



RESEARCH PAPER

The Homing of Diaspora and Relational Positioning in Gooneratne's *A Change of Skies*

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ABSTRACT

This paper studies Gooneratne's *A change of Skies* from diasporic perspective. Globalization, colonization and global flow of labour have led people to shift to different parts of the world. This dispersion from the homeland and re-rootedness in the diaspora space is a complex phenomenon. It involves intersection of multiple spatio-temporal and personal factors that shape and reshape the diasporic subjects. Keeping this in view, the selected novel reflects upon the diasporic journey of a young Sri-Lankan couple who shifts to Australia initially for a period of five years but later on decides to reside there permanently. Bharat and Navaranjini's experiences as immigrants in the host country and their struggle for homing of diaspora are representative of the efforts of all the immigrants who shift abroad for some reason or the other. Brah's notions of diaspora journey, the formation of the diasporas, relational positioning, the homing of diaspora and Berry's ideas related to plural societies and acculturation strategies have been used as theoretical framework for this research. The study is qualitative in nature and uses Belsey's textual analysis as a method to interpret the selected text. The paper concludes that though the immigrants are treated differently on the basis of relational positioning in the host country, making diaspora composite formation due to distinctive historical experiences and multiple modalities of race, gender, class, religion, generation and language, they negotiate these differences and finally succeed in their efforts of homing diaspora space.

KEYWORDS Acculturation, Diaspora, Homing, Plural Societies, Relational Positioning

Introduction

Decolonization, globalization, market liberalism and desire for better life have led people to move to different parts of the world. Sometimes, this movement, migration, dislocation or dispersion is voluntary, while at others it is forced. Whatever may be the reason behind this dislocation, people try to adjust themselves in their newly found 'homes' away from their homeland in a diaspora space where their subjectivity is shaped and reshaped. This process of subversion and settlement is at once *social* as well as *subjective* and includes multiple challenges especially when gender intersects with dislocation. The fictional world attempts to highlight these issues and challenges in different ways. These narratives of dislocation form an important aspect of post-colonial literary studies.

The word 'Diaspora' derives from the Greek words *dia* that means 'through', and *speirein*, that means 'to scatter' (Brah, 1996, p.178). Webster's Dictionary defines diaspora as 'dispersion from' (p.178). Hence, the term entails the meaning or notion of "a centre, a locus, a 'home'" (p.178) that is the location of dispersion. (p.178). It involves the idea of multiple type of journeys. These journeys are necessarily about "settling down" (p.179) or

about “putting roots ‘elsewhere’” (p.179). Thus being placed at another place or being rooted somewhere else essentially makes the idea of space and subjectivity problematic and in need of a debate. The notion of diaspora space refers to the global condition where culture serves as a “site of travel” (p.205). It is the point where “the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, belonging and otherness, ‘us’ and ‘them’ are contested” (p. 205). Diaspora space is ‘inhabited’ (p.205) equally by the migrants, their descendants, and by the so-called “indigenous” people (p.205). It is a place where “*native is as much a diasporian as the diasporian is the native*” (p.205, *emphasis original*). Thus, diaspora space provides the diasporians with an opportunity to find home or feel at home where and when they are supposed to be homeless.

Gooneratne’s *A Change of Skies* (1991) portrays a Sri Lankan family that moves to Australia. The novel mainly reflects upon the practices of Asian immigrants and their efforts for adjustment in diaspora space and in a new environment away from their homeland. Bharat and Navaranjini Mangala-Davasinha migrate to Australia for a temporary teaching job at Southern Cross University. They stay there for a period of five years. Despite the saying “he who crosses the oceans may change the skies above him, but not the color of his soul,” (Gooneratne, 1991, p.167), they are fully changed during their stay in Australia. They try to negotiate their subjectivities by changing their names into Barry and Jean accordingly. During the process of subjectivity formation resulting from social change, they adapt themselves to the environment of diaspora space to an extent that when they return to Sri Lanka, they miss their life in Australia and find it difficult to adjust in their homeland. Both come to understand that immigration is about change, and change must be accepted. Furthermore, there is difference in being at home and feeling at home. A ‘diaspora space’ may sometimes serve as a better place to make one feel at home.

Literature Review

A Change of Skies has been studied from different perspectives. Few researchers have focused on problems and dilemmas of the immigrants while others have tried to highlight cultural confusion and confrontation in the selected novel. Rathod (2013) is of the view that diaspora refers to the process of “displacement and settlement of a national population in a transnational setting, i.e. cutting across borders” (p.116). It denotes four main elements in the historical process, which are “homeland, migration, displacement and settlement” (p.116). *A Change of Skies* (1991) tends to explore the life of early Sri Lankan immigrants who arrived in Australia at the end of the White Australia policy. It highlights cultural confrontation and confusion of living in a “multi-racial society” (p.119) and explores the problems and dilemmas of the immigrants through the character of Bharat and his wife. He asserts that the novelist has tried to address issues like “migration, displacement, nostalgia, assimilation, home and cultural clash” (p.120). She has explored the painful process of “uprooting and re-rooting” (p.20) of the diasporic Sri Lankan couple to survive in alien land.

