Transnationalism: A Concept of Bridging People and Connecting Nations

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ABSTRACT--Globalisation has influenced people from every corner of the world by connecting people from different nations and has also enabled people to move from one corner of the world to the other effortlessly. This movement of people has empowered the capacity of the people to develop multiple connections with various nations simultaneously. This pattern of multiple connections has attracted the writers to study the movement of immigrants and they framed the terminology as transnationalism. Transnationalism is a global phenomenon which deals with multiple networks created by people from different countries where they accept and adapt to non-native cultures. Various writers have defined transnationalism in their own versions and some researchers have given different interpretations of the concept by comparing it with other concepts. The objective of the present paper is to examine the definition of transnationalism given by various writers and to analyse the different perspectives of the researchers in approaching the concept of transnationalism. It also details the development of the concept of transnationalism from word to an ideology.

Keywords--Transnationalism, developments, multiple networks, migration, globalisation.

I.   AN OVERVIEW OF TRANSNATIONALISM

The impact of globalisation has resulted in social, economic and technological development of all nations. The economic and technological advancements have influenced many people to move towards various nations for different purposes. The high movement of people from one place to another creates multiple networks with more than one nation. This gave a spark to the writers and critics to frame a study regarding the movement of immigrants across nations. And thus, the critics coined the term transnationalism, which studies about immigrants moving across nations and having multiple ties with the other nations. Transnationalism generates a greater degree of connection between individuals, communities and societies across nations, bringing changes in the social, cultural, economic and political landscapes of societies of origin and destination.

Randolph Bourne was the first person to coin the word 'trans-national' in his article entitled 'Transnational America' which was published in 1916. Bourne's article recorded the high number of immigrants entering America and their assimilation to the American culture. Bourne found it as a new trend in America as he was not used to the immigrant's adaption to the non-native culture. And so, Bourne mentions this new trend as transnational, where various kinds of people are interwoven as a single community despite their variations. "America is coming to be, not a nationality but a trans- nationality, a weaving back and forth, with the other lands, of many threads of all sizes and colors". (Bourne 1916)

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In latter 1990s transnationalism was developed into a concept by few critics like Schiller, Steven Vertovec, Blanc and Linda. Basch, Schiller and Szanton refer transnationalism as the 'processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of residence'. (Basch, Schiller & Szanton 1994) According to Schiller, transnationalism's major focus is "not to merely describe patterns of living across borders, but to develop social theory that did not use the nation-state as the primary unit of analysis." (Schiller 2007)

Immigrants who develop and maintain multiple relationships – familial, economic, social, organisational, religious and political – that span borders we call 'transmigrants'. An essential element of transnationalism is the multiplicity of involvements that transmigrants sustain in both home and host societies. (Basch, Schiller and Blanc 1994)

II.   THE DEVELOPMENTS OF THE CONCEPT

Transnationalism as a word, existed in 1916, but later in 1990s it was coined as an ideology in migration studies by the American sociologists Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller and Cristina Szanton Blanc and then it developed into a migratory concept by Alejandro Portes and his colleagues. William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki's *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (1918) is the first book which made a maiden attempt to study a transnational family life of the immigrants. Portes quotes that the transnational field is 'comprised of a growing number of persons who live dual lives: speaking two languages, having homes in two countries and making a living through continuous regular contact across national borders' (Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt 1999, 217). A more extensive definition of transnationalism was framed by Steven Vertovec as referring to 'multiple ties or interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states' (Vertovec 1999, 447).

III.   REVIEW OF VARIED LITERARY PIECES

Reiko Yoshida's (2001) thesis studies the transformation of Japanese identity through globalisation and transnationalism. Yoshida explores that the advancement in the technology and communication has caused a shift in the way the Japanese people understand their culture and identity. "It is argued that identities are not fixed or frozen in time; rather, they should be understood as flexible and a process shaped by history, a given context, and multiple external factors, and that a more fluid understanding of Japanese culture and identity is needed in a globalized, transnationalized world." (Yoshida 2001, 2)

Patricia Clavin's (2005) article deals with defining the concept transnationalism. Clavin compares transnationalism with a honeycomb which creates vacuum and empty spaces to refill different groups of people and innovations from all geographic locations.

"Transnationalism is best understood not as fostering bounded networks, but as creating honeycombs, a structure that sustains and gives shapes to the identities of nation-states, international and local institutions, and particular social geographic spaces. A honeycomb binds, but it also contains hollowed-out spaces where organisations, individuals and ideas can wither away to be replaced by new groups, people and innovations". (Clavin, 2005, p421)

Richard Huff (2007) in his article has explained the concept of transnationalism and has contrasted nationalism with transnationalism. He has also mentioned about the dual identities and loyalties of the immigrants in their

destination state. "Dual loyalties have led some nations to liberalize their laws regarding dual citizenship or provide rights and privileges to noncitizen groups who permanently reside within their borders, while others have adopted the opposite position and made their immigration policies more exclusionary". (Huff 2007, 985)

