

Exploring the unknown territories in Deepa Agarwal's *Journey to the Forbidden City*

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Abstract :

The transnational migration provides a sophisticated examination of the shifting identities and social factors that arise when people migrate beyond their homeland boundaries. With a focus on the difficulties of identity reconstruction, displacement and adjustment within host and homeland cultures, this corpus of literature explores the actual lives of migrants. The migrant characters usually have cross-border relationships, which is a reflection of the customs from their home country. Writers use narrative strategies to show how migrants navigate border crossings, frequently forming diverse identities that are difficult to categorise. Deepa Agarwal in her work *Journey to the Forbidden city* illuminate the complex realities of migration and the transformational potential of an explorer who underwent cross-border migration to find unknown places .The migrant appears as an individual balancing two lands and he often struggle with adaptability, a sense of belonging and displacement, experiencing both nostalgia and the difficulties of assimilating into an unfamiliar culture. These characteristics demonstrate the intricate and varied character of transnational migration, which has important ramifications for people, societies and nations.

Keywords : Migration, identity ,explorer , hostland and assimilation .

Introduction

A comprehensive and enlightening view of the intricate sociocultural and political forces that have influenced the encounters of those who have travelled across borders can be gained by analysing the Indian transnational migration in the context of English literature. This extensive area of study explores how Indian writers have dealt with the subtleties of identity, displacement and navigating cultural landscapes both on the homeland and the host land. Migration and movement have always been an aspect of the history of humanity. Human migration has increased during the past two centuries due to a confluence of several variables, including financial, political, social and environmental factors. This spatial occurrence is still present in the twenty-first century. The modern world has become increasingly interlinked due to globalisation and advancements in communication as well as transport technologies and the concept of travelling across borders and changing one's origins has taken on new meaning.

In the recent years, the Indian transnational migration has gained worldwide attention and respect, contributed significantly to the growing subject of nostalgia and produced a significant study. Beginning in the first century AD, Indian migration entered its ancient era. The initial migration was carried out by a group of people known as gypsies. For the purpose of commercial and cultural exchange, some of the oldest Indian migration may have been linked to civilisations such as the Greeks. During the British colonial era, the indenture system was established, whereby work is classified as state-regulated labour for a term of five years, with the employer possessing the authority to refuse to switch employers. These indentured servants were transported to various British colonies across the globe such as Trinidad, Guyana, Fiji and Mauritius. A number of them were forced to enlist in the army without knowing where they would be stationed. The post-colonial era was different; middle-class migrants were drawn to the new chances overseas and chose to relocate there in order to obtain quality education and employment. Professional migration resulted from this. Despite having a reason for travelling, these individuals often remain in their new country and begin to embrace their transnational identity. Indian transnational migration generally deals with grief, relocation, a sense of nostalgia and hybridisation.

The encounters of thousands of migrants who have crossed frontiers for a variety of motives, such as social refuge, marriage, education or job prospects, are reflected in the diverse and wide-ranging issue of Indian transnational migration in modern writings. Indian

groups have established thriving migrants in nations including the UK, the United States, Canada, the Caribbean and several regions of Europe and the Arab world since the time of British colonisation. Indian literature on transnational migration examines the political, cultural, and emotional challenges of juggling several different realities. The journey of the Indian migration is shaped by elements of one's identity, relocation, conflict between cultures, generational conflicts, and globalisation that surface through the prism of migration.

Often referred to as "transnationalism," global mobility is the practice of relocating individuals from a particular country to another. Managing the border crossings was challenging and there is a little that may be done to drastically cut migration. Such ethnic groups are typically formed in conjunction with the migration of millions of individuals beyond boundaries. The internet, low-cost global travel and affordable international communication choices have made it possible for the majority of people who have relocated abroad in the last few decades to maintain contact with their loved ones back at home. Levitt and Jaworsky (2000) , in their work "Transnational Migration Studies: Past Developments and Future Trends" state that during a moment when social interaction frequently occurs beyond boundaries, transnational studies of migration emphasise that migrants possess choices for keeping ties to their hometown. According to Brooks and Simpson (2012) *in Emotions in transmigration* is a result of ,

geographical boundaries that inevitably causes feelings of separation and pressure among the members of transnational families (84)

According to commitments, familial connections and a feeling of national identity are typically linked to nostalgic and recollections, generating different feelings. Either migrants or their relatives abroad are impacted by the range of emotions that come with isolation and relocation. It is frequently socially and culturally required for migrants to provide dependents who are displaced with emotional as well as financial assistance. The concept of "home" is altered by relocation and the connection between migration and family has been studied from several angles.

