CHAPTER I

THEORISING DIASPORA
Judith T. Shuval (2007) quoting a story from Safran (1991) highlights the notions of ambiguities and dynamism in conceptualising and theorising diaspora:

In an old Jewish joke set in an Eastern Europe village, the husband asks his wife: “What will happen to the million zloty I invested in the business if the Messiah comes and we return to Jerusalem and I have to leave everything behind?” The wife answers: “With God’s help, the Messiah will not come so soon.”

In the Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse Matthew Arnold, the famous English poet had written: ‘Wandering between two worlds, one dead, / The other powerless to be born’ (Allott 1965: 305, lines 85-86). This was more like the lives of the first / second generation of Indian diasporic people, hovering between two worlds, their own, which even then seemed dead, and another of the diaspora, not quite capable of being born in a domain where the cultural logic of assimilation (assimilation into the dominant colonial culture) was the norm.

The above two aspects; one exhibiting the diaspora contemplating a long time to come back (even if to come back at all) and the other viewing the diaspora hovering between two worlds: one dead and the other powerless to be born pronounce the difficulties, ambiguities and dynamism in the process of diaspora’s identity formation, adoption and adaptation.

Again diaspora has no longer remained as the monopoly subject matter of any particular branch of study. Anthropologists, sociologists, cultural analysts, literary critics etc. have studied and interpreted diaspora in their own ways. So it’s very difficult to provide one uniform theory to conceptualise and study diaspora. The present Chapter attempts at pointing out various aspects, notions, ambiguities and dynamism of diaspora by contesting it with nationalism, trans-nationalism, globalisation, ethnicity, multiculturalism, diversity, indentureship etc., which in turn helps in understanding various contours and dynamics of diaspora.
Etymologically derived from the Greek term \textit{diaspeirein}, from \textit{dia-}, “across” and \textit{speirein}, “to sow or scatter seeds”, diaspora may be perceived as the naming of the ‘other’ which carries a sense of ‘displacement’; that is, communities of people who have been dislocated or separated from their native homeland or national territory, as a consequence of colonial expansion, through the movements of migration, immigration, exile or voluntary aspiration to leave the country and these people contemplating a hope, or at least a desire, to return to their homeland at some point, if the “homeland” still exists in any meaningful sense.

Diaspora may result in a loss of nostalgia for a single home as people “re-root” in a series of meaningful displacements. In this sense, individuals may have ‘multiple homes’ (at least in the broad compass of their mental horizon) throughout their diaspora, with different reasons for maintaining some form of attachment to each. First used in the \textit{Septuagint} diaspora suggests a dislocation from the nation-state or

\footnote{The first mention of a diaspora created as a result of exile is found in Deuteronomy 28:25 ”thou shalt be a dispersion in all kingdoms of the earth”. Its use began to develop from this original sense when the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek; the word diaspora then was used to refer to the population of Jews exiled from Israel in 607 BCE by the Babylonians, and from Judea in 70 CE by the Roman Empire. It subsequently came to be used to refer interchangeably, but exclusively, to the historical movements of the dispersed ethnic population of Israel, the cultural development of that population, or the population itself. When capitalized and without modifiers (that is, simply the Diaspora), the term refers specifically to the Jewish diaspora. The wider application of diaspora evolved from the Assyrian two-way mass deportation policy of conquered populations to deny future territorial claims on their part. In ancient Greece the term diaspora meant ”the scattered” and was used to refer to citizens of a dominant city-state who emigrated to a conquered land with the purpose of colonisation, to assimilate the territory into the empire.}

The first modern attestation of diaspora is in 1876 from the Greek diaspora, derived from \textit{diaspeirein} "to scatter about, disperse," from \textit{dia-} “about, across” + \textit{speirein} “to scatter”. The term became more widely assimilated into English by the mid 1950s, with long-term expatriates in significant numbers from other particular countries or regions also being referred to as a diaspora. The term diaspora has also been applied to other peoples with large numbers living outside their traditional homelands. The term diaspora refers to the movement of any population sharing common ethnic identity who were either forced to leave or voluntarily left their settled territory, and became residents in areas often far remote from the former. Diasporic cultural development often assumes a different course from that of the population in the original place of settlement. It tends to vary in culture, traditions and other factors between remotely separated communities. An academic field, diaspora studies, has become established relating to this contemporary, more general sense of the word.

In Hebrew, the term is ‘galut’ which initially referred to the settling of scattered colonies of Jews outside Palestine after the Babylonian exile and has assumed a more general connotation of people settled away from their ancestral homelands.

\footnote{The Greek translation of Hebrew Scriptures explicitly intended for the Hellenic Jewish communities in Alexandria (circa 3rd century BCE) to describe the Jews living in exile from the homeland of Palestine. The \textit{Septuagint} or simply "LXX", is the Koine Greek version of the Hebrew Bible, translated in stages between the 3rd and 1st centuries BC in Alexandria. It is the oldest of several ancient}
geographical location of origin and a relocation in one or more nation-states, territories or countries (Durham Peters 1999: 23). If the gypsies were read as the absolute instance of a nomadic tribe the profound historicity of the Jewish people gave their diaspora a specially privileged position in diasporic theory. Diasporic theory, then, uses the Jewish example as the ethnic model for purposes of analysis or at least as its point of departure. But Jewish diasporas were never totally exclusivist and met the nation-state halfway in its border zones (Clifford 1994: 326). Jewish ‘homelands’, for instance, were constantly being recreated: in Babylon, in the Rhineland, in Spain, in Poland, and even in America with varying degrees of autonomy (Smith 1986: 117).

Another, but quite different, early historical reference is the Black African diaspora. Beginning in the sixteenth century, the slave trade meant forcibly exporting Africans out of their native lands and dispersing them into the “New World” – parts of North and South America, the Caribbean and other parts of the globe that slave labour was exploited. These early historical references reveal that diaspora is not always voluntary (Kaplan 1996). The Middle Passage marks one trajectory of the triangulated form of circulation - the movement of people across the globe in the early modern period resulting in conquests, genocides, and the trade of spices, sugar, and slaves (Braziel and Mannur 2003: 2). Some scholars estimate that as many as twelve million West Africans were sold into slavery and forcibly exiled to the “New World” during the almost 400-year period of legalised slavery which began in 1502 and ended in the mid-nineteenth century (Braziel and Mannur 2003: 2). This early trans-Atlantic African diaspora resulted in numerous fractured diasporas.

translations of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, lingua franca of the eastern Mediterranean Basin from the time of Alexander the Great (356-323 BC). The term Septuagint derives its name from Latin septuaginta interpretum versio, "translation of the seventy interpreters" (hence the abbreviation LXX) – which is also taken to imply seventy-two, six from each tribe. The Latin title refers to a legendary account in the pseudepigraphic Letter of Aristeas of how seventy-two Jewish scholars were asked by the Greek King of Egypt Ptolemy II Philadelphus in the 3rd century BC to translate the Torah for inclusion in the Library of Alexandria. A later version of that legend narrated by Philo of Alexandria states that although the translators were kept in separate chambers, they all produced identical versions of the text in seventy-two days. Although this story may be improbable, it underlines the fact that some ancient Jews wished to present the translation as authoritative. A version of this legend is found in the Tractate Megillah of the Babylonian Talmud (pages 9a-9b), which identifies fifteen specific unusual translations made by the scholars. Only two of these translations are found in the extant LXX.
Another phase in the diaspora history starts around 1830s with the phase of transportation of indenture labour from Asia, especially from the Indian subcontinent to mitigate the demands for expansion of the colonial economy. The modern globalised world has experienced (experiencing) another phase of the diaspora in the 1960s and 70s, especially the migration of skilled labour from the former colonies to the metropolitan centres. Diaspora, in the rapidly changing world that one now inhabits, speaks of diverse groups of displaced persons and communities moving across the globe.

**Conceptualising Approaches and Definitional Challenges in Studying Diaspora**

Once conceptualised as an exilic or nostalgic dislocation from homeland, diaspora has attained new epistemological, political, and identitarian resonances as its points of reference proliferate. The term ‘diaspora’ has been increasingly used by anthropologists, literary theorists, and cultural critics to describe the mass migrations and displacements of the second half of the twentieth century, particularly in reference to independence movements in formerly colonised areas, waves of refugees fleeing war-torn states, and fluxes of economic migration in the post world war II era.

As a social construct the term has shifted its meaning and coverage over time. The term ‘diaspora’ refers not only to such classic groups as Jews, Greeks and Armenians, but to much wider categories which reflect processes of politically motivated uprooting and moving of populations, voluntary migration, global communications and transport. The term has acquired a broad semantic domain and now encompasses a motley array of groups such as political refugees, alien residents, guest workers, immigrants, expellees, ethnic and racial minorities, and overseas communities. To the ancient Greeks, diaspora was associated with “migration and colonisation” (Cohen 1997: ix). However, for Jews, Africans, Palestinians and Armenians the term had a more ominous connotation: “Diaspora signified a collective trauma, banishment, where one dreamed of home but lived in exile” (Cohen 1997: ix). Indeed the term ‘diaspora’ has acquired metaphoric implications and is used more and more by
displaced people who feel, maintain, invent or revive a connection with a prior home (Safran 1991: 83). The recent opening up of the word to signify the lives of ‘any group living in displacement’ (Clifford 1994: 310) is a phenomenon that probably marks a post-modern move to dismantle a logo-centric and linear view of human affairs, essentialist notions of social and national cohesion that connected narratives and experiences to specific races and to origins.

Speaking to different communities, recent theorisations of diaspora also seek to represent the lived experiences (in all their ambivalences, contradictions, migrations, and multiple traversals) of people whose lives have unfolded in myriad disaporic communities across the globe. Diasporic subjects are marked by hybridity and heterogeneity – cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and national – and these subjects are defined by traversal of the boundaries demarcating nation and diaspora. For Stuart Hall (1990), the diaspora experience “is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of identity which lives in and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity.”

For Paul Gilroy (1993), “the politics of transfiguration” that diaspora necessitates “strives in pursuit of the sublime, struggling to repeat the unrepeatable; to present the unrepresentable.” Paul Gilroy remains critical of earlier critical formations of the African diaspora that see all the African diasporic individuals everywhere – scattered across several continents – as linked by a common heritage, history, and racial descent; for Gilroy, such African diasporic conceptions homogenise difference and form “ethnic absolutism.”

For other scholars like, (Clifford 1992), (Gilroy 1993), (Hall 1990), (Mercer 1988), (Ifekwunigwe 1999), (Radhakrishnan 1996), this hybridity opens diasporic subjectivity to a liminal, dialogic space wherein identity is negotiated. Kobena Mercer (1988) theorises a diasporic “critical dialogism” that challenges “the monologic exclusivity on which dominant versions of national identity and collective belonging are based”; this critical dialogism, according to Mercer, allows for a “powerfully syncrgetic dynamics, which critically appropriates elements from the master codes of the dominant culture and creolises them, disarticulating given signs and rearticulating their symbolic meaning otherwise.”
Thus, diasporic subjects experience double, and even plural, identifications that are constitutive of hybrid forms of identity (Chow 1993), (Gopinath 1995), (Ifekwunigwe 1999), (Manalansan 1995); hybrid national (and trans-national) identities are positioned with other identity categories and severed from an essentialised, nativist identity that is affiliated with constructions of the nation or homeland. Urgo (1995) makes the important claim that diasporas do not transcend differences of race, class, gender, and sexuality; nor can diaspora stand alone as an epistemological or historical category of analysis, separate and distinct from these inter-related categories. More complexly, diasporic scholars have therefore suggested innovative and nuanced ways of thinking across the once demarcated terrains of identity and exploring the imbrications of ethnic and national categories, while offering insights into the cultural constructions of identity in relation to nationality, diaspora, race, gender, and sexuality.

Diaspora has been theorised from many diverse points of departure – East Asian, South Asian, Southeast Asian, Asia-Pacific, Caribbean, South American, Latin American, African, and Central European. Recent uses of the term move from essentialist notions of homeland, national or ethnic identity, and geographical location to deployments of diaspora conceptualised in terms of hybridity, metissage, or heterogeneity. Michel Laguerre (1998) and Aihwa Ong (1999) note that more flexible or diasporic notions of citizenship are needed to probe the multiple belongings created in diaspora.

Scholars of the Jewish diaspora and the African diaspora are also rethinking earlier notions of diaspora as grounded in the fixed or metaphysical geographical foundations of home, identity, and exile. Such models privilege the geographical, political, cultural, and subjective spaces of the home nation as an authentic space of belonging and civic participation, while devaluing and bastardising the states of displacement or dislocation, rendering them inauthentic places of residence.

Diasporas have a progressivist as well as a reactionary streak in them. Both forms of this ‘streak’ centre on the idea of one’s ‘homeland’ as very real spaces from which alone a certain level of redemption is possible. Homeland is the desh (in Hindi)
against which all the other lands are foreign, or *videsh*; it is the source of homesickness, that which 'gives rise to the adventures through which subjectivity escapes from the prehistoric world' (Adorno and Horkheimer 1997: 78). When not available in any 'real' sense, homeland exists as an absence that acquires surplus meaning by the fact of diaspora. It is not unusual for the two versions (the physical and the mental) to be collapsed into an ahistorical past going back to antiquity. This reading of the homeland must be placed alongside another truth about diasporas – except Jewish homelands, diasporas do not return to their homeland (real or imaginative) (Mishra 2007: 2).

