

Diaspora as Translation and Decolonisation

DEMIR, IPEK. 2022. *Diaspora as Translation and Decolonisation*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

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Ipek Demir's *Diaspora as Translation and Decolonization* (2022) is a much-needed intervention in the area of Social Theories, Diasporic Literature and Translation in broader sense, which brings the practices and energies to further study in the mentioned areas. It is the fruitful outcome of Demir's efforts and research. This book is an important part of 'The Theory for a Global Age' series edited by Gurminder K Bhambra, which basically aimed at the research scholars and students of various streams, like, social and political theory, cultural and literary theory, history and postcolonial studies. In the similar sense this book has already contributed to multiple study areas, one may call it as a reference for multidisciplinary studies.

The book offers a peculiar and innovative account of the dynamics of diaspora in which, it has been involved in processes of decolonisation and translation. It has successfully captured the transformative and far-reaching role of diaspora one that sought to expand diasporic imaginary spatially and temporally and show how much could be gained if we weaved translation and decolonisation into understandings of diaspora.

The first theory of Diaspora appeared, according to Gabriel Sheffer, with the work of Amstrong in his paper, titled as- "Mobilized and Proletariat Diaspora." Sheffer himself wrote that it is a mistake to maintain the concept of Diaspora only for Jewish people because there is also chance that may others have existed before. Rather it would be worthy to say that there are various Diasporas which exist, that we are unaware of. Therefore, it would be apt to say that Ipek Demir critically

examines the contributions made by the Kurdish diaspora with providing multiple citations and viewpoints, as well as shifting our focus from the usual concerns of those who study diasporas – ‘static’ and carried forwarded topics such as homeland, identity, and questions of belonging – to examine how diasporic communities themselves ‘translate, intervene and decolonise’ the contexts within and across which they move.

Diasporas are often conceptualised through the politics of nation- states. They are seen to come into being as a consequence of struggles within nations and are represented as coming to reside in what are regarded as the nations of others. In this way, they are presented as having a sense of ‘home’ elsewhere than where they are. Demir skilfully emulates such associations. In contrast, she locates diasporas also in the historical relationship’s consequent to the expansion and dismantling of imperial formations. Drawing on, and extending, Sivanandan’s resonant formulation that ‘we are here because you were there,’ she examines both the ‘we’ and the ‘they’ in terms of each being diasporic.

The book has been structured into five main chapters with some subtopics, in addition to the introduction and conclusion. Every chapter has been ended with the ‘Notes’ of the particulars which is uncommonly observed in the theory books. This may be the speciality of the work.

The ‘Introduction’ is a way too self-confessional in nature, provides the crystal-clear view that this book is not meant to be written as textual translation of diasporas nor it is the critique of literary works to do with it but she takes people, identity, and power as her primary sources for uncovering diasporic translations. The introduction of the book has provided the general idea of each chapter being written in the book. The book broadens the horizons of reader’s thinking of diaspora in

political scenario in the global context by considering the insights of translation studies and research on migrancy, race and culture. She introduces two central processes to conceptualise how diasporas unto colonisation, respectively, 'radical remembering' and 'radical inclusion'. She writes crafts fully that there is a link between the colonialism, indigeneity, and strong desire to translate ethno-political identity. The book throws light on how the specific group of Migrant becomes the Diaspora, e. g. Kurds, initially they were the mere migrants, over time in Europe, they became the Kurdish Diaspora. This is how the introduction has been given.