A person's "homeland" is their ancestral home and cultural domain. The inhabited country, also referred to as the host land, is where migrants ultimately end up. In the current climate, the influence of globalisation has promoted migration of people and this free movement for capital and the unstoppable expansion of commodities have led to the separation of both economic and governmental authority. People from every corner of the

world are perpetually on the move due to the phenomenon of globalisation, which has sparked conversations about what nationality and identity imply. The growing awareness of the fact that migration is an intricate phenomenon with frequently conflicting effects on both those who leave their homes and those whose accomplish rather, the multidimensional nature of the flow of people flows which include peoples' enduring, short-lived and changing mobilities has been greatly increased .

After entering another nation, migrants frequently develop a network of mutually reliant relationships with those who live there. The goal of the present study is to highlight the various ways that the chosen books may examine migration, diversity and transnational problems.

The characteristics of a migrant is defined by the concept of "transnationality," which also explores the difficulties in establishing closeness with "home" as a self-process. For us, "transnationality" transcends the confines of ideas, deeds and feelings, compelling us to reconsider domains of intellectual investigation such as enquiries of opinions and subjectivities as enmeshed in sociocultural practices and the reorganisation of current familial and social relationships. In order to preserve social and relational ties with people who remain by others, the article examines the familiarities with "home" and consider emotional investments that do not necessarily require connection to the homeland . For migrants, "home" is more than just a residence, a location, an area of town, a country or a place of social, religious or creative solace. Whereas Ahmed his work "Home and away: Narratives of migration and estrangement" (1999) states it as ,

The migration journeys entail a division of homeland as an area of origin with home as a sensory realm of everyday experience (342).

A migrant's "search for home" and how migration affects their interpersonal situations, "home" in the host nation is both a physical and a set of significant connections, recollections and goals to be emplaced" . In the context of daily life in the host land , home could support migrants in achieving an overwhelming feeling of security and familiar. The examined novelists themselves is a migrant , with a focus on those who are excluded and how they adapt to new situations, the selected writer is multi-ethnic and have addressed issues of transnational and ethnic ethos in their works. The works on transnational migration being a part of something in which transnational immigrants influence social and cultural changes

have crucial social power to unite people and nations through the extension of multiple or various ties and identities, is therefore important and pertinent to the modern era.

The background of the Naina Singh's migration is examined in the work of Deepa Agarwal and the examines the breadth and depth of topics, such as identity problems brought on by prejudice based on race, gender, religion, ethnicity and culture makes it noteworthy. Through a targeted examination of modern Asian transnational literature, the study will aid in comprehending the more recent viewpoints and enquiries in detail, ultimately advancing its comprehension on a more extensive and worldwide scale. This study centres on Deepa Agarwal's *Journey to the Forbidden City* (2020), which tells the story of Naina Singh Rawat, an Indian traveller from the Kumaon mountains who endangered his life in order to survey the enormous lands and identify villages and people. He has experienced a sense of adventure, quest, nostalgia and recollection while travelling.

Delving into the unmapped wilderness

The novel explores the background of this extraordinary man who became a legendary adventurer despite starting off as a modest schoolteacher. Rawat's journey was dangerous because he entered the secretive Tibetan realm by posing as a Buddhist monk. The difficult circumstances, cultural hurdles and political manoeuvring that Rawat faced throughout his journey is been accurately portrayed by Agarwal's painstaking inquiry. The novel's realistic depiction of Tibetan culture and geography is among its most remarkable features as Agarwal depicts a region rich in moral and spiritual value, where long-standing customs and beliefs are still practiced.

Journey to the Forbidden City is a celebration of the spirit of mankind that goes above the historical story. Rawat is an inspiration because of his bravery, tenacity and constant curiosity. His tale serves as a tribute to the strength of free will and the timeless appeal of adventure. Deepa Agarwal praises the exploration hurdle of Naina Singh as ,

Naina Singh Rawat's name is permanently engraved in the annuals of Indian exploration. He features in every volume that records the mapping of Tibet and his incredible expeditions have been the subject of films and television programs. (107).

As the British were keen to investigate the Forbidden Land which they considered to be an essential component of their 'Great Game' with Russia and its spies but Dalai Lama prohibited the migration to Tibet in the middle of the nineteenth century. In order to circumvent migration controls, a sizable group of deluded Indians, known as "Pundits," entered Tibet posing as Buddhists as he states ,

The Chinese customs man did not return his greetings. His icy gaze ran over swiftly over Naina Singh and his cousin Mani. 'Who are you? Where do you think you are going? Don't you know foreigners are not allowed to Tibet? (2).