As is mentioned earlier, diaspora study has no longer remained as the prerogative of the any one particular discipline and various scholars belonging to different disciplines like, sociology, anthropology, history, humanities etc. have studied diaspora in manifold ways. In referring to modern diasporas, Sheffer (1986: 3) has proposed a simple definition: “Modern diasporas are ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin – their homelands.” Chaliand and Rageau (1991: xiv-xvii), in their *Atlas des Diasporas*, utilise four criteria for defining a diaspora: forced dispersion, retention of a collective historical and cultural memory of the dispersion, the will to transmit a heritage, and the ability of the group to survive over time. Sheffer (1986), Safran (1991) and Clifford (1994) have focussed on a history of dispersal, myths/memories of the homeland, alienation in the host country, desire for eventual return – which can be ambivalent, eschatological or utopian, ongoing support of the homeland and, a collective identity defined by the above relationship.

Robin Cohen (1997) has proposed a typology of diasporas each of which has been caused by a different set of precipitating circumstances which result in a variety of social contexts, mythologies and definitions of solidarity. These are: victim diasporas, labour and imperial diasporas, trade diasporas, cultural diasporas, global – de-territorialised - diasporas. Diaspora discourse reflects a sense of being part of an ongoing trans-national network that includes dispersed people who retain a sense of their uniqueness and an interest in their homeland. Diaspora is a social construct founded on feeling, consciousness, memory, mythology, history, meaningful
narratives, group identity, longings, dreams, allegorical, and virtual elements – all of which play a role in establishing a diaspora reality. At a given moment in time, the sense of connection to a homeland must be strong enough to resist forgetting, assimilating or distancing. In the words of Walter Benjamin (1968), “effaced stories are recovered, different futures are imagined....”

Drawing from the works of Safran (1991), Sheffer (1993), Bruneau (1994) and Cohen (1997) a migration can be defined as a “diaspora” if four conditions are met: firstly, an ethnic consciousness; secondly, an active associative life; thirdly, contacts with the land of origin in various forms, real or imaginary; fourthly, there should be relations with other groups of the same ethnic origin spread over the world. This is perhaps best captured by Judith Shuval:

A diaspora is a social construct founded on feeling, consciousness, memory, mythology, history, meaningful narratives, group identity, longings, dreams, allegorical and virtual elements all of which play an important role in establishing a diaspora reality. At a given moment in time, the sense of connection to a homeland must be strong enough to resist forgetting, assimilating or distancing (Shuval 2000: 43).

Diasporic communities in the world consider the ancestral homeland according to several factors (Jayaram 1998: 48): “(a) the conditions under which it’s...ancestors left the homeland, (b) the distance at which their community is now in relation to that homeland, (c) the duration of settlement in the host country, and (d) the socio-economic and political conditions in the host country.”

Diaspora is also defined by the “role played by collective memory, which transmits both the historical facts that precipitated the dispersion and a cultural heritage latter often being religious” (Chaliand and Rageau 1995: xv).

Diasporans must keep a collective memory of their past and keep their links with the motherland alive so that they can qualify for a diaspora identity. However, as Mandaville (2001: 172) argues, this is a negotiated identity:

The estrangement of a community in diaspora – its separation from the ‘natural’ setting of the homeland – often leads to a particularly intense search for and negotiation of identity: gone are many traditional anchor points of culture; conventional hierarchies of authority can fragment. In short, the condition of diaspora is one in which the multiplicity of identity and community is a key dynamic.
Debates about the meanings and boundaries of affiliation are hence a defining characteristic of the diaspora community.

It is also observed that, going back to the original land/motherland is also a natural desire of many diasporans, and this natural desire may well become a perpetual and utopian longing. On the other hand, strict alliance with co-ethnic members in the hostland may lead these people to turn their backs on the reality of the country in which they are now living. Contradictory feelings such as loss and gratitude, frustration and hope or joy and sorrow lie at the core of the diasporic position. To make matters even more complicated, the members of a specific diasporic community may greatly differ in terms of gender, race, class or ethnicity. The formation of diasporic ethnic identity is influenced by three sets of struggle (Brass 1985: 1). Firstly, there is struggle within the ethnic group for control over its 'material and symbolic resources'. This will determine the group's boundaries, and the conditions which will ascertain inclusion or exclusion. Secondly, there is struggle between ethnic groups as they compete for resources, rights, and privileges. Finally, there is struggle between the state and the groups which dominate it, and the other ethnic groups in the country. Accordingly, the diasporic identity is, very often, the complex and unpredictable outcome of the subject's never ending efforts to cope with particular and ever-changing factors and circumstances.

Theoretical analysis of diaspora studies can best be understood and interpreted through approaches on ethnicity. Building on the assumption that people seek a shared identity, ethnic theory addresses itself to understanding the processes involved in deriving such identity from commonalities of history, language, religion and past achievements. When a group finds itself in a context of exclusion, limited opportunities for advancement, political domination or social and political discrimination, a diaspora culture helps to maintain a sense of community and belonging to a more rewarding and welcoming social entity. This is accomplished by selectively preserving and recovering traditions so that they create or maintain identification with far reaching historic, cultural and political processes giving a sense of attachment elsewhere, in a different time accompanied by hopes or visions of renewal (Gilroy 1987; Rouse 1991). Myths of return serve to strengthen ethnic solidarity but in many cases have little practical implications. The 'return' of many
diasporas is an eschatological concept used to make life easier by means of a belief in an eventual, virtual utopia. The return is hoped for “at the end of days,” i.e. in Hebrew, “be’achrit ha’yamim.” (Shuval 2007: 35). Clifford (1994) notes that the language of diaspora is increasingly used by people who feel displaced and who maintain, revive or invent a connection with a prior home. Groups that did not have diasporic consciousness in the past are reclaiming diasporic origins and affiliations. The sense of being a ‘people with historic roots’ outside the time/space of a host nation provides a sense of power and legitimacy to claims of oppression or disadvantage (Clifford 1994).

Before the 1960s immigrant groups were generally expected to shed their ethnic identity and assimilate to local norms. Beginning in the 1970s, when it became evident that assimilationist models did not work effectively, there were policy changes in some societies that permitted or even encouraged immigrants to maintain various aspects of their ethnic tradition. The resurgence of diasporas can be viewed as part of the persistence, or de novo emergence of ethnicity at a time when according to older versions of modernisation theory it was to have been attenuated and tending to disappear (Kearney 1995; Kymlicka 1996).

What distinguishes diaspora people is their ongoing or reawakened attachment and loyalty to their earlier culture and specifically to the homeland which they feel they have left (Kearney 1995). In most cases this does not necessarily interfere with their integration into the host society on the condition that that society is accepting such competing loyalties. Immigrant communities have a certain temporal span and often last up to a third generation after which time their self identification as immigrants in most cases fades – even though they may retain an ethnic identity. A sense of diaspora can occur or reoccur after several generations when the group members are themselves no longer immigrants even though their predecessors were. A sense of diaspora is a feeling that is characterised by shifting periods of latency and activism which occurs in response to processes in the three relevant referents: the group itself, the host society and the homeland.

Diasporas present a unique challenge to the hegemony of modern nation-states because of the feelings they engender towards groups and places located outside the
borders of a given nation state. Diaspora communities make it clear that identity with a political or geographical entity does not need to be binary – in the sense of all or nothing – but can involve loyalty to more than one such entity (Clifford 1994; Kearney 1995). Thus notions of assimilation and loyalty to one nation are challenged by diasporas who – in addition to relating to their host nation-state – relate simultaneously to people located in other nation-states. De-territorialisation of social identity challenges the meaning of the ‘nation-state’ and its claims for exclusive loyalty with the alternative of multiple identities and even multiple citizenships (Cohen 1997).

Diaspora study also derives notions from the theoretical discourse on transnationalism and globalisation. Töölöyan (1991) states that “Diasporas are the exemplary communities of the trans-national moment.” Diaspora discourse reflects a sense of being part of an ongoing trans-national network that includes a homeland. It is characterised by a sense of living in one place while simultaneously remembering and/or desiring and yearning for another place. This is because of the multiplicity of relations not only between diaspora communities and their homeland in a binary context but because of the ongoing, lateral relations among diaspora communities located in different sites within nation-states and in different states. In an era of globalisation, open borders, mobile job markets, international division of labour, increased accessibility of modern means of communication and transportation technologies and accelerated dispersal of information and images across boundaries and cultures make possible ongoing communication and contact of immigrants with their countries of origin and with significant others there (Shuval 2007: 32).

Social networks promote and support immigration. These phenomena carry important implications for the maintenance of relations between immigrants and their homelands and for the persistence of traditional cultural patterns, ongoing separatism and processes of merging into the mainstream of the host society. It has been noted that people who live in close physical proximity, may share less on a cultural level than they do with dispersed people elsewhere, in an increasingly interconnected world (Shuval and Lesham 1998; Shuval 1998).
(Sheffer 1986) speaks of three sets of actors that are relevant to diaspora theory: (a) the diaspora group itself, (b) the host society and (c) the homeland which may be real or virtual. There is a complex triadic relationship among these actors each of which is differentiated into a range of sub-groups, which may differ considerably with regard to levels of commitment, self-interest, power and interest in each other.

(A) Diasporas have been mobilised to influence political outcomes in real home countries and to provide economic aid to homelands (Esman 1986). But issues of bifocality have also been raised and pose some intriguing questions regarding the dynamics of the relationships (Gilroy 1987; Mankekar 1994; Rouse 1991). On a schematic level, it is fruitful to focus on pairs of factors in terms of their relationship to the third. Thus:

diaspora and homeland – attitudes of a diaspora group to its host may be a function of the host’s policy with regard to the homeland. This may express itself in voting patterns and other forms of political support or non-support by the diaspora group of the host. Analogously, a diaspora group’s attitude towards specific groups in the host society may be determined by these groups’ support of homeland policies of the host. There have been cases in which members of the diaspora community have left their host country to seek protection or political asylum in their homeland (Shuval 2007: 34).

(B) Attitudes of a diaspora group towards its homeland is often ambivalent – a combination of yearning and distancing (Shuval 2007: 34). When they have a choice, many people do not choose to return to their homeland because it is often too disruptive or traumatic to leave the diaspora. In many cases a homeland does not actually exist or it is not welcoming to them politically, ideologically or socially. Maintaining an eschatological stance with regard to the homeland, i.e. defining it as a future, virtual, utopian goal that will be attained at an undefined time may reflect the practical view which may be summarised as *ubi lucrum, ibi patria*, i.e. my home is where I can make a living (Shuval 2007: 34). A sense of the need for immediate return in most cases reflects discomfort – for whatever reason – in the host society or a strong belief in the legitimacy and desirability of return. Lack of overt political support for the homeland may reflect concerns with regard to accusations of dual loyalty, fears of oppression or discrimination; on the other hand, overt support may reflect a sense of security in a society in which there is tolerance and acceptance of such views.
Homeland and host attitudes of the homeland to diaspora group may be to provide cultural and emotional support and security but also to make use of diaspora groups to gain political, material, or other support from host countries. In the case of the actual return of diaspora persons to their homeland, the reception accorded to them may be welcoming but also ambivalent or hostile. The latter might reflect homeland residents' feeling that diaspora returnees may threaten their status or their property and that the returnees are not real 'natives' (Munz and Ohliger 1998). The host’s attitude towards the diaspora group reflects overall norms of tolerance or intolerance that are defined as appropriate. If the diaspora group is politically significant in terms of size or influence, the host may relate to the diaspora group in terms of its own political goals.

To explore the narrative of the Indian diaspora critically, one may read it as two relatively autonomous archives designated by the terms ‘old’ and ‘new.’ The ‘old’ and ‘new’ Indian diasporas reflect the very different historical conditions that produced them. The old (that is, early modern, classic capitalist or, more specifically, nineteenth century indenture) and the new (that is, late modern or late capitalist) traverse two quite different kinds of topography. The subjects of the old occupy spaces in which they interact by and large with other colonised people with whom they have a complex relationship of power and privilege as in Fiji, South Africa, Malaysia, Mauritius, Trinidad, Guyana and Surinam; The subjects of the new are people who have entered metropolitan centres of Empire or other white settler countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA as part of a post 1960s pattern of global migration. The ‘new’ surfaces precisely at the moment of (post) modern ascendancy. In a thoroughly global world the act of displacement now makes diasporic subject travellers on the move, their homeland contained in the simulacral world of visual media where the ‘net’ constitutes the ‘self’ and quite unlike the earlier diaspora where imagination was triggered by the contents in gunny sacks: a Ganesh icon, a dog eared copy of the Ramayana or the Quran, an old sari or other deshi outfit, a photograph of a pilgrimage, and so on (Mishra 2007: 4). Indeed, ‘homeland’ is now available in the confines of one’s bed room in Vancouver, Sacramento or Perth. In short, networking now takes over from the imaginary.

