



Literary Enigma

The International Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture
(Peer-reviewed and Indexed)

Vol. 1, Special Issue: 6

June 2025

Article No 3

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Diasporic study of Nadia Hashimi's Novel *When The Moon Is Low*

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Abstract

This research will represent the study of diasporic elements in the form of exile and migration along with identity. Diaspora is explicated as migration of population and way of life in host country.

Nadia Hashimi's *When The Moon Is Low* is clearly dealing with a family who is terrified and agonized by the domination changing and migrated from Afghanistan. Being lost her husband a woman flees away from her country to another country in search of identity and peace, have to face bother with her children. They have discarded education, jobs, houses, properties, relation only for peace of mind and security.

They have to face many problems there too like finding identity, presenting documents, finding works, talking to people, maintaining behaviour, escaping from the police, wearing the uniform of that place. Here is used descriptive and analytical method to find result. In this novel war, violence and terrorism are main cause of displacement. This study is an attempt to reveal the importance of diasporic elements of novel. This will help to readers to understand essential diaspora features of the novel *When The Moon Is Low*.

This research paper shows pathetic condition of a family in Afghanistan and migration in Athens, Turkey, Greece, Perish, Iran and England. They are unable to live in native country and face problems to maintain culture and identity in migration.

This paper will attempt to give a suggestion to native country prevent war, violence, and terror those are cause of exile and migration, also give suggestion to the host country please keep a helping viewpoint towards migrants.

Keywords: Diaspora, migrants, Afghan, identity, displacement etc.

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Introduction

Diaspora term is most global literary discourse of modern era. This term contains people who have been scattered from their native place and living exile in another country as migrants, refugees, they are called translated men. Migrants and diaspora both look as same, diaspora word really used for Jews scattered widely after Babylonian captivity and began living outside Israel. Every migrant holds his historical background that linked to the history of country. Diaspora introduces the concept of homelessness. Men and women get lose and gain after displacement. The homeland is root of their culture and identities; however, they flourish in foreign in spite of stress and trauma. Thus, the diaspora literature refers to the concept of an identity crisis, heterogeneity, homelessness, nostalgia estrangement, recognizing, and expressing one's thought of different places. Here are six common characteristics in diaspora:

"1) Dispersal of people or their ancestors from a centre to two or more peripheries, 2) the retention of collective memory, vision or myth about the original homeland its physical location, history etc, 3) a feeling of non-acceptance, alienation or insulation in the host society. 4) a strong feeling that their ancestral homeland is their true, ideal home and the place to which they or their descendants would or should eventually return, 5) a responsibility or the maintenance of the homeland or its restoration and 6) a self-conscious definition of one's ethnicity in terms of existence of their homeland." (Mishra, 1996, p.70)¹

All diasporic discourse revolves around the circle of home, a place where we connect through generation. When we live may not aware of homeland but being left from there a memory does not leave us always keep our mind in a imagination. To study Nadia Hashimi's novel "When The Moon Is Low" in the perspective of diasporic concept is the main point of this current paper. In the light of this, it is important to mention Hashimi's background and literary thought. Noted literary books on diaspora come from the writers who are living displaced. They know actual condition of the whole world. They visit to displaced people with imagination, insight, media and try to collect feeling of pain of the people. Through their writing they help to live happy and comfortable life to exile people.

Nadia is international best seller author along with pediatrician by profession, often takes inspiration from Afghan community and culture. She was born in 1977 in USA by Afghan parents. Her family immigrated from Afghanistan to America in 1970. She received graduation degree is in Biology from Brandis university. She lives in Washington with her husband and four children. She struggles to find a place in USA as other migrants who settle in America or other countries.

Nadia Hashimi's famous diasporic novel "When The Moon Is Low" published in 2015 and deals with hardship and exodus of Afghan people during Taliban regime. Ferriba and Mahmood were living a happy life, Mahmood was working in electric department, but with the regime of Taliban their happiness changed in pain and terror. Taliban forcefully took Mahmood with them and murdered him. Ferriba and her family panicked and no one was to help.

