

Original Article

Comparative Study of British vs. Indian Short Stories: Themes of Identity and Diaspora

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Abstract: The essay undertakes a comparative analysis of selected short stories from India and Britain and focuses on the motifs of diaspora and identity. Short stories have always been a powerful medium with which to dissect the complexities of life, in a succinct and often stark manner; most especially when related to cultural dislocation and self-negotiation. Short stories frequently picture the interaction between individual and society's imperatives in both Indian and British writing, yet they address diaspora and cultural hybridity quite differently.

Difficulties of assimilation, cultural negotiation and marginalisation are often foregrounded in British short stories, particularly those written by writers from a multicultural society or post-colonial background. In these tales, the protagonists commonly face challenges around cultural identity negotiation, a sense of belonging and how to respond to racism or alienation from society. These narratives incorporate stories of migration, cultural fragmentation and the legacy of colonial history as well as exploring the nature and source of a diasporic community's identity formed in living among Britain. Diaspora as a thematic concern in Indian short stories, both written by diasporic and native writers, is seen with the shades of cultural negotiation, dislocation and nostalgia. Authors like Jhumpa Lahiri, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni depict the plights of men and women torn between two or more cultures, as they struggle to adapt to familial expectations, cultural appropriation, and also acceptance in a new society. Indian short fiction highlights existential and emotive dimensions of diaspora that involve internal psychological conflicts and struggle to find a middle ground between traditional ethnicity and global cosmopolitanism.

By closely reading both Indian and British short tales this book demonstrates that the themes in Indian short stories centre on internal politics, memory and personal displacement while those of British stories concern relationships between people within society, multicultural relations, post-imperial realities. But the manner in which both traditions portray identity as fluid, challenged and constantly shifting in response to migration, globalisation and cross-cultural relations are parallel. This work reveals the striking similarities and differences in how literature serves as a means of mediation between life-in-diaspora and identity through an exploration of narrative strategies, character development, and thematic concerns with representative works from both traditions. The contrastive approach demonstrates short fiction as a literary form that reflects the nuances of identity and diaspora, providing reader a lens through which to examine challenges of selfhood, cultural negotiation and belonging in an increasingly interconnected world.

Keywords: Post-Colonial Literature – Multiculturalism – Selfhood – Displacement – Identity --- Diaspora- Cultural Hybridity---Immigration- British and Indian Short Tales.

I. INTRODUCTION

Short stories are important and cherished because they offer brief, yet powerful insights into the human experience. Short stories use straightforwardness and economy to depict complex things, feelings, events, in opposition with the novel that offers extended narrative development. One of its most appealing qualities is the way in which the form can succinctly, and with ease, communicate depth within ideas of identity, diaspora. Second, the twin issues of identity and diaspora have been gaining prominence in academia due to mass migrations, transnationalism, and the nature of post-colonial literature in a globalized world. British and Indian short stories have emerged as fine specific sites for such considerations, albeit through different cultural, historical, and socio-political prisms. British short stories often address questions of identity formation in a society marked by historic imperial legacies and contemporary diversity, particularly those produced in the post-colonial period or by authors from immigrant and multi-cultural families. The characters in these stories often find themselves caught between their own culture and what is considered 'normal' behaviour in the UK. The narratives reflect on the psychological and social dynamics of living in diasporic cultures in terms of assimilation, racial prejudice, cultural alienation, and multiple identity relations. For instance, short fiction penned by South-Asian, African or Caribbean writers frequently focuses on the challenges faced by second-generation immigrants, including incompatible cultural demands and responses to



national stances influenced postcolonial pasts. These narratives illustrate how identity is seldom fixed but rather that it emerges through a negotiation among the self, family and community; revealing its fluidity and complexity.

Short of Indians, meanwhile, paint identity and diaspora from a different (but no less intriguing) angle whether they're written by Indian writers or by non-resident Indians. Themes of displacement, nostalgia and cultural negotiation are often overlaid with the experiences of migration, 'transacting' between cultures and carry constant reference to the emotional weight of estrangement from home in Indian literature. Diasporic Indian writers including Jhumpa Lahiri, Salman Rushdie and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni depict the emotional struggles of individuals trying to negotiate their native cultural beliefs with those of a new land. There is a tension between personal and collective self in this tales – most often this narrow focus keeps exploring gender relations, family connections and heritage of generations. "Indian short stories show how people are connected to their past and yet, they do adapt to new social contexts and cultural changes by indenting memory, language, and continuity as very important constituents of identity. The presentation of identity and diaspora in British (in the context of South Asia) and Indian short stories is similar yet different. Both literary traditions deal with questions of cultural negotiation, alienation and belonging, and the universal appeal of these themes in an increasingly migratory and interconnected world. By contrast, British writing usually has a more outward-facing approach which foregrounds engagement with society, multicultural interaction and the experience of colonialism, while Indian narratives are typically more introspective in nature, stressing inter-ethnic conflict, cultural memory and the emotional intricacies of diasporic existence. Thanks to this comparative approach, scholars can more readily understand how literature mediates between experiences in migration, hybridity and the construction of identities across a large spectrum of socio-cultural backgrounds.

