

An Attempt to Contemplate the Term ‘Human Migration’ Beyond its Elementary Meaning: Extracting the Junctures from the Works of George Saunders

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Abstract— People are stuck in the discourse of liminality, where they suffer from an identity crisis. An identity crisis is such a period when a person is uncertain about his life and origin and many more areas, which compel people to migrate to some other unknown places. This research delineates the issues that people go through in the non-fictional world, particularly, how an individual struggle for their identity. Saunders has made references to human migration in his various works, aiming to portray the true crunches faced by the people through the characters in his anthologies. The term ‘migration’ is often seen as a notion and frequently relates to refugees. Therefore, this paper probes to look into the other side. The journey is drastically different from person to person when it comes to migration. Displacement and cultural diversity are the major causes to be discussed which prompt migrants to move afar from racism and hostility and search for social identity. There are people who are helpless in seeking their originality and the only choice is to shift from one place to another, which is studied as ‘human migration’.

Keywords— Migration, Identity, Origin, Struggle, Society.

The anthologies of George Saunders are flooded in multiple paradoxical tensions, and most of the times his works survey the human being’s predicaments from the improbable angles and the endless urge to precede new scholarly and sociological fluctuations into the mundane world knock against one another in order to forge the true shiver in the short fictions. Saunders refers human migration in his various collection. The story *Sea Oak* from the book *Pastoralia* can be undoubtedly considered as one of the best examples for the interpretation of migration and identity crisis. There is a “dramatist twist” (Mambrol 2021), when the lady named Bernice, often known as Bernie, the aunt of Min and Jade and returns a ghost. Though Saunders has contributed a creepy feeling and an essence of superpowers but significantly his motive is to hit on the areas of crisis that people are going through today. Aunt Bernie simply wants her niece and nephew (children) to live a blissful life with status, identity and content. Most importantly to move from the Sea Oak where they have been living and shift to a better place or fruitful land to acquire bright future. Saunders has made references of human migration in his various works, aiming to portray the true crunches faced by the people through the characters in his anthologies. There are people who are helpless in seeking for their originality and the only choice is to shift from one place to another, which is studied as ‘human migration’. The

anthologies of George Saunders are flooded in multiple paradoxical tensions, and most of the times his works survey the human being’s predicaments from the improbable angles and the endless urge to precede new scholarly and sociological fluctuations into the mundane world knock against one another in order to forge the true shiver in the short fictions.

It is quite effortless for Saunders to lay out any particular theme by producing any kind of fictions or from whatever corners of his anthologies. The name Sea Oak, and there is neither a sea nor an Oak tree mentioned in the story, rather it’s a hazardous place where this particular family live, having no hope and future out there. Therefore, Aunt Bernie intensely wish her kids to migrate to the superior place. She could not accomplish while she was alive, thus, after death she has been highly indulged into rectifying the present. Bernie was an optimistic lady before her passing away, and tender and responsible person. Moreover, she felt blessed to be acquainted with whatever she possessed. She was further grateful to God for “what life had given her” (2021). Yet she denies at some point to acknowledge all these in regard to her children. She wishes that the kids live with extra possessions, in simple terms she wants them living a happy life. Unfortunately, in such an age of medias, television and movies of crime and violence, Min & Jade spend much of their time in watching their favourite shows and several other dramas coming up in the channels. Saunders’s motive is to reach out to number of readers as a serious message that the youngsters worship these delinquencies, vehemence, and amusements as a part of their daily time-table which has penetrated gradually and involuntarily “into their lives and serves to identify them as a culture” (2021).

The cause of migration may vary; few are compelled to, even if they do not wish to shift. There are people not content with their living, hence, they uproot themselves seeking for their deserving lifestyle with standards and status. For instance, the narrator and children weren’t satisfied with the life so she decides to get a change of environment and a different atmosphere. Yet the misery lies in the fact that the kids were such slothful to wake themselves up change their fate. Grief and loss are the two major themes that people suffer in their lives. On the other side, the manner how the society would be teaching to deal with those crunches. Not forgetting the other

forces viz: loss of a conducive life, poor wealth and progress including death. Equally devastating, the unnamed narrator in the story *Sea Oak* is helpless with the condition of his present. He had to make bread by spending his nights stripping in the strip club. Moreover, migration is not the final solution to the problem and it's not necessary that after shift to the dreamland the dreams would be accomplished. The consequence can be fatal.

