



A Thematic Study on Diasporic Displacement, Migration and identity in the novels of Jamaica Kincaid.

Jahnvi Singh

Research Scholar, Department of English and Foreign Languages, Indira Gandhi National Tribal University,
Amarkantak, M.P., Pin code- 484887, India. Email- jahnvibanapher@gmail.com

Dr. Rituraj Trivedi

Assistant Professor, Department of English and Foreign Languages, Indira Gandhi National Tribal University,
Amarkantak, M.P., Pin code- 484887, India. Email- rituraj.trivedi@igntu.ac.in

Abstract:

The given paper will examine the Diasporic Displacement, Migration and Identity as a crucial theme in two novels of Antiguan-American female novelist Jamaica Kincaid. It will explore how the experiences of displacement are totally different for the woman of colour who belongs from a colonial country. The search of relevance, relativity and familiarization is a social as well as psychological need of human and the subjugation of people because of their ethnicity has been a continuous process from generations. The study will foreground and analyse the protagonist of Jamaica Kincaid novels Annie John (1985) and Lucy (1990) protagonists leave their Antiguan homeland and face the cultural marginalisation of the Caribbean diaspora focusing on their struggles for their fabricated and sociopolitical identity because of their race and gender. This research will make an inquiry how Jamaica Kincaid portrays the psychological and emotional complexities of diasporic individuals especially women who experience displacement due to colonial atrocities, forced migration, or voluntary exile. Through her semi-autobiographical characters, her own insights and ideas Kincaid delves into how migration disable the personal and cultural identity, creating tension between the self and the "other," the homeland and the host land, the colonizer and the colonized.

Keyword: Diasporic Displacement, Migration, Identity, Post colonialism, Jamaica Kincaid, feminism, Caribbean Literature.

Introduction:

The well admired and favoured Antiguan-American Writer, Jamaica Kincaid is one of the significant female authors from the Caribbean Island. Kincaid is known for her fictions and theme she follows in them. Kincaid in her novel explores and celebrates her culture and struggles as a diasporic female writer and women allied with the colonization. The fiction of Kincaid is much of a personal then a professional writing the settings of the novels and the core of them is the characters she created through her own experiences and similar to herself. Her characters are image and shadows of her and every other Caribbean woman who have faced discrimination for their ethnicity and Culture. Kincaid's novels frequently invoke themes of exile, uprooting, and return to the motherland, signalling their deep diasporic battle.

“She had to have a birth-date so why not mine? She was going to have a name that would refer to the slave part of her history, so why not my own? I write about myself for the most part, and about things that have happened to me.”

The lines above are the spoken by Kincaid in the interview on 1991 which is indication that her works are semi-autobiographical in nature. Kincaid tend to discuss the struggles of class privileges and distinction of treatment through her fiction and Non-fiction works. Novels like *Annie John* and *Lucy* and their protagonist are somehow interrelated with the writer itself. Kincaid in her novels discusses the struggles of migration and how the displacement from their own country to the new place creates a doubt and need of search for their identity. The search of identity also comes up with the fact of being colonized. The characters of Lucy and Annie’s encounter with the rejection, the experience of displacement, and the reflection of fractured diasporic self. The analysis is enlightened by postcolonial critics like Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha, and Carole Boyce-Davies on diaspora and hybridity, showing how Kincaid’s narratives dramatize Caribbean diaspora themes in the lives of young Antiguan women.

Diasporic Displacement in Jamaica Kincaid’s Novels:

The idea and meaning of diaspora have been changed and keep on changing as per the need of the society as it originally meant the dispersed people from their home land but now it had become the reason of subjugation for the people of many countries especially those who had been colonized. Africa is the name of the missing term, the great aporia, which lies at the centre of our cultural identity and gives it a meaning which, until recently, it lacked. No one who looks at these textural images now, in the light of the history of transportation, slavery and migration, can fail to understand how the rift of separation, the 'loss of identity', which has been integral to the Caribbean experience only begins to be healed when these forgotten connections are once more set in place (Hall,2). Kincaid protagonists symbolize the postcolonial Caribbean diaspora transaction of peoples from colonized homelands to developed centres of the world. The variation in the diaspora can be seen in these two novels of Kincaid. Lucy’s journey in the novel begins with the diaspora having left the Caribbean to work as an au pair in North America. Her interactions with her white employer signify the power imbalance of colonized and colonizer. For Annie diaspora has completely different impact it shaped her colonial British Schooling embedding her diasporic consciousness before her migration to England. In the final chapter of the book Annie’s departure was a bittersweet experience from idea of freedom to pain of separation.