And with their brevity, short stories offer a unique lens through which the question of identity and diaspora may be read. Every aspect of the character, plot, setting, and language has been carefully selected to convey the story's underlying messages. The notions of displacement and identity negotiation in the narratives of British as well as Indian short tales are illustrated with the use narrative techniques such as first person perspective, disjointed storytelling, and symbolic imagery. The abbreviated form also allows for a stronger sense of the ways in which identity is formed, contested and transformed among members of diasporic communities; it keeps the reader connected to a character's predicament. Through a comparison of British and Indian short stories, the present article attempts to describe how these narratives engage with facets of identity and diaspora in different cultural and historical contexts. In mirroring the life of people, who have to move in and through so many cultural worlds, and helping us understand some of the larger socio-cultural forces that shape identity, the study illustrates literacy's dual role as both mirror and mediator. And by focusing on the enduring significance of the short story form as a site for investigating self, culture and identity the book also contributes to debates in postcolonial, diasporic and multicultural literary studies.

II. THEMATIC EXPLORATION IN BRITISH SHORT STORIES

For many years, the British short story has been a critical tool for scrutinizing difficult social, cultural and psychological subjects. These stories, representative of the multicultural demographics of the UK, often deal with questions of identity, belonging and diaspora in the contemporary literary landscape. Authors use the form of short story to represent and explore conflicts between society's external pressures and an individual's internal sense of self through nuanced depictions of human beings interacting with their culture. The critically acclaimed short story "The Original Is Not Here" by Piyumi Kapugeekiyana, which offers an exploration of cultural possession and identity through the eyes of Charitha a curator at a Sri Lankan museum is one such example. The plot reflects themes of cultural appropriation, colonial past and public reaction to contested cultural narratives. The thematic concerns in this bigger framework where the British short tale is situated seem to be: issues of acculturation, alienation, multicultural identity and post colonial history and legacy.

A. Cultural Assimilation

Cultural assimilation is the universal problem which reflects in British short-stories; specifically those which are written by immigrant or post-colonial writers. Oftentimes, these narratives also revolve around characters attempting to hold on to aspects of their native traditions while reconciling various challenges presented by adapting one's life to a more dominant culture. Assimilation is almost never easy; it involves reconciliation of one's own sense of self with social pressures, which often means compromise or loss. The writers reveal the emotional turmoil of the diaspora experience with its struggle to hold on to one's past in one hand and new cultural norms in another. Kapugeekiyana's representation of Charitha's contact with the British museum raises important issues about diaspora self and attempts to recover one from its naturalised habitat. Public backlash against her efforts to put together an exhibition about Sri Lankan heritage demonstrates the need to keep up appearances. The finely worked psychological and social compromises of characters are often exposed by assimilationist short stories that engage with the processes of acceptance and rejection, where identities are remade under both pressures. These narratives also illuminate broader British social dynamics where assimilation is a struggle since the presence of multiculturalism combined with colonial hierarchies still linger.

B. Alienation

Alienation, which often appears to be a social and psychological state, is another major theme in British short stories. The characters in these tales are isolated from their families, their communities and society at large – they depict the tension between social membership and personal identity. These emotional struggles, which seem to mirror the existential conflicts endured by diasporic individuals in general, are often depicted in terms of alienation caused by migration and/or cultural dislocation or institutionalized hostility. The marginalization and criticism that Charitha encounters in “The Original Is Not Here” highlight the isolation caused when your own cultural identity is misread or dismissed. British short stories often press alienation as a kind of lens through which more general social issues are focused, reflectively refracted by observing 'the way in which multicultural societies deal with diversity, inclusion and cultural recognition. Subtle microaggressions, cultural miscommunications and internalised lack of confidence are part of the problem alongside straightforward exclusion. These stories write about the psychology of migration, social pressures and nation's mixed cultural identity through nuanced articulations of alienation. They also reveal the ways in which people try to reconcile themselves socially and personally.

