DIASPORIC CONSCIOUSNESS IN NEEL MUKHERJEE'S *A LIFE APART* AND AMIT CHAUDHURI'S *ODYSSEUS ABROAD*

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Abstract

Amit Chaudhuri and Neel Mukherjee are UK-based Indian-origin writers who deal with the question of diasporic consciousness in many of their works. The focus of the research is to investigate the angles of the diasporic consciousness concept depicted in the novels Odysseus Abroad (2015) and A Life Apart (2010). Both novels deal with young Indian-origin protagonists living in England who struggle with self-identification. Once they start their journeys in the far-away country, they realize that they are different and each of them deals with this discovery in his own way. "Odysseus Abroad" and "A Life Apart" highlight the questions of loneliness, isolation, homesickness and attempts to adjust. The protagonists have different expectations from their move to England and are anxious to be included, as they only half-belong to the world they are in. The novels are conspicuous examples of diasporic literature and are analysed from the postcolonial and diasporic literary studies' point of view.

Key words: *diasporic consciousness, diasporic literature, Indian diaspora*

The given article focuses on the theme of diasporic consciousness in the works of the writers of Indian origin who live in the UK Amit Chaudhuri and Neel Mukherjee. *Odysseus Abroad* by Amit Chaudhuri and *A Life Apart* by Neel Mukherjee have been selected for the analysis as the protagonists of the works both are Indian-origin youngsters who are eager to move to the UK and for whom the move means the start of a new life. In both the cases their life after the move is not what they would have expected, partly due to postcolonial heritage and diasporic consciousness. A theoretical overview of the terms diaspora and diasporic consciousness has been outlined.

1. DIASPORA AND DIASPORIC CONSCIOUSNESS

We live in the world where the impact of globalization is universal. People travel to different countries and settle down there. They start working or studying and undergo transformations. Meeting other people belonging to their nationality they try to help each other and often join the community, as it is easier to survive together. Usually they try to keep to the traditions and customs of their homeland and at the same time integrate in the new society, contributing to its flourishing by working in the new country, acquiring new habits, speaking the language of the host county. Large groups of people belonging to the same nationality and living away from their homeland, but following the traditions of their homeland, are called diasporas.

According to Dr. M.K.Gautam, the term itself originates from the Greek *diasporá,* meaning dispersion, found in Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible (2013, p.8). Since then the meaning of the term has been widely used by researchers and, thus, has significantly broadened and generally undergone changes.

Steven Vertovec argues that the key aspects of a diaspora refer to a population that is deterritorialised or transnational, that is, "which has originated in a land other than which it currently resides, and whose social, economic and political networks cross the borders of nation-states or, indeed, span the globe" (1999, p.1). Like Steven Vertovec another researcher James Clifford (1994) claims that the main focus is on the existing element of exile and uniting various communities of a scattered population as diasporas usually "presuppose longer distances, […] a constitutive taboo on return, or its postponement to a remote future (1994, p.304).

In continuation, the subject of unity is pointed out by Gabriel Sheffer (2003) who considers that members of diasporas build "trans-state networks that reflect complex relationships among the diasporas, their host countries, their homelands (2003, p.10)."

Further, S. Sayyid (2014) emphasizes the importance of three coordinates that, according to him, constitute the concept of diaspora. They are homeland, displacement and settlement. Thus, a diaspora starts its existence when "communities of settlers articulate themselves in terms of displacement from a homeland. The homeland acts as a horizon around which the community articulates it collective sense of self. A diaspora is formed when a people are displaced but continue to narrate their identity in terms of that displacement" (Sayyid, 2014, p.251).

It should also be noted that the essential part of the formation of any diaspora is the act of moving from their original homeland, but at the same time continue to identify with it or with "wider ethnic category if there is no territorial homeland" (Anthias, 1998, p.559).