“What a surprise this was to me, that I longed to be back in the place that I came from... I longed to sleep in a bed I had outgrown...” (Kincaid, Lucy, p.04)

The above mentioned showcase the dilemma of Lucy and how displacement from her home is affection her. The Character of Annie somehow feel emotional displacement because of the absence of her mother. Her alienation intensifies when she’s been taught European values distancing her from her culture and tradition. For Lucy it is double displacement first from her homeland and other from the people who excluded her.

Annie John traces a girl in Antigua and her concluding migration to England. In this Afro-Caribbean context, Annie’s displacement is felt long before her actual migration. Psychologically, Annie has an intense bond to her mother’s “womb” of Antiguan safety, which is harmed as colonial and cultural authority remain constant. The novels imagery “the spilling of the vessel as the emptying of the womb” symbolizes the loss of safety of her homeland. In leaving, Annie undergoes a traumatic experience as she “fails to create her subject formation as she is unable to live in hybridity and instead turns to exile”. In other words, Annie cannot simultaneously inhabit Caribbean and British cultures and customs, and so she withdraws from Antigua into the other England. Annie’s attempt to blend home and the colonizers fails as she cannot reconcile the “hybridity of East and West”. Emotionally, Annie experiences a sense of loss and anger. Her rebellious ways to obey her mother reflects a deeper abuse with colonial Antiguan norms. Culturally, she has been programmed by British colonial schooling even as she longs for her Antiguan identity. The outcome was her fractured identity as Blomgren argues, Annie is “torn between two worlds” and cannot fully become “a subject of the Third Space,” Eventually, her emigration becomes an act of exile leaving her confused and displaced from both the lands.

In Lucy an eponymous 20-year women leave Antigua to work as an au pair in the United States. Her displacement is conscious and self-initiated and inflected, but it still harms her sense of self. Lucy arrives in New York excluding herself from colonial and family influences of home, insisting on leaving her home in West Indies. She clings onto the memories of her home and country yet also revels her liberation and freedom. Her

sexual freedom and cynicism about American life. Pebbili describes how, in diaspora, Lucy uses “her sexuality, language and silence as weapons of self-redefinition beyond colonial and family imperatives”. Lucy’s mother-daughter conflict mirrors her colonial rebellion between her homeland and her migrated country. Lucy sees both her mother and her American boss Mariah trying to gain control over her. Her search to forge autonomy drives her to reject old identity constraints and that left her with the feeling of “Homesickness” and “Loneliness”.

Both protagonists share a diasporic space where Afro-Caribbean identity is constantly in flux. As Hall reminds us, such identities are always “never complete, always in process”. In *Annie John*, Annie’s departure to Britain is blended with guilt and agony. The island has been her whole world, so leaving feels like self-erasure and she “confront her placelessness” only by going into exile. In *Lucy*, the protagonist seeks out displacement but then must settle with the loneliness and racism it will determine. Both wrestle with postcolonial hybridity, Lucy consciously through language and art, Annie more subconsciously through education but only Lucy actively embraces her new culture with her American identity.

Migration and Cultural Conflict in Jamaica Kincaid’s Novels:

Both *Annie John* and *Lucy*, migration is a conscious step from the subjugated, patriarchal norms of colonial Antigua. *Annie John* ends as Annie “boards the ship for England,” and *Lucy* begins with her immigrating to the United States in search of “work, learning and experience” beyond home. Candice Pitts observes that Annie’s “struggle to reorder her life prompted to migrate from Antigua to England,” a decision that allows her to challenge the “internal colonization” of Antiguan women. Once in the new country, Annie and Lucy sail across very different cultural realities. Lucy must negotiate her Caribbean identity within a white American identity. Annie’s cultural transition is less explicit but critics note that migration itself signals Annie’s rejection of her colonial legacy. Pitts argues that by leaving, Annie “works against the internal colonization of women in Antigua” by ultimately putting physical distance between herself and the societies patriarchal power.

Ultimately, migration in *Annie John* and *Lucy* is represented as a crucible of identity. Both protagonists leave Antigua for colonial and patriarchal stigma, but each’s experience is distinct. Lucy’s journey highlights her dilemma about her inconclusive culture and hybridity of the Caribbean diaspora, memory and displacement collide in a new world. Annie’s journey emphasizes on how leaving can itself be an act of self-definition, act of rebellion, an assertion of independence from family and country. These novels suggest that for Kincaid migration reshapes belonging as it offers escape and self-creation, but also gives a sense of longing and the perpetual homesickness.