The first chapter of the book 'Theories of Diaspora and Their Limitations' starts with a striking, highly controversial stanza quoted from May Ayim (2003), which simply attracts the reader to take a pause and think. The lines mean nobody can force a person to be 'Someone' of having different identity, which the person doesn't want to held. In the same chapter Demir has explained two major approaches regarding the study of diaspora. First is, the 'Ideal Type Approach' which was led by Cohen, Safran and other theorists who devoted much of their attention and devotion in identifying the characteristics of Diaspora. There were some of the important notions and questions like, 'Who and under what conditions does a group become a diaspora? Who should count as diaspora? Is the theme of 'return' central to diasporas? What types of diasporas are there besides 'victim' ones?' further she refers 'The Hybridity Approach' as the second one which was led by Hall, Gilroy and Brah etc. their works are beyond the hybridity, ambiguity and fluidity at the centre of common understandings of diaspora. Finally, these two approaches differ at a strong end that is 'Diaspora as a being' in Ideal Approach and 'Diaspora as a becoming' in Hybridity Approach. There is some sort of diplomacy observed between the theorists' own notions, later they seem changed, like, Brah.

The second chapter is 'Diaspora as Translation' which shows the similarity in starting point as with chapter first. It has some subpoints which contribute to the clearer understanding of the text, they respectively are, Translation Studies and Diaspora, The Lure of Translation for Diaspora, Diaspora as Erasure and Exclusion, Diaspora as tension between Foreignization and Domestication. Demir has quoted opening lines from Hall (2007). Demir moves the focus from 'Being' and 'Becoming' to the translation and decolonization and examines diaspora by using the insights of translation studies and makes the reader rethink on diaspora theorising. As title itself suggests the prime focus of this chapter is on translation and how the translation made huge changes in the history of diaspora, because translation is not just a tool to understand what diaspora is but it is something through which we can learn, apply and extend our understandings in the diasporic study. Translation, from long been a source of inspiration and concern, simultaneously in the social theories, particularly, to the postcolonial thinkers. The hidden suggestion here is to make translation central to our understanding of diaspora, which could help us to rethink diaspora, and place it at the centre of our understanding of modernity, globalisation, and politics today. Although translation is recreation, but translating identity, culture and practice and relating these to someone else's language and culture is a real challenge. Translation is not just the process of gaining something or getting rewarded but can shut down dialogue, cross breeding, and learning.

Demir believed that Diasporas are the archetypal translators, because they put new identities, languages, and world- views in circulation. Therefore, the ethnocentric aspect of translation is much important in the diasporic study. Further she examines the lure of translation for diaspora, unpacking 'diaspora as rewriting and transformation,' 'diaspora as erasure and exclusion' and 'diaspora as a tension between foreignisation

and domestication.’ Venuti has argued, ‘The colonization of the Americas, Asia, and Africa could not have occurred without interpreters, both native and colonial, nor without the translations of effective texts, religious, legal, educational’ Venuti (2002: 158). This is how the importance of translation with reference to the diaspora has been discussed by Demir in the Chapter II.

“Diaspora as decolonisation: ‘Making a fuss’ in diaspora and in the homeland” reflects and somehow follows the ideas being discussed in the chapter I and II. The book takes gradual turn from this chapter as it starts focusing on the practical perspectives of the diaspora and its relative connectivity to the decolonisation. The chapter opens with the fine example, can be stated as rebellious one (!) that states whether the belonging of mother or the father is from anywhere, if the child born in the state they are currently living in- will be the origin/ belonging of the newer generations.

Somehow, it breaks the colonised viewpoints which are deeply rooted in the minds of diasporic people. Here, decolonization of minds is more important than the decolonization of identities, places and culture. Demir focuses on the dislodging of coloniality specially in the Global North setting. How diasporas have a potential to become agents of decolonisation in ‘homeland’ as well as the ‘new home’. Under, ‘Challenging Vertical Fallacies’ she introduces the three important reasons that why one must be so prompt while translating in the context of diasporas. These questions are, “how do you interpret other cultures? How do you write about another culture in another language? How do you ensure you do not misrepresent another culture and what is said?” these points are valid at their peak. The book shifts to another chapter with clear ideas.

