



LOCATING NOSTALGIA IN KAVITA DASVANI'S LOVETORN

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Abstract:

In the domain of diasporic writing large number of writers put their insights in the creative and critical ways. They present their insights in connection with their experiences. The Diasporic communities possess collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history, suffering and achievements. When these migrant people suffer from the feeling of loneliness and up-rootedness, their mind ultimately goes back in the memory for the happy and glorious past. They have an elegiac feeling about their present condition in the host country. Nostalgia is a consequential effect of the homelessness in the new land, as well as loss of home in the motherland. A number of Diasporic writers have incorporated and accentuated the theme of nostalgia in their writing which occurred because of their exile which is always prevailing and recapitulating in their mindset. In the present paper the researcher explores the nostalgia in the novel Loetorn. The major characters becomes nostalgic because of their present critical situation which is the major concern of the present paper.

Keywords: Nostalgia, diaspora, alienation, history, myth, location, relocation, history etc.

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Did my uncles ride on camels?... Did my cousins, so like me in other ways, squat down in the sand like little mowglis, half naked and eating with their fingers?... stories to help me see my place in the



world and give me a sense of a past which could go into the making a life in the present and the future.(3)

Mrs. Asha Agarwal is unable to adjust with the environment in Los Angeles. She, even not ready to accept it mentally. She every time tries to show that their migration is wrong decision and she has shows non-cooperation with family members especially her husband. To get out of the sad feelings she always tunes the Indian channels and try to live mentally in India. She every time exhibits her nostalgic psychology.

‘Thanks,’ I now said to Renuka, smoothing my hair down the back. ‘It feels different, but I like it too.’

Our families had been seeing a lot of each other. They had taken us to Santa Monica to ride the ferries wheel and, one weekend, to Universal Studios.

‘It is like Chowpatty beach in Mumbai,’ my father had said wistfully. ‘We went there when you two girls were small. You were rescuing the fish that had washed ashore, throwing them back into the water.’ He had smiled at the memory. ‘I will wait till your mother is well, and then I will bring her here,’ he had added hopefully. (86)

Shalini and Renuka goes to a place which is like Chowpatty beach in Mumbai. She remembers it because it has many similarities. He remembers few other memories about throwing the fishes back in the water. Though Shalini’s father is in a despondent mood he is quite hopeful about recovery of Asha, his wife.

‘Asha, you have to come with me, this is not negotiable,’ my father said sternly. I could hear everything through the open door.

‘I’m not interested in going and talking to a bunch of women I don’t know!’ my mother screamed, crying. ‘Stop asking me to do it. I won’t!’

I stood in the doorway. My father’s face was red, his fists clenched at his sides.

‘Papa, can I help!’ I asked meekly.

My mother wiped her tears with the back of her hand. She was chewing her hair nervously. She was unkempt. She looked like she was on the edge of being totally crazy. When had things gotten so bad?(122)

Mr. Agarwal tries on his level best to make Asha well acquainted with the Indian people around their house. But she is not ready to go with him because she thinks that nothing can pacify her disturbed mind. She forces exile on herself. Even she is not ready to look at her daughters. It is the stage which is as good as madness.

Before leaving Bareilly, I had bought a small pink diary, its front cover decorated with a picture of a climbing in. I had never had a diary before, but in view of the life change that looked before me, I thought it might be a good idea to have a place to record my thoughts and feelings. It was also a way for me to remember all the things I wanted to tell Vikram. I had had no need of such a thing before, as he and I would talk many times a day, see each other all the time, and he would happily listen to even the most mundane details of my life. But with the distance and the large time difference between us now, I knew that wouldn’t be so easy any more. Even though we could email back and forth, I would miss hearing his voice several times a day (42).



Shalini is eight thousand kilometers away from Vikram. She contacts him through mail and phone calls. But still she wants to listen him number of times because in the new environment she is unhappy and she want that someone loving should consider her feelings. She maintains the diary to record her thoughts because every time it was not possible to call him and express her feelings.

Now, however, that diary served a whole other purpose. On the day we arrived, I had started to make a list of all the firsts I had experienced in that one day alone: the quietness of the house, the cheese sandwich for dinner, the fact that I could watch anything I wanted to do on TV, without fearing that Dada would come in any minute and change channels. In the two weeks that we had been here, I had filled four pages of the diary with all these firsts- even things as inconsequential as having the electrician show up at precisely the appointed time, which never happened in India. The diary had become my best friend, my confidence, the replacement for all that I had left behind. It had become a part of me (43).