It is common knowledge that people belonging to diasporas have a strong feeling of their identity and, at the same time, they accumulate certain experiences living away from their homeland. Thus, one can speak about the dual nature of diasporic consciousness. The awareness of their multi-locality does not mean that they forget their homeland which goes hand in hand with the collective memory of homeland and solidarity. People belonging to a diaspora not only reproduce the knowledge acquired from their parents and their home country, but also produce something new acquired locally. In this case the Internet plays a crucial role. It can be a source of knowledge and a source of transmitting produced information further on.

Cohen (1997) points out the social side of the creation of diasporic consciousness. It is mobilized when "a significant number of social actors need to accept their collective self-definition as a transnational community, organize to spread this perception and persuade others to participate in actions designed to cement their diasporic character and status " (Cohen, 2008, p.13). The researcher shares the viewpoint that diasporas need (a)opportunity structures like an enhanced means of communication and a permissive legal and political environment; (b) mobilizing practices like neighbourhood associations, demonstrations and fund-raising events; and (c) frames that allude to ideas like 'roots' and 'home' and the importance of memory in history, which then feed into the collective imagination of the group concerned (ibid.). In short, diasporic consciousness is the awareness of belonging to a certain homeland as well as the place of settlement. The connections with the homeland are strong and maintained in a regular way.

In the formation of a strong diaspora being connected with anyone they want to with the help of the Internet without going to the place is important. For example, there exists http://theindiandiaspora.com/. With its help millions of Indians living abroad can follow what is happening to Indians round the world as well as what is happening in India. It makes connections with the homeland tighter and enriches diasporic consciousness. According to the website www.indiandiaspora.nic.in the Indian community can boast with numerous associations and organizations that focus on "show-casing the cultural and intellectual achievements of India" (The Indian Diaspora: n.d.).

Two novels written by famous writers of Indian origin who have strong psychological ties with their ethnic country have been chosen to prove the above stated features of the diasporic consciousness. The reason of choosing the novels is that they depict young people who find themselves away from their homeland in Britain. Their feelings and emotions are very strong and impressive. The plot of both novels dates back to the same time period, which is also one of the essential reasons of selecting the novels.

2. *ODYSSEUS ABROAD* BY AMIT CHAUDHURI

One of the biggest diasporas abroad is Indian. A lot of Indians live in Great Britain, London included. Amit Chaudhuri is a contemporary prolific writer. Indian by nationality, he studied in London and works and lives in Britain. He wrote the novel *Odysseus Abroad* which is set in London of the late 1980s. The title of the novel refers to antique literature, namely the work by Homer "The Odyssey". The protagonist of the novel is a young twenty-two-year old Indian student Ananda Sen who studies Romantic poets in

London. The reader is introduced to Ananda, his interest in English, his attitude to English and his judgement of himself as a person with unique identity. While in England this viewpoint undergoes changes since everyone speaks English here. "He was a modern Bengali and Indian, with a cursory but proud knowledge of Bengali literature; that he wrote in English, and he wrote in English, and had spoken it much of his life; … that his early teenage years he'd subsisted on a diet of Agatha Christie and Erle Stanley Gardner; that he'd developed a taste for corduroys over jeans recently – almost none of this counted for anything in London, since everyone here spoke English,…wore jeans or corduroys. In this way, his identity had been taken from him." (Chaudhuri, 2015, p.13) In his interview, Amit Chaudhuri admits that the work is autobiographical and he himself was in London at that time and experienced the same feelings Ananda has (Tweeds', n.d.). The reader follows episodes from Ananda's life which is quite slow and uneventful. Ananda asks himself what he is doing in London. "What am I doing in London?"(Chaudhuri, 2015, p.8) He never forgets about his homeland India. Living in Britain, he compares London and Bombay and finds only few similarities. "How is it that our cities are so different? ... He briefly ought but couldn't find a connection between London and Bombay - except, of course, the red double-decker buses and postboxes." (ibid.) His reflections on British policy are both positive and negative. On the one hand, he is quite sarcastic about Margaret Thatcher."Even before he'd journeyed to England this time, to start out as a student he'd heard that money was flowing in from North Sea Oil. Lucky bastards. Lucky for Thatcher – like a gift to her from Poseidon, or whoever the appropriate god was Poseidon had also given her a hand at the Falklands…" (ibid., p.10) He defines Britain as a "lucky island, with more than its fair share of windfalls, rewards and fortune... This happy breed of men, this little world. This precious stone set in the silver sea."(ibid.)