The cultural dynamics of the ‘new’ are often examined within a multicultural theory. The binary of the ‘old’ and ‘new’ offered here is not meant to isolate communities or
to situate experiences within nonnegotiable or exclusive frames. It should be self-evident that the ‘old’ has become part of the ‘new’ through remigrations such as Fiji-Indians to Vancouver or Trinidad-Indians to Toronto and that the old has not been immune to a general electronic media culture that has tended to redefine subjectivities along different lines of what Manuel Castells (1996) has termed the ‘net and the self.’ The binary therefore has a strategic function: it recognises an earlier phase of migration, the psychic imaginary of which involved a reading of India based on a journey that was complete, a journey that was final.

Theorisations of diaspora have been hotly contested and critiqued. The term “diaspora” has been critiqued as being theoretically celebrated, while methodologically indistinct and ahistorical. Some scholars, arguing that diaspora enters into a semantic field with other terms and terrains, such as those of exile, migrant, immigrant, and globalisation, have asserted that diasporic communities are paragons of the trans-nationalist moment (Tölöyan 1996). Other critics have resisted and critiqued such celebratory models for thinking diaspora, noting that such celebrations are often ahistorical and apolitical, failing to note the different contexts allowing or prohibiting movement globally (and even locally) (Robbins 1995). In its multiple uses, as Bruce Robbins (1995) astutely notes, the term “diaspora” has occasionally been used in an ahistorical and uncritical manner that fails to attend to the historical conditions that produce diasporic subjectivities. The term “diaspora” risks losing specificity and critical merit if it is deemed to speak for all movements and migrations between nations, within nations, between cities and within cities.

The explosion of diaspora studies in various fields – literature, sociology, anthropology, film studies, queer theory, area studies, and ethnic studies - makes it difficult to ascertain how and why the term is being deployed in critical scholarship. It is often used as a catch-all phrase to speak of and for all movements, however privileged, and for all dislocations, even symbolic ones (Braziel and Mannur 2003: 3). So, the uncritical, unreflective application of the term “diaspora” to any and all contexts of global displacement and movement should be cautioned.

While cultural and literary critics have been increasingly concerned with how to rethink the concepts of nationhood and national identity, such critical analyses should
also interrogate contemporary forms of movements, displacement, and dislocation – from travel to exile. Indeed, these questions are inextricably linked to the theorisation of diaspora.

Here, the basic focus of the study is to examine, within an inter-disciplinary frame, both the historical phenomena of migrations and diasporas and how these movements also inflect identity formation in relation to race, ethnicity, gender, culture, diversity, pluralism etc. If one is to take the lessons of interdisciplinary seriously, it is incumbent on one to examine how work in ethnic studies, communication studies, area studies, and cultural studies, as well as sociology and anthropology, provides one with the tools to understand the lived experiences of diasporic subjects. It is also pertinent to point out the relevant actors and their roles in diaspora studies, the social and political functions of diaspora, how does diaspora differ from other migrations and how does diaspora theory link to other theories. This study on the theoretical contours of diaspora is based on a number of assumptions:

1. This study takes into account of the changing reality in which diasporas exist. It also reflects the fluid nature of social processes in diaspora. This means that a group may acquire a sense of diaspora, lose it, regain it, change it and so on – over an undefined period of time. An ongoing change is an integral part of the diaspora study.

2. This study on diaspora is structured around three principal actors – homeland, diaspora group, and the host – who interact in a multi-faceted, changing set of relationships which may be viewed on a bifocal or trifocal level. These three actors form the principal components of diaspora theory.

3. Taking into consideration Featherstone’s (1992) analysis of hyper-differentiation in post-modern societies, it can be claimed that diasporas, hosts and homelands take many forms and are characterised by ongoing differentiation into distinct types and subtypes. Different subgroups within the three basic sets of actors are characterised by different orientations, values and attitudes. Therefore, diaspora has to be studied through multi-dimensional and multi-faceted approaches and parameters with many variables playing a role. The parameters are not necessarily binary.
Indentureship and Diaspora in V.S. Naipaul

The transplanted Hindu-Muslim rural culture of Trinidad into which my father was born early in the century was still a whole culture, close to India (Naipaul 1983: iii-iv).

In the arcade of Hanuman House...there was already the evening assembly of old men...pulling at clay cheelums that glowed red and smelled of ganja and burnt sacking.... They could not speak English and were not interested in the land where they lived; it was a place where they had come for a short time and stayed longer than they expected. They continually talked of going back to India, but when the opportunity came, many refused, afraid of the unknown, afraid to leave the familiar temporariness (Naipaul 1961: 174).

'No space ever vanishes utterly, leaving no trace,' wrote Henri Lefebvre (1995: 164). And no space – mental, physical, and social – is simply real or ideal. Space is always both: ideal in the sense of being positive, mathematical, logical, and real in the sense of being social and psychological. If Lefebvre is correct in interpreting the 'role of space, as knowledge, and action' (Lefebvre 1995: 11) even when it is recalled 'tragically' (Lefebvre 1995: 20), then the space of the indenture ships in which Indians were sent to the sugar colonies of the West Indies and other parts of the world, and the experience of the passage are important elements in the social imaginary of these people. Production and reproduction of diaspora culture must begin with the ship's passage: 'indenture lives in dates and distances', writes Arnold Itwaru in his poem We Have Survived (Itwaru 1987: 293).

Indenture history, located in the changed temporality of girmit when experiences altered linear time into relentless, ever present labour, has produced its enabling aesthetic, none more powerful or influential than that of V.S. Naipaul. Naipaul is an anguished observer traumatised by what Vijay Mishra (2007: 72) calls the girmit ideology. Fredric Jameson (1986: 69) reads Third World texts as national allegories: 'All cultures, at particular moments of their history, produce national allegories.' In reading Jameson's passage Vijay Mishra (2007: 72) claims that V.S. Naipaul's works about the Indian diaspora are allegories of that diaspora:

V.S. Naipaul’s fictions about the Indian diaspora are necessarily, I want to argue, allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I will call diasporic allegories, even when, or perhaps I
should say, particularly when their forms develop out of predominantly western machineries of representation, such as the novel.

Here Rob Nixon’s critique of V.S. Naipaul is a good point of entry: ‘The oeuvres of both V.S. Naipaul and his brother Shiva Naipaul are dotted with instances of them rallying to the defence of the [old] Indian diaspora, whether in Trinidad, Guyana, Surinam … (Nixon 1992: 34). The problem with Naipaul, as Nixon points out, is that he does not come clean on his pretensions. But what the critique fails to examine is precisely the conditions that give rise to a particularist point of view and why it is that Naipaul and his brother Shiva Naipaul remain sympathetic to people who share their indenture background. Here one falls squarely back on to questions of diaspora and its aesthetic representation in V.S. Naipaul.

As Vijay Mishra (2007: 73) claims two critical strategies may be employed reading V.S. Naipaul. First, one needs to address Naipaul’s diasporic history and, second, one needs to argue that Naipaul’s works are allegories of the diasporic writer and the coloniser. The latter may be addressed with reference to the structural inevitability of mimicry in Naipaul’s art because for the colonised, as (plantation culture’s) diasporic subject, ‘slave’ mimicry (of the colonial universal since the diaspora’s own particularity had no value) was both innocuous (from the colonial point of view) and subversive (from the point of view of the colonised subject) since it opened the way to a degree of self-legitimation, self-projection or representation and even self-transcendence. It is only when the colonised enters the metropolitan centres of Empire that the disjunction and the power of a colonial pedagogy, a ‘monkish, medieval, learning quite separate from everyday things’, becomes obvious (Naipaul 1987: 108). The degree to which Naipaul’s cultural prejudices and his coloniality is a function of a history of colonial education and indeed of plantation social history. The origins of the counter-narrative go back in time to Naipaul’s own father, Seepersad Naipaul, about whom he writes:

My father rejecting one world came into contact with another. In him was played out the whole tragic drama of an ancient civilisation coming into contact with a hideous colonial mimicry of another civilisation (V.S. Naipaul 1996: I: 1.3).
In Paul Gilroy’s narrative of *The Black Atlantic* (1993) time has to be located in key spaces one of which is the Middle Passage itself. The ship, the medium of mercantile capitalism and of the middle passage of both slavery and indenture, is the first of the cultural units in which social relations were resited and renegotiated. The ship and the passage are then a chronotope, like the road in picaresque novels without which the picaro hero loses all sense of who he is (Mishra 2007: 74). In the case of the old Indian diaspora, the ‘chronotopic’ space of the ship is absolutely pivotal; it produced a site where caste purities were largely lost (after all, the crossing of the dark ocean, the *kalapani*, signified, at one level, the loss of caste) and a new form of socialisation that went by the name of *jahaji-bhai* (ship brotherhood) created. Social interactions during these lengthy voyages began a process that led to the remaking of cultural and ethnic identities to a critical self-reflexivity of the kind missing from the stratified and less mobile institutions of the homeland. This is especially so if one remembers that the indentured labourers were ‘working class’ people who had been “born into a culture characterised by the persistence of precapitalist relationships (or by the absence of notions of ‘citizenship,’ ‘individualism,’ ‘equality before law,’ and so on)” (Chakrabarty 1989: xiii). These precapitalist relationships began to be modified the moment this ragged and destitute crowd assembled in the space of the ships, and the discourses that emerged in due course became charged.

Contrary to absolutist theories that implied lived diaspora experience as being forever locked into reveries of homeland – the danger here is that one begins to repeat racist or nativist discourses of cultural anteriority and superiority which emphasise lost glories (myths replacing history) – diaspora radically reinterrogates the actual experience of life on cotton, tobacco and sugar cane plantations so as to represent themselves (people of the old Indian diaspora) as ‘creatures of peasant flesh squelching through mud and cane field, bearing about [them] the stench of fish and fresh blood’ (Dabydeen 1986: 9). In regarding one’s past, one does not so much create timeless narratives as use real material experiences as a ‘means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger’ (Gilroy 1993: 187). This memory has only recently come to be associated with modes of resistance to colonial hegemony which began the moment the subaltern entered the ‘colonial’ space of the ship or barrack. The interactions during the lengthy sea voyages began a process that led to the remaking of cultural and ethnic identities and to the displacement of ‘desire for a
“homeland” with what Avtar Brah has called ‘homing desire’ (Brah 1996: 197). These processes never come to a standstill in diaspora cultures; they continue to permeate all aspects of diasporic life as ‘roots’ and ‘routes’, ‘home’ and ‘dispersion’ are placed in a ‘creative tension, inscribing a homing desire while simultaneously critiquing discourses of fixed origin’ (Brah 1996: 193). Since cultural situations are not fixed but mobile, since cultures travel and become contaminated in the process, a nativist (millenarian) discourse must be rewritten through a theoretically aware and critically self-reflexivity in Naipaul and the historical weight of his diasporic allegories are to be located in indenture, out of which grew, as we have seen, a girmit ideology (Mishra 2007: 75).

To return to the discussion of a diasporic allegory, the paradigmatic text is obviously A House for Mr. Biswas. Homi Bhabha locates its energy in the play between two discourses, one metaphoric and ascriptive, the other metonymic and radical (Bhabha 1984: 114-20). For the purpose (that is, in search of a way of understanding this text as diasporic allegory), Bhabha’s reference to the ‘ascriptive’ as belonging to a certain order of memory, of history, of discourse, may be fruitfully expanded with reference to Amitav Ghosh’s reading of the novel as a text that displaces and then recreates India within the space of Hanuman House (Ghosh 1989: 73-78). The linking of this space with actual Indian referents is made unnecessary because the ‘symbolic structure of India is infinitely reproducible’ (Ghosh 2002: 248) and ‘lived within the imagination’ (Ghosh 2002: 247). In an early draft of ‘Prologue to an Autobiography’ (incorporated in Finding the Centre [1984]) V.S. Naipaul had written:

It was astonishing what they [the indentured labourers] did bring; but they were going to the end of the world and they came prepared for the wilderness: they brought holy books and astrological almanacs, images, sandalwood, all the paraphernalia of the religious shrines, musical instruments, string beds, plates and jars, even querns, even grinding stones...as it was, they carried India with them and were able to recreate something like their world (Naipaul 1996 I: 1.3).

The novel thus works through the principle of space at two levels. First, there is the level of imaginary spatial reproduction of the signs of Indianness but with a consubstantial semantics where the new sign implies an essential lack and cannot stand for the ‘other’, for it is the ‘other’ (but only in the imagination). Second, the first mythic space undergoes a realist reproduction in houses that symbolically displace the spaces of the ship and the barracks. So nostalgia for a lost space is worked through the
social reality of a new space which carries a traumatic history of life in ships and barracks. Space has to be shared, and lives and valuables, too, so that Mr. Biswas’s gift of the doll’s house to his daughter Savi (functional within the confines of private space) has to be destroyed (Naipaul 1961: 194-8). Hanuman House reproduces the earlier space that is never left behind. In this space, new Ayodhas, Varanasis, Lankas are constantly recreated, as geographical distance is cancelled out in the cartography of the mind. The space of the novel is thus an arena (the earlier space of ships and barracks) where the history of the old Indian diaspora is played out.

