



Between Motherland and Fatherland: Rootlessness and the Indian Jewish Identity in a Post-Colonial Context

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Abstract

Minorities in any country face the threat of being marginalized and pushed to the periphery. Marginality for the members of minority groups remains an involuntary position ascribed to them. As seen in most minority discourses, the question of identity is central and is subject to several aspects related to the situation of the particular minority group in the context of its position of existence in the said country or culture. Minorities can be defined on the basis of culture, language, religion, ethnicity, colour, caste or any other virtue attributed to a particular group. This paper is an attempt to explore the Post-Colonial identity of members of a miniscule minority, the Bene Israel Jews, who have lived and survived and also managed to maintain their distinct identity in the multi-cultural canvass of India. It tries to explore the crisis faced by this community specially in the context of bridging a gap between their Motherland which is India and their Fatherland which is Israel. It looks into the divided identity of this Jewish community which is Indian by citizenship and Israelite by religion. The primary text in question and the major point of reference for this paper shall remain Meera Mahadevan's fictional work Shulamith. This paper shall additionally look into the fictional works of other Indian Jewish writers as well. As the titular character of the novel Shulamith searches for a homeland in India, this paper will evaluate her struggles as a voice from a religious minority in India. When the State of Israel came into being in 1948, Jews started returning to Israel in search of better opportunities. Mahadevan's character struggles in the midst of an alien culture to stick to her own identity as an Indian Jew. Though her roots remain in Israel she is completely committed to a homeland which she finds in India.

Keywords: Motherland, Fatherland, Rootlessness, Identity, Indian Jew, Post-Colonial.