A Change of Skies presents two cultures and societies. Anitha (2017) states that in *A Change of Skies* Gooneratne “juxtaposes two cultures and two societies” (p.25) rejecting the notions of ethnicity and proposing the absorption of the new culture as the survival strategy. Anitha further elaborates that the novel is predominantly a postcolonial text that deals with the protagonists’ crucial step to assimilate into Australian culture and society. It further involves the themes of “clash of cultures and adaptation” (p.26). The novel reflects Gooneratne’s personal experiences as an immigrant to Australia for the last twenty years. She affiliates herself with her characters and explores “the new post-colonial world” (p.26) where immigrants live among shifting cultures with keen understanding and sophistication. She has successfully projected the cultural confrontation and confusion of a

“multi-racial society” (p.26) by suggesting a “need for adaptation” (p.26) as a part of all expatriate experience.

Technological innovation and globalization has motivated cross-border movement in South Asian societies. Keeping this in mind, Singh (2017) opines that technological development and new opportunities have triggered cross-border movement. The immigrants therefore keep on navigating the permeable boundaries of “filiation and affiliation”(p.131).The diaspora literature too reflects “these contradictory allegiances” (p.131) of transnational characters, as manifested in the novels of Gooneratne. He further asserts that the novelist revisits the experiences of the immigrants from the standpoint of diasporic consciousness that is formed by colonial/postcolonial familiarities of the home country Srilanka and unfamiliarities of the settling Island Australia.

A Change of Skies portrays a variety of characters that are bound to adhere to their fixed attitudes due to their ideological and filial boundaries. While comparing *A change of Skies*(1991) with Gooneratne’s *The Pleasures of Conquest* (1995) Glory(2021) endorses that both the novels place their characters at fixed “familial, cultural and ideological positions”(para.3).They therefore are unable to change their attitudes and assumptions initially but consequently accept the fact that adaptation is the only means of survival in the host country. They finally learn the language, culture and manners of the hostland.

Rathod (2013) mainly focuses on the troubles and dilemmas of immigrants while the present research reflects mainly on the efforts of homing diaspora as made by main characters of the novel. Anitha (2017) reflects upon post-colonial aspects of the novel and Singh (2017) highlights the phenomena of filiation/affiliation in the selected work. Glory (2021) focuses on the cultural confusions in the novel. The present research is different from the previous studies on the novel as it tends to highlight the psychological and social aspects of migration and settlement. Moreover, it focuses on the prospects and opportunities of the homing of diaspora while simultaneously highlighting the difference and relational positioning the immigrants have to experience in the hostland.

Material and Methods

Brah’s(1996) theoretical concepts as depicted in *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* and Berry’s (1997) notions of acculturation as depicted in his “Lead Article: Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation” have been used as methodology for carrying out this research. Brah is a Ugandan-British sociologist and Emeritus professor of sociology at Birkbeck, University of London. She is pioneer of diaspora studies and a specialist in gender, ethnic identity and race issues. Berry is a Canadian psychologist and professor Emeritus of psychology at queen’s university Canada. His areas of research are cultural and ecological influences on behavior; and the adaptation of the indigenous people and immigrants resulting from intercultural contact. The first falls in the domain of cross-cultural psychology while the second is related to intercultural psychology. The research is qualitative in nature. Belsey’s textual analysis has been used as method for careful reading and interpretation of the text in order to find out novel meanings and cultural significance in the selected text leading to new insights in diasporic studies. The theoretical concepts and methodology have been described in detail in the analysis section.

Results and Discussion

Gooneratne’s *A Change of Skies*(1991) is the striking description of diasporic experiences It throws light on the immigrant experiences of a young Sri Lankan couple Bharat and Navaranjini. The couple moves to Australia from Sri Lanka during the late

1960s/early 1970s. Initially they tend to shift to Australia temporarily as Bharat secures the job of a lecturer at Southern Cross University in Sydney. They are warned by their family and friends who consider Australia as a remote place and a cultural wasteland forecasting their early return to their native land Srilanka that they consider as centre of civilisation. However, this five years visit turns into a permanent move. In order to adapt themselves to Australian culture, Bharat and Navaranjini change their names from Bharat to Barry and Navaranjini to Jean. When they return to their native country ,they find it difficult to adjust there and decide to reside permanently in Australia.