Deepa Agarwal's fascinating fictional work , takes us to many distant places across Asia as it recounts Naina Singh Rawat's adventure . In the late nineteenth century, he was the first Indian to traverse the unexplored area of Tibet. From determining the precise position of Lhasa to documenting Tsangpo and precisely locating them on the world map to being given the title of Pundit, his illustrious and frequently difficult expeditions has left a mark permanently inscribed in the history of Indian exploration. One of the earliest of them was Naina Singh Rawat, the protagonist of the novel. History mostly overlooked him because of other journal-keeping interpreters.

As an explorer he had to go through a terrible challenge in order to complete his mission and thus Deepa Agarwal gives information on the incredible feats of Naina Singh Rawat, shedding light on his remarkable contributions to the field of exploration .Rawat has characterised the Thok Jalong golden field as probably one of the coldest locations he had ever encountered and it proved to be one of the initial areas an outsider visited. Both the devotional wheel and the unique pouches in his backpacks that contained his geological tools were employed by the explorer to conceal his notes. When he thought they would be found, he was often compelled to dispose them underground. Determination and attention are two essential characteristics of a migrant that helps Naina Singh to make his way into an untrodden area.

The majority of migrants travel in groups and on foot due to financial worries. Making the choice to come back to homeland is complex since it involves cultural, educational, social and financial considerations as the migration is influenced by many interconnected push and pull factors.

For Westerners the nineteenth century, Tibet was a distant nation and a complete geographical mystery because for a white man to enter this tightly controlled area was almost impossible. Consequently, Naina Singh Rawat, a daring Indian adventurer from the Kumaon terrain became the chosen one by the British . Wearing a variety of clever disguises, he trekked throughout the region, risking his life in order to take in the enormous distances and recognise numerous towns, cities and people. From correctly locating Lhasa on the map to being given the title of Pundit, his thrilling and often challenging trips made his name permanently etched in the history of Indian discovery.

Moreover Deepa Agarwal creates a novel which emphasises determination and makes many references to Naina Singh's "silver tongue," which enabled him in to converse through obstacles into caravans approaching Tibet as he endured the face of hardship. According to Vidya Thakkar, she says that Deepa Agarwal creates a novel which emphasises determination and makes many references to Naina Singh's "silver tongue," which enabled him in to converse through obstacles into caravans approaching Tibet as he endured the face of hardship. Those who are unfamiliar with Rawat, however, will also find the compact volume intriguing. She states that ,

He overcame the difficult circumstances and finished the task in regardless of having endured a difficult background (5)

People's social as well as personal identities are shaped by the difficulties and opportunities that come with migrating and the scattered existence of communities over across borders. Complicated discussions about identity with a delicate balancing act among the native culture with the demands made by the adopted nation are often hallmarks of a migrant experience. Therefore, a culture having the greatest impact on identity development is highlighted by the Ferrer-Werder's "person-context interaction" theory. It explains the impact of one's identity that is influenced by the culture through actions and society forms oneself from the use of similar languages and concepts that enable people to take the responsibilities of other people, the relationship between the self and identity is important.

Reminiscent of how Naina Singh attempted to strike an equilibrium among his former and present identities. It was additionally difficult to strike a balance between the two personas as an explorer and pundit. Agarwal highlights the identity maintained by Naina as ,

He had to balance his Indian identity with the Tibetan one he had assumed. It was a delicate balancing act, a tightrope walk between two worlds.(58)

The difficulties of preserving one's identity while assimilating into a new culture is emphasised as Rawat had to maintain his Indian ancestry while assimilating into Tibetan traditions and beliefs. Despite their subtlety, these phrases emphasise the intricate relationship between migration and identity. Rawat was compelled to consider issues of authenticity, belonging, and the meaning of identity as a result of his voyage. His background as an ethnic mediator and explorer provides insightful information about the complex character of identity within a globalised society.

In her work of fiction Deepa Agarwal emphasises on the early days of circular transnational migration. Naina in *Journey to the Forbidden City* travels as an explorer and when probed by the Chinese officer, might have been identified as a British official, however the responses instantly link him to his native country. The outcome regarding what they will accomplish in the transaction or mission is the sole factor that gives the protagonist a comfort. The protagonist went through similar situation either he reside within his own native culture or being emotionally transported back to the country of origin when he observes its physical culture.

For them, it serves as an optical illusion in which Naina Singh seeks his own background and exactly how deeply he desires it, rather than actually melting into it. Since he is recognised, his identity had no need to confirm, the idea of pluralism may therefore be traced back to the early stages of migration. In the new nations, the protagonist remained true to self and he preserved his unique identity and culture rather than assimilating into the new one. At the culmination of his life, Naina Singh returned to his hometown. Moreover he has ,

Naina Singh spent many years grooming a new generation of explorers. After he retired, he spent summers at his native villages of Milam and Madcote and winters at the jagir that government had granted in the plains(100).

