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**PREDICAMENT OF IDENTITY IN SUNETRA GUPTA'S *THE GLASSBLOWER'S BREATH***

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**Abstract:**

In the present scenario diasporic literature is a developing branch in the new literatures in English. Migrancy, Immigration and transgression are the common or routine matters of today's citizens. They cross the borders with various intentions. Some go for education, others for scholarship and many other for the sake of survival. Though the objectives of these people are different, yet the resultant effects on their personalities are the same. Ultimately they become the element the phenomenon of immigration. They are forced to accept certain inevitable issues. Due to their shifting they create multiple identities which are transforming in nature. Some identities are self created and some are labeled to them in the course of time by the surrounding environment. These identities are created due to loss of home land and the shifting to the host land. The home gives the person a separate identity at the same time the host land gives another which is different and sometimes forced on the person. The person tries to define his or her self in the new environment with his own past experiences. At the same time he is also defined by the society in which he lives and the working place where he is a part of an institute. At the same time his friends, relatives are also other parameters which define his identity. Present papers try to highlight the multiple identities created by the characters in Sunetra Gupta's *The Glasblower's Breath* (1993).

**Keywords:** Multiple Identity, Diaspora, Homeland, Hostland, Immigration,

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The diasporic characters create their identities on the multiple level which is rightly put by the scholar Meenakshi Thapan in her article "Making Incomplete: Identity, Woman and the State" as:

In the context of migration not only does the ethnic dimension of identity gain significance, it becomes critical to account for the way it is perceived in terms of selfhood, personhood and constructed in public image and representation. In different contexts, identity takes on a new meaning for the immigrant women who no longer want to be identified merely in terms of

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their traditional domestic roles but assert their identity in multiple roles in the public sphere(29).

*The Glassblower's Breath* is a novel which underlines the anonymous female protagonist's encounter with the world. Throughout the novel the protagonist is addressed as 'You'. Sunetra Gupta wants to portray through the character of the protagonist that she is not only a single woman getting these kinds of experiences from the world but the representative of those innumerable women who are getting these experiences. The protagonist undergoes varied experiences at different places like Calcutta, London and New York which is the result of her displacement and the dislocation from her mother land. Her first displacement is her wish to follow the love of cousin Avishek, the second one is to follow the butcher Daniel with whom she had enjoyed physical love and the third displacement is due to the attraction to her university friend Jonathan Sparrow. In connection with every character, the protagonist tries to identify herself. Her search is not only for the sexual experiences but for the sake of defining herself in the different circumstances. In fact, it is a kind of search for the self. Beyond the marriage construct in the Indian context, the protagonist tries to explore herself in order to define herself by maintaining relations with the remaining three major characters. It has been noticed that due to her relations with different male characters the marriage structure is not followed by her in the course of her journey. In fact, her encounter with different males is the result of the emotional vacuum in her life and the scarcity of love, which she wanted to replace in company of those characters. The present novel is a hierarchal map of the protagonist from the childhood to adolescence and further to adulthood.

Alexander, the narrator of the novel, in the very beginning of the novel portrays the displacement of his wife from the homeland in the following way. This female character has identity in the home land as a wife. But later on it shifts according to the time and space.

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He had given you toilet seat covers for wedding along with a pair of iguana earmuffs and several copies of *The Plain Truth*, where was he now, swallowed by that vast mass of land, deep, thick, heavy land, that you left, five years ago, promising never, never to return.(6)

The narrator focuses on the first journey undertaken by the protagonist, which is her first attempt to leave the homeland. But he brings to notice the fact that she departs from this land never to come back. She wants to fulfil her repressed desire. Her leaving of the homeland is her sincere attempt to define herself in the large panorama of the world.

She has an emotional and psychological attachment with that house where she has in fact, spent her childhood and adolescence. Therefore, though she is at Hounslow Central, the underground railway station in London, she remembers her home because of the letter of her father. But she laments because the home is sold and to be collapsed for creating a huge mansion at that place. Though she has created her new identity in London still she is not ready to forget her old identity at her homeland. She can't forget her father, home and homeland too which shows that some identities are deep and firm. These identities cannot be changed totally in the course of time.

You have come a long way, my love, a long way from home, you have found your way into a houseful of mirrors that each tell you tale, but none as well as you might have, if you had looked within, instead of among your myriad reflections, for the shape of your destiny. For mirrors have their own memories, my love, old shadows that fill new outlines. (42-43)

The narrator expresses the psychological condition of the protagonist that she has departed from the homeland and reached to the imaginary land but her past can't be washed out because the past is at the basis of her present. Instead of looking at the images in the mirrors the narrator asks her to introspect in her own self which will give her own picture of the self. This is, In fact, a sense of

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loss in the host land. The image in the mirror is a reflection of her identity. Her minute observation of the image is nothing but the retrospection of her identity.

The protagonist who is anonymous throughout the novel, is presently in New York, however she is unable to forget her old identity which is given by her home town Calcutta. Home in the memory of the protagonist occupies certain place which is highlighted by the following quotation:

My friend Jon Sparrow, you tell him, went through a phase where he ate nothing but chick peas, but that was only for a week. Is this the friend who left for New York this morning? He asked greedy for the opportunity to mention paradise. What is it like, there, in New York, is it like they say it is?

New York, you say, recovering from the wine's sudden swift back-kick, ties with Calcutta for my second most favourite city in the world. (105)

Here the narrator asks the protagonist which place she likes most. Then she replies that New York is the place which she likes most but she could not forget her homeland that is Calcutta. Though she is under the influence of the wine she immediately replies that 'Calcutta for my second most favourite city in the world' (105). It reveals that in her unconscious mind there is certainly the concrete place for her homeland. In fact, her physical displacement does not matter much but her attachment and affinity with the homeland can be seen in the above lines.

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