On the other hand, he is ashamed that his country was colonised by the British. "…But we were colonised by them, "he thought….It made him ill at ease – over and above having to swallow the insult of having been ruled by this nation!"(ibid., p.8)

While in Britain, Ananda forms his opinion on the English as a nationality:"The English were a strange lot; even if they didn't acknowledge your existence, they made you feel on display. How did they manage to do that? Their books advocated the virtues of observation – but they didn't look at you directly. If you sat opposite an English person, you may as well not be there – that was English politeness, or the rules of the culture. It wasn't obliviousness. They did practise the art of looking in secret, on the tube, in the silence of human contiguity, Ananda's eyes had more than once alighted accidentally on the reflection of a co-passenger, and found he was being studied. The eyes had immediately slid away."(ibid., p.53) The situation in Britain is not very simple. It is complicated not to be a person belonging to a different race. There are some people who are dangerous to meet. Ananda's uncle, who has lived in Britain, for a long time warns Ananda:" His uncle with his misshapen racial superiority, often warned him against making eye-contact with skinheads and even punks: "Would you look an animal in the eye? No. Because it thinks it's a challenge." Having a long life experience the uncle's life's motto is that of a slave:"Never go into confrontation. Follow Gandhi. Turn the other cheek." (ibid., p.17) But times have changed and Ananda is astounded by his uncle's hypocrisy and he does not follow the advice but chooses the way of confronting his neighbour who wants to humiliate him. And he wins. The neighbour loses the "battle". (ibid.) Ananda and his uncle belong to different age groups and if elderly people follow the above-mentioned life principle of being afraid of somebody they consider superior which comes from the colonial times, then Ananda, being young is not aware of that time and feels quite confident about his rights.

It is common knowledge that people belonging to the same diaspora have a strong diasporic consciousness. Together with his uncle Ananda frequents a restaurant run by Indians. And it is here that one can speak about diasporic consciousness. "…once they discovered his uncle hailed from Bejura in Habiganj district – a chicken jhalfrezi on the house, or unobtrusively omitted the gulab jamun from the bill. Often they'd be an extra mint chocolate on the platter."(ibid., p.15) In their own country they would be strangers, but away from their homeland they try to support each other. "…he did often feel the invisible, gravitational pull of racial empathy: that the Indian, Pakistani, black, even the Chinese, could be presumed upon in a way that the white man couldn't. The outlines of their consciousnesses were fuzzier, less individual, and softer… Ananda felt a strange unconscious familiarity among them – in ordinary circumstances, he wouldn't have noticed his countrymen; but he noticed them here, reviewing

them not only with recognition, but with accumulated knowledge and an emotion he hadn't previously been aware of. Indeed, the very urge and temptation not to notice them – not just Indians, but the heterogeneous tribe of the non-Caucasian – to take them for granted, was something he thought of now as quite wonderful: a gift." (ibid., p.59). Ananda is proud of being Indian. "Ananda didn't see himself as 'Asian'….He was Indian. He'd go home someday"(ibid., p.66). A lot is meant in the short sentence "He was Indian". It implies the history of the country, its ancient culture and the great feeling of belonging to the Indian nationality.

Ananda's uncle, whose name is Rangamama, stands out in the novel as a person who has sacrificed his future career and whose life can be considered as a failure. Rangamama once "shone so brightly in his youth…and who was a 'genius', but who'd imploded, arresting his own advancement. (ibid., p.50) "As his basic requirement was an avid companion, he didn't get married, because the distractions of sex and administering a family would leave less time to talk about himself. Deprivation had already turned him …into a hermit in a dressing- gown. The rug and furniture in the first-floor bedsit was covered with the fur-like lining. The pans in the kitchenette sink hadn't been treated to a washing liquid for years."(ibid., p.54) But, as they say: "Every cloud has a silver lining" and Rangamama has strong connections with his relatives who live in India and helps them financially" (ibid., p.18).