For many years, Naina Singh trained the upcoming generation of adventurers and he spent summers in his hometown after retiring. Naina Singh's dedication towards instructing and encouraging the upcoming generation of explorers was a major factor in his impact on the exploration industry. With all of his accomplishments and travels, he never forgot his roots and always returned to his hometown. His narrative to the future generations and mentoring of explorers made certain that his story would always be connected to adventure and that his contribution to exploration would continue to be remembered.

Forced migration

Stuart Hall's Push-Pull Theory is a sociological model that explains migration patterns by examining the factors that push people away from their home countries and pull them towards new destinations. This theory provides a captivating examination of forced migration and its effects on identity, which may be used with the narrative of Naina Singh Rawat.

Hall claims that the conventional logic of identification is either intellectual or behavioural and the initial view holds that being one "is the ground of action." The latter aspect concerns an inner vernacular of identity that is continuous, independent, growing and changing. The important question is how those migrants' experiences within the new location affect what they are, instead of how they identify or present them. He states that in *Familiar Stranger A Life Between Two Islands*(2017) ,

From this I came to understand that identity is not a set of fixed attributed, the unchanging essence of the inner self, but a constantly shifting process of positioning. We tend to think of identity as taking us back to our roots, the part of us which remains essentially the same across time. In fact, identity is always a never-completed process of becoming - a process of shifting identifications, rather than a singular, complete, finished state of being.(10)

Migrants can be considered good , civilised or savage, since some prevailing cultures describe them in a conflicting way , according to the behaviours that constitute their identity. Therefore, even though the reputation of the migrant is stigmatised because of the acts and presentations made by certain individuals, it isn't essential to completely change one's identity because every individual reflects himself. Eliassiin *Contesting Kurdish Identities in Sweden* (2013) states that,

experience the problem of where to belong and not knowing where one belongs, hence dominating subjects often question and challenge their ways of belonging (53).

The British colonial influence in India fostered an environment that promoted mapping and exploration. Rawat had the chance to migrate and discover. The concept of forced migration where people are pushed to leave their homes because of outside pressures is embodied in Rawat's voyage. In this instance, the use of diplomats and explorers was required due to the strategic interests of the British colonial authorities in Tibet. As a subject of the British Empire, Rawat was forced to forgo his family life and personal ambitions in order to carry

out this perilous task. As Rawat balanced his adventures in Tibet with his Indian ancestry, the novel examines the intricate relationship between identity and belonging. A confluence of these elements prompted Naina Singh to set out on his treacherous trek to Tibet. He was driven to seek the unknown by the British colonial setting, his own ambition and his spiritual curiosity. His attention was drawn to Tibet by its spiritual significance and rich cultural legacy, which provided an influential attracting factor.

Additionally, we can better comprehend the intricate conditions and reasons that shaped Naina Singh's journey and consequently, the experiences of numerous other migrants throughout history by putting Stuart Hall's Push Theory to use. Although the main focus of Hall's theory is economic considerations, it can be modified to comprehend the nuanced driving forces underlying exploratory expeditions such as Rawat's

The intricacies of identity are also explored in the book. Rawat discovers a culture that is very dissimilar from his own as he travels more into Tibet. In order to hide his genuine motivation, he must strike a careful balance between his Tibetan identity and his Indian identity. His sense of self is tested by this forced assimilation, which also calls into question what identity and belonging are. The work also stresses how colonialism affected indigenous traditions. In Tibet and India, the British colonial presence resulted in resource exploitation, cultural tradition deterioration and community displacement.

Conclusion

The selected work *Journey to the Forbidden City* has examined the subject of transnational migration in the past and its significance that has been deftly woven into Deepa Agarwal's writing. The novel highlights Naina Singh Rawat's migration that has a sense of adventure, quest, nostalgia and recollection. The work examines the historical background of the migration and the issue of migration which has been skilfully woven. Through her blog post, Deepa Agarwal highlights the cross-cultural ties as "Stories help us to make sense of the world around us, to understand and respect cultures different from ours and to connect with our past," formed during relocation and appears to suggest which is attainable to moderate possibly contentious cultural differences. The pursuit for balance between the two personal identities and displacement has been examined and in brief, *Journey to the Forbidden City* is a potent metaphor about the journey of migrants that goes beyond its historical setting. It emphasises notions of bravery, flexibility and the pursuit of being part of something,

demonstrating the resilience of the individual in dealing with overwhelming adversity. Agarwal's creative work highlights the universality of journey from the lens of migration and the pursuit of unknown borders, whether geographical or cultural, turns into a profound story of discovering oneself .

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