The novel begins and ends with death within the confines of a house that encapsulates, allegorically, a specifically diasporic negotiation of space in terms of indenture history and its (spatial) sites. How terrible it would have been, at this time, to be without it: to have died among the Tulsis, amid the squalor of that large, disintegrating and indifferent family; to have left Shama and the children among them, in one room; worse, to have lived without even attempting to lay claim to one’s portion of the earth; to have lived and died as one had been born, unnecessary and unaccommodated (Naipaul 1961: 12-3).

*The Suffrage of Elvira* is about colonial politics, about the social being mapped on to the political, about political chicanery and games that people play and, from Naipaul’s perspective, about the Indian diaspora’s comic involvement in democracy. Democracy comes to Trinidad not as a gift of universal suffrage; it comes to a culture with its own internal squabbles, power play, racialised life-worlds, and cultural peculiarities such as belief in *Obeah* and other superstitions. We recall a passage from *The Suffrage of Elvira* (Naipaul 1969: 66):

> Things were crazily mixed up in Elvira. Everybody, Hindus, Muslims and Christians owned a Bible.... The Hindus and Muslims celebrated Christmas and Easter.... Everybody celebrated the Muslim festival of Hosein. In fact When Elvira was done with religious festivals, there were few straight days left.

> ‘We [can no longer] understand all the traits we have inherited. Sometimes we can be strangers to ourselves,’ writes V.S. Naipaul in *A Way in the World* (1994:11). To rethink culture with diasporic poetics in mind would imply that the rootedness of culture or its presumed compulsion towards such rootedness (in search of permanence, fixity, immobility, eternal values, and so forth) is now replaced, through
a diasporic epistemology, by a definition in which the root is less important than the route. What roots did one take, how do one discuss one’s shared ‘common historical experiences of dispossession, displacement, adaptation’ (Clifford 1994: 309) – these are the urgent questions that one now asks of diasporas. They are also some of the questions that concern a reading of V.S. Naipaul through a diasporic epistemology. Naipaul is a product of an Indian diaspora, situated between an old world that can only be memorially constructed and a new that lacks the certainties of the old. The old (poetic) dichotomy (after Matthew Arnold) of a dead world and another powerless to be born is replaced by discontinuous worlds constantly being remade. Old worlds do not die; they are transformed by diasporic cultures that bring their own ‘postmodern’ ethnicities to the nation-state. And diasporic cultures, too, change. As Cheddi Jagan once observed, ‘[Indians of the diaspora] are not exactly the same as the roots from which they sprang’ (Jagan 1989: 25).

Ethnic, Cultural, Conjunctural / Hyphenated Identity and Diaspora

The diaspora has created rich possibilities of understanding different histories. And these histories have taught one that identities, selves, traditions, and natures do change with travel (and there is nothing decadent or deplorable about mutability) and that one can achieve such changes in identity intentionally. In other words, one needs to make substantive distinctions between “change as default or as the path of least resistance” and “change as conscious and directed self-fashioning” (Radhakrishnan 2003: 126). Identities are the names one gives to the different ways one is positioned by, and position oneself within, the narratives of the past. Radhakrishnan (2003: 119) argues that ethnicity is always in a state of flux; far from being static, unchanging, and immutable, Radhakrishnan suggests that understandings of ethnicity are always context specific, so that, as he cites an instance, being Indian-American, in a hyphenated sense, is completely different from being Indian. Radhakrishnan (2003: 119, 120) gives one example: when his eleven year old son asks him, “is he Indian or American?” he tells him he is both. As Radhakrishnan feels, the main problem that intrigues his son is this: How could someone be both one and
something other? How could the unity of identity have more than one face or name? If his son is both Indian and American, which one is he really? Which is the real self and which the other? How do these two selves coexist and how do they weld into one identity? Is the “Indian” in Indian and the “Indian” in Indian-American the same and therefore interchangeable? How is ethnic identity related to national identity? Is this relationship hierarchically structured, such that the “national” is supposed to subsume and transcend ethnic identity, or does this relationship produce a hyphenated identity, where the hyphen marks a dialogic and non-hierarchic conjuncture? To what extent does the “old country” function as a framework and regulate our transplanted identities within the diaspora? Should the old country be revered as a pregiven absolute, or is it all right to invent the old country itself in response to one’s contemporary location? Furthermore, whose interpretation of India is correct: the older generation’s or that of the younger; the insider’s version or the diasporan?

During the initial phase, immigrants suppress ethnicity in the name of pragmatism and opportunism. To be successful in the New World, they must actively assimilate and, therefore, hide their distinct ethnicity. As Radhakrishnan (2003: 124) claims, from the point of view of the assimilated generation, it is all too easy to want to forget the past and forfeit community in the name of the “free individual,” a path open to first generation citizens. It is in the nature of a racist, capitalist society to isolate and privatise the individual and to foster the myth of the equal and free individual unencumbered by either a sense of community or a critical sense of the past. One cannot afford to forget that one lives in a society that is profoundly anti-historical. The next period refuses to subsume political, civil, and moral revolutions under mere strategies of economic betterment. In the call for total revolution that follows, immigrants reassert ethnicity in all its autonomy. The third phase seeks the hyphenated integration of ethnic identity with national identity under conditions that do not privilege the “national” at the expense of the “ethnic” (Radhakrishnan 2003: 121). The point here is that individualised escapes (and correspondingly, the notion of the “history of the present” as a total break from the messy past) may serve an emotional need, but they do not provide an understanding of the history.

As Radhakrishnan (2003: 125) feels, first it is important to make a distinction between information about and knowledge of India and an emotional investment in India.
What can be shared cognitively between the two generations is the former. It would be foolish to expect that India will move the younger generation (like, Radhakrishnan’s son) the same way it moves the older generation (like, Radhakrishnan). It would be outrageous to claim that somehow India of the old generation is more real than of the young generation; India of the old generation is as much an invention or production as of the young generation. But here again, the inventions and interpretations are themselves products of history and not subjective substitutes for history. Second, the older generation has actively to learn to find “Indianness” within and in conjunction with the minority ethnic continuum. In the United States many of the younger generation find their ethnic Indian identity as distinct from the “Indian” identity experienced at home not in isolation but in coalition with other minorities. Many of the younger generation have identified themselves under the umbrella of “Third World”, but this term is problematic and often promotes an insensitive dedifferentiation of the many histories that comprise the Third World, but this term when used by the groups that constitute it has the potential to resist the dominant group’s divide and rule strategies. Third, it is disingenuous of the old generation to behave as though one India exists “out there” and our interpretation of India is it. This is a generation both of and distant from India, therefore the politics of proximity has to negotiate dialectically and critically with the politics of distance (Radhakrishnan 2003: 126).

Very often it is when one feels deeply dissatisfied with marketplace pluralism, its unwillingness to confront and correct the injustices of dominant racism and not finding a proper representation in the socio-cultural and political domain as in the case of Indian diaspora in the West Indies that one turns diasporan gaze back to the home country. Often, the gaze is uncritical and nostalgic. Often, one cultivates the home country with a vengeance. Several dangers exist here. One can cultivate India in total diasporan ignorance of the realities of the home country. By this token, anything and everything is India according to one’s parched imagination: half truths, stereotypes, so called traditions, rituals, and so forth. Or one can cultivate an idealised India that has nothing to do with contemporary history. Then again, one can visualise the India one remembers as an antidote to the maladies both here and there and pretend that India has not changed since one left its shores. These options are harmful projections of individual psychological needs that have little to do with history. As
diasporan citizens doing double duty (with accountability here and there), one needs to understand as rigorously as one can the socio-economic and political situations in India, both because that concerns one and also because one has a duty to represent India to oneself and to the adopted country as truthfully as one can (Radhakrishnan 2003: 128).

Coming back to the earlier question posed by Radhakrishnan’s son, his son wonders who he is, he is also asking a question about the future. It can be hoped that as Radhakrishnan believes (Radhakrishnan 2003: 126), his future and that of his generation will have many roots and many pasts. One can hope that it will be a future where his identity will be a matter of rich and complex negotiation and not the result of some blind and official decree.

Conjunctural by definition, diasporan subjectivities can also be interpreted with other subjectivities that are not necessarily of the same horizon. The challenge of the diasporic situation is that there is no pre-existing historical temporal horizon; the horizon has to be co-ordinated simultaneously with the creation of the contents that are to be historicised within the horizon. It then follows that the ethico-political valences of any of these systems are determined polemically, i.e., not neutrally or disinterestedly. These valences cannot be understood and appreciated without reference to the historical conditions that engendered them in the first place. The diasporic condition would insist that these different histories ought to be studied with reference to each other, as immanent critiques of themselves and of each other. Both the certitudes of filial belonging and the guarantees of pedagogical sovereignty are dislocated in the diaspora.

Identity exists as a specific and determinate anteriority that enables and legitimates certain expert representational practices; and on the other, it is these very expert practices that in effect constitute the anteriority effect of identity (Butler 1990; 1993). Identity is the consolidated negotiated effect of heterogeneous and contradictory practices. What is open to question and criticism is the performative aspect of identity. Between “being Indian” and “practising Indian” there lies a space of semantic openness that is neither ideologically free nor ideologically consummate: a
space where "name" and "agency" problematise each other (Radhakrishnan 2007: 216).

Radhakrishnan (2007: 217) in his study of the Asian American identity formation speaks of the representational model, which, is also a representative model, raises concerns such as adequacy, fidelity, authenticity, historical veracity, spokespersonship, inclusiveness, and so on. The representational model achieves success by way of the prescriptive singularity of the name that supposedly speaks for the "differences within." There is no representation without "naming" (Asian-America as a name creates a certain interrelationship among the parts that constitute it), and "naming" as a process is symptomatic of a tension between epistemology and politics. As the Asian-American presence grows stronger in numbers, the question arises: How and in what forms should this presence be felt within the American body politic? Unless minorities craft their experiences into their own forms of knowledge, they will always be vulnerable to cooperation / (cooptation) by the epistemic categories of the dominant discourse. Clearly, minority knowledge is neither "pure" nor separatist; instead it takes the form of a double or multiple consciousnesses that dislodges the regime of the dominant one.

The fundamental issue confronting the conceptualisation of Asian-America is that of ethnic hyphenation (Radhakrishnan 2007: 219). Dwelling in the hyphen is not a matter of neutrality or of benign participation in the conjuncturality of “equal” histories. It is a mandate to acknowledge coevalness between two histories as well as a call to redress the existing imbalances between the two histories (Fabian 1983). Dwelling in the hyphen is neither to be romanticised in the name of “free” individual choice, nor is it to be registered as a free floating hybridity devoid of historical baggage. The hyphen has to speak to exist, and given the ambivalence of the diaspora, it is not always clear who the addressee is: all of America, Asia, only Asian-America? The identity question, “Who am/are I/we?” constitutes the diasporic epistemological domain; in other words, indeterminacy and the immanent undecidability of identity are the cornerstones of diasporic studies, as also the challenge, “how to proceed from I to ‘we’ (Radhakrishnan 2007: 225).
In the diasporan context, the hyphen should be produced as a theoretical category that is not to be owned by or normatively deployed by any one hyphenated constituency. In acknowledging the existential epistemic alterity of the hyphen, both Asia and America are radically derealised in the name of an emerging heterogeneous historiography. The historicity of the hyphen warrants a different historiography, and dwelling in the hyphen, between identity regimes, necessitates a different narratology. Betweenness and conjuncturality ought to be enfranchised as modes of legitimate being before the hyphen can speak. The hyphen as such in Asian-America has to do double duty and coordinate the Asian experience without resort to hierarchical manoeuvres or identity coups (Radhakrishnan 2007: 221). Coming back to the discussion on Indian West Indian identity formation, one may read that Indians as an ethnic (minority) community in the West Indies come in ‘communication’ with other groups and in the process of their ‘interaction’ their cultural identities get transformed and they shed some of their ethnic marks to the formation of one, what they call, West Indian, to which at least they can claim, they belong to, but on the other end, practising their ‘own’ ethnic value system among their ethnic groups. The critical semantic significance of the hyphen lies in its capacity to demand that so called discrete, autonomous, or absolute histories be read and interpreted relationally, that is, with reference to other histories. Indeed relationality is so much at the heart of the hyphen that it represents relationality as such, and with the autonomous advent of the hyphen, there is no History, nor are there separate histories, but histories cross hatched in relationality (Mohanty 1989).

Stuart Hall (2003: 233) theorises two ways of reflecting on “cultural identity”: First, identity understood as a collective, shared history among individuals affiliated by race or ethnicity that is considered to be fixed or stable; and second, identity understood as unstable, metamorphic, and even contradictory — an identity marked by multiple points of similarities as well as differences. Hall (2003: 233) posits Caribbean cultural identities — heterogeneous composites defined in relation to first world terrains and in relation to the different heritages of the Caribbean islands — as the play of the three dominant presences: Presence Africaine, Presence Europeenne, and Presence Americaine. In Hall’s (2003: 233) configuration, Presence Africaine is the “site of the repressed”; Presence Europeene is the site of colonialist, hegemonic construction of
knowledge; and *Presence Americaine* is the “New World” site of cultural confrontation, possibly for creolisation and points of new becoming. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, identity should be perceived as a “production” which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside representation. This view problematises the very authority and authenticity to which the term “cultural identity” lays claim.