Diaspora Journey

Brah(1996), is of the view that the term diaspora involves in it the notion of journey. It is actually a 'dispersion from' (p.178) somewhere , hence it embodies the concept of "a locus, a 'home' " (p.17) that serves as a place of dispersion. Despite being central to the idea of diaspora, the notion of diaspora journey does not encapsulate "temporary sojourns" (p.179). Diasporic journeys are primarily about "settling down, about putting roots 'elsewhere'(p.179). Thus, the notion of diaspora goes beyond "who travels"(p.179) but "when, how and under what circumstances?(p.179). It means that socio-economic, cultural , political conditions and regimes of power are involved in the formation of diaspora or diasporic journeys. In other words, it can be said that there are different points of similarity and difference between or reasons behind different diasporic formations i.e. a)conquest or colonization e.g. as is the case with several European Diasporic formations, b)removal or capture of a group through slavery e.g. the Asian and African diasporas , c) expulsion or persecution as of different Jewish groups in history,d) political strife ,conflict or war followed by "the creation of a new nation state " (p.179) e.g. the case of Palestinians since the establishment of Israel or e)"global flows of labour"(p.179) etc. e.g. African-Caribbeans, Asians, Irish People or Cypriots in Britain.

Keeping in mind the above mentioned reasons *A Change of Skies* may be called "a dispersion from" (Gooneratne,1991,p.178) Sri Lanka to Australia. Initially it is like "temporary sojourns" (p.179),for the period of five years as Bharat decides to apply for the post of visiting professor at Southern Cross University in South Wales,Australia . Although it was Bharat, who decided to move but it was Navaranjini who was "curious enough--- or possibly, bored enough by her life in Colombo"(P.9) that she immediately agreed to move. Bharat as initially indecisive about moving there because the word "Australia" brought to his mind a "single picture" (P.11) that came out of "Philip's Atlas" (p.11) that he used to use "as a schoolboy at Royal"(p.11) where huge area as covered by 'washed out pink patches"(p.11) denoting areas of "British Ownership"(p.11). Australia had been presented there as "a blank pink space"(p.11).Its shape resembled "the head of a Scotch terrier"(p.11) whose ears were pricked up. Its square nose seemed permanently pointing out, towards Britain. Bharat considers this "doggy devotion"(p.11) of Australia to Britain to be a result of colonial history. Secondly the things that come to his mind about Australia were "Kangaroos, emus, koala, sheep. Tennis, cricket, Don Bradman, Bondi Beach, Aborigines" (P.12).These thoughts seemed to be disconnected because he did not have any "visual conception"(p.12) about Australia unlike England for most of his family members used to visit England and inform him about her. While he was pondering over his decision, he meets Australian high Commissioner Harry and his wife Barbara .This meeting helps him to some extent making his mind. He is told by Barbara that Australia is "the most multicultural country in the world"(p.29) as it has "immigrants from more countries than United States"(p.29).She regrets that this fact is unknown to the world and this is one of the part of their mission to make it "known" (p.29).Australia here seems to be what Berry calls a "Plural Society".

Berry (1997) suggests that immigration leads to “Culturally plural” societies (p.8). This is due to the intermingling of people belonging to different cultural backgrounds. In many cases these groups do not stand equal in power (political, economic and numerical). Therefore terms like “*mainstream*”, “*minority*” and “*ethnic group*” (p.8) etc. are used to refer these groups. Multiple cultural groups in plural societies result from three factors: “*Voluntariness, mobility, and permanence*” (p.8, Emphasis original). It means that some groups go through the process of acculturation voluntarily (e.g. immigrants), whereas others experience it involuntarily (e.g. indigenous people, refugees). Secondly, mobility refers to the point that some groups come into contact with new groups due to migration to a “new location” (p.8) while others experience acculturation because of the new culture” (p.) they are introduced to (e.g. “national minorities” and indigenous people). Thirdly, few migrated groups are permanently settled as a result of acculturation (e.g. immigrants) whereas others experience the condition temporarily (e.g. guests workers, international students, or asylum seekers). Whatever may be the factor behind or leading to acculturation, the basic “*process of adaptation*” (p.9, emphasis original) seems to be the same to all the groups with some variation in the level and course, of difficulty eventually leading to acculturation (Berry, p.9, Berry & Sam, 1996).

In Navaranjini and Bharat’s case this movement and acculturation seems to be resulting from “*voluntariness*” (Berry, 1997, p.8, Emphasis original) as it was his own decision to immigrate but it later on turns to “*permanence*” (p.8). Bharat decides to visit Australia by accepting the offer, all the procedure of immigration was completed so easily because he was “*invited*” (emphasis original) to go to Australia unlike “anxious would-be immigrants” (Gooneratne, 1991, p.33). When the plan to move is finalized, Bharat and Navaranjini inform their families about it. They have to face a severe reaction. Bharat’s sister Vera who is settled in New York warns him about the outcome of his decision: “You ‘will be miserable” (p.33). There is nothing in Australia except koala and kangroos, sheep and wombats. Vera’s opinion about Australia was not different from many Sri Lankan people. Bharat at this point realizes that Vera, as she is living a happy life in New York, is still imagining Colombo as she had left it ten years earlier. It is at this point that we may guess the reason behind Bharat and Navaranjini’s plan to move to Australia. Their movement was not as a result of colonization, capture or expulsion. It seems to be triggered by perhaps “global flows of labour” (Brah, p.179) initially. But later on Bharat calls Vera’s perception about Srilanka as ten years’ old. She imagined a peaceful Colombo and Srilanka: “But this was 1964” (Gooneratne, 1991, p.33) and few years “following the Sinhala-Tamil riots” (p.33) many of his colleagues had moved to Canada, Britain and the United States for many academic posts. Here Gooneratne perhaps refers to 1958 anti-Tamil riots and program in Ceylon.

