the novel. Appachana concerns primarily with the psychological trauma of Indian women in her narratives. Her narratives explicate the plight of women who are strangled in their marital relationships and are also suffocated in the new familial relations that the marriage forces upon them. Further, the writer attempts to show that a woman will listen to the sufferings of other woman. This is an act of sharing trauma and conflicts that facilitates the narrator to purge her sorrows and rehabilitate with her trauma.

Jhumpa Lahiri (b.1967)

The writer of the collection of short stories *Interpreter of Maladies* won her Pulitzer Prize 2000 for Fiction. Her first novel, *The Namesake* epitomizes the psychological trauma of identity crisis, the conflicts between couples, individual, familial and cultural stress. Lahiri explores the trauma and rehabilitation in the focal characters, Gogol and Moushumi. The novel depicts the trauma at cultural confrontations, migration, sex, love, escapism, mobility, rebel, extramarital relationship, nomadism and mongrelism in major characters. Further, Lahiri's latest novel *The Lowland* (2013) which was nominated for the Booker Prize, 2013, chronicles the psychological trauma at personal, social and collective levels. The novel is foregrounded on Naxalism in Calcutta wherein Udayan, the brother of Subhash and husband of Gauri is encountered by the police. Lahiri showcases the trauma at different altitudes by making the widow and pregnant Gauri marrying Subhash and migrating to America. Similarly, Bela, the daughter of Gauri and Udayan voices the trauma of an unmarried pregnant woman who explores her femininity in her nomadism and quest for identity. The novel epitomizes emotional trauma at variant levels ranging from migration, rebel, sex, mobility, identity, escapism, nostalgia and lesbianism. Lahiri is an 'interpreter of maladies' of the subjects in 'the lowland' who feel trapped in 'unaccustomed earth' and struggle for 'the namesake'.

Conclusion:

In the era of Post globalization an array of immigrant writers chronicle their experiences of expatriations, their 'roots' and 'routs' which capture their psychological traumatic itineraries in the international space. Women literary artists are more on the emotional front as compared to men writers. This harbingering of women writers is due to their added sensibility towards the changes and strong connectivity with cultural ties of the homeland. Also a shift in geographical and cultural location brings a sense of psychological insecurity and trauma with females more than it is evident in males.

The fiction of Meena Alexander, Anjana Appachana and Jhumpa Lahiri deals largely with the elements of psychological trauma, inner conflicts, variant psychological behavioral patterns and rehabilitation due to the diasporic identity and sojourn of their characters. Migration, transnationalism, dislocation, cultural hybridity, identity crisis, nostalgia, loss, 'inbetweenness' between spaces, 'root' and 'rout' of the migrants result in psychological trauma. However, these characters rehabilitate and either restore to their own 'selves' or struggle to invent their true identity in their new environment with their fractured identities.

Works Cited:

1. Alexander, Meena. *Nampally Road*. Hyderabad: Disha Books, 1991.
2.,..... *Manhattan Music*. San Francisco: Mercury House, 1997.
3. Appachana, Anjana. *Incantations and other Stories*. Penguin Books: India, 1994.
4.,..... *Listening Now*. IndiaInk: New Delhi, 1998.
5. Lahiri, Jhumpa. *The Namesake*. Flamingo: Great Britain, 2003.
6.,..... *The Lowland*. Random House: India, 2013.
7. Alexander, Meena. *Fault lines* New York: The Feminist Press at the city University of New York, 1993.