As Hall (2003: 234) points out, there are at least two different ways of thinking about “cultural identity.” The first position defines “cultural identity” in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective “one true self,” hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed “selves,” which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. Within the terms of this definition, cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide the diaspora, as “one people,” with stable, unchanging, and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of their actual history. This “oneness,” underlying all the other, more superficial differences, is the truth, the essence, of “Caribbeanness” (Hall 2003: 234). This becomes a very powerful and creative force in emergent forms of representation among hitherto marginalised people. New forms of cultural practice in these societies address themselves to this project for the very good reason that, as Fanon (1963: 170) puts it:

Colonisation is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it.

Here, the important aspect is the imaginative rediscovery that this conception of a rediscovered, essential identity entails. The Indians shed their differences and became one and the experience of slavery united the blacks from Africa.

The second position recognises that, as well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant difference which constitute “what one really is”; or rather – since history has intervened – “what one has become.” One cannot speak very long, with any exactness, about “one experience, one identity,” without acknowledging its other side – what Hall (Hall 2003: 236) calls the ruptures and discontinuities which constitute, precisely, the Caribbean’s “uniqueness.”
Cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of “becoming” as well as of “being.” It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history, and culture. Cultural identities undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous “play” of history, culture, and power. The past no longer addresses one as a simple; factual “past,” it is always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative, and myth. Cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture; not an essence but a positioning (Hall 2003: 237). Hence, there is always a politics of identity, a politics of position. This inner expropriation of cultural identity cripples and deforms. If its silences are not resisted, they produce, in Fanon’s (1963: 176) vivid phrase, “individuals without an anchor, without horizon, colourless, stateless, and rootless – a race of angles.”

As Hall (2003: 237) points out black Caribbean identities are “framed” by two axes or vectors, simultaneously operative: the vector of similarity and continuity; and the vector of difference and rupture. Caribbean identities have to be thought of in terms of the dialogic relationship between these two axes. The first one gives one some grounding in, some continuity with, the past. The second reminds one that what one shares is precisely the experience of a profound discontinuity: the people dragged into slavery, transportation, colonisation, migration, came predominantly from Africa – and when that supply ended, it was temporarily refreshed by indentured labour from the Asian subcontinent.

But the slaves were also from different countries, tribal communities, villages, languages, and gods. The paradox is that it was the common history – transportation, slavery, colonisation, uprooting of slavery and the insertion into the plantation economy of the western world – have been profoundly formative, for all these societies, unifying them across their differences, in the same moment as it cut them off from direct access to their past. Difference, therefore, persists – in alongside continuity. Moreover, the boundaries of difference are continually repositioned in relation to different points of reference.
Coming back to Hall’s Caribbean of *Presence Africaine, Presence Europeenne*, and *Presence Americaine* one can add the many other cultural “presences” like, Indian, Chinese, Lebanese, etc. that constitute the complexity of Caribbean identity. *Presence Africaine* is the site of the repressed. Apparently silenced beyond memory by the power of the experience of slavery, Africa was, in fact, present everywhere: in the everyday life and customs of the slave quarter, in the languages and patois of the plantations, in names and words, often disconnected from their taxonomies, in the syntactical structures through which other languages were spoken, in the stories and tales told to children, in religious practices and beliefs in the spiritual life; the arts, crafts, music, and rhythms of slave and post emancipation society. This was – is – the “Africa” that “is alive and well in the diaspora” (Hall 1976).

It is the presence/absence of Africa, in this form, which has made it the privileged signifier of new conceptions of Caribbean identity (Hall 2003: 241). Everyone in the Caribbean, of whatever ethnic background comes to terms with this African presence. The original “Africa” is no longer there; it too has been transformed. History is, in that sense, irreversible. Africa may be reckoned with by Caribbean people, but it cannot in any simple sense be merely recovered.

Communities, Benedict Anderson (1982: 15) argues in *Imagined Communities*, are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined. As Frantz Fanon claims that we must not therefore be content with delving into the past of a people in order to find coherent elements which will counteract colonialism’s attempts to falsify and harm... A national culture is not folklore, nor an abstract populism that believes it can discover a people’s true nature. A national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence (Fanon 1986: 188).

Africa is, to the blacks, what Edward Said (1985: 55) once called an “imaginative geography and history,” which helps “the mind to intensify its own sense of itself by dramatising the difference between what is close to it and what is far away.” It “has acquired an imaginative or figurative value that one can name and feel” (Said 1985: 55). The blacks’ belonging to it constitutes what Benedict Anderson calls “an
imagined community" (Anderson 1982). To this “Africa”, which is a necessary part of the Caribbean imaginary, the blacks can’t literally go home again. But a symbolic journey is possible, which is circular – but “by another route:” “Africa” – as one retells it through politics, memory, and desire (Hall 2003: 242).

Likewise, a physical journey to India for the Indian West Indians is not possible because neither Indian West Indians wish or aspire for nor the Indians in India would like it, but a kind of spiritual sustenance exists. Though India can never provide them the kind of motherland feeling as West Indies offers, yet India stays with them, at least in their subconscious state. Another aspect is that ‘India’ for the Indian West Indians stands different from as it stands for Indians. Even the Indian (Hindu) value system spells out different practices. An East Indian who visited Calcutta a century ago came back to Trinidad warning that “there was no use in those who were accustomed to the ways of this country returning to India”, because “the manners of the East were different and utterly opposed to the freedom of life that they were accustomed to here” (Lowenthal 1972: 156). Here it becomes interesting to study whose ‘India’ is pure. The Indian West Indians feel that India has no longer remained the same that their grand parents left, so they develop the notion that they have kept the ‘pure’ India, hence why to return to an ‘impure’ India. So what remains is a kind of spiritual sustenance or symbolic journey of mind to India.

The European presence interrupts the innocence of the whole discourse of “difference” in the Caribbean by introducing the question of power. *Presence Europeenne* is about exclusion, imposition, and expropriation, as Hall (2003: 242) claims that we (the African ethnicity) are often tempted to locate that power as wholly external to us – an extrinsic force, whose influence can be thrown off like the serpent sheds its skin. Frantz Fanon reminds in *Black Skin, White Masks*, how this power has become a constitutive element in black’s identities:

> The movements, the attitudes, the glances of the Other fixed me there in the sense in which a chemical solution is fixed by a dye. I was indignant; I demanded an explanation. Nothing happened. I burst apart. Now the fragments have been put together again by another self (Fanon 1986: 109).

This brings one face to face with the dominating European presence not simply as the site or “scene” of integration where those other presences that it had actively disaggregated were recomposed – reframed, put together in a new way; but as the site
of a profound splitting and doubling – what Homi Bhabha has called “this ambivalent identification of the racist world…the ‘Otherness’ of the Self inscribed in the perverse palimpsest of colonial identity” (Bhabha 1986: xiv-xv).

The dialogue of power and resistance, of refusal and recognition, with and against Presence Europeenne is almost as complex as the “dialogue” with Africa. In terms of popular cultural life, it is no where to be found in its pure, pristine state. It is always already creolised – not lost beyond the Middle Passage, but ever present: from the harmonics in black music to the ground bass of Africa, traversing and intersecting black lives at every point (Hall 2003: 243).

The third, “New World” presence, is not so much power, as ground, place, territory. It is the juncture point where the many cultural tributaries meet, the “empty land” (the European colonisers emptied it) where strangers from every other part of the globe collided (Hall 2003: 243). None of the people who now occupy the islands – black, brown, white, African, European, American, Spanish, French, (East) Indian, Chinese, Portuguese, Jew, and Dutch – originally “belonged” there. It is the space where the creolisations, assimilations and syncretisms were negotiated. The New World is the third term – the primal scene – where the fateful/fatal encounter was staged among different people, culture and civilisation. It also has to be understood as the place of many, continuous displacements: of the original pre-Columbian inhabitants, the Arawaks, Caribs, and Amerindians, permanently displaced from their homelands and decimated; of other people displaced in different ways from Africa, Asia, and Europe; the displacements of slavery, colonisation, and conquest. It stands for the endless ways in which Caribbean people have been destined to “migrate”; it is the signifier of migration itself – of travelling, voyaging, and return as fate, as destiny; of the Antillean as the prototype of the modern or postmodern New World nomad, continually moving between centre and periphery (Hall 2003: 243).

The “New World” presence is therefore itself the beginning of diaspora, of diversity, of hybridity and difference. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference. One can only think here of what is uniquely – “essentially” – Caribbean: precisely the mixes of colour, pigmentation, physiognomic type (Hall 2003: 244). Nobody in the
West Indies including Indians has remained ‘pure’ of what they had come from. In the socio-cultural and political mosaic of the West Indies, their identities have been transformed and they have become syncretised and hybrid.

Kobena Mercer claims that across a whole range of cultural forms there is a “syncretic” dynamic which critically appropriates elements from the master codes of the dominant culture and “creolises” them, disarticulating given signs and rearticulating their symbolic meaning. The subversive force of this hybridising tendency is most apparent at the level of language itself where creoles, patois and Black English decentre, destabilise and carnivalesque the linguistic domination of “English” – the nation language of master discourse – through strategic inflections, reaccentuations and other performative moves in semantic, syntactic and lexical codes (Mercer 1988: 57).

As Stuart Hall feels, it is because this New World is constituted for the diaspora as place, a narrative of displacement, that it gives rise so profoundly to certain imaginary plenitude, recreating endless desire to return to “lost origins,” to be one again with the mother, to go back to the beginning. And yet, this “return to the beginning” is like the imaginary in Lacan – it can neither be fulfilled nor requited, and hence is the beginning of the symbolic, of representation, the infinitely renewable source of desire, memory, myth, search, discovery – in short, the reservoir of cinematic narratives (Hall 2003: 245).

Multiculturalism, Pluralism, Diversity, Syncretism and Diaspora

Culture may refer to a shared system of meaning in terms of which people understand themselves and the world, organise their individual and collective lives, develop views about the nature of the self, its relations to others, man’s place in the world, the meaning and significance of human activities, moral values and ideals, etc., and it provides a framework, an intellectual and moral compass, in terms of which human beings navigate their way through life. In a culturally homogenous society its members share a common system of meaning and significance and despite their
differences on this or that subject, they share a common vision of human life, articulate it in terms of a shared conceptual vocabulary, and organise it on the basis of common principles. The disagreements between them are limited, and they know where and why they disagree and how to explain and come to terms with their differences.

But in the case of multicultural society, their structure of beliefs and practices vary, and so do their values, literature, historical memories, etc., in which their cultures are articulated. They may and generally do agree on a number of things, but they also disagree on many others, and their agreements are often embedded in different views of life. As Aditya Raj (2002: 183) feels, minority cultures in a democratic and multicultural set up firstly provide minority communities a psychological and moral home between the family and the state. Secondly, it tends to enable the minority members to act collectively and not merely individually to fight for their rights. In immigrant societies, minority rights are not only protected through the power of the organisations of immigrants themselves but also through the paternalistic actions of indigenous organisations in the host society (Rex 1996). A multicultural society is a learning society where different cultures and individuals seek to learn from each other and in the process are also open to mutual criticism and transformation (Giri 2000).

Multicultural societies consist of people of distinct diverse cultures, holding differing views regarding family, companionship, life and values by which to live and die. These kinds of diversities, however, possess some basic questions, challenging social scientists, educationists and political leaders. How are societies and nations to deal with this diversity? How are culturally diverse people to live together? What is the relationship between a nation and culture? Does cultural identity determine national identity or rather does a nation have to have a single well defined cultural identity? How should a state deal with persons culturally different from the majority? Should it follow the assimilation path of ending cultural diversity which is seen by the assimilationists as a threat to national unity and disruption, or, at least, a dilution of national culture?

Diverse groups as the indigenous people, national minorities, ethno-cultural nationals, old and new immigrants, feminists, gay men and lesbians, and the greens ask for the
acceptance, respect and even public affirmation of their differences. Some of these groups want the wider society to treat them equally with the rest of the society and not to discriminate against or otherwise disadvantage them. Moreover, they argue, all cultures are, in fact, hybrid, for all of them have developed in interaction and intermingling with other cultures and they ask people to cherish, celebrate and foster diversity, and to create multiculturalist ethos in society. These diverse groups cannot express and realise their identities without the necessary freedom of self-determination, a climate conducive to diversity, material resources and opportunities, suitable arrangements, and so on, and all these call for profound changes in all areas of life.