These riots are also famous as 58 riots. These island-wide ethnic riots targeted the Tamils minority in Ceylon after its independence from Britain in the year of 1948. The duration of these riots was from May 22 to 29, 1958. About 158 to 1500 estimated murdered bodies were recovered. Although Tamils were victimized, Sinhalese had to face the damage as well due to the retaliatory attacks by Tamil mobs in Jaffna and Batticaloa districts. These were the first severe race riots in Srilanka in almost over forty years. Hence they spoiled and shattered the trust of different communities on another and thus caused further polarization in the country. This gives us a clue that the couple moved to Australia due to political strife going over in their own country. Even then Bharat pondered over the offer for “several weeks” (34) but he did not discuss it with his wife because he didn’t want to “distress her” (p.34) by the idea. He supposed that his wife would not really understand “how frustrating academic life at the University of Ceylon had become” (p.34) for people like him. Despite all this horrible situation, the couple was unwilling to move initially as

Bharat informs that even after knowing about the riots his wife would argue that her "family home in Jaffna and mine in Matara had survived the riots" (p.34) and "no-one we knew had actually died" (p.34). Despite the opposition of all the members of family Bharat thought that he would find at least "peace and tranquility" (p.34) over there. Moreover, the idea of "working with the Asianists of an Asialiterate society gained increasing popular appeal" (p.34) as commissioner's wife labeled Australia so. Thirdly, Vera's consoling remark about the short nature of the visit released his tension: "Well, Bharat, it's...just a five-year sentence, after all" (p.34). At this point Bharat himself couldn't predict that this five years sentence will turn into whole life's labour of love afterwards.

Reasons of Arrival or Settling Down

Brah (1996) is of the view that equally important to the circumstances of migration are the situations of "arrival and settling down" (p.179). The manners and ways in which these journeys accomplish and overlap at particular places, spaces, and historical conjunctures matter a lot. Similarly important are the ways and manner of insertion of a particular group within social categories of gender, class, sexuality, race, and other points of differentiation in the place of settlement. The way in which a particular group is 'situated' (p.179) in or through variant discourses, state policies, institutional practices and economic processes of critical importance for its future. The 'situatedness' (p.179) defines the relational positionality of different groups in a given context. Berry (1997) suggests that there are few important factors that need to be studied in the society of settlement. These are firstly, general attitudes of the society and the people towards "immigration and pluralism" (p.16), secondly, some societies are supportive of cultural diversity, this situation reflects a positive and "Multicultural ideology (Berry & Clain, 1995), others try to eliminate cultural diversity by introducing assimilationist policies, others tend to marginalize or segregate diverse cultural populations.

Chapter/Part III of *A Change of Skies* entitled as *Old World, New World* provides us with a detailed description of the situation and circumstances, the couple faces after their "arrival and settling down" (Brah, p.79) in Australia and general attitudes of people and the society towards immigrants. While narrating the story to Mrs. Koyako, her new Sri Lankan friend, Navaranjini explains how she got afraid of hail storm by mistakenly considering it an attack from Australians on their first day in the host country. She assumes that they were stoning at their house. Contrary to its expectation, the couple is surprised to see a neighbor standing outside the door welcoming them and offering help for repairing the window-pane temporarily. He introduces himself as Trevallys: "Next door, number thirty-two. Maureen and Bruce. Welcome to Australia" (p.83). The couple is impressed by the hospitality of their Australian neighbour. Next day, Maureen Trevally visits Bharat and Navaranjini with a bouquet of flowers to welcome them and invite them to a party at their house the following Saturday. Later on they come to know that the Trevally's party is "annual affair" (p.83). In the party they meet all of their neighbours who lived there and who used to live there years ago and had come to attend the party specially. Apparently the neighbors seem to be very generous. "I think it'll take you exactly five years for the two of you to feel at home in Australia" (p.85) says Maureen addressing Navaranjini. Meanwhile she comes across a mynah and cries "Shoo! Get away you nasty thing! She is annoyed to find a foreign bird in her garden. Later on Navaranjini asks her about another "immigrant bird" (p.6). "It's a crow," informs Maureen. "Another of those foreign marauders. They are everywhere these days----drive me wild, the lot of them." (p.86). This unveils the hypocrisy of the native Australians. Apparently they are so hospitable towards immigrants yet in reality they are annoyed by the presence of even foreign birds like Mynah and crows. Navaranjini consoles herself by perceiving that Maureen may not like immigrant birds but she is kind enough to think of them as "exotics" (p.87), trying to put

roots into “an alien ground” (p.87) with great difficulty. The Asians are still exotics for the West despite all their intellectual capabilities.