‘Translations and Decolonisation of the Kurdish Diaspora’ is the fourth chapter of the book. It starts with the quoted line from the interview of a Kurdish man, “I became a Kurd in London; I became a Kurd thanks to imperialists.” This is what the decolonised notions reflect on diaspora. In some of the previous chapters she defended the viewpoints that how the conceptualisations of should make central the ways in which diasporas have been, and continue to remain a corrective to colonialism. At the same time, she goes with the examples of decolonisation demand of South Asian and Afro- Caribbean diasporas in the United Kingdom for radical inclusion and radical remembering. She does not only write about the dislodged coloniality in the new home but also for the decolonisation of the home which has been left behind. She provides the prominent example Kurdish diaspora which has proved how a strong desire to translate ethno-political identity in diaspora maps onto indigeneity and decoloniality. When we think of any successful decolonised indigeneity, like, Kurdish, there is always a setting to consider, e. g. it is not possible for Kurdish to present themselves without referring to the role of the Ottoman, French and British empires, their consolidation of borders, their governance and population regimes and their negotiations with ethnic and religious alliances in the Middle East. The chapter then presents the ‘Kurdish Diaspora in Europe.’ Demir has referred to one report published by Council of Europe, (2006) which denotes that most of the Kurdish population live in four states, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. They are the fourth largest group in the Middle East. The second wave of Kurds came to European cities, escaping the violence and oppression during 1980s and 90s. Over time, some of those who were refugees and migrants from Iran, Iraq and Turkey became part of the ‘Kurdish diaspora’ in Europe. This does not mean they are homogeneous in nature; they too have their own belongings and cultural identities. Demir

conducted research and she present her observations here as how the Kurds believe they have struggled and won against the colonial discourse and they are now telling the success stories of their fighting to their newer generations. The next important subpoint of the chapter is 'Rewriting, domesticating and foreignising: Translating the Kurdish struggle.' Salvaging and translation of ethno-political identity in diaspora is not a cup of tea without the efforts. Even if that struggle gets translated, it may have different versions at the same time, therefore, being translated and retold is again a threat for diasporic group unless they themselves proves what is an actual scenario. E.g., Kurdish group had been translated into two different versions in the earlier times. Hence, it is proved that the diaspora, translation, and decolonisation are the inseparable entities in the process of being decolonised community, which has the strong identical factors as they wish to present. The word 'struggle' has been used throughout the book for hundreds of times, that shows the intensity and the victory of Kurds over all the resistance. It is a journey from rebellion to mobilisation. The struggle is an inspiration itself because now the Kurds are presenting their fighters those who lost their lives during this happening as Martyrs to the younger generations and of course the generations to come.

'Backlash to Diaspora in the Global North' is the fifth and the last chapter of the book. It examines the backlash to diaspora and thinks through the attempts to 'write out' diasporas of colour in the Global North through discourses of anti-multiculturalism and 'the left- behind'/ 'traditional' working class. These kinds of discourses erase diaspora of colour and highlight their demand of equality. The book discusses the close connectivity between 'getting high' on national identity and decline on the grounds, like, racial and ethnic privilege and status.

The book has a strong shift from the idea of diasporas, denial of the diasporas, its colonial discourse and lastly, decolonisation of group, culture, identity and what not! The Kurdish diaspora is an aptly chosen example for the explanation, discussion, and examination of ideas in the light of Diaspora, Translation and Decolonisation. Though the book can be considered as a multidisciplinary reference, it is strongly recommended for the scholars, readers, and interpreters in the field of translation, interpretation, and social theories, because the role of translation is not merely limited to translating something from one language to another but it is an activity of retelling the 'Struggle', recreation of the history and regaining the identity and culture of particular Diasporas in the global order.

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Cite This Work:

Mhaske, Komal Nanasaheb. 2022. Diaspora as Translation and Decolonisation. Review of *Diaspora as Translation and Decolonisation*. by Demir, Ipek. *Translation Today*, Vol. 16(2). 159-167. DOI: 10.46623/tt/2022.16.2.br4