In a way London has a special place in Ananda's life. It is linked with the essential family events. It is important to mention that Ananda follows his father's steps. His father studied in London. It was in London that his parents got married in London and then lived for a year there. "By then, 1955, Ananda's father was in London, pursuing without focus his Chartered Accountancy qualifications…Uma travelled across the seas – in an aircraft – and joined Ananda's father Satish (to whom she'd been betrothed before he left Calcutta). The journey – counting the interminable waiting on Uma's part, the six years of not knowing whether or not it would happen, making her a kind of paragon of and authority on waiting – had been so in the preparation that when it took place other things followed: the wedding on a sunny day in London" (ibid., p.19). Thus, Ananda's parents settled down in London and formed their own opinion on the English. "Going to the cinema, they agreed that the English, unlike the melodramatic Indians, were natural actors; but they also noted that this race behaved and spoke in normal circumstances like they were in a film, with a peculiar self-consciousness, as if their gestures and words were being recorded. They didn't appear to be a complete separation between fantasy and social life for the English" (ibid., p.21).

Ananda's mother is a woman with strong beliefs:"…nothing …was long-term. Her readiness for battle she had even today. When trouble presented itself, she had to confront it with her oppositional littleness" (ibid.). It is this readiness to confront troubles that has made diasporas staunch and has moulded the character of minorities.

The author pays attention of the reader to the fact that even obvious things, things we have got used to, can be interpreted by other nationalities in a different way. Thus, the line by W.Shakespare:"Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" has undergone changes in Ananda's mind (ibid., p.27). He read this line in a textbook in Bombay and thought it foolish .Because the word 'summer' does not carry any romantic meaning in India. On the contrary, in Britain the notion of 'summer' is romantic, very positive and beautiful. It is one of the most favourite seasons of millions of people who live in countries with four distinct seasons, while in India summer is almost only season people are exposed to. "Only after coming to England had he discovered the beauty of the word" (ibid.).

Being a poet, Ananda is very sensitive to light and sounds. This peculiarity he finds in himself living in England. "He loved light – London had taught him this fact. University had taught him little in comparison; his main education in England was imparted by the day itself.…the realisation that he adored light – and sound. And by sound it was the street he meant, flowing inside in a shallow current through the crack beneath the raised windowpane" (ibid., p.15).

In conclusion, the notion diaspora is interpreted in many ways by different scientists. It has three meanings and the notion has changed with time. Diaspora his tight links with the homeland and the Internet contributes to them a lot. Indian diaspora in England is one of the largest. Amit Chaudhuri wrote a novel based on his own experience as a student in England. The main protagonist of the novel is

Ananda, an Indian student, who arrives in London to study. He is homesick and feels lonely. His relationships with his uncle who has lived in London for a long time are peculiar. They are friends, but they do not see eye to eye very often. In a way Ananda is opposed to his uncle who still has a colonial way of thinking.

Ananda is proud of being Indian and is overwhelmed by special feelings when he encounters somebody unknown but belonging to the same part of the world. He is an advocate of the English language, he writes poems in English, he is an avid reader and knows well not only Bengali literature, but also English literature. He shows some despise to the English and the fact that his country was a colony of England is an insult to him. Nevertheless, his admiration to London, to English literature, to the English language is hard to deny. Although one cannot say the same about Ananda's attitude towards the English. He considers them actors who act artificially and who are deprived of real feelings. They even do not look straight at people, but steal glances. His uncle is a typical representative of the Indian diaspora living in London. Nothing is said about his links with other diaspora members. He is selfish as he has not married to avoid responsibility for his own family, he loves himself dearly. On the other hand, he takes care of his nephew and spends some time with him regularly. He also helps his numerous relatives who live in India. He was considered 'a genius' in his younger years but coming to England was a mistake of his life as he had to change his surname to get a job and he was one of the three employees who were made redundant as soon as there was some improvement in the economy of the country.

3. *A LIFE APART* BY NEEL MUKHERJEE

The main character of the novel is Ritwik Ghosh, an Indian student in Oxford. He arrives in England from Calcutta, where his life was full of abuse. He is an orphan. First, his father dies and then his mother dies in eleven days after his father's death.