Relational Positioning

The *concept* of Diaspora is related not only to “historical specificity” (Brah,1996,p.180) but also to the historically mutable kinds of “*relationality*” (p.180) between and within the formations of diaspora. Power relations play a significant role in constituting ever-changing diasporic formations. Thus, the “*configurations of power*” differentiate diasporas “*internally*” (p.10) while simultaneously situating them “*in relation to one another*” (emphasis original, p.180).

This relational positioning of diaspora community can be seen while comparing the newly settled couple with Mr. and Mrs. Koyako. They are not satisfied with their life in the host country as they have to face prejudice on daily basis. They are not interested in, “the Trevallys, their roses, their lawn, or their bluebells... views on the relative merits of crows and Mynahs...the birth tales of the Buddha...” (Geoneratne,1991,p.87) as they are fiercely wrestling...with that life’s most central issues” (p.87). Both the couples are of Sri-Lankan origin but their way of looking at the things is quite different based on and reflective of their own personal experiences in the host country. They are simultaneously same and different from each other. Similarly, Navaranjini’s neighbor ,Bruce’s wife, Maureen’s behavior towards Navaranjini and new Srilankan neighbour Mrs. Dr. What’s-his-name is the reflection of this relative positioning. She speaks of new neighbour’s “big oriental eyes,” (p.99)and calls her “scared stiff” (p.99) and labels her musical instruments as “Exotic thing” (p.99) Navaranjini and Bharat have to face less prejudice because they are more educated and willing to adapt to the culture of the host country. This is what Bharat writes in a letter to his mother that the Asian community in Australia is well aware of “*the cultural hazards*” (p.87.emphasis is original) among which it lives. He explains his mother how the Asians were trying to spread their traditions like the pattern of beginning and ending the letters conventionally just to “*protect and preserve, in situations of cultural danger, the values which support a civilization*” (p.87,emphasis original). Mr. Koyako leads Sri Lankan community in Australia and stands as “*a person in whom Sri Lankan moral values and traditions remain strong*” (p.88,emphasis original) despite their ten years’ stay in Australia. We find relational positioning of diasporic communities when Bharat uses the plural personal pronoun “we” (p.87) while referring to the cultural hazards the immigrants face. Simultaneously he switches to the individual description of Mr. Koyako, a Sri Lankan national, highlighting his efforts to protect Sri Lankan culture while comparing and contrasting them with his personal experiencing in the host country Australia. This unity and diversity makes diasporas composite formations.

Diasporas as Composite Formations

Diverse historical experiences make diasporas composite formations. Each such diaspora is “an interweaving of multiple travelling; a text of many distinctive and, perhaps, even disparate narratives” (Brah,1996,p.180). This is quite true of the South Asian, Palestinian, Jewish, Irish, Chinese and African Diasporas. For instance South Asians in Britain, Africa ,USA and all over the world have simultaneously a different and related history. *A Change of Skies* is such a composite formation as it encapsulates the diasporic experiences of grand-father Edward parallel to those of Bharat and Navaranjini. Edward reached Australia in 1882 on the S.S. Devonshire (name of the ship). Edward journey resulted from an unsuccessful love affair with her cousin Emily. Escaping a strict father, Edward travelled in disguise as servant boy Devith’s younger brother. The rich Edward had to work hard for his survival during the travel. Bharat and his wife later on edit the

diary that Edward maintained throughout his journey to and stay in Australia. They discover many commonalities that underscore all diasporic experience. The novel thus presents the diasporic experience from three simultaneously different and to some extent similar points of view: Edward's, Bharat's and Navaranjini's. For Edward as he puts it in his Diary in 1887 at Badagini: "He who crosses the ocean may change the skies above him, but not the colour of his soul." (Gooneratne,1991,p.167). The diasporic journey of Barry and Jean (Bharat and Navaranjini) and perhaps of Gooneratne too, advocates that "everything around us is caught up in a process of profound and inexorable change and that we are not only changing with it but are being perpetually remade." (p.285). Edward has written on the tombstone of his friend as a message of consolation: "Subject to change are all component things." (p.285). Both Edward and Bharat are of Sri Lankan origin, and belong to same family, even then their diasporic experiences are diverse in nature due to spatio-temporal factors behind "dispersion" from homeland and "situatedness" in the foreign country. For the former, the change is temporary and superficial, for the latter, it is a way of reconstructing and re-forming an old self with conscious awareness of being an "other". Despite the differences, both of them agree upon the fact that change is the spark of life.