Gender, Sexuality and the Formation of Self in Jamaica Kincaid’s Novels:

Jamaica Kincaid’s novels *Annie John* (1985) and *Lucy* (1990) both criticize Caribbean women gender norms and roles under colonial and patriarchal authority. In *Annie John*, the Antiguan schoolgirl Annie rejects the idea of restrictive roles installed and followed by her parents and teachers. Lucy follows another young Antiguan woman who, in the diaspora of the United States, challenges patriarchal roles. Set in postcolonial Antigua, *Annie John* portrays a society in British influenced gender expectations. Annie is “constantly given instructions” by parents and community (Tekin,1) to become a “good little Antiguan girl,” but she quietly realizes she need not to follow. In correspondence, Lucy’s patriarchal and racial identity follows her even to America. Sayed Youssef observes that Lucy “breaks away from... colonial and patriarchal mores” when she leaves home, ultimately constructing a hybrid identity beyond Antigua’s gendered structures. In both novels, colonial legacies inhabit daily life. In *Annie John* this imparted morality defines their pressure to follow the orthodox roles set by the colonizers, enforcing gender roles. Against these roles, manipulation and confusion Kincaid’s heroines must negotiate who they will become.

The theme of sexuality in *Annie John* (1985) and *Lucy* (1990) by Jamaica Kincaid is deeply tied to questions of identity, freedom, and rebellion within the broader foregrounding of colonial and diasporic experience. Both novels portray young Caribbean women negotiating their sexuality in relation to mother-daughter bonds, colonial authority, gender roles, and diasporic displacement. In *Annie John*, Annie’s close, sensual friendships with other girls particularly like Gwen and the Red Girl. These relationships in Annie’s life blends the line between innocent affection and sexual desire. Annie’s attraction to same gender symbolizes her resistance against her mother’s

control and the rigid and tight moral tradition and values intentionally imposed by colonial society. In *Lucy*, sexuality becomes a conscious act of independence. Lucy explores her sexuality and relationship with men such as Hugh for an example not necessarily for love but as a way to act of knowing herself and have control over her body and symbol of resistance towards controlling influences of family, race, and colonialism.

In *Annie John*, sexual curiosity is suppressed and controlled within the colonial educational system that gives impression of morality, discipline and righteousness. Annie's secretive desires reflect her rebellion against both colonial and parental control. Lucy, as a Caribbean immigrant, get captured in relationships with white men, which raises questions of many hidden issues and the colonial gaze. Lucy often sees these relationships as a way of exerting control and asserting her motive. For Annie, sexuality is tentative, a stage in her identity formation that leads to her being distant from her mother. For Lucy, sexuality is explicit and intentional taking a form of independent identity in a foreign land, which often left her feeling fragmented and insignificant. Both novels highlight how young women's sexuality is manipulated harshly than men's. Annie's mother, and later Lucy's society, demand sexual restraint and purity, while male wants and desire is normalized. This reveals the gendered oppression within both Caribbean and Western patriarchal communities.

The search of self in both the protagonists is one of the prominent factors they share. Annie's thought of self begins with rebellion, lying, skipping schools, breaking rules. For Lucy it started as her sexual independence separating her from her cultural identity. Both the characters were infatuated with the ideals of European culture against Caribbean realities, it acts as a source of empowerment but also as a symbol of subjugation. Like the Displacement and Diaspora, the concept of "home" and "Self" is not the fixed idea or a concept, it meant different things for different persons. The emergence of these ideas are negotiations and clash of inheritance of their culture and infatuation with the other one.

Conclusion:

In *Annie John* and *Lucy*, Jamaica Kincaid put forward an unflinching portrayal of the female migrant's journey as a complex negotiation of Diaspora, Displacement, home, self, memory, cultural hybridity, and gendered displacement. Diaspora and Displacement in both texts functions as a double-edged force sustaining cultural identity while simultaneously burdening the protagonists with the weight of colonial and familial legacies. Hybridity, far from a seamless integration of cultural identities, emerges as a tense "third space" where inherited Caribbean sensibilities intersect with, and at times resist, the values of the metropolitan West. The protagonists' experiences of migration are deeply gendered, shaped not only by the political and economic realities of postcolonial displacement but also by intimate mother-daughter relationships, sexual autonomy, and the racialized nature of women's labour in host societies.

Kincaid's narratives reject any romanticized resolution to the migrant's condition; instead, they reveal that the act of leaving home initiates an ongoing process of self-redefinition. In this process, memory becomes both a site of resistance and vulnerability, hybridity a space of negotiation and estrangement, and migration a deeply embodied experience that is inseparable from questions of gender and power. Ultimately, *Annie John* and *Lucy* illuminate the fractured yet resilient identities forged in the aftermath of colonialism, underscoring that for the female migrant, home is neither wholly lost nor entirely found it exists in the shifting terrain between remembering and becoming.

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