While in Oxford once in the darkness, it seems to him that he sees "his mother …in the armchair near the door. In a thought-swift instant he understands the expression about hairs standing on end – fear tastes like this; it is the opening of the pores of your face, inside your ears, behind your head."(Mukherjee, 2010, pp.90-91). The novel abounds in Ritwik's reminiscences of his mother being too strict to him and beating him almost to death. "He must have been six or seven at the time, so it was quite natural to have thought it was a great idea to stick the rubbery gob of chewing gum in his mouth in the hair of Tipshu, the small girl next door"(ibid., p.93) The reaction of his mother is shocking. "The first kick caught him unawares; it happened in the instant of a blink and sent him nearly flying to the niche where the mortar and pestle stood… He lay on the floor, a foetal quiver of fear, as the first lash from the leather belt cleanly cut a menacing crack through the compact air and landed on him with a sting of fire. The fiery flowers bloomed rapidly across the legs his tights his back his scalp, now all one clarifying tingle of pain, and his hairs took life in rising to attention to this rain of weals…until she put an end to it and instead started kicking his head his stomach his chest then stood on him with her fierce weight of fury. He felt choked…then there is only dark, only a saving obliterating blackness"(ibid., pp.94-95). It is Tipshy's mother who saves him and carries him to her house. "All he knows is that they can't put him in a plaster cast for cracked ribs; he has to sit, or lie, and wait it out, still as a forgotten stone in a corner, erased, absent"(ibid.,p.95). It is not the only case of cruelty on his mother's part. "Every evening, from six till nine, was homework time: she supervised this…with the sharpness of a predatory bird. …I want you to read the lessons out aloud, so I can hear you from the kitchen. I want to be sure you're not wasting time….Ritwik could only feel the rectangles of burn the ruler imprinted on his skin (ibid., pp.308-309). This is the way Ritwik spent his childhood.

If mother is depicted in a horrifying way as a woman who is eager to produce an excellent impression on her methods of upbringing her children, then father is 'a kind, gentle, elderly man.(ibid., p.296) "Neighbours whispered respectfully,'Budisha is a perfect mother. Look how well she disciplines her boys. Look how wonderfully she keeps them on the straight and narrow'. Her fame spread, her name was on every tongue."(ibid., pp. 295-296) Ritwik's father holds the view that "children should be brought up with love and tenderness, should never be shouted at, and should never, never be hit." (ibid., p.296) Although the family lives in great poverty as Ritwik's father is the only person who works, father