Another point that makes diasporic journeys composite ones is that they are "embarked upon, lived and relived through multiple modalities" (Brah,1996,p.180) of race, language, gender, religion, class and generation. According to Berry(1997), these factors exist prior to Acculturation. Individuals' acculturation process starts carrying with a variety of personal characteristics which, in nature, are both demographic and social. A person's age, gender, education, factors behind migration and cultural distance are closely related to process of acculturation. Hence, all diasporas are "differentiated, heterogeneous, contested spaces" (p.181), despite the fact that they contribute to the "construction of a common 'we'" (p.181). The constitution this collective 'we', the distribution of power in the construction of "we", the relationship of the 'we' with its 'others' is very much important. Who are these others? How binaries are constructed? Most often a single dominant Other is placed in opposition to the "We" negating the various historically specific, political, socio-economic and cultural circumstances that influence the constitution of different others. This is the effect of dominant discourses, institutions and practices that a binary that need to be deconstructed is commonly accepted as an unproblematic other. Brah is of the view that there are "multiple others" (p.181) who are embedded across and within binaries. How in a given context these binaries e.g. Jew/Gentile or Male/female intersect or slide into one another is significant to bring into consideration. Brah uses the notions of "differential racialization" (Brah,1996,p.183) to analyse the processes of "relational multi-locality" based on power dynamics that intermingle one kind of racism with another while simultaneously involving "other modes of differentiation" (p.183).

In *A change of Skies* the whole idea is depicted in a comment by Dr. Crabb when he decides to appoint Jean Mundy (Navaranjini) as leader of Women's group for the campus branch. He is greatly impressed by the way she had called a spade a spade to the racist Professor Blackstone and believes that Jean has the courage to fight for the rights of women. He considers women, gays, abos, koalas, kids, kids, whale, druggies and the Asians as "endangered species", "marginalized" (Gooneratne,1991,p.130) by the rotten Australian society. This shows that even Australians are well aware of the injustice the immigrants have to face in their country but don't protest against it. Barry and Jean feel marginalized even after living in Australia for five years. People even ask them where they were from? When they were going back and what made them decide to come to Australia? Despite learning the language and adopting the customs of Australian people, they are considered as "other". These different "Others" turn into a common "we" when it comes to the common historical background or issues leading to the migration. As they all have the same answers, "The educational system there is in ruins, and we have young children to

educate," (p.155) or "the mobs burnt out house during the riots in 1958" (p.155) or 'We saw our books burned, our furniture broken, and our china smashed by vandals' (p.155) and escaped with the children...or we would have been killed" (p.155). These were the commonalities between Asians that led them to migrate to Australia. Moreover, there was also a common history of colonial violence, occupation and "international bullying" (p.270) often "reeking, as Swift has noted, with the blood of their native inhabitants. 'Exterminate all the Brutes!'" (p.270). This Kurtzian sentiment "had been heard at Auschwitz, Belsen, and Dachau, and over little villages in Vietnam... Little Rock, Arkansas...Australia...Soweto,...in Srilanka in 1854..." (p.270). It is this common history of endless sorrow and pain that connected the people living in Diaspora space. For Australians, the immigrants are still outsiders, or "others" who have only "Hopes" (p.281) and "expectations" (p.270) which are "quickly and easily dashed in a world that has got on perfectly well without us before we arrived" (p.281) and does not realize as quickly as we might wish, what it has gained by the lucky accident of our arrival" (p.281). The immigrants are not only ignored but their contribution to the development of host country is also remains unacknowledged. They are further categorized and marginalized on the basis of their religion, age, education etc. Jean and Barry have to suffer less because they are education and differential relational positioning. Jean being a woman could challenge Prof. Blackstone for harassing her and worrying her husband by calling her "shit stirrer" and "dog's dinner" (p.127), 'a yahoo' (p.128), "a wrinkly, 'a shit head and "a stinker" (128). "The barbarian" (p.128). She can do so only because her relatively different position among the people of the host country because of her education. She learnt Australian language, is made in charge of the book display on language schools open day as she had a diploma in library management. Moreover, she is young and could adapt to the host country's customs easily. Her migration was triggered by motivation or pull factors as Berry (1997) call them and finally she had less "cultural distance" (Berry, 1997, p) to the culture of the host country because she belonged to Srilankan aristocracy. She had often been in contact with Australian visitors like high Commissioner and his wife who actually motivated the couple to move to Australia showing them the positive side of the country. An uneducated housewife living in a host country might not have adapted herself to the new culture so easily. Hence, Berry rightly suggests that a person's age, gender, education, cultural distance and factors behind migration matter a lot in acculturation process. Their intersection makes diasporas composite formations.

The Homing of Diaspora, the Diasporising of Home

The concept of diaspora necessarily comprises a subtext of home. On one side "home' is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination" (Brah, 1996, p.188). Hence, "it is a place of no return" (p.188), despite the possibility of visiting "the geographical territory" (p.188) known as "the place of origin" (p.188). On the other side, "home is also the live experience of a locality, it sounds and smells... mediated by historically specific everyday of social relations" (p.189). In *A Change of Skies* home serves both as a mythic place one desires in his imagination and the lived place full of life experiences of the characters. Mr. Koyako informs Jean and Barry that he has modeled his whole life on the patterns provided by their leaders at "home" (Gooneratne, 1991, p.9). He has grown "a luxuriant moustache in the style of Sri Lanka's first prime minister" (p.9) and always "carries a camera in imitation of her second, keeps a pair of jodhpurs in his dressing room in imitation of her third, smokes a pipe in imitation of her fourth, writes verse in imitation of her fifth" (p.89). He encourages his wife "to wear kandyan *osariya* in imitation of Sri Lanka's sixth prime minister" (p.89). By following the traditions of their homeland both Mr. and Mrs. Koyako tend to and express a desire of homing diaspora, bringing home to the host country. However they know that living in the host country they have to adapt themselves to its culture by diasporising home. Said (2001) therefore opines that the notion of 'home' emerges

