

Literature and Territoriality: Configuring Spaces by Jaffna Tamil Writers

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At present when cultural difference is increasingly becoming deterritorialized because of the mass migration and transnational culture of the postcolonial world, a special attention is shown through literary work in understanding the ways in which the questions of identity, belonging and cultural difference are spatialized.

The concepts of Tamil identity and nationalism in Sri Lanka have always been associated with territory and expressed by Tamil authors in their writings. Territory is not simply where one lives, but one which is controlled and directed in political terms and through literature Tamilian identity transcends ethnic borders and clinches a sense of territorial possession.

This paper on “Literature and Territoriality: Configuring Spaces by Jaffna Tamil Writers” attempts to pinpoint that contemporary writings of Jaffna Tamils, the writers from the Northern part of Sri Lanka, are concerned with legitimizing the new configurations and fostering a feeling of belonging and identity by invoking a history and tradition.

The objective of this paper is not to present a comprehensive reading of contemporary Jaffna Tamil authors and to rewrite a literary tradition but to reveal the role and function of literature in English by Jaffna Tamil writers in constructing, maintaining and legitimizing Tamilian identity through spatial configuration. Critical descriptive analysis is applied in this research paper.

Literary work of any community does not stand in a vacuum but it always covers the quest for national identity of that particular community. In this regard literature of Jaffna Tamils not only legitimizes a strong sense of territory and deals with political resistance but implies dislocation of power through fragmentation and loss of identity as well.

This presentation by focusing on spatial registers such as space, territory, nation, and home aims to provide a critical analysis of socio political conditions in which the literature of Jaffna Tamils has been produced.

Key words: *Literature, Territoriality, Spaces, Identity, Resistance, Nationalism*