Diary becomes the very good media to express Shalini's thoughts. Even there she can watch the TV channel of her interest without the fear of any one. As she is unable to make friends very fastly she makes diary as her very close friend and pours her feelings in it. On the contrary Sangita makes friend very quickly. But her inability shows that she is very much nostalgic. Her connections with the people in India are very strong and she is unable to forget them.

I laughed a little now. This was my favorite part.

'Vikram put a handkerchief to his mouth,' my father continued. 'He licked it and tried to wipe the stain off your dress, telling you not to cry. You stopped immediately. He took your hand and led you back to the party. It was then that Bhushan turned to me and suggested that we should pledge you two in marriage. I was very surprised. Even in our tradition, it rarely happens like this anymore, when two people are so young. But it made sense. It would have happened anyway. Bhushan and I simply decided to take matters into our own hands.' I smile. To me, it was the most glorious fairy tale (35).

Shalini remembers her past in India and her childhood days. She remembers the aunt Bharati wife of Mr. Bhushan who is the parent of Vikram. She very much likes Vikram from her childhood that she stops crying when she listen his voice.

Suddenly, my mother put down her newspaper,

'Well, I didn't think it was the best of ideas,' she said sternly. I sat up straight. She had never told me this before.

'On that day, I had told your father it wasn't a great idea. You and Vikram were just children, after all. Yes, you were friends then, but who knew what it would be ten or twenty years later, where your lives would take you, what fate has in store for you both?'

My father was quite. Sangita looked up from the barebone beginnings of her tapestry (35).

Mr. Agarwal and Asha Agarwal try to convince Shalini for going abroad. They thinks that it will create better avenues for her in future. It is not a permanent separation. Even after ten to fifteen years the lives of both the members can be different. So it is better to accept the change which is very close to them. Mr. Agarwal believes on their children that they are very strong and they will surely adopt the situation.



Alienation

‘Don’t misunderstand me, Shalini,’ my mother said. ‘I love that family. Vikram is like my son. I just didn’t think we had the right to make that decision for you. But I had no choice. I had to accept it. The men had decided.’ She stared at me for a second. There was an emptiness in her eyes.

‘Look at you now,’ she said. ‘Your heart is breaking because you are so far away from him. Is it fair to put you through this?’(36)

When Mr Agarwal decides to migrate Los Angeles then Shalini was shocked because she has to separate from Vikram. Actually Asha her mother also not interested to go there. But due to the decision of her husband she have to accept it. Though their union is preplanned she is unable to live with Vikram. She has to leave him and go eight thousand kilometers.

‘I’ve been missing you a lot,’ he said on the phone now. Lately, people in India had been embracing Valentine’s Day with new fervor, young people catching on that it was now something trendy to celebrate. For the past two years, Vikram and I had exchanged home-made cards, and last year, when he had come over for dinner with his family, he had brought me a single white rose, leading all my cousins to shout, ‘wah re wah’, which loosely translates to ‘wow, oh wow’, while Dada shook his head disapproving.

‘Have you been missing me?’ he asked now.

‘Of course I have,’ I said. ‘But I’ve been so busy with this new group.’ (102)

Valentine’s Day is the day to express love for each other. It is an opportunity for the love birds to come together for love making. In America Shalini remembers Vikram and his absence at that time. Vikram has the same feeling. But during the course of time there is change in Shalini. Instead of living in the memories of Vikram she joins the group Food4Life which for the poor people. This is the creation of her new identity. Diasporic characters form multiple identities.

In short the present paper explores the nostalgia of major characters in the novel. It elaborates the trauma their emotional world and its resultant effect on their psyche. Mr Agarwal undoubtedly as per the need of his job moves to Los Angeles, however he considers less about the effect of his migration on his family members. It affects largely on them and Kavita Dasvani rightly picks up the condition of these characters in her novel. The major victim of nostalgia is Mrs. Asha Agarwal because not only her emotional world but her health is also affected by this immigration. She visits her past to recover herself from the present painful situation. In short present paper confirms the effect of nostalgia on different characters in the novel *Lovetorn*, which justifies the title.

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