pays great attention to his sons' education. "Whenever a book was demanded by Ritwik, it arrived. His father went and ordered it in 'Study', the tiny bookshop in Jadavpur Central Market, paid in advance, and the book appeared, wrapped in crisp brown paper, in a week or two"(ibid., pp.228-229). Ritwik's father considers knowledge of English of primary importance:" 'Without knowledge of the English language, you are crippled,' he used to say. If sacrifices had to be made for it, they would be in some other household department. No compromise was ever to be made with the boys schooling: that was sacrosanct"(ibid., p.225). The author gives the reader the clue to mother's behaviour :"…He was going to become her creation, her prize garden, her impeccable son. He was going to be her bulwark against everything that life had ranged in battle against her. Bend him, buckle him, mould him like wax, like clay, like putty, he's mine, my love will build him anew, I'll show them I've won, the ooze of oil comes only from pressing and bruising, the life in him is going to be the shine of oil, not the dullness of uncrushed seed and I'm going to be responsible for the radiance, she thought"(ibid., pp. 299-300). This is how Ritwik's miserable life looks like. That is why when he arrives in England, he hopes for the better. "He can have a new body in England, even be a new person. Maybe"(ibid., p.89). This short, one-word sentence is a vivid example of how unsure of himself Ritwik is. After having been ruled by his mother and after a sudden loss of his parents, he is left all by himself since he is not closely connected with his brother, although they do keep in touch with each other. The crisis of his identity goes much deeper since he is gay. Sometimes he is desperate about it." At other times he just sits away the hours in his cubicle thinking, 'What would you think if you saw me now? This stench of urine and disinfectant and cock, this is what I am, not what you wanted me to be"(ibid., p.368). He cannot forget his mother's abuse and addresses her as if mocking and punishing her by this behaviour. Moreover, he uses drugs as well. (…two pipes of hash in Chris Elwes's room, have left Ritwik clouded and dizzy. He can't sit still or lie down for more than a few seconds because everything starts becoming gently, dancingly unstuck and unfixed. The only hope is to keep walking" (ibid., p.369). The reader witnesses a full degradation of the identity. There is nobody here Ritwik can rely on. Of course, he has Gavin, a Brazilian, he can ask for help and get it. Thus, when Ritwik finishes his studies, he does not want to go back to India, but he fails to get a visa to stay in England legally. "…he knew he wasn't going abroad only to study but was also leaving behind one life, permanently, in exchange of another one; unknown, but better. This much he knew – it was going to be a better life"(ibid., p.376). He does not feel homesick. There is no affection to his relatives. Thus, he does not plan to return. He explains his position to Gavin:"I don't want to live in aqualor any more. I don't want to go down the way of my father, helpless and exploited, unable to escape. I don't want to become him. If I return there, they will now attach their suckers on to me. Life out there will just carry on running in the same groove, decade after decade. I want a different life"(ibid., p.378). It is here that the reader is exposed to an ugly picture of nature in India. The writer is very convincing here."…to escape the wet sticky monsoons; the blood-drying heat of summer, which made him a drugged, ill, slow creature for six months of the year; the insects that came out in giant colonies and multiplied during the rains; the sheer filth and mud of Calcutta streets, which welled in over the edge of his frayed sandals and oozed between his toes; the thirteen hours of power cuts every day; the chronic water shortage; the smell of paraffin and kerosene oil everywhere; the soot on the glass of the hurricane lamps; the random days without meals, all fanning and exacerbating the tensions in the joint family, year after slowfestering year"(ibid., pp. 378-379). India in summer as well as life in India as such is described in short but in a vivid way. It is as if one is looking at the photo. The situation is critical because typically people living abroad, away from their homeland, feel homesick and describe their country as if advertising it. They do experience only positive feelings about their country. One of the reasons is guessed by Gavin. "Is it also..also a.., Gavin hesitated. 'is it a matter of your sexuality as well that you don't want to go back? I can't imagine gays having a ball in India" (ibid., p.379). Ritwik's answer is positive. "Yes,' he said, 'yes, it's partly that. I can be free here. No, you are right, the opportunity to be myself here is something I value immensely"(ibid., p.380).

Ritwik's life in England is punctuated by the story of Miss Gilby. It should be noted that Ritwik writes it himself. She is an English woman. The story is set in Bengal where she teaches English in a Bengali household. She is interested in Indian people, in their lifestyle, in their language which she learns and she thinks she has a noble mission to educate Indian women so that they could speak beautiful English, play the piano and have beautiful manners. She is popular, busy and successful. Miss Gilby is planning

to write an essay on the rights of women (ibid., p.345). She becomes more than a teacher to the wife of a wealthy Indian. The time Miss Gilby lives in is the time of the politically turbulent 1900s. Mr Roy Chowdhury in whose house Miss Gilby lives and who knows and recites by heart poems by English poets is "in favour of economic independence from British rule by a steady process of industrialization, which would then also become a remedy for the growing poverty of India"(ibid., p.420). Miss Gilby does not feel any danger on the part of people surrounding her. They all greet her when they meet her and everyone seems to be friendly. But the situation changes and those who were once friendly become enemies. They regard Miss Gilby as one belonging to the English. And it is enough for them to beat her. "…Suddenly her back is hit by something hard and heavy…Miss Gilby is so sure that a stone has been hurled at her in mistake or by accident that she advances towards them to complain and ask them to be more careful. …As the distance between her and the assailants decreases, she recognizes two of the young men. She used to see them often in the market square: they smiled and wished this exotic foreigner in their village 'Good morning, memsa'ab. 'Good evening, memsa'ab' every time they saw her. This is some terrible mistake, she thinks; if only she can talk to the two familiar men, everything will be all right. They will understand and go away to summon help" (ibid., p.752-753). But no miracle happens and soon Miss Gilby is on the ground all in blood and severely bitten. The writer asserts that when it comes to nationalistic feelings there is no way to remember about the good deeds of people belonging to another race. For the above-mentioned young Indians Miss Gilby is the embodiment of England, the representative of which she is. And England is a coloniser of their country. Everything is so simple and complicated since it is connected with people.