Though not assimilated into a dominant culture in a narrow sense, diverse cultural groups, living together in a nation or political unit, do not go on living in mutually exclusive compartments or in isolation or continue to live parallel and separate cultural lives, rather cultural boundaries weaken, get blurred, beliefs are contested and interrogated and a loosely held and fluid body of beliefs emerge. They not only interact and influence each other and undergo changes, but, interacting on an equal basis, they also create something new, i.e., a common, distinctive pluralist national composite culture. This precisely could be the definition of assimilation in multicultural societies. To complement this cultural interaction, public institutions ensure equal power and equal access to members of the non-dominant cultures in political, economic and cultural spheres. This makes contemporary multicultural societies different from plural societies, with the former stressing equality of cultures and the latter plurality and coexistence of the already existing pluralities (Mahajan 2007: XI). Plural societies and cultural pluralism emphasise the plurality but not the equality of cultures, especially if the societies happen to be essentially unequal and hierarchical. Plural societies seem to be concerned primarily with the peaceful coexistence of diverse, more or less, self-contained cultures rather than their equal participation in the conduct of their collective affairs. In such societies, the state apparatus has little interest in mounting a critique of, and radically transforming, the dominant culture though the question of equality cannot be postponed if such societies claim a democratic secular polity.
In societies that underwent long periods of colonialism, slavery, the indentured labour, and the Holocaust, minority communities were oppressed and humiliated politically, socially, economically and even culturally; and generally they accepted their subordinate status and remained confined to the social and even the geographical spaces assigned to them by the dominant groups. Most prominently, multiculturalism emerged against this kind of mono-culturalistic policies and Goldberg (1994) delineates that mono-culturalism as an institutional ideology came up at the time when migrants from different countries changed the ethnic composition of these countries (Western Europe and North America). It served as a ploy to assimilate these ethnic migrants. This hegemonic monocultural strategy went to the extent of repression and at times annihilation of the ‘other’ (Goldberg 1994). Specific ethnic groups because of their physical and cultural characteristics were denied the opportunity to attain the attributes and behaviours that were needed to assimilate in mainstream society (Bank 1983). Whereas an earlier ‘multiculturalism’ remained defiantly colonial in its conception of race (natives, slaves and coolies were its categories of analysis) and had no capacity for self-critique (and hence never used the term ‘multiculturalism’), the later form (as ‘multiculturalism’), growing as did from a postcolonial ethos of multiply centred cultures and histories, began to challenge the glue that had hitherto bound the liberal nation state together (Mishra 2007: 135). A multicultural society is one of mutability and diverse identifications where individuals are neither subjected to the tyrannies of compulsive cultural traditions, nor are ethnic groups subjected to the tyranny of either the state or a dominant group within it (Giri 2000).

The various dimensions, contours and magnitude of the concept of multiculturalism cannot be understood properly without the reference to Canada - the first state to declare itself multiculturalist. When the government of Canada decided to implement its policy of multiculturalism within the nation’s pre-existent bilingual framework, this is how the then prime minister, Pierre Trudeau, addressed the policy on 8 October, 1971:

...there cannot be one cultural policy for Canadians of British and French origin, another for the original peoples and a yet third for all others. For, although there are two official languages, there is no official culture, nor does any ethnic group take precedence over any other. No citizen or group of citizens is other than Canadian, and all should be treated fairly. ...Canadian identity will not be
undermined by multiculturalism. Indeed, we believe that cultural pluralism is the very essence of Canadian identity. Every ethnic group has the right to preserve and develop its own culture and values within the Canadian context (Mishra 2007: 138).

Canada therefore ceases to be a land of fixed or permanent values and dominant cultures that a race (or two races) has created; rather it is a field to which people can bring their own values provided these are not contrary to the nation state’s established liberal democratic framework. In many ways this is a very real advance on abstract rights since the Act (which Act?) now spells out ways in which the disadvantaged, those whose rights are a pre-given in the Constitution but only in an abstract fashion, would now have at their disposal apparatuses that would ensure the development of precisely those aspects of their lives that the nation state has always valued as an inalienable human right. Multiculturalism, soon after considered as largely a ‘Canadian term for cultural and ethnic pluralism’ (Berdichewsky 1997: 53).

Bhikhu Parekh (2000: 3) points out that cultural diversity in modern society takes many forms of which three are most common. First, although its members share a broadly common culture, some of them either entertain different beliefs and practices concerning particular areas of life or evolve relatively distinct ways of life of their own. They do not represent an alternative culture but seek to pluralise the existing one. Bhikhu Parekh calls it subcultural diversity. Second, some members of society are highly critical of some of the central principles or values of the prevailing culture and seek to reconstitute it along appropriate lines. These and other groups represent neither subcultures, for they often challenge the very basis of the existing culture, nor distinct cultural communities living by their values and views of the world, but intellectual perspectives on how the dominant culture should be reconstituted. Bhikhu Parekh calls this perspectival diversity. Third, most modern societies also include several self-conscious and more or less well-organised communities entertaining and living by their own different systems of beliefs and practices. Bhikhu Parekh calls this communal diversity.

‘Multicultural (state)’ has the power to subsume everything from diasporas to ethnic minorities and ‘first nation’ people (Mishra 2007: 133). Diasporic narratives are formed within multicultural structures. Located at once in memorialisation (‘an easy recourse to origins’) and in the social realities of living in the here and now (‘an anti-
essentialist presencing') diasporas require one to keep in mind an analytic of two kinds of exclusion: exclusion from the nation state as a group as well as exclusion of women, gays and lesbians from inside a heterosexually defined and patriarchal diaspora (Kaiwar and Mazumdar 2003: 245-51).

In many ways the excessive zeal with which ‘non-visible’ minorities have claimed to occupy this space as well has meant that multiculturalism has lost much of its political and social (as well as critical) edge, for if every group within a nation is itself a migrant community (except of course the nation’s First Nation people), then every nation is by definition multicultural (Mishra 2007: 134). This argument is quite uncritical because it overlooks a fundamental feature of nations and their link to power. A nation’s dominant community is never part of the multicultural mosaic. To repeat: a multicultural nation or a multicultural polity is meaningless if each community within a nation state can equally claim to be part of the nation’s multicultural communities. In other words, in any multicultural nation there will always be a cultural imbalance between those (one or two communities) whose history is foundational to the nation and those who have come as equal citizens no doubt but whose presence can only have the same legitimacy (in terms of national ideology) retrospectively and even then only after their discrepant narratives have been incorporated into the ‘foundational narrative’ or when the necessity for the latter has been dispensed with altogether (Mishra 2007: 135). There is, then, a presumption of recognition of the other over time as participants in the historical narrative of the land. Failure to recognise this fundamental fact often leads to an idealist or romantic theory of multiculturalism that is often way off the mark. Multiculturalism requires constant critique and re-evaluation, the need to specify the real, material conditions of racism and their relation to capital at every point (Mishra 2005). At the heart of the politics of multiculturalism is the demand for recognition and at the heart of that recognition is the subject of diaspora (Taylor 1994).

The project of multiculturalism must acknowledge that its principles of universalism were themselves ‘particular’ (linked to a specific western historical formation) and this particularity (now rendered as universal) is a particularity that may be located within all particularisms (Laclau 2003: 362). If the place/terrain from which the universal subject spoke is nonexistent, then a space is created for the evolution of
multiple identities, and new forms of multicultural subjectivities. Diasporic/multicultural identity requires constant negotiation so as to critique the dominant group (which denies minority identity) as well as self-reflect on its own demands for particularism (Mishra 2007: 183). Laclau asks a question that holds the key to multicultural thinking: 'Now, how could that coexistence be possible without some shared universal values, without a sense of belonging to a community larger than each of the particular groups in question?' (Laclau 2003: 366).

Culture, Gilroy insists, 'is not a fixed and impermeable feature of social relations. Its forms change, develop, combine and are dispersed in historical processes. The syncretist cultures of black Britain exemplify this. They have been able to detach cultural practices from their origins and use them to found and extend new patterns of meta-communication which give their community substance and collective identity' (Gilroy 1987). Bhabha speaks on the same line. The Satanic Verses, he thinks, has changed the vocabulary of our cultural debate:

It has achieved this by suggesting that there is no such whole as the nation, the culture, or even the self. Such holism is a version of reality that is most often used to assert cultural or political supremacy and seeks to obliterate the relations of difference that constitute the languages of history and culture.... Salman Rushdie sees the emergence of doubt, questioning and even confusion as being part of that cultural 'excess' that facilitates the formation of new social identities that do not appeal to a pure and settled past, or to a unicultural present, in order to authenticate themselves. Their authority lies in the attempt to articulate emergent, hybrid forms of cultural identity' (Bhabha 1989).

In other words, social identities need to be authenticated, as Bhabha claims – their authentication derives from our ability to continuously reinvent ourselves out of our confused cultural conditions. This 'confused cultural conditions' need to be understood on the background of a culturally plural society consisting of diverse social, cultural and ethnic groups. Furnivall (1948) points out that a plural society exists when a country under colonial rule shows the following broad cultural, economic and political characteristics: (a) Culturally, it comprises groups which are institutionally disparate and do not share the same basic values and way of life; (b) Economically, these separate social entities have interaction mainly in the marketplace, in buying and selling types of relationships; (c) Politically, these disparate but economically interacting segments are held together by a superordinate authority – that is, the colonial rulers. To paraphrase Furnivall broadly, these plural
societies do not have a common social 'will.' The segments may mix (as in the marketplace) but they do not blend (Jain 1998: 344). From this perspective the West Indian society can be studied as a plural society, which as a part of the colonial arrangement saw the arrival and became a refuge place for many diverse groups like, the aborigines (Arawaks and Caribs who were desecrated by the colonial masters and some of them were made slaves just leaving little of their cultural sparks), the white labour from Europe, the slaves from Africa, the indenture labour from India and other ethnicities like, Chinese, Javanese and others.

R.K. Jain (2003: 2) in his study of settlement societies calls settlement society a polythetic category and points out the characteristics of settlement societies: (a) a short history (basically post 1492) marked by recent massive immigration; (b) presence of native populations, variable in numbers; (c) colonialism or dependent status of one kind or another; (d) a correlation between the economy and ethnic relations in such a way that if the economy is buoyant, interethnic relations are better, and vice versa; (e) the settlement society is also a geopolitical entity in the sense that in the New World, for instance, Mexico and Latin America can be contrasted with the Caribbean, the USA and Canada. The former provide examples of civilisations, and the latter of settlement societies.

Cultural diversity and pluralism in a settlement society like, the West Indies is born out of the presence of a variety of cultures and cultural perspectives within that society and inter-cultural interaction between different cultural communities. Norms, values and the way of life of the collectivity vary immensely and therefore cultural diversity is remarkable (Giddens 1989). Different cultures thus correct and complement each other, expand each other’s horizon of thought and alert each other to new forms of human fulfilment. Cultural diversity is also an important constituent and condition of human freedom and both prevents the dominance of any one of them and facilitates the emergence of new forms of belongings. Since cultural diversity fosters such vital preconditions of human freedom as self-knowledge, self-transcendence and self-criticism, it is an objective good, a good whose value is not derived from individual choices but from its being an essential condition of human freedom and well-being (Weinstock 1994).
Niranjana (1994) studies the problems of cultural translation in Trinidad and for the plural society of Trinidad and Tobago, as Niranjana argues, it is ironical that while the Indian identity is already translated, there is a defiant refusal by sections of the Indian (or better, Hindu) population to be seen to be translated. Niranjana’s example is the chutney soca, a form of hybrid Trinidadian Indian calypsonian song form which drew loud protests from sections of the Indian population as being non-Indian, if not a downright corruption, and hence a disgrace to Indian arts. This one form of ‘untranslatability’ of Indian culture in an arena where interculturation (as in the cultural interchange between the East Indians and Creoles) rather than acculturation is the operative dynamics (Jain 1998: 351). A more sociological example, according to Niranjana, would be the rarity and criticism of inter-racial marriages among Indians (Niranjana 1994). Another aspect to this untranslatability is that Indians themselves are often unaware that they have adopted Creole norms. Even when they are conscious that their culture is changing, they seldom recognise change as an adaptation to the wider West Indian world. “We were steadily adopting the food styles of others: the Portuguese stew...the Negro way with yams, plantains, breadfruit and bananas”; but, adds Naipaul, “Everything we adopted became our own; the outside was still to be dreaded” (Naipaul 1964: 35). The other kind of problem in cultural translation refers to problems of translatability when social relations are set in a matrix of hierarchy. This is not peculiar to a multicultural or plural society, but is a phenomenon wherever socio-cultural stratification is pronounced (Jain 1998: 351).