"There were distraught, but no in any position to help Mahmood's sisters begged me to keep them informed if I heard their brother." (Hashimi, 2015, p.107)²

Russia was launching its rocket attacks, people all around were living in terror, someone's house was burning, someone's family was burning. On the other hand Taliban were also spreading their terror, people were not even coming out of their houses. Shop owners were hiding and leaving city. Women were unable to move and do job out of home. The society of Afghanistan was living in great fear, everyone's freedom seemed to have been snatched away, people were lost in a dilemma whether to stay in this country leave it and go to some other country.

“It was not a boy’s question. It was the question of a young man who needed to know what to expect of tomorrow and what tomorrow would expect of him” (Hashimi, 2015, p.112)³ Ferriba crosses the border into Iran, where she has to remove her burqa to integrate into the Iranian culture, so she can blend in with Iranian women. They started living in the house of a family who had come from Afghanistan a few months ago, they had come in the same treacherous condition as Ferriba. People of the same country feel a sense of belonging Iran was one such country which had opened its doors for Afghans and everyone lived there illegally, everyone was treated like poor, their opportunities were also very limited. Mahmood had a dream of settling in England, Ferriba did not know whether his decision was right or wrong, some of his relatives lived in England and there was more security and freedom than other countries, so she did not change his decision, although he did not have any better plan. Ferriba and her children reach in a Turkish city Intikal, Saleem knew English well, the biggest problem after going to another country is the language. He was talking to one after another person. He meets Hakam and Hayal where these people started living in his house.

“Turkey looked less like Afghanistan than Iran had the language, the earth, the food, everything was more foreign. On reconsideration, it was we who were foreign. We are drifting into the land where we were not welcomed and sacred every step of the way that we would be sent home, a fate I could not bear to consider.” (Hashimi, 2015, p.218)⁴

Hashimi deals with the comparison of exile country and native country. Turkey is not much similar to the Afghanistan, its language, soil, food, dress, culture was very different from Ferriba’s native country. Everyone watches doubtfully to migrants, they always live in burden and fear. The adore of the home country does not leave them alone, a imagination and a dream, a love for home country always stable in the mind. If they find an occasion to go a new happy and excitement comes in their mind and life. But here was different situation with Ferriba, she could not return her native country because her country was like a foreign for her family. Saleem was searching work for food, Hakam brought him at a place where migrant workers can receive jobs. He was moving here and there, looking for friendly faces. They have required work for eating. Ferriba was sweeping the floors, washing dishes, and doing laundry work, cleaning some of her neighbour’s house and preparing foods in hotels. Saleem was a boy of 15 th years old, worked hard daily, was also eager for her sister Samira, lived in frustration and fatigue.

The migrant people want to meet the people who were related to their region. They like to live together, eat and drink, exchange ideas with them. They can understand the language of the people of their country very well, if they are far away they want to see them. They have an attachment and cultural vibe. Saleem converses with his friends Kamal and Hasaan. “But you say you want to see Afghans, we will show you where you can find the Afghan” (Hashimi, 2015, p.189)⁵

Saleem joined the group of Abdullah and the group welcomed, everyone was eager to share bits of refugee mind and intelligence. The Greece detention centre was shelter of immigrants. Detention centre was a cage of biggest size. Men, women and children, those who left countries trapped in Greece but there was so many difficulties and inconvenience to live in the detention centre as a toilet was available for hundred immigrants. Saleem meets Roksana there, who helps him in every work, both had a emotional attachment because Roksana’s parents were also residents of Afghanistan and had come and settled here from there. Since both of them had the same native country, their thoughts were also similar.

