

# **Confetti Of Literary Thoughts**

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## ***On the Term of Exile: The Politics and Mental Pangs of Leaving one's Country out of Force or Choice: Diaspora in the Political Poems of Bertolt Brecht***

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The word diaspora originated from Greek words “dias” which means scatter and “spora” which means “seed.” The word originated from a concept of agriculture. The term has its Biblical origin too. In Old Testament, it refers to the scattering of the Jewish tribe throughout the globe. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines diaspora as “the movement of people away from their own country to live and work in other countries.”(418) In Post Colonialism, it refers to the voluntary and forced exile of the colonial subjects to other nations and areas. After Colonialism ended, many of the colonial subjects preferred to migrate to other countries for the sake of better life conditions. During war and terrorism many people seek political shelter in the neighbouring countries. Economic problems, unemployment etc. in ones motherland also force men to go on temporary or permanent exile.

Bertolt Brecht(1898-1956) was a German playwright, theatre practitioner and poet. He was born in an upper middle class home in Germany. After his school education, he went to study medicine. “When Nazis came to power in 1933, he was the first to bear the marks of fascist barbarism.(Mator 2). His books were burned, the door of the theatres in which he staged his early plays were closed. The torture went to an extent to which he was denied nationality. He went on an exile from 1933 to 1947. During this period he wandered in Austria, France, Switzerland and in Denmark. After this he went to USA and stayed there till 1947. He was politically very active during his exile. He was in the front fighting against fascism. He also remained faithful to the cause of the working class. He threw all his ardour and creative energies in rich political activity.

Many of his poems are political and propagandist in nature. He discusses the problems faced by migrants in many of them.

“Homer had no homeland  
And Dante had to leave his own  
Lucretius went into exile  
Like Heine and so lies  
Brecht under a Danish roof of snow.”

(Brecht The Exile of Poets 1-5)

Ranging from language to shelter, food to culture, a migrant would be full of problems even if he/she went on an exile out of one's own choice.

“If mastering the language is too hard

Only be patient;

The telegram imploring your return

Won't need translation.”

**(Brecht: On the Term of Exile 9-**

12)

He writes about assimilation, the greatest problem faced by a migrant in an alien land. They cannot absorb themselves into an alien land. They find many cultural practices revolting. But they have no choice but to bear all the bitterness without complaining. Nobody would hear the wails of a person who is forced to stay in a foreign land. Whatever he has, he would have to accept with gratitude because the conditions in his homeland would be worse than this as he writes:

“Slave, who is it who shall free you?

Those in deep darkness lying

Comrade those alone can see you

They alone can hear you crying.”

**( -----All of Us or None 1-4)**

The poem *All of Us or None* is full of such paradoxes when the poet says that only hungry men can feed you, only the beaten ones can avenge your blows etc. In all these lines we see the spirit of the poet who is ready to avenge his fellowmen from an alien land. Even if driven out of his homeland he is ever ready to drive out the forces which have driven him out. He is optimistic about the outcome of his struggles: “The wall that keeps you out is crumbling too:” He hopes in the poem *On the Terms of Exile*.

In the meanwhile, he plans to fight for the common good of the working class. He was never the official member of the communist party but he was always ready to fight for the cause of the downtrodden. So, throughout his exile he was politically active. He wanted the workers of the world to unite:

“Black or white or brown or yellow

Leave your old disputes behind  
Once start talking with your fellow  
Men you will soon be of one mind.”

(Solidarity)

11-  
14)

Towards the end of the same poem, he warns his fellow beings saying that the rulers would always like to divide them and rule. They want to split and fool them so that they can always remain on top. An interesting thing to note here is that a majority of Brechtian poems are written in first person. The poet identifies himself with those who toil. He becomes the messiah of the people who suffer in alien lands. He wants to unite them and form asolidarity against all tortures and injustices. He is optimistic about the outcome of his struggles. He believes in the Utopian ideals of “Bread for the hungry and peace for all.”

Unlike the people who live in alien lands Brecht never believed in the idealized picture of his homeland. He always believed that living in exile was far more better than living in a land where your individual freedom to speak, write and work will be curtailed by the Nazi government. Where ever he went he always fought in the forefront against all forms of fascism. He used his pen to fight against fascism. In the poem sermon he complains about Nazi government:“They ask us what to eat, what not to think.” Like all intellectuals he was against all sorts of slavery. So we cannot see any nostalgic memories about his homeland in any of the Brecht’s poems. He sees his homeland as a place where he would have to live as a slave until somebody intervenes and frees them from this abyss.

Brecht lived most of his life outside Germany. He lived in Denmark for many years ,until he died in East Berlin in 1956. So he pictures himself as lying under the Danish roof of snow in the poem *the Exile of Poets*. But he is sure that the walls that keep him out are crumbling too. And his stay in the alien land is temporary. In the meanwhile he wants to work for those who suffer. They include, the war refugees the working class and the people who thirst and hunger. Even if propagandist in nature, Brecht’s poems are universal. Their universal appeal lies in the fact that wherever they occur human sufferings are identical.

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