In Guyana, Brackette F. Williams has shown how the creolisation of cultural practices, through inter-culturation, does not simply slip over into an ideology of ‘live and let live.’ In her analysis of the celebration of Rum Tadjeh (known as tazia in Mohorrum in India) in Guyana, she brings out the coexistence of homogeneity (creolisation) and heterogeneity (the Muslim character of the celebration). In respect to the latter aspect and the dynamics of conflict, one has to go to the colonial roots of the creolisation process (Williams 1990). Similarly, for the East Indians in Trinidad, a recent historical study has shown how the sting of colonial stereotypes of the inferiority and backwardness of Indian culture remained, despite the overt veneer of creolisation (Jain 1998: 355). It is this continuing thorn in the Indians’ side that made their culture ‘distinctive’ and untranslatable (Kale 1995).
However, one believes that all is not lost in the process of translation even when, or precisely when, in the words of Polier and Roseberry, ‘the postmodern anthropologists encounter the other and discover themselves’ (Polier and Roseberry 1989). This is the attainment of a view of the ‘us as others,’ or as Geertz has pointed out, ‘an imaginative entry into...an alien turn of mind’ (Geertz 1986). The anthropological value of cultural translation is apparent whenever, viewing ourselves as others, has been taken. Ethnic groups are perceived by ‘others’ in the society to be different in some combination of language, religion, race or background. Even the members of ethnic groups perceive themselves to be different based on their cultural peculiarities and thereafter they participate in their commonly shared activities (Yinger 1997). The types of social relationships which exist between individuals and groups in a culturally diverse society characterised by multi-ethnicity are such in which ethnic minorities suffer disadvantages and are forced to pursue goals which are not their own because of some forced polity of assimilation (Rex and Tomlinsons 1979). Kusha Haraksingh wrote: ‘Cosmopolitanism, multiracialism, West Indianism, nationalism, the working class – these were the shibboleths that stood in the way of a genuine appreciation of the problem...it was [the] reluctance to accept that Trinidad was a “plural” society and that it was therefore necessary to accept cultural and racial differences as their point of departure’ (Haraksingh 1985). Here Rhoda Reddock, an African Trinidadian feminist scholar who has been studying the vicissitudes experienced by East Indian women in the Caribbean diaspora, can be quoted:

It was my experience, for example, that in my society, African and Indian women were constantly being defined in opposition to each other; Indian women were/are what African women were not and vice versa. This within the racial contestations of the society, served to narrow the options and spaces to manoeuvre for the women concerned. It was for this reason that in my own historical research (Reddock 1994), my effort to understanding of the experiences of Indian women was as important to me as was my understanding of that of African women. ...I felt that our differences had in some way contributed to what we had now been constructed to be. In other words, it was impossible to know myself if I did not know my other/s (Reddock 1996).
Based on the advances in Creole linguistics, Drummond (1980) had suggested that cultures, like languages in plural society (the specific example was Guyana), constituted a continuum from, say, pure English to Creole and that speakers were familiar, unevenly, with the whole range and could adjust their speech according to the interlocutor or the person spoken to. This implied, somewhat paradoxically, a standardised hybridisation.

Comparing Guyana with Fiji, Drummond (1980) illustrated how creolisation in the former country had developed due to the relatively free intermixture between the East Indians and the Africans, whereas creolisation had not developed in Fiji because of the British policy of divide and rule between the Indians and Fijians. Even in Guyana, however, culture had become the springboard for politically charged 'ethnicity' because despite inter-culturation, stratification had resulted in conflict between the dominants and the subordinates (Drummond 1980; Jayawardena 1980).

The purely ancestral Indian culture and social institutions in the West Indies survive as ideals rather than as realities or endure in name but are creolised in character and function. Many insistent aspects of Indianness are either syncretised adaptations to creole life or deliberate resuscitations of all but forgotten folkways. Indians remain more 'Indian' in some ways than in others. But trait-by-trait generalisations grossly oversimplify; degrees and types of "Indianness" vary from place to place, from city to countryside, from old to young. Surinam's rural Indians remain most traditional, urban Trinidad's least. In Trinidad the Oropouche Lagoon, an area affected both by Presbyterian missions and by industrialisation, is more creolised than conservative Caroni, where outside influences hardly affect peasant farmers. The nature of the Indian group in each Caribbean territory is, however, a function of its size. In Trinidad, Guyana and Surinam, where they comprise one-third to one-half of the population, Indians manifest a distinctive, flourishing culture and community and compete with Creoles for national power and Status. But the Indians of Jamaica, Martinique, Guadeloupe, and the Windward Islands, by contrast, are only small minorities - two to four per cent of the population. Basically being in large measure, subsets of the rural lower class, they hardly constitute viable separate entities to
challenge creole hegemony, and although they have, with few exceptions, adopted much of the creole cultural values, yet they are not integrated to the creole society.

How ‘Indian’ the Indians remain, and how Creole they have become, are two quite different, though related, questions. Some Indians express the wish to be ‘just like a Creole’; others derogate Creole-like behaviour. Attitudes may range widely in a single household; an East Indian in Chaguanas, Trinidad, assured an interlocutor, “I’m completely Creolised, man”, while his wife and daughters were in the kitchen singing Indian songs and dancing steps learned from Indian movies (Cloak 1966: 110-111). Market vendors make “no attempt to disclaim knowledge of Hindi, or familiarity with food, customs, or music which are identified as ‘Indian’ in Trinidad, but their children would often deny knowing about such “Old Fashion” things” (Lowenthal 1972: 155).

The dominance base in creolisation refers to the continuing and pervasive presence of linguistic and other forms of cultural expression derived from the former colonial ruling power – whether English, French, Dutch or Portuguese – in the hybrid speech and culture of certain settlement societies. It also alerts one to the fact that the factor of colonialism has to be introduced in a nuanced and non-monocausal manner in the comparative study of the Indian diaspora. In countries like, Trinidad and Guyana where creolisation has taken place overt conflict between the ethnic segments has a tendency to become covert. To uncover the underlying conflict, one has to probe the process of the empowerment / disempowerment of the minorities (minorities not only numerically, but also culturally). As soon as such a probe is mounted, the creolisation base – British, French, Dutch or Portuguese – becomes important. The continuing hegemony of European and North American culture in Trinidad and Tobago, and of French culture in Mauritius needs ‘uncovering’, lying as it does beneath the overt rhetoric and posturing in these territories (Jain 1998: 354).

Mourning, Melancholy, Trauma, Memory, Imaginary and Diaspora

True mourning dictates a tendency to accept incomprehension, which means leaving it as an absence. In other words, the truth of mourning effectively implies that true
mourning can never be defined, except as an absence. Mourning remains in us upon the death of the other (Derrida 1986: 32), and it is bequeathed to us only as memory, given in the dative case, as Derrida observes ‘to the memory’ (Derrida 1986: 33). Since the ‘truth’ of mourning never arrives, all that is left is memory, which, of course can only be structured as a trope of absence, a ghostly trope of prosopopoeia (the mode of personification that implies an absent speaker), by which memory (which like stone is silent) is given a voice (Derrida 1986: 27). The normal working of mourning is an idealisation of the absence because it is prior to the possibility of mourning. But ‘we can only live this experience in the form of an aporia: the aporia of mourning and of prosopopoeia, where the possible remains impossible’ (Derrida 1986: 35). True mourning becomes impossible because one doesn’t accept the truth, the textuality, of mourning.

Freud provides a masterly synthesis of the subject: “Mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or the loss of some abstraction which has taken place of one, such as one’s country, liberty, an ideal and so on” (Freud 1984: 251-252). The traumatic moment may be seen as crystallising that loss, as a sign around which memory gives itself to the past. The (ideal) loss persists because there is no substitution for it in the ‘new object of love’ (in the nation-state in the case of diaspora) (Mishra 2007: 8). Freud goes on to remark that in some people ‘the same influences produce melancholia instead of mourning and we consequently suspect them of a pathological disposition’ (Freud 1984).

Whenever the nation-state is perceived as racist or imperialist and the therapy of self-representation is denied to diasporic people, a state of melancholy sets in precisely because the past can’t be constructively interpreted, the primal loss cannot be replaced by the ‘new object of love’ (Freud 1984: 252). But does the subject want to replace the object (and hence cure himself / herself of the trauma)? The condition of mourning is after all predicated upon a loss that the subject does not want to replace because to do so would taint the purity of the object lost (Mishra 2007: 9). The subject turns away from reality and clings on to the object of mourning even when reason dictates that the object can no longer be grasped, and the ‘work of mourning’ has to be completed before the ego can become free and uninhibited again. In the context of diaspora, diasporic imaginary is a condition of an impossible mourning that
transorms mourning into melancholia (Mishra 2007: 8). In the imaginary of diasporas both mourning and melancholia persist, sometimes in intensely contradictory ways at the level of the social. In melancholia the object lost is of ‘a more ideal kind’; it is much more difficult to pinpoint as, unlike the loved object of mourning, it remains unpresentable (Mishra 2007: 9). In Freud’s own words one reads:

Melancholia is in some ways related to an object loss which is withdrawn from consciousness, in contradistinction to mourning, in which there is nothing about the loss that is unconscious (Freud 1984: 254).

Failure to objectify the loss means that the emptiness and impoverishment of the world (the condition of mourning) are transferred on to the ego: ‘the complex of melancholia,’ writes Freud (Freud 1984: 262), ‘behaves like an open wound [that empties] the ego until it is totally impoverished.’ But since the object of loss is never quantifiable (it is always deferred) the ego’s relationship to the lost object is much more ambivalent (Mishra 2007: 9).

In the case of the Indian diaspora trauma is linked to painful experiences such as the passage, plantation life, or events in the diaspora like the Komagata Maru\(^3\) (Mishra 2007: 10). Traumatic moments heighten the sense of mourning occasioned by a prior ‘death’ of the homeland. There is no immediate cure for the condition because the loss remains abstract; it is not compensated for by happiness in the new nation-state and therefore internalised as the emptiness of the ego itself. It leads to retreat into essentialist diasporic instrumentalities such as places of worship (church, temple, and mosque) or into social collectivities from which both the nation-state’s dominant racial group as well as other diasporas are excluded. The stages that constitute melancholia (first the loss of the object, second an ambivalent relationship to the loss, and finally the regression of the libido into the ego) parallel stages in the life of the diasporic subject, too (Mishra 2007: 10). What is necessary, then, is the ‘freeing of

\(^3\) The Komagata Maru incident involved a Japanese steamship, the Komagata Maru, that sailed from Hong Kong to Shanghai, China; Yokohama, Japan; and then to Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, in 1914, carrying 376 passengers (predominantly Sikhs, would-be migrants to Canada) from Punjab, India. The passengers were not allowed to land in Canada and the ship was forced to return to India. The passengers consisted of 340 Sikhs, 24 Muslims, and 12 Hindus, and all were British subjects. This was one of several incidents in the history of early 20th century involving exclusion laws and racist phobia in Canada and the United States designed to keep out immigrants of Asian origin.
the libido from the lost object' (Freud 1984:262), and this 'freeing' can come only when diasporas become full participants in a nation-state's collective history or when they write their great books and critiques, which as 'minor literature' would have embedded in them the possibilities of greatness precisely because their subject matter is not a pregiven (Mishra 2007: 10).

Diasporic writing often recalls a moment of trauma in the homeland. Diasporic melancholia, too, is related to a moment of trauma. However, instead of locating the loss, the moment of trauma, in the abstract loss of the homeland (which effectively forecloses diaspora theory), can be located in the case of the plantation Indian diaspora, in the space of the ships, the passage and the barracks. Here the long period of Indian indenture and plantation experience get transformed into a collective trauma that reappears primarily as the trauma of work and drudgery on the plantations. The discourse then is linked to the space of the barracks or the routine of plantation life: *din cale kudari rat nind nahim ave* ('the hoe defines my days; insomnia my nights') sing women in the cane fields (Mishra 2007: 12). In the context of the Canadian (East) Indian diaspora it can be located in the *Komagata Maru* incident (1914). For Indians in East Africa, the trauma is often connected to demands for their repatriation to India by African nationalists, even though most are at least second generation Indo-Africans. The Kenyan ‘expulsions’ and, more dramatically, Idi Amin’s declaration that ‘Asians’ were no longer welcome in Uganda are a case in point.

The diasporic imaginary is a term that refers to any ethnic enclave in a nation-state that defines itself, consciously, unconsciously or through self-evident or implied political coercion, as a group that lives in displacement (Mishra 2007: 14). The word ‘imaginary’ is characterised by a residual narcissism, resemblance and homeomorphism (Laplanche and Pontalis 1980: 210) and in its more flexible current usage, as found in the works of Slavoj Žižek. Žižek defines the imaginary as the state of ‘identification with the image in which we appear likeable to ourselves, with the image representing “what we would like to be” (Žižek 1989: 105). In a subsequent application of this theory to the nation itself, Žižek connects the idea of what he calls the ‘Nation Thing’ to its citizen’s imaginary identification with it. The ‘Nation qua Thing’ (to use Žižek’s phraseology) is therefore constructed out of fantasies about a particular way of life that may be enjoyed by a particular community or race. The
‘way of life,’ which may be defined by any number of things, is seen to come under threat by the ‘other’. Racist phobia, Žižek suggests, arises out of a proprietary sense of enjoyment of the ‘Nation Thing’ that is the exclusive property of a given group, community or race.

If the enjoyment of the ‘Nation Thing’ is the property of a specific community, then the other is always seen as someone who wishes to ‘steal [the nation’s] enjoyment’ (Žižek 1993: 203). But the fact remains that, in this imputation to the other of a property that one possesses (and ‘one’ here refers to those of who own the foundational narrative of the nation), one represses the ‘traumatic fact that one never possessed what was allegedly stolen from him or her’ (Žižek 1993: 203). Enjoyment is therefore always of the ‘imaginary,’ and one continues to impute to the ‘other’ what one himself or herself wishes to enjoy. In other words, the fantasies of one’s own enjoyment return to oneself once one has, negatively, imputed the same to the ‘other’.

In this respect diaspora as ‘other’ has an important function to play in the construction of the fantasies of the nation-state as a thing to be ‘enjoyed’. In its extended form, it is the absence of diasporic enjoyment of the ‘Nation Thing’ in the dominant group itself that gives rise to the exclusion of diasporas from the national imaginary (Mishra 2007: 15). It is diasporic enjoyment of the ‘Nation Thing’ which is absent among the ‘proprietors’ of the nation that gives rise to a range of responses, chief among them racist exclusion, cultural denigration and misrecognition.