Hashimi’s novel deals with problems that appear banal but raise a question about culture, identity, the condition of the subject as well as the position in Iran, Turkey, Greece, Athens, and England. The similar subject and explication we see in the fiction of Jhumpa Lahiri. M Gholipour and Sanahmadi has described this type of similar situation in the Lahiri’s novels, some lines are following-----

“Lahiri, though being American forms part of the diaspora of writers who may be identified with and analysed in the post-colonial framework as she also finds herself as an immigrant. However, the question of identity in her fiction invites compelling and important scholarly inquiry whether the identity is presented or not.” (Gholipour and Sanahmadi, p.53-57)⁶ Hashimi was immigrant like Jhumpa Lahiri both live in America. Hashimi has real experiences of migrants. In presenting novel Saleem moved in a street, police arrested him and everyone was asking about his identity. He had no any document and her mother was waiting for him on a railway station with empty hands. She had given him jewellery to sell for money. Ferriba was nervous and her mind was brusting with headache and anxieties for Saleem and food problems of other children. Saleem told about himself to police but not informed about his mother and brother and sister Samira. At the mercy of a police officer, he was thrown out of van with the warning that he must never be seen in Turkey again. Hashimi’s protagonist Ferriba’s last journey was from Greece to Italy, from Italy to France, From France to London. They have to go to sister Najiba who was living in London. Saleem does not know address of Najiba, Roksana surprised, without address cannot be search the house of Najiba. Saleem does not know but targets his aim to reach there. In Italy, Saleem is looking for work around as he does not have money for food. He does not want to take Mimi’s help because he wants to do his work for himself. However, her mother reaches at the Najiba’s home in England. Her husband Hameed would like nothing more than for us to be gone. Hameed was the boy of orchard who brought Ferriba to Mahmood. Ferriba looked Saleem in a dream that was sweetest for her. Saleem with the help of his friend Ajmal tried to cross the France boarder by camp and train. He says:

“Madarjan, I am not just a few kilometers away, I will be your side and show padar-jan that can be the man my family needs me to be ----- the man I want to be. I will not stop until I see these bangles back on your wrist, Madarjan.” (Hashimi, 2025, p. 380)⁷

A connection was looked on the board. A crowd of young French gathered in front of camps. They were talking to ban boarder, no prison for immigrant, for human right also. Police were collected in black uniform. Ajmal forbid Saleem and said about the odd situation. Train was another option to choose to travel or cross border. The story ends here, whether Saleem meets her family or not is not clearly shown in the fiction. Nadia has shown Taliban as the fanatic Islam follower; they are responsible for Afghan ups and down and disillusionment of people from country. As Edward Said has depicted similar thought in following lines of book

Orientalism:

“The sword of “Muhhamad” and the Koran, are the most stubborn enemies of civilization, liberty, the truth which the world has yet known.” (Said, 2001, p.151)⁸

Conclusion

Today, Afghan diaspora has emerged to be distinct transitional community. It is bringing the “local and global” together. Afghan community is involving their homeland and connected people all over the world. The central preoccupation of the diaspora writers are issues of identities, nostalgia, longing and desire for the home.

A bulk of Afghan diaspora literature focuses on the issues of identity and displacement. This identity is based upon humanism, tolerance and secular idea and focuses in the works of female writers who gave expression to women’s issues. Writers who have left their native country illustrate their immigrant experience, displacement and encounter with foreign country. They explicate real experience and consideration.

This paper explores diaspora has becomes a prominent theme in world. I have tried to outline Nadia Hashimi’s talent in handling diaspora in her novel *When the Moon Is Low* in my research paper. My paper shows feelings, experiences, suffering, ups and downs, weal and woes of displaces people described in her novel.

In Hashimi’s novel the readers are invited to cross over from Afghanistan to Iran, Turkey, Greece, Perish, Italy and England. She portrays exactly Afghan immigrants, their struggles,

achievement, trauma, tension, and experience. It mainly tells the experience of Ferriba and Saleem as well as others. Hashimi's fiction shows pathetic condition of Afghan people on the space of diaspora.

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