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## THE CHRONICLE OF THE PRECOLONIAL MIGRATION

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### Abstract

The very early instances of Indian diaspora start around the 1st Century. The first migration took place with a group of Gypsies who moved from the North west to the European countries, their life is sort of like nomadic and movement from one place to another is important. During the early 18<sup>th</sup> Century Indians have travelled to various part of the world through sea. Some of the early emigrations of Indian are being traced with civilizations like Greek for trade and religious contact. The traders travelled to various part of the world and returned back to their homeland. This phase of migration was a short one and it was circular in motion. The work *Caravan to Tibet* by Deepa Agarwal traces the precolonial trade in the silk road and Tibet, where people migrate for every six months. We see the migration through the lens of the 14-year-old boy Deepu who takes up the trade to search his father. During his travel there is a sense of nostalgia, quest, memory, adventure which the boy goes through and eventually he fights against the odds and returns with his father. This novel is analysed with the background of early Migration with the story which has been undertaken by the authors ancestors.

Keywords: Diaspora, Trade, Precolonial

### Introduction

The term “diaspora” is universally known all over the world. The term is progressively extensive in all usage. Until now the word had a specific and constrained meaning, which refers primarily to the dispersal and exile of the Jews. But in the twentieth century, the meaning of the term has gradually lengthened to cover the involuntary dispersal of the migrants. As an idea, diaspora produces powerful insights and distortions to the world depending on how the term is used.

In the process of migration, the term “diaspora” has two quite opposing implications. In

one sense, diaspora levels the social and chronological distinctions of a migrant group into a single undistinguishable group based on their place of origin. Phrases such as the “Irish diaspora” refer to the people who migrated from Ireland with their descendants, irrespective of the reason of their migration history abroad. In this way, diaspora has a sturdy tendency to regulate. Attaching the label of “diaspora” to the broad migration of a given group, can reduce that migration to its single traumatic form such as Babylonian captivity, the Atlantic slave trade, the Irish famine, Indian indentured labour. People who leave the same place during the same period can do so for drastically different reasons.

And, above all, the character of every group's migration changes significantly over time. Used in a critical sense, diaspora is a powerful tool for making just these kinds of distinctions. The idea of diaspora can reveal variations, not just between migrant groups. Rather than being a simple synonym for migration, diaspora in this sense illuminates particular aspects of migration and the world that migrants have created.

The Indian diaspora progressive in its growth has undergone different phases, the phase which we talk a lot is the phase of migration due to partition and later in search of job. Though the memories of their motherland lingers in their heart in their new land and then in course period of time they end up in transnational identity whereas in the early phase the memory travels with them in their trade journey though it's a short journey. The South Asian migrants have been the ancestors of various migration patterns. Each of these patterns had its own specific background, characteristics, and circumstances. Some of which resulted in the reproduced 'Indian culture' in the host societies. The first migration flow was that of traders who began leaving the country in the for a short time to do trade and business. As the Indians were had already developed lucrative ties with East Asia, East Africa, and Central Asia in precolonial phase. So, the key characteristics of this phase was the 'trade diaspora' which consisted of 'temporary' or migration. Indian travelled far from their homeland made an adventurous journey in the Kumakoan hill, Tibet and silk road to do business but they weren't like the 20th century migrant who settled in the host land. The came back as soon as the business got over and later the sons were sent to search for trade elsewhere, but also to eventually return. Migrating and returning were the key motives in this phase. These traders acted as strainers through which other cultures were linked with their own. They developed a multicultural lifestyle due to their exposure to other cultures, but they don't hybrid with it.

### **The Unaccounted Migration**

The pattern of Indian diaspora is known for its setting and features which laid a base for the upcoming migration. The precolonial phase of

migration had a lot of challenges, earlier it was king who travelled through sea to conquer and expand their territory, priest travelled to other country to share their knowledge, Indian gypsies travelled and settled in different countries as part of their nomadic cultures and then traders travelled to another country to do business. We have oral account regarding this migration but we don't have a book which details account of it. The second and third generation of the trader's community have drawn a detailed account of this migration through their narration.

Deepa Agarwal's author, poet, translator writes for both children and adult. She has received National award for Children's literature. Her novel *Caravan to Tibet* was on the IBBY honour list in 2008. *Caravan to Tibet* was published as a long story was later compiled as novel. *Caravan to Tibet* traces the detailed narration of precolonial migration which is accounted from her great grandfather's journey and nomadic lifestyle.