C. Multicultural Identity

Contemporary British short stories: Multicultural and multiethnic identity in multicultural Britain is a prominent feature of contemporary British short fiction. Within a community defined by immigration, colonial inheritance and international cultural exchange, the stories explore the variety of identities. Currents of characters travel between cultural crosscurrents, languages and value systems, often dwelling in liminal spaces. In this context, short stories undermine the fixed notion of belonging by emphasizing the fluid and hybrid form of identity. The hero of Kapugeekiyana's story grapples with issues of Sri Lankan ancestry within a British institution, this addressing the complex interplay between social integration, individual responsibility and ethnic face. The authors depict the nuances of multicultural identity using narrative techniques including fragmented narration, changing perspective, and interior monologue. These stories reveal that cultural hybridity is a site of unceasing negotiation, accommodation and struggle rather than merely a syncretic depository of half-remembered traditions. In British literature, multiracial identity is often situated alongside gendered and generational features, illuminating how public opinion, family expectations, and broader sociopolitical context shape selfhood.

D. Colonial Legacy and Cultural Appropriation

It is a very popular topic among writers of British short stories, the painful legacy of cultural appropriation and centuries old colonisation. Themes play out in stories that develop post-colonial relationships, heritage dilemmas and the morality of cultural representation. Cultural ownership and historical power imbalances are also illuminated in “The Original Is Not Here” by Charitha's curation of a copy of the Tārā statue that is to be placed in the British Museum. The story underscores the colonial histories still impacting contemporary cultural environment, as well as the tactics diasporic people utilize to reconcile between responding to public perception and preserving culture. Themes of colonial legacy and appropriation highlight how literature critically engages with past injustices and contemporary cultural politics, revealing the complex interconnections among power, identity, and memory. In British short stories, personal narratives are often situated within such wider social-historical frames to show how the self relates to and distances from collective cultural memory Retrieved from s. By tackling these topics, writers challenge readers to think about moral responsibilities, cultural recognition and the long-range consequences of colonialism for society and individuals.

III. THEMATIC EXPLORATION IN INDIAN SHORT STORIES

Themes of identity, displacement, and cultural negotiation abound in Indian short stories written by Indian and diasporic authors alike. Indian diasporic writers have foregrounded the challenges of maintaining cultural roots amidst a changed context by focusing, particularly, on the psychological and emotional dimensions of migration. Authors such as Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's stories reveal what people's lives are like when they have to navigate multiple cultural worlds, often addressing the clashes of tradition vs. modernity, personal desire vs. familial expectation, host-country reality vs. homeland yearning. Inter-generational cultural conflict, gendered interactions, identity construction, and uprooting and nostalgia are some of the prominent Indian short stories. These are stories that speak to the emotional cost of relocation, the nature of belonging and how memory, culture and lived experience together form identity.

A. Displacement and Migration

Another common motif in such stories is that of displacement, something shared by many Indian short stories, particularly the ones that focus on the diaspora. Characters often experience mental and physical alienation as they "cross cultural, social or geographic boundaries". When characters are made to move through unfamiliar landscapes but also maintain connections with their heritage (life) through immigration, we have a sense of foreignness; Plants and animals whose roots / Dig deep: In “blood lines,” how far back one's ancestors can be traced before the blood loses its own claim on our bodies; Drought as expanse-equipped peeling of winter flowers. In Jhumpa Lahiri's "Unaccustomed Earth," for example, the Indian-American characters in her stories navigate American life and its accompanying pressures against their cultural

inheritance. The narratives convey the existential, emotional impact of migration in terms of cultural alienation, loneliness or isolation. For Indian stories, the sense of displacement is two-fold: geographic on one hand and symbolic on the other – depicting internal conflict as protagonist and antagonist while trying to reconcile multiple identities. Using narrative devices such as shifting time frames, split narrations and reflective monologues, the authors highlight how migration has had profound impact on individual self-understanding and social identity which are endlessly negotiated between home / away, memory / present.

B. Nostalgia and Cultural Memory

Nostalgia is a recurring motif in Indian short fiction, serving as a prism through which characters interrogate their past and culture. Diasporic characters often experience a longing for their own nation, customs and family structures which shape their identity and choices. In the writings of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, for instance, characters wrestle with that tension- for assimilation in other cultural milieus and yet longing for India. Nostalgia also functions as a narrative device through which writers reflect on inherited cultural traditions, inter-generational memory and the bonds of feeling that tie people to their native lands. The introspection with the past allows characters to reshape and negotiate a sense of self, thus combining continuity with change. The themes of migration, identity disintegration and cultural preservation often intersect with nostalgia in Indian short stories to show the enduring role of memory and shared cultural history in shaping personal as well as social identities.