Diasporas must have a homeland since only upon this presumption can the dominant group (or community or citizenry) define itself as a homogeneous entity. Indeed, homeland as ‘[a] fantasy structure, [a] scenario, through which society perceives itself as a homogeneous entity’ (Salecl 1994: 15) and which is predicated on the construction of desire around a particularly traumatic event applies equally well to the ‘owners’ of the nation in which diasporas are located. In the case of diaspora the fantasy of the homeland is linked to that recollected trauma that stands for the sign of having been wrenched from one’s mother (father land). The sign of trauma may be the ‘[middle] passage’ of slave trade or Indian indenture. The ‘real’ nature of the disruption is, however, not the point at issue here; what is clear is that the moment of ‘rupture’ is transformed into a trauma around an absence that, because it cannot be fully symbolised, becomes part of the fantasy itself (Mishra 2007: 16). To be able to
preserve that loss, the fantasy structures of the homelands for diasporas very often become racist fictions of purity as a kind of jouissance, a joy, a pleasure around which anti-miscegenation narratives of homelands are constructed against the multicultural, miscegenation-prone reality of the nation-states in which diasporas are located (Mishra 2007: 16).

And we need to accept that, contrary to idealist formulations about diasporas as symbolising the future nation-state, diasporas are also bastions of reactionary thinking and fascist rememorations: some of the strongest support for racialised nation-states has come from them, too (Mishra 2007: 17). Racist narratives of homelands are therefore part of the dynamics of diasporas; they are distorted mirror images of the nature of enjoyment itself as imaginary homelands are constructed from the space of distance to compensate for a loss occasioned by an unspeakable trauma. It should be made clear that diasporas construct homelands in ways that are very different from the way in which homeland people construct themselves. For an Indian in the diaspora, for instance, India is a very different kind of homeland than for the Indian national. The diaspora wants, in Suketu Mehta’s words, ‘an urban, affluent, glossy India, the India they imagine they grew up in and wish they could live in now’ (Mehta 2004: 351). At the same time, the nation-state needs diasporas to remind it of what the idea of homeland is. Diasporic discourse of the homeland is thus a kind of return of the repressed for the nation-state itself, its pre-symbolic (imaginary) narrative, in which one sees a more primitive theorisation of the nation-state.

To think of diasporas in these terms, in terms of negation, in terms of discrepant or varied understanding of the enjoyment of the ‘Nation Thing’, also stipulates a consciousness of one’s own beings, and the necessity of intense self-reflection and finally recognition. If for the dominant community diasporas signify their own lapsed enjoyment of the ‘Nation Thing’, for diasporas facing up to their own ghosts, their own traumas, their own memories is a necessary ethical condition. There is, for the old Indian diaspora, a plantation history, a lived memory of the passage that must be firmly kept in place. The reflection demands that one constantly revisits one’s trauma as part of one’s ethical relationship to the ghosts of diaspora. It also sends a clear signal that the idealist scenario endorsed by some diaspora theorists needs to be tempered by individual diaspora histories.
Globalisation, Nationalism, Trans-nationalism and Diaspora

Diaspora forces one to rethink the rubrics of nation and nationalism, while refiguring the relations of citizens and nation-states. The nation-state always imagines and represents itself as a land, a territory, a place that functions as the site of homogeneity, equilibrium, and integration. In such a territory, differences are assimilated, destroyed, or assigned to ghettos, to enclaves demarcated by boundaries so sharp that they enable the nation to acknowledge the apparently singular and clearly fenced off differences within itself, while simultaneously reaffirming the privileged homogeneity of the rest, as well as the difference between itself and what lies over its frontiers (Sahoo and Maharaj 2007: 25). In the past, diasporan communities confined in this way have remained self-protectively silent about their own view of themselves; their self-representations and assignments of meaning to their collective existence have been carefully policed. Stated too loudly and clearly, these representations would inevitably blur difference, even while pointing to an endemic doubleness, or multiplicity, of identities and loyalties, taboo topics both within and outside the diaspora community. This vision of a homogeneous nation is now being replaced by a vision of the world as a “space” continually reshaped by forces – cultural, political, technological, demographic, and above all economic – whose varying intersections in real estate constitute every “place” as a heterogeneous and disequilibrated site of production, appropriation, and consumption, of negotiated identity and affect.

In the last century, under the pressure of monumental trans-nationalist and global shifts (economically, politically, geographically), the nation as a political ideal and as a state form has undergone significant transformation, if not massive ideological erosion. Diaspora has been loosely associated with other terms, particularly trans-nationalism, to describe the disjuncture and fractured conditions of late modernity (Braziel and Mannur 2003: 7). While diaspora may be accurately described as trans-nationalist, it is not synonymous with trans-nationalism. Trans-nationalism may be
defined as the flow of people, ideas, goods, and capital across national territories in a way that undermines nationality and nationalism as discrete categories of identification, economic organisation, and political constitution. On the other, diaspora refers specifically to the movement – forced or voluntary – of people from one or more nation states to another. Trans-nationalism speaks to larger, more impersonal forces – specifically, those of globalisation and global capitalism. Where diaspora addresses the migrations and displacements of subjects, trans-nationalism also includes the movements of information through cybernetics, as well as the traffic in goods, products, and capital across geopolitical terrains through multinational corporations. While diaspora may be regarded as concomitant with trans-nationalism, or even in some cases consequent of trans-nationalist forces, it may not be reduced to such macroeconomic and technological flows. It remains, above all, a human phenomenon – lived and experienced (Braziel and Mannur 2003: 8).

Trans-nationalism perceives that migrants forge and sustain multiple connections across national borders. As Tambiah (2000: 163) points out, a striking feature in this age of globalisation is the “trans-national movement of people” and the “… intensification in the creation of diverse diaspora populations in many locations, who are engaged in complex interpersonal and intercultural relationships with both their host societies and their societies of origin.” Trans-nationalism has been defined as “social process whereby migrants operate in social fields that transgress geographic, political and cultural boundaries” (Glick-Schiller et al., 1992: 9). Levitt (2001: 14) has argued that the “impact of trans-national migration differs from, but must be understood within the context of, the heightened globalisation in which it is embedded. Changes prompted by migration and globalisation mutually reinforce one another.” Grant (1981) utilises the terms “shuttle migrants” or “cultural commuters” to refer to migrants that travel to and fro with no intention of staying anywhere permanently. Cohen (1997: 135-6) has similarly argued that:

Diasporas are positioned somewhere between nation-states and “travelling cultures” in that they involve dwelling in a nation state in a physical sense, but travelling in an astral or spiritual sense that falls outside the nation-states space/time zone.

According to Vertovec (1997: 277) the term “diaspora” is often applied to “describe practically any population that is considered ‘deterritorialised’ or ‘trans-national’ –
that is, which has originated in land other than that in which it currently resides, and whose social, economic, and political networks cross the borders of nation-states or, indeed, span and globe.” It is therefore evident that geographically, “diaspora involves a radical...redefinition of place. Simultaneously, nowadays diaspora increasingly transcends place as a result of the technological revolutions in the telecommunications industry (Stewart 2001: 13).

In 1990, the International Organisation for Migration estimated that there were over eighty million migrants who had moved out of the country of their origin. Among them thirty million were said to be irregular migrants and another fifteen million were refugees or asylum seekers. By 1992, the number of migrants increased to hundred million, of which twenty million were refugees and asylum seekers (Castles and Miller 1993). These migrants often converge into diasporic communities.

Diaspora offers myriad, dislocated sites of contestation to the hegemonic, homogenising forces of globalisation. The process of globalisation and the inevitable expansion of “markets, transportation, communication, capital and skills have challenged the geographic hegemony of national governments” and their borders (Centre for Development Enterprise 1997: 17). Globalisation transcends territory, location, distance, and borders, and has been accompanied by rapid migration of people across borders, and has raised questions about identity, citizenship and nationality. In an era of globalisation, Bhagwati (2003: 99) has suggested that “the ability to control migration has shrunk as the desire to do so has increased. Borders are largely beyond control and little can be done to really cut down on immigration.” Such borders had been compared to “feudal barriers to mobility” that “protect unjust privilege” (Carens 1998: 383).

It has been argued that the links between globalisation and the rise of diasporas are not necessarily direct. However,

[g]lobalisation has enhanced the practical, economic and affective roles of diasporas, showing them to be particularly adaptive forms of social organisation. As diasporas become more integrated into the cosmopoli, their power and importance are enhanced. Their relative solidarity and integration are particularly evident in relation to the local populations among whom they work (Cohen 1997: 176).
Part of the thinking about different diasporas in trans-national and globalising settings is that it offers an alternative paradigm for national (or multinational, trans-national, and even post-national) identification. Within some early scholarship grounded in more traditional foundations of nation, exile, and identity, diaspora stands in a hierarchically subordinate relation to nation or homeland, regarded as "the bastard child of the nation – disavowed, inauthentic, illegitimate, and impoverished imitation of the originary culture" (Gopinath 1995). These theorisations also create new configurations of nation and diaspora. For Stuart Hall (2003), the Caribbean is triply traversed by a Presence Africaine, Presence Europeenne, and a Presence Americaine, as well as the multiple cultural striations of Indian, Chinese, Middle Eastern influences and the erased presences (through decimation and genocide) of the Arawaks, the Caribs and other indigenous Amerindians; For Gopinath (1995), diaspora can "be seen as part of the nation itself," and this destabilised border "allows the nation to be rewritten into the diaspora."

Future generations of immigrants will all have to grapple with questions of identity as youth of these ethnicities are born and raised in diasporic contexts and enter into adulthood (Maira 2002; Danticat 2001). How will their memories of the homeland, marked by ambivalence and contradiction, operate? How will they relate to the cultural heritage of their parents? Will they reject aspects of the home country culture and embrace other aspects? What types of alliances will they seek to establish? To fruitfully analyse such questions and problematic dynamics, diaspora studies will need to move beyond theorising how diasporic identities are constructed and consolidated and must ask, how are these diasporic identities practiced, lived, and experienced?" In such contexts, prevailing metaphors applied to the diasporic individual or diasporic communities must be rigorously interrogated. Janus, the figure from the Greek Pantheon whose gaze is simultaneously directed both forward and backward, suggests a certain temporality; the figure at once looks to the future and the past (Braziel and Mannur 2003: 9).

Thus, diaspora study offers critical spaces for thinking about the discordant movements of modernity, the massive migrations – from the late colonial period through the decolonisation era into the twenty first century. Diaspora studies need not, and should not, be divorced from historical and cultural specificity. Diasporic
traversals question the rigidities of identity itself—religious, ethnic, gendered, national; yet this diasporic movement marks not a postmodern turn from history, but a nomadic turn in which the very parameters of specific historical moments are embodied and—as diaspora itself suggests—are scattered and regrouped into new points of becoming (Braziel and Mannur 2003: 3).

Of course, multicultural colonial empires—Hellenic and Roman, Persian and Ottoman—have existed since antiquity, and some of the phenomena characteristic of transnational movement are as old as history: individual exile like Ovid's, collective dispersion like that of the Jews by the waters of Babylon. But the past five centuries have been a time of fragmentation, heterogeneity, and unparalleled mass dispersion; additionally, the past five decades have been a time of cultural and political regrouping, of renewed confidence for ethno-nations existing across the boundaries of established nation-states. Border has become more symbolical than literal and instead of one crossing borders, the borders (multiple and virtual vectors of energy, power, desire, and capital) cross and crisscross, deterritorialise and reterritorialise one. Perhaps, as Jerry Herron (1993) suggests, we will no longer go to the border: the border will (be) come to us.

In fact, migrations have led to a proliferation of diasporas and to a redefinition of their importance and roles. Crucially, these dispersions, while not altogether new in form, acquired a different meaning by the nineteenth century, in the context of the triumphant nation-state, which as a polity claims special political and emotional legitimacy, representing a homogeneous people, speaking one language, in a united territory, under the rule of one law, and, until recently, constituting one market.

The real history of diaspora is always contaminated by social processes and in the end by nationalist forces that govern their lives. Nations are not fixed entities, national cultures are not absolute cultures, and they are not governed, like religion, by perennial, universal values. Nations and cultures are products of their multifaceted histories, and they grow and change with the times. Diasporas tell one much about the evolution of cultures. As a social fact of late modernity, diasporas 'call into question the idea that a people must have a land in order to be a people' (Boyarin and Boyarin 1993: 718). Of course, the danger of this reading is that diasporas may well be
romanticised as the ideal social condition in which communities are no longer persecuted. But diasporas also remind settler nation-states in particular about their own past, about their own earlier migration patterns, about their traumatic moments, about their memories, their own repressed pain and wounds, about their own prior and prioritised enjoyment of the nation. In the end, diasporas should not be thought of through the simplistic logic of the binary. One needs to think about them as 'nonnormative' communities not necessarily locked into the binary of 'exile' (the condition of a declared stand against a homeland’s policies and hence revered) and 'diaspora' (a 'chosen geography and exile') (Barkan and Shelton 1998: 4).