Chapter 2

Where to be? ‘To be or not to be’?:

Diasporic Dilemma in Literature
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DILEMMA IN LITERATURE

Diaspora, derived from the Greek term ‘diasperien’ from dia-across, and sperien-to sow or scatter seeds, is now used to name the communities of people who have dislocated from their native homeland through movements of migration, immigration or exile. This word was first used in the *Septuagint-* the Greek translation of Hebrew Scriptures to describe the Jews living in exile from the homeland of Palestine. As mobility, dislocation and relocation along with exploration and travelling have all been human practices across the races of the world, the term diaspora has been variedly defined by scholars of various beliefs and schools of thought. Right from the ancient times, human races have travelled and reveled in terra incognita in search of their desired goals and aspiring ambitions. Sometimes, they were really forced by circumstances beyond their control and had to consequently migrate to the ‘other lands’. Hence the experience of diaspora has world wide commonality. It is in this sense that John Durham Peters states: “Diaspora suggests a dislocation from the nation-state or geographical location of origin and a re-location in one or more nation-states, territories, or countries. (Durham.23). The word ‘diaspora’, originally used to describe the plight of the Jews living
outside Palestine, has today acquired a wider meaning and has become an interesting area of study.

The term diaspora might have been used for the displacement of the Jews from Palestine to different countries and the after effects political, social, cultural and even literary. It might have taken a long way to identify the changes due to the fusion of two or more cultures. History is full of such instances where diaspora has practically enlarged the impact of civilization. If the meaning of ‘diaspora’ is taken in a broader sense, the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Paradise to the earth would be the first and the most significant instance, where the act of expulsion unfolded many cultural dilemmas in the