C. Identity Formation and Selfhood

Brinda: Indian short stories are heavily concerned with an idea of identity, particularly the second/third generation diaspora. More often than not, characters are depicted as moving through multiple modes of identity such as gendered, ethnic and cultural identities and especially linguistic ones. These stories explore how people find their way through societal expectations, forging an identity that is both inherited and necessary by allowing the past to collide with modern experiences. Using characters who struggle to accommodate family obligations with cultural heritage, as well as personal desires, Lahiri's "Unaccustomed Earth" emphasizes the complexity and malleability of identity. Psychological and emotional processes of selfhood (subjectivity) are the focus of Indian short stories where identity is dynamic, situational and negotiated in social context, cultural belonging and human relationships. The essays illuminate the psychological battles, moral quandaries, and tactics of survival that mark identity formation with a narrative thread by character-building narratives: they show how cultural and individual histories intersect to shape the self.

D. Gender and Cultural Conflict

Indian short fiction often articulates gendered experiences as well as cultural conflict, particularly in the context of diaspora narratives. And while male heroes also work their way through social norms, familial duties and personal quests, female protagonists often face an even greater struggle. But as with Divakaruni's fictions, these stories are about the struggles of Indian women in dealing with intergenerational conflicts, cultural transplantation, and patriarchal customs. These narratives reveal how gender and culture intersect in the formation of identity and belonging, emphasizing the tensions between maintaining cultural purity and asserting individual freedom. In Indian short fiction, cultural dilemma is portrayed as an internal (conforming to one's needs and desires) and external (interaction with the alien cultures where in they now belong) conflict. To underline how complicated these experiences are, writers deploy narrative techniques like braided storylines, reflective monologues and shifting perspectives. Indian short fictions provide nuanced portrayals of the social, psychological and ethical struggles involving diaspora, migrations and identity contestation through the exploration of gendered cultural negotiations.

IV. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Identity and diaspora play a part in both Indian and British short stories, but the two literary traditions approach the topics differently, with divergent focuses on different things. Indian short narratives typically focus on inner psychological and emotional dilemmas of individuals who inhabit between cultures, while British ones tend to explore social relationships, post-colonial inheritances and cross-cultural communication. This study aims to provide examples of selected stories that illustrate how authorial point-of-view, historical contexts, and cultural reference shape representations of identity and diaspora. Cultural adaptation process, intrapsychic conflict, narrative method, and gendered experiences are the four dimensions contrasted.

A. Cultural Integration and Societal Context

It's a familiar challenge, to make it on the outside in a multicultural culture and like many British short stories, Dreamland is about the external problems of fitting in. The authors explore the demands of assimilation, societal expectations and public perceptions in order to understand how identity is mediated by the broader social environment. Piyumi Kapugeekiyana's "The Original Is Not Here," for example, draws attention to the sociopolitical dimensions of diaspora in illustrating how cultural ownership and legitimacy are negotiated in public spaces such as the British Museum.

On the other hand, Indian short stories focus on the internal tension between storing cultural artifice and adapting to a new experience of people in another society. In Lahiri's "Unaccustomed Earth," characters broach the cultural demands of American life while balancing personal aspirations and domestic duties. In general, Indian stories track the tension between leaving cultural heritage behind and pursuing personal desire; British ones the way society constrains identity.

B. Psychological Conflicts and Identity Formation

Even as their focus is distinct, both religions delve into the mysteries of identity. Identity is often depicted in British stories as something that is socially constructed and flexible, shaped by personal relationships and the interplay of a multicultural society. Characters feel misunderstood, alienated or wonder if people of a different race may not intentionally mean to be rude, ignorant jerks. By contrast, interior psychological stresses produced by cultural dualism are the focus of Indian short stories. As they negotiate between the strictures of assimilation and obligations to heritage, characters express ambivalence, shame and nostalgia. Both approaches stress a dynamic conception of identity, though with Indian stories it is an inner, emotional kind of selfhood and with British stories it is externally influenced relational identity.

C. Narrative Techniques and Storytelling

The thematic concerns of Indian and British short fiction are evident from the narrative strategies applied by them. British authors often depict both social and multicultural tensions through fragmented narrative, third-person omniscient point of view, and variable perspectives. Fictional history and background To represent the depth of human feelings, Indian authors employ memory-based narratives, self-reflective narration, and the Second World War was fought in colour monologue. The choice of narrative style reflects the chosen focus: Indian stories delve into the interiority of emotion and psychology shaped by migration and diaspora, while British stories concentrate on extra-psychological, social forces that define identity.

