

ECHOES OF RESILIENCE: THE CULTURAL INFLUENCE OF MIGRANT NARRATIVES IN "MARUBHOOMIYILE MARUJEEVITHANGAL"

Dr. Joseph Mathew* Vishnu Chandran Aswathy Mohan*****

EXIT FROM ONE'S COUNTRY

Emigration means leaving one's homeland to live in another country. People have been migrating since ancient times, but during prehistoric times, when humans survived by hunting and gathering, they didn't stay in one place. So, these movements weren't considered emigration. Emigration became significant only after agriculture developed during the Neolithic Age, when people started living in permanent settlements.

People migrate for many reasons. They may look for jobs, escape wars, flee natural disasters, improve their social status, pursue education, or even leave as punishment. These reasons can be grouped into three categories: Seeking safety, finding basic needs, and aiming for a better life. For those looking for safety, emigration is vital; for those searching for basic needs, it is necessary; and for those wanting a better lifestyle, it is optional.

EMIGRATION: DEFINITION AND USE

The term "expatriation" refers to concepts like "exile," "banishment," "leaving one's homeland," "voluntary migration," "moving to another country," and "emigration." Herman Gundert described emigration in his dictionary as "living far from home." In Shabdataravali, it is defined with terms like "journey," "leaving home," and "temporary separation."

The Sanskrit word for emigration, *prakrushenavasam*, means a special kind of residence that can have positive or negative effects. Emigration is not just ordinary living-it is about staying in a place different from one's home. The word comes from the prefix 'p' and the root verb 'vas.' The term has evolved over time to include many meanings, such as living in a foreign land or leaving for better opportunities. Emigration reflects the need to live temporarily or permanently in a new place, often for survival or to improve life conditions. It can affect a person's social awareness, personal life, and creativity in profound ways.

FOREIGN NATIONAL

The word "expatriate" comes from the Latin words 'ex' (meaning "out of") and 'patria'

* Assistant Professor, Department of English, Nehru Arts and Science College, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India -641-105.

** Assistant Professor, PG Department of English, Sree Narayana College for Women, Kollam, Kerala, India-691-001.

*** Assistant Professor, PG Department of English, Sree Narayana College, Kollam, Kerala, India-691-001.

(meaning "country" or "fatherland"). It refers to someone who moves to another country, either temporarily or permanently. The feminine form of expatriate is "expatriate woman." An expatriate is someone who lives in a country other than their own, and memories of their homeland often bring a feeling of longing or homesickness.

Many Malayalis have settled in different places, both inside and outside India. There is ongoing debate about whether the movement of Malayalis seeking jobs and better opportunities should be considered emigration. Unlike traditional diasporas, which involve forced displacement, the migration of Malayalis is not usually driven by trauma. However, sociologist Robin Cohen argues that people emigrate for many reasons, not just those that cause emotional distress, and this is true for many Malayalis as well. "After arriving here, I was searching for him in every person I met. So many people pass by in the streets, the alleys, and the busy crowds of the city; different kinds of people; among them, I would often look in vain, hoping to recognize my elder brother, even unknowingly." (p.28)

V. Rajakrishnan suggests that the emigration of Malayalis should be seen differently from the usual idea of emigration. People who move from a poorer country to a wealthier one in search of better job opportunities are called economic migrants. Most Malayalis who have moved abroad have done so mainly for economic reasons.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF EMIGRATION

E.J. Ravenstein's "Laws of Migration" and Everett S. Lee's "Push and Pull" theory helps to explain why people migrate. Ravenstein's laws suggest that migration often happens over short distances, typically to areas near one's homeland. As populations grow, people move to meet the increasing demands for resources. Also, cities become more appealing due to specific needs and goals, leading people to move to urban areas or industrial centers. Everett S. Lee's theory explains why people emigrate. It is called the Push and Pull Theory, which has two parts: push factors and pull factors. Push factors are reasons that make people leave their homeland, such as unemployment, lack of opportunities, poor living conditions, natural disasters, war, and unrest. Pull factors are the attractions of another place, such as better living conditions, job opportunities, better education, and progress in industry, which encourage people to move to a different country. When looking at why people emigrate, it's clear that one or more of these reasons usually play a part.

The word "diaspora" refers to people who are displaced from their homeland. It comes from the Greek words "dia" (meaning "outside") and "speiro" (meaning "to scatter"). It generally describes both voluntary and forced migration, referring to people moving away from their original home to a new place. Initially, the term was used to describe the scattering of the Jewish people from Jerusalem, but over time, it has been applied to a broader range

of people, including immigrants, political refugees, foreign workers, and those who are forced to leave their homeland.

Emigration can be divided into two types: internal and international. Internal emigration happens within a country, while international emigration involves moving to another country. After the Gulf War in 1991, the term "emigrants" started to be used in Malayalam to describe Malayalis who returned to Kerala after working abroad. Before this, Malayalis who moved abroad were identified by the countries they settled in, like Gulf Malayali, American Malayali, or Bombay Malayali. The term "Malayali expatriate" became more common, replacing the older term "migrant Malayali," which referred to any Malayali living outside Kerala. Today, "Malayali expatriate" is more widely used, even for those who migrate within India.

MIGRATION TO THE GULF REGION

Gulf migration refers to people moving to Arab countries. The social and economic changes in the 20th century played a big role in making migration a key part of modern life. The global economic crisis that started in 1929 also affected Kerala. The rapid population growth, due to better education and lower death rates, contributed to this trend. In the 1960s, Kerala was struggling with poverty and hunger, and migration to the Gulf countries became a way out. With local industries and agriculture failing, many people from Kerala saw the Gulf as a place to find jobs and improve their lives. Before this, Malayalis had moved to places like Burma, Malaya, Singapore, and Ceylon to find work.

