

## Migration in Literature: Introduction

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In the context of India, the 2020 Pandemic has foregrounded the otherwise neglected, vulnerable lives of migrants, especially internal migrants, who live within the perimeters of the country but move from rural to urban areas not of choice but for survival.

Migration, for several decades now, has been a site of inquiry and interest in academia. Existing studies on migration and migrants' experiences are largely shaped by social scientists, with sociologists, economists, anthropologists and political scientists debating the causes and effects of global migrations. However, migrant narratives in the form of conventional literary works as also the newly emerging genre of blogs/vlogs, films and documentaries have the capacity to empathetically and affectively relate to the complex, multi-layered lives of migrants.

Literary narratives read the phenomenon of migration from different perspectives, be it a result of wartime crisis, political repression, religious/ethnic persecution, lack of economic possibilities, the stigma associated with gender and/or sexual orientation, etc. Such narratives help locate the migrant at the very complex interface of race, gender, sexuality, class, caste, religion, ethnicity, able-bodiedness, age, language, legal status, and even climate politics. Literary narratives on the experiences of the Atlantic slave trade, for example, highlight the excruciating pain of forced migration that distorts a migrant's sense of self, language and identity. The idea of the "slave migrant" that emerges in such narratives can definitely help the reader untangle the present-day intricate relationship between labour and the migrant workforce that caters to the development of the international economy and inevitably transforms the migrants' living conditions and lifestyles.

Certain literary narratives document stories of original inhabitants of countries whose land, resources, cultures and economies stand ravaged by settler colonialism. The arrival of the colonizer/migrant and his subsequent settlement in the colony (both voluntary) inflicted

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immeasurable and often irrecoverable changes in the lives of the indigenous people of the colony/country. Migration, thus, is not unilateral but a phenomenon both multidirectional and inconsistent.

However, migrant narratives can also be sites of resistance and resilience. Such narratives may highlight fusion cultures; interchange of languages and experiences may manifest in cultural artefacts like new forms of music, poetry, food, and new political ideologies, to name but a few.

This Special Issue, titled “Migration in Literature”, has aimed to situate on a single platform voices of noted academicians as also budding scholars from across the globe as they discuss and debate the diverse and complex representations of migration in literature.

In her article “Narrating African Migrations: Perspectives and Chronotypes in Narrative Strategies”, Annie Gagiano navigates a broad spectrum of African narratives to explore the different forces that drive migrations. She also studies the consequences of such displacements and relocations. Alongside literary narratives, she references scholarly commentaries, which is particularly useful in locating the arguments presented by the discussed African authors through their literary renderings. The article “Head, Adichie and the Patterns of Migration Struggles”, co-authored by Okolie and Abonyi, presents a side-by-side analysis of migrations through Bessie Head’s *A Question of Power* (2011) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Americanah* (2014). It examines, through literal and metaphorical perspectives, the reasons behind as well as the struggles involved in both migrations and border crossings. The article “Roots and Routes: Tracing the Trends of Indo-Fijian Fiction”, co-authored by Khemendra Kamal Kumar and Subashni Lata Kumar, chronicles the literature originating from the Indian community of the Fiji Islands. It foregrounds both the diasporic dread and the Indianness, hallmark traits of Indo-Fijian writers. It also examines the colonial struggles of these writers and how it reflects in their works. Sujatha CE, in her article “Migrants from Disparate Terrains: Entangled Identities in *Wide Sargasso Sea*”, succinctly portrays the gradual shift in identities taking place in two Caribbean islands, Coulibri and Grandbois, with reference to Jean Rhys’ *Wide Sargasso Sea*. A very close textual reading enables the author to not only locate the minute diverse voices in the novel but also to situate those voices onto the socio-cultural and historical realities of the Caribbean islands.

In her article “Silence as a tool of oppression and voice as a tool of resistance as portrayed in select Autobiographies and Memories by migrant women”, Syyada Faheem discusses the oft-ignored narratives of migrant women through select texts, namely *The Woman Warrior* (1976) by Maxine Hong Kingston, *I am Malala* (2014) by Malala Yousafzai and *The Last Girl* (2018) by Nadia Murad. This study foregrounds the silenced emotions of the emigrant women belonging to different parts of the world. It not only unfolds the stories of their struggle and subjugation but also reflects upon their resistance and regeneration. In his

article “Loss of the Swedish Idyll and Xenophobia: Criminal Detective Kurt Wallander in Henning Mankell’s *Faceless Killers*”, Joydeep Bhattacharyya shows how Mankell, in highlighting the issue of xenophobia in contemporary Sweden, stretches the genre of detective fiction (mostly relegated to popular fiction), which mostly advocates the restoration of the orthodox existing social order, to the point of no return.

In her article “The Journey from ‘Darkness’ to ‘Light’: Aravind Adiga’s *The White Tiger* and the Phenomenon of Rural to Urban Internal Migration in India”, Mohua Dutta discusses rural to urban migration in the context of 21<sup>st</sup> century India through the character of Balram, who tries to break the existing social and economic hierarchies but ends up being reduced to a desperate and isolated man deprived of both moral values and humane qualities. Finally, Arnab Kumar Sinha’s review of Himadri Lahiri’s *Asia Travels: Pan-Asian Discourses and Diasporic Asian Literature/s in English* presents an engaging, insightful and in-depth study of the book while simultaneously highlighting Lahiri’s cogent ideas about the Asian diaspora and cultural discourses.

It is hoped that this Special Issue will be a meaningful addition to the existing scholarship in the domain of Migration Studies. The painstaking effort behind stringing together this collection of insightful articles would be richly rewarded if it stimulates not only the academician and the scholar but also each thoughtful, sensitive reader to ponder over the myriad facets of the phenomenon called migration and move them closer towards the collective dream of creating a more egalitarian and fairer world order.