D. Gendered Experiences and Cultural Negotiation

Though the emphases differ, gendered experiences mix with identity and diaspora in both traditions. British stories illustrate how gender is implicated in post-colonial hierarchies, cultural assumptions, and social demands. Indian stories, particularly those penned by women, explore how women navigate tradition and home life against the backdrop of cultural mores in an array of settings. In both cases, gendered stories illuminate broader social and cultural dynamics, revealing how internal strife and external pressures shape the construction of identity.

Table 1 : Comparative Summary Table

Aspect	British Short Stories	Indian Short Stories	Key Difference/Observation
Cultural Integration	Emphasizes societal interactions, multicultural norms	Focuses on individual negotiation with heritage and host culture	British: external; Indian: internal
Identity Formation	Shaped by societal acceptance and public perception	Shaped by internal reflection, memory, and emotional negotiation	British: social mediation; Indian: introspective
Narrative Techniques	Shifting perspectives, fragmented storytelling	First-person narration, reflective monologues	British: outward focus; Indian: inward focus
Psychological Conflict	Alienation and marginalization due to societal pressures	Nostalgia, guilt, ambivalence from cultural duality	British: relational; Indian: emotional
Gendered Experience	Interaction with societal expectations, stereotyping	Negotiation of autonomy, familial and cultural obligations	Both highlight social dynamics but with different cultural lens

Although British and Indian short stories vary in viewpoint, theme and narrative technique, they both scrutinize Identity and diaspora as this comparative study proves. In an attempt to assist readers in understanding these differences and thematic nuances, the table provides a brief visual guide.

V. CONCLUSION

As the juxtaposition of the short stories from India and Britain shows, literature works as a medium to investigate practices of fluid identities on multiple levels. The two literary traditions broach the problems of cultural membership, personal identity and existential experience of displacement despite their distinct contexts of culture, narrative manner as well as subject's focus. Due to their brevity and intense focus, short stories offer a particularly effective mode of exploring these complex human experiences, serving readers as a lens through which they may view social, cultural and psychological dimensions of identity. Identity is often negotiated in post-conversation with society through British short stories. Figures

are embraced and marginalized, and struggle with issues of cultural negotiation in ethnic settings. The narratives bring to the reader's attention public opinion, post-colonial histories, and socio-cultural norms about the self that point identity as determined by relational and institutional factors no less than individual choices. This approach is particularly evident in works such as Piyumi Kapugeekiyana's "The Original Is Not Here," which highlight how diasporic subjects address the impact of colonialism by negotiating cultural possession and recognition. 13 British short stories clearly have an external orientation – other people are made concrete, and therefore the relational nature of personal identity construction and the process of self-conception balanced against social validation comes to the fore.

On the other hand, indigenous/ emotional aspects of identity is foregrounded in Indian short tales (esp. by diasporic authors). Adrift in multiple cultural worlds, characters are often haunted by generational conflicts, nostalgia, memory and cultural conflation. The psychic and emotional costs of reconciling one's roots with the demands of a new place are also charted in stories by Jhumpa Lahiri, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and others. To suggest the nuanced nature of debates on selfhood and belonging, as well as the stories frequently rely on introspective devices such as first person narratives and reflective monologues. This inward focus provides a holistic view of the diasporic experience, underlining the impact on identity development and transformation, influenced by cultural heritage, individual memory and emotional connection. Notwithstanding these differences, a striking continuity between Indian and British short stories is the image they both provide of identity as complex, fluid and dynamic. Yet this state of diaspora is a precarious balancing act of identity, culture and society regardless of its navigation in British multicultural terrain or amongst Indian diaspora abroad. The stories reflect that identity is a process, produced through social encounters, memory, migration, and cultural crossing rather than as something static or singular. What is more, both literary traditions also underline the importance of narrative representation, cultural memory and personal agency as mediations between experiences of (dis)belonging.

In sum, the juxtaposition of Indian and British short stories demonstrates the significance of literature for increasing our understanding of diaspora and identity in a globalized world. These are stories that depict culturally specific experiences and narrative forms, while also revealing the universal human issues of adaption, purpose, history and self-discovery by offering multiple perspectives. In a rapidly evolving world, this research brings out the contemporary relevance of short stories as narrative forms which can articulate the range and depth of human experience by examining layers of society, cultural history and self-identity.

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