The first Gulf migrants were called "Persians." The large migration to the Gulf began in the 1970s, mainly driven by the growth of oil fields. Since then, the trend of people moving to the Gulf for jobs has continued. While Malayalis had previously traveled to places like Kuwait and Bahrain by boats, the Gulf migration as we know it began later. At first, people traveled by dhows and ships, but now they mostly use airplanes. Migrants include skilled workers, laborers, and domestic workers. The broader idea of migration has also been explored in books and movies, showing the struggles and experiences of migrants, which are very different from those of expatriates.

THE DESERT'S STAR

A key part of migration is the compassion between people. There are many examples of friendship in this context. One such example is Amaal, the "Star of the Desert," in 'Marubhoomiyile Marujeevithangal' (Life in the Desert). Despite the many challenges Amanulla faces in the vast desert, Amaal becomes a true friend and guide. At first, Amanulla struggles with uncertainty, but through Amaal's support, his journey transforms into one of friendship and connection.

The desert, with its emptiness and harshness, is a powerful backdrop for their friendship. In such a lonely place, the warmth of human connection stands out. Amaal represents the true meaning of friendship, showing that even in difficult environments, strong bonds can form. Amanulla, though far from home, finds comfort in Amaal's companionship.

Their growing friendship shows that real connections can overcome cultural differences, highlighting the shared human experience. Amaal's character shows how important friendship is, even in tough times, and how it can bring hope and strength. Their relationship is a reminder that the human spirit thrives through connection, even in the most difficult situations. This bond, created in the heart of the desert, crosses language and cultural barriers, showing how friendship deeply impacts the migrant experience.

NOSTALGIA AND HOMESICKNESS

Nostalgia is an important part of the migrant experience, often accompanied by a strong desire to return home. Immigrants often feel homesick, which can show up in different ways. Missing loved ones, familiar places, and cultural traditions can lead to sadness and worry, affecting their mental health. For many migrants, memories of home become precious parts of their past. The longing for family gatherings, cultural celebrations, and familiar food can create an emotional weight that's hard to carry. These feelings are often stronger during holidays or important life events, making them feel more disconnected from their roots.

In 'Marubhoomiyile Marujeevithangal', Amanulla's story clearly shows this experience. As he adjusts to his new life, memories of home and family continue to shape who he is. His thoughts on the past reveal how nostalgia affects his emotions, showing the struggle of being both a migrant in a new land and someone deeply tied to their homeland. Resilience among migrants often manifests in the preservation of cultural identity. This cultural retention is crucial for emotional well-being, particularly in the face of alienation or marginalization in the host country. In 'Marubhoomiyile Marujeevithangal', the protagonist Amanulla's experience is shaped by memories of home, illustrating the centrality of nostalgia and cultural ties in building resilience. These emotional connections can serve as both a source of strength and a means to combat homesickness, as migrants forge communities based on shared heritage. The resilience to uphold traditional practices-whether through food, language, or religious observances-acts as an anchor in an otherwise uncertain environment.

However, while cultural preservation fosters a sense of belonging within migrant communities, it often exists in tension with the demands of integration into the host society. As cultural groups cling to familiar ways, their members may be less likely to adopt new customs or language skills, which are necessary for better social mobility and acceptance

in their adopted countries.

The very resilience that aids in cultural preservation can simultaneously prevent integration. In the case of the Malayali expatriates, the retention of cultural practices and social ties to Kerala, despite the economic success many experiences in the Gulf, can create a feeling of "being in-between," where migrants exist in a liminal space, neither fully integrated into the host society nor completely tied to their homeland. This is particularly evident in the gulf migration patterns, where expatriates have the economic means to stay in their cultural enclaves but may face difficulties in interacting with local populations or adopting host-country norms. In 'Marubhoomiyile Marujeevithangal', the protagonist's isolation in the desert is symbolic of the broader struggle between maintaining one's cultural identity and the psychological toll of not truly belonging to either place. As much as the protagonist relies on his cultural resilience for survival, it's clear that his experience of being in a foreign land remains fundamentally fragmented.

LITERATURE AND DISPLACEMENT

Literature is a powerful way to express the complex realities of migration. Many writers have shared their personal experiences of displacement to explore themes like identity, belonging, and cultural differences. This helps readers understand the immigrant experience more deeply and highlights the details of their journeys. Migrant literature often blends personal stories with larger societal issues, showing the challenges people face in their search for a better life. These authors contribute to a growing collection of work that emphasizes the importance of migration in shaping modern society. In recent years, migrant literature has become more popular, with writers focusing on different aspects of migration. These stories not only share personal experiences but also challenge stereotypes and misconceptions about migrants. They provide a window into the real lives of migrants, encouraging empathy and understanding among readers.

CONCLUSION

Exploring migration, nostalgia, and homesickness is important for understanding the complexities of human experiences. Migrant literature, like Dr. Deepesh Karimpunkal's 'Marubhoomiyile Marujeevithangal', shows the strength of individuals who face the challenges of displacement while keeping their cultural identities. Through personal stories, migrants share their struggles, successes, and lasting connections to their homeland. As migration continues to impact societies around the world, these stories will remain crucial for helping us understand the human experience. By recognizing the importance of these journeys, we can develop more compassion and empathy for the diverse stories of migrants and the cultures they bring to our world.

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