*Caravan to Tibet* is about the 14 year old Deepu who takes up his father's journey to find him. Deepu lives near Milam with his father, mother and brother. His family's occupation is to travel for every 6 months and do trade this a lineage which is been followed by them. His father and the fellow village men along with head man Kalyan have gone up for a journey. Deepu with his mom waits for his father's return but they are shocked with the news that his father has been lost in the snowstorm and there is very less chance to survive. As a result, Deepu takes up the journey before he was ready as an adult to find his father. The novel not only focuses on the adventure and trade migration but it also highlights the memory, nostalgia of Deepu in search of his father.

The precolonial has certain rituals and procedure it's a process of the 6 month journey. They weren't able to sell the products in their homeland as it had limited sales whereas when they travel and visit the other countries market, the sales will be high which ended them with a good profit. This is one of the main motives to take up the difficult path and migrate into other country and settle there for 6 months, in some cases the duration

was 1 year to 2 years but their return to homeland was assured.

'Uncle I want to join the caravan. I want to go to Tibet.To search my father' (20) Deepu informs about his willingness and reason to join the journey. When Deepu had decided to take up the travel, he had to prove himself to the village headman and fellow travellers. Later he is reminded about the partnership stone which he has to show to do business in Tibet.

In the earlier period they didn't have any agreement so these people selected a stone once the partnership is settled. This stone is divided into two halves,each partner has to take up the half stone and when the business time starts the migrated person has to show his other half to his partner and thus the business takes place. Deepu is informed about this and he searches his father's stone and finds it. 'Is that a piece of stone here ? he asked the partnership stone ?'(28) This minute detailing about the ancient method of trade partnership has been recorded by Deepa in her novel.

Later on, when Deepu takes up the journey which is father hasn't completed, he witnesses what is father has told him orally.'How often had his father described this journey ! But the view was far more breathtaking than anyone could express .....Debu felt his breath grow laboured' (36)While on his journey he rides along with the mountains crosses the valleys. They camp at certain places to ate some rest and then move on with their journey.

Later he and his partner in Gyanima do some profitable business. Thea are asked to stay in a tent which is of "the aristocratic looking white tents, with patterns for Lhasa merchant and the small plain tents without proper flags for Shaukas like us '(51) here we trace the conflict of merchant hierarchy and the conditions of the camp to their class. Even during those early days migrants had to face Identity and class conflict in their place of stay, meanwhile he also investigates about his father and gets some information about him. During his journey he is reminded about his mother and brother, worries for them. Though he came to search his father he is being tied up with his memories of his hometown.

The market reminds him of brother who asks for candies and plays with him. Being reminded of his brother he buys some sweets to give him.

Deepu has faced a lot of difficulties from being detained to travel as the monk wants to see him but in vain when he returns from there he gets caught by the robbers. Deepu travel extends and finally he escapes from there. In his escaping process he gets injured and but save by a couple in goldfield. He inquires about his father in the digging area and they give some information about a man.

Soon he is united with his father who is working in the digging area, his father narrates his story.Together they move back to Gartok and all are surprised, deepu end his journey by winning the race. When they travel back Deepu 'he visualized his mother's look of overjoyed surprise and heard Hayat's welcoming yell' (171) this visualization is what had made him to overcome the hurdles.And at last, he has completed his first 6 month journey and travels to his hometown. In this 6 months of journey Deepu has gone through a lot. Every human he sees reminds him of his mother and brother, to save them from his uncle he has to find his father. In his case the memories have strengthened him to continue and complete his journey.His identity as a 14 year old boy is being laughed not only among his fellow travellers but also by the people in their travelling areas. But Deepu manages it all and succeeds.

The novel highlights the beginning phase of the Indian diaspora which inculcates the identity, memory in Deepu. The journey is new for him but the motive makes his journey strong. We come across various characters in the traveller's community who tend to travel along with the the memories. Their 6 month journey acts a catalyst which is going to give them a wonderful memory and uplift their family and again, in the next 6 month the process starts. This phase of journey has to be taken into account of the diasporic pattern and should be discussed more.

### Conclusion

This paper has attempted to examine the early pattern of Indian Diaspora and the theme in it. Many Indian diaspora writers writing in English and

other languages have portrayed the twentieth century diaspora in their literary works. Deepa Agarwal's *Caravan to Tibet* recollects the trade journey and the themes of diaspora in it. Caravan travels with them throughout their journey and it is a part of them. Though their journey is temporary it focuses on the migrant's identity, nostalgia, movement and memories. Thus the journey can be accounted as an account of the precolonial diaspora and it widens the scope for the future studies that can be taken up and discussed.

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