Köstem, Seçkin (2010) has mentioned that transnationalism is an outcome of globalisation and the transnational migrants spread their idea and identities beyond borders "globalization have strengthened activities and capacity to influence of non-state actors over national governments as well as how those actors help spread ideas and identities beyond borders" (Seçkin 2010, 3) Seçkin highlights the influence of Turkish foreign policy over the Turkic-speaking states and communities in a transnational perspective. "This study focuses on how Turkish foreign policy towards Turkic-speaking states and communities has been influenced by the transnational idea of "Turkic World" in the post-Cold War era". (Seçkin, 2010, 3)

Paolo Boccagni (2010) has given a new definition to transnationalism which creates a wider interpretation of the concept. According to Boccagni transnational ties includes "occupations and activities that require regular and sustained social contacts over time across national borders for their implementation". (Faist 2010, 186) Paolo has analysed the immigrants in Italy and had proved that the transnationals have a strong tie with their native land and also, they remain loyal to their migrated land. They expose the sense of missing their origin land making a motherland reference. "social ties at distance with one's motherland structured by its political, economic or other institutions through which this country of origin remains for the migrants a source of rights, opportunities, identities or belonging;" (Faist 2010, 202)

Derya Ozkul's (2012) article explores the distinctions between transnationalism, diaspora and globalisation. Ozkul defines globalisation, diaspora and transnationalism in a different perspective. According to Ozkul, "a globalization perspective in migration studies is concerned with the global scale and effects of migrant flows in various localities. Diaspora studies take a historical account and are concerned with the issues of culture and identity" (Ozkul 2012, 1) Ozkul specifies transnationalism as not only a network established by the migrants between the nations but also the connections and flows beyond geographies. "Transnationalism refers less to locality – such as that of 'country of origin' and 'country of destination' – than to the connections established by migrants. This means that migrant transnationalism involves not just networks established between countries of origin and destination, but also connections and flows across other geographies". (Ozkul 2012, 2)

Adams (2014) has explained the possibilities of making a transnational identity in a non-native state and also has analysed transnationalism through the lens of postcolonialism. "In order to understand transnationalism, one must almost necessarily borrow both the temporal and ideological frameworks of postcolonialism". (Adams 2014, 6) Adams also refers to Stephen Clingman's description of grammar of identity and Benedict Anderson's theory of imagined community to interpret transnationalism.

Emma Brouwer's (2015) thesis deals with transnationalism, fluidity and identity. Brouwer states that identity is a constant movement which change and develop from time to time and also exhibits constant repositioning. "Identities are in constant movement and are never completed or finished. They develop and change in relation to other selves, and this relation is not based on negation but rather on a constant repositioning, that somewhat resembles a palimpsest… it remains always undetermined. Identity, it could be claimed, is fluid". (Brouwer 2015, 3) Brouwer uses globalisation and cosmopolitanism to study transnationalism in terms of identity and national borders. According to Brouwer, transnationalism is an amalgamation of fluidity and borders. "Transnationalism

thus disputes the idea that national borders define and delimit people's identification, and emphasizes how we relate across, and beyond borders to other people, places, and cultures". (Brouwer 2015, 4)

Krzysztof Jaskułowski's (2015) book focuses on transnationality in migration theory. The book analyses three substantive phenomena of transnational migration approach: network between migration and development of both sending nations and receiving nations, integration of the migrants with the receiving society, political activities and emphasis on dual citizenship of the migrants in their non-native state. Jaskułowski also "outline the main tenets of transnationality theory by focusing on intense cross-border ties and practices and analysing the concept of transnational social spaces". (Jaskułowski, 2015)

Catherine Akca's (2016) article reviews Robyn Rowland's 'Line of Drift' which is a transnational poem that deals with dual identity and the sense of belonging. "However, in evoking memories of a lifetime balanced between two homes in two continents, the one in her birthplace, Australia, and the other in her ancestral Ireland, Rowland is concerned not with chronology but with fluidity". (Akca 2016, 2) Akca states that Rowland's poem is multi-layered and "the setting shifts between Australia and Ireland…describe journeys or departures, not only recreate the real experiences of the poet but also, at another level, reveal her search for identity and for a sense of belonging" (Akca 2016, 2)

Philip Q. Yang's (2019) article has intertwined transnationalism and genealogy with reference to transnational family bonding, transnational marriages, transnational parenting and transnational care for elderly parents. Transnationalism has remodelled the shape of a migrant family and has separated the relations from their native state, but these relations sustain their close relationships with their kith and kin by frequent communication and advanced technology. There are different patterns of family arrangements and one among them is astronaut family, where the breadwinner stays in homeland and the family lives in host country. "Transnationalism has created transnational families whose members are separated in different nation-states but sustain close family ties across borders. Existing studies have identified a variety of transnational family arrangements created by immigrant transnationalism including "astronaut" families". (Yang 2019, 49) Yang has specified the varied patterns of families living away from each other and their unending touch with their family symbolises the significance of a transnational family and their relationships.

IV.   CONCLUSION

Transnationalism is a global phenomenon which considers globe as conglomeration with different countries, shades of people, communities, organisations, governments and colours of cultures. Transnationalism is a bridging concept which connects people and countries from one pole to the other. The present paper has highlighted different articles and thesis submitted by various writers which has dealt with the keywords - identity, fluidity, connecting people, networks, globalisation and duality in identity. Most of the researchers have connected these themes with transnationalism.

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