More disturbing, *Home*, the short story from the book *Tenth of December*. This is a short story where the situation is definitely fatal and quiet opposite to the story *Sea Oak*. A veteran named Mike, returns home after a long period of time from his work expecting a warm welcome, cheers and astonishment from his family members. It was he surprised by seeing their zero reaction, and busy with their life, with unnecessary tasks, except his mother, who was eagerly waiting for Mike. There are lots of changes he could notice; his mother's old partner Alberto has shifted or left the house and the family but on the other hand, she has got a new guy, Harris, who is completely a stranger to Mike "then some guy came tromping down the stairs: older than Ma even... who's this this? He said. My son, Ma said shyly. Mickey, this Harris" (Lincoln in the Bardo, Saunders 170). Furthermore, his ex-wife has wedded to his (Mike's) school batchmate and the new husband wants Mike to see their children. Mike's sister Renee is also married to some rich and wealthy family and she isn't excited at all to see her brother's return after such a long time.

It wasn't at all a homecoming for the veteran. Moreover, Mike is suffering from "post-traumatic stress disorder" (Nirmala 2017), it goes severe when he learns that his mother's house of eighteen years is now being usurped and his mother is getting evicted from her own house. He had to take his mom and migrate to some other place, which is certainly difficult for him, since it happened all of a sudden on the day of his return. This was his laudable astonishment. Mike's disease begins to show up, for instance, he gets bewildered and perplexed, short-tempered and these leads to "a dark, sad story" (2017). Migration of human beings, without their willingness is the most destructive situation. Mike's sudden learning to the fact of eviction breaks him down atrociously. "Friend, excuse me, I'm not abusing, the man said. This is evicting. If she's paid her rent and I was evicting" (Sea Oak Saunders 181).

Semplica ladies from the short story *The Semplica Girl Diaries* from the anthology *Tenth of December*. The ladies migrated from their natives and are sold to the American sophisticated, family as a symbol of wealth and status. The term 'Semplica Girls' itself is quite disturbing, it meant an embellishment or a sample. The point to be startled is that the human beings projected as a sample and considered to be their wealth and status which is unquestionable distressing. On the other side, the ladies had to move out from their houses forsakenly, having no other option to be sold to the wealthy families in order to survive and also to take care of their families. Admitting to the fact that there is somewhere the reason of lack of education and guidance hitting back always in this fiction. Saunders is intelligently trying to portray the truth of society in this real world through his fictions. The rich American family takes those ladies for granted to showcase

their reputation and build up their status. The embarrassing ideology is the stupid neighbours, who suppose to stand against this illegal practice, they rather hail to their belongings and appreciated it, whereas few jealous and envying their possession. Saunders presumes the society is still unwise and absurd or it takes longer times for the people to realise it.

As the paper delves into contemplating the term 'Human Migration' and most importantly not only studying its accurate meaning but also attempting to discern beyond it. Likewise, the short story *Sticks* from the book *Tenth of December* is not depicting the migration, rather the old man's mind was migrating from one place to another which he himself did not understand it. Certainly, yes it explicitly throws light upon the liminality, the abandoned and the bewilderedness of an old father. The term 'Liminality' has been received from the latin word limin, which means liminal or limit. The isolation has pushed him towards the mental disbalance, because his son and the family evict the house leaving their father alone. The proper term that can be used to locate the old man's condition would be mirthless. He becomes more baffled after the death of his wife that precedes him to act in a strange manner. For instance, he would celebrate everyday whatever it symbolized. It was a Halloween day, he would dress the steel rod into Halloween and place it in the backyard, if it is a Christmas eve, then the rod would be Santa Clause and so on. In normal days he would dress the rod with his wife's attire and consider it to be his wife. The only thing he needed was love, support, family, and affection. Saunders outlines the sad truth of human world, with no sympathy and mercy. The old man's mind was migrating from one place to another which he himself did not understand it. People frequently fall into misfortunes because of several aspects in life. The choices shrink, human beings go insane, disorganised and anxious, on how to deal with it, which further results to death, like this old man. Hence it was too late for his son to approach his father, since when he finally arrives checking for his father's health, he sees the old man sitting in his same old wooden chair cold and stiff with no breath and life. Saunders constantly throws light upon the message of how slow the realization and change in human beings take place after the milk is spilt.

Therefore, the term 'Liminality' would be appropriate for the story *Sticks*. Love, envy, responsibility are the major cause of liminality and migration. "Human's identities oscillate and at times collapse altogether. Judicious boundaries of time and zone lose integrity. The period is totally a stretch of discomfort of tediously waiting and not forgetting the revolution. The traditions, cultures, the classical habits, beliefs and also the individual's identity (personal) drops into fragments. This paper aims to hopefully contribute not only for more information related to migration but interpreting the word beyond its elementary meaning, by aligning the selected works of George Saunders.

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