Reading Diaspora: The Architectonic Spaces in Preeta Samarasan’s *Evening is the Whole Day*

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Abstract

Many Malaysian writers have delved into the subjects of race, identity and nationhood, given the postcolonial and multicultural contexts of the country. One relatively new writer who has added her voice to the narrative of the Indian diasporic community in Malaysia is Preeta Samarasan. *Evening is the Whole Day* (2008) is a riveting text by a diasporic author writing about the diasporic Indians living in Malaysia. Naturally themes of home and homeland are dominant in the text. Indeed, the house occupied by the rich middle-class family in the narrative, called the Big House, becomes a reflection of the many issues faced by Indians living in a country rife with racial politics. More than just reflecting this family’s desire to belong, in *Evening is the Whole Day*, the house becomes a space wherein the personal and the public coincide. Within this space too, differing realities exist between the poor and the rich. It is this diverse economic standings which create varying realities for both groups of people.

This paper then will explore the architectonic spaces in *Evening is the Whole Day* with the aim of highlighting some of the pressing issues faced by the Indians in Malaysia. The motif of the house and, by extension, the notion of home, is evoked as a theoretical concept to image and analyse some of these issues.

Keywords

Malaysian Indian, architectonic, economy, diaspora, home, class

In much contemporary cultural and literary theory, diaspora has become the “exemplary condition of late modernity” (Mishra, “New Lamps for Old” 14”). Growing interest in the diasporic condition is generated by an awareness that “our contemporary world has seen migrations of people on a scale as never before in human history” (Katrak 649). This mobility is rooted within colonial and postcolonial histories as well as continuing imperialist dominations. In

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