In the second part of the novel Ritwik finds himself in the dark world of illegal trade. Gavin helps Ritwik to get shelter in London. Ritwik lives for free taking care of Anne Cameron, a woman in her late 80ies. They get on well and Ritwik sets out to find a job. It is here that he experiences difficulties being worn out by picking strawberries, then working in a warehouse. He has no rights and learns that showing his knowledge of English might even be dangerous. In this part of the world it is dangerous to stand out. At the same time he is active as a gay and finally Zafar employs him and pays him for sex. The vicious end is nearing. The tension is growing and just as in case with Miss Gilby Ritwik is attacked. He is also confronted by the locals because he belongs to a different nationality. The end is horrible. He will remain in England, remain for ever but dead."…he doesn't feel the swift entries and exists of the knife…his thin blood trickles out on to this dark corner of a back street that will be forever England" (ibid., p.785). The end is devastating. The author puts a full stop.

4. CONCLUSION

The term 'diaspora' has many interpretations and has undergone some changes. These changes occurred because of the Internet since it has become easier to keep in touch with the people belonging to the same diaspora and develop the feeling of diaspora consciousness. The Internet makes distances shorter and the ties with the homeland are becoming stronger and stronger.

Both the novels *Odysseus Abroad* and *A Life Apart* and depict young Indians. Both come to England to study. And this is the end of the similarities. Ananda belongs to a middle-class family and is deeply loved by his parents who come to visit him from time to time. And this time is looked forward to by him. The only relative who lives in London is his uncle who is a bit eccentric having no family in his 50ies and loving his ego too much to change anything in his life. But like many people living abroad he helps his relatives and enjoys his generosity.

In *A Life Apart* the situation is tragic. Ritwik has gone through many difficulties, has lost his parents before finding himself in England. If Ananda is planning to return to India after finishing his studies, Ritwik decides he will never come back before he leaves India. He hopes for the better future. He has some grounds for hoping for the better because he has picked out a 'lucky ticket' which gives him an opportunity to study in Oxford, which is a dream of almost every student. But he does not manage to take hold of the situation and suddenly finds himself among criminals and very simple illegal workers who live from hand to mouth. Getting money from his very rich lover does not radically change the situation. He ends on a dark London street stabbed by locals.

One more character of the novel is Miss Gilby, an unmarried English woman who devotes his life to teaching rich Indian women English manners, the English language and playing the piano. She is open-minded and senses no danger in the events happening around her. She holds a strong belief that she cannot be treated in a bad way and that she is surrounded by friendly locals. At the end of the novel she is severely attacked by the people who earlier greeted her twice a day and she ends living in the company with the artist who draws birds. She does not believe in people any more and switches over to birds that will never betray her.

In *Odysseus Abroad* the pace of the narration is slow but it makes it possible for the reader to follow the train of thought of the protagonist and enjoy the style the novel is written in. Amit Chaudhuri claims that diaspora is a living organism and consists of people with their ups and downs.

The novel *A Life Apart* has two story lines and if Ritwik does not want to return to India, then his second 'ego' writes about an English woman living in India and being in love with the country and its people. The reader feels genuine sorrow for Ritwik and sympathises with Miss Gilby. These two characters symbolise the title of the novel since they live away or apart from their homeland and nobody becomes happier. The problem is that they do not have future.

Both novels produce a great impression on the reader by their simplicity and, at the same time, complexity. The language is rich and the numerous references to various English authors make it obvious that the authors are well-read men of letters.

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