out of migrant experience of uprootedness; that is to say, when it is left behind and gone, but simultaneously desired and imagined (Friedman,2004).Barry's grandfather Edward misses his home while he reaches Fraser Islands because that Island and its beach brought his "*home and the countryside about it*" (Gooneratne,1991,p.160,emphasis original) constantly to his mind. His thought "*fly so often homeward*"(p.163) and he thinks that "*He who crosses the ocean may change the skies above him but not the color of his soul*"(p.167,emphasis original). After moving to Australia Barry writes his mother, " there are certain things which can never alter, and among them are the devotion both Baba and I feel for homeland and family"(p.98). This is what he feels in the early years of settlement and believes that nothing can stop them from returning home after his contract is over. After spending many years in Australia, writing the first draft of the *Guide*, the name of his book based on his grandfather's travelogues, he still asks himself a question: "when is it exactly that the immigrant throws overboard every other idea, every other possible destination, and decides that here, and in no other place, he will make his home"(p.151).Barry (Bharat) even after spending five years in Australia was overwhelmed by homing desire and felt a "spell at home" and wanted to get once again as soon as possible "under the skin of Sri Lankan life"(p.226). Jean (Navaranjini)however, succeeds in homing diaspora as she writes to Vera, her sister in law, that she was worried and doubtful about their being happy in Australia while the situation "turned to be just the opposite" (p.197) . She further explains her that expats try to hold on to their national traditions of "warm hospitality"(p.199) irrespective of "ethnic conflicts back home"(p.199). Moreover the Sri Lankan community in Australia is very lively one, and arranges and enjoys social events throughout the year. The concept of home thus includes the ways by which practices of inclusion and exclusion affect and shape subjective experiences under certain circumstances. Brah's (1996) concept of home in diaspora is ambivalent. It inscribes "*a homing desire*"(p.189) while simultaneously critiques "*discourses of fixed origins*"(emphasis original, p.189).She suggests that homing desire is different from desiring home. For some people feel better at home in the hostland while others like to affiliate themselves to their homeland.

Diasporas are places of long term formations. The term diaspora entreats imaginings of "traumas of separation and dislocation" (p.190). These are necessarily the most important aspect of migratory experiences. At the same time diasporas also serve as 'the sites of hope and new beginnings"(p.190). They are "contested cultural and political terrains where individual and collective memories collide, reassemble and reconfigure"(p.190). Bharat and Navaranjini's diasporic journey resulted from riots in their homeland. When they left Sri Lanka, the situation was not so bad. When they revisit it after five years, the political riots had become so common that people were being killed for no reason and houses were being burnt. One of their friends, Mr. Doraisamy is shot dead during his visit to his family in Jaffna. Jean's family home in Jaffna was also set on fire because It was of a Tamil family. Only "the empty shell of its massive outer walls" (Gooneratne,1991,p.268) stood over there. As Mr. Koyako comments, "our homeland is going through terrible times. It is a dark and tragic era in its history " (p.273).During such hostile situation, diaspora serves as a site of hope and new beginning for Jean and Barry. While they moved away so lighthearted from their homeland few years earlier ,they at that then realized that their "future now lay elsewhere" (p.271) .Brah is of the view that there is a difference between 'feeling at home'(Brah,1996,p.190) or staking claim considering a place as one's own. Jean and Barry feel at home in the host country Australia due to the prevailing political situation in their homeland Sri Lanka. They had adapted to the customs of the host country to such an extent that despite having decided to not behave like expatriates, they were unconsciously doing so while returning to Srilanka. When Bharat had to wait for "three quarters of an hour"(Navaranjini,1991,p.262) for her bill in a Colombo bookshop, for the female clerk was busy in polishing her nails and gossiping with

the peon, he almost lost his temper. All the people over there smile meaningfully considering him to be an 'Expat' (p.262) for according to them "expats make scenes" (p.262) and complain "about the food being 'off' in expensive hotels" (p.262). They protest against the "faulty air conditioning, about the absence of toothpaste, about the dubious cleanliness of sheets, about the disgusting state of public lavatories" (p.262). This type of behavior is not expected from nationals. At this point Bharat longed for going back to Sydney. He found himself '*aching*' (p.263) for elementary and ordinary things. He wanted to be back "in a house where the plumbing was at least marginally reliable... in a city where garbage was not allowed to rot in great open heaps on street corners for weeks before being removed by municipal vans" (p.263). Barry and Jean have assimilated to the Australian culture to such an extent that they cannot tolerate the corruption and unhygienic life style in Sri Lanka, though they were Sri Lankan nationals. They go through the process of "*multi-locality*" (Brah,1996, p.191, emphasis original) beyond psychic, cultural and geographical boundaries. In other words 'the double, triple, or multi-placedness' (p.191) of the concept of home in people's imagination does not serve as hindrance to their affinity with the hostland or diaspora space. Hence, the concept of home entails in it a kind of fluidity. Bhabha (1994) asserts this idea when he says: "Home may not be where the heart is, nor even the hearth. [...] Home may be a mode of living made into a metaphor of survival' (p.19). This fluidity of the concept of home, therefore, carries with it a type of instability or risk of losing its identity as physically relatable place (Ryan,2008).

Moreover, factors like generational gap, and identity markers like age and gender also have a great influence upon the concept of home. The relationship of the first and the subsequent generations to the place of dispersion or migration varies from each other as this is mediated by The first generation is laden with the "memories of the recent past" (Brah,1996, p.191), and the experiences of displacement and dispersion while trying to formulate "new social networks" (p.190), and learning to negotiate novel cultural, political and economic realities. Brah, therefore, considers identity as "plural" (p.191) rather than "fixed" (p.191) entity that might be shaped and reshaped. In the selected text, the factors like age, and gender seem to affect one's attitude towards home. Mr. Koyako belongs to the first generation of diaspora. Therefore he is strongly attached to the customs and traditions of his home. He and his wife dress up like Sri Lankan Prime ministers. He is a person "in whom Sri Lankan values and traditions remain strong" (Gooneratne,1991,p.88) even after spending nearly ten years in Australia. Mrs. Koyako always serves her guests with "*Siri Lankan' savouries and sweets*" (p.90). They whole heartedly participate in alms giving and very religious and are devote "supporters of three temples" (p.90). While this first generation is inclined to cling to the customs of their home country, their children seem to be reluctant to these "formulae" (p.88). Refers to one Sri Lankan custom of bowing to one's parents Barry writes to his mother that they seem to do so only "under the threat of a stoppage of their pocket money" (p.88) or "confiscation of their Walkmans" (p.88). Mr. Koyako informs Barry that Dr. Kasimuttu's younger most intelligent daughter, descendant of a family of renowned surgeons in Jaffna ruined her parents' dreams by expression her ambition to become "a fashion model" (p.93). Mr. Koyako considers it the result of living in the "alien society, far away from kith and Kin, far away from everything know and love" (p.93). He laments the fact that these children do not know "what we are going through to give them these opportunities" (p.93). The people like Mr. Koyako have keen association to their home and home land. They know what they have lost and what they have gained but the new generation is no more interested in reviving these traditions of their ancestral homes. Gender relations also shape the experiences of men and women but not according to the patriarchal formations of the homeland a they will be transformed according to the "specific policies, institutions and modes of signification" (Brah,1996,p.190) of the country to which migration has taken place. Bharat compares the roles of women in Sri Lanka and

in Australia. In his homeland, woman considered that she had utilized her time nicely if she managed to get “ little extra sewing done” or “ a letter written” (p.233) or if she had cooked food. Contrary to this, in Australia, he observes that the wives of his contemporaries mostly spent their time “leaping up and down at aerobic classes, attending coffee mornings and gala batik exhibitions, devising seating plans for charity concerts, organizing fashion shows or meeting each other at cocktail parties...” (p.33). Even Jean becomes very social, finds a job, writes a cook book entitled “*Something Rich and Strange*”(p.293), owns and runs an Asian cuisine namely BABA-G. She adapts her roles according to the culture of the host country where women’s job is not only limited to doing household chores. They are no more oppressed by the patriarchal society but equally contribute to the socio-economic development of the host country.

Conclusion

The research concludes that in the age of globalization and market liberalism, diaspora space serves as a site of hope. It opens up new possibilities for the settlers, making them feel at home by negotiating their relational positioning during their efforts of homing diaspora spaces. Gooneratne’s *A Change of Skies* endorses this point. It reflects how Bharat and Navaranjini’s temporary sojourn turns into a permanent dispersion from Sri Lanka resulting in settlement in the host country Australia. The novelist beautifully highlights the couple’s efforts and desire for homing of diaspora that requires learning of the culture and customs of the host country. During the process of acculturation, both husband and wife face a number of difficulties due to differences in gender, race, nationality, religion, customs and culture. Their relational positioning, voluntariness to assimilate into the host culture and desire for homing of diaspora reflect the attitude and behavior of Sri Lankan immigrants in Australia on one hand while are representative of the existing practices of the immigrants across the world on the other. Instead of desiring for a mythic home where they once lived, they struggle for and to some extent succeed in homing of diaspora where they live or at least learn to live gradually despite their distinctive historicity and different modalities of race, gender, religion, culture and age making their diaspora a composite formation. Herein lies the internal complexity and theoretical ambiguity of diaspora fiction in general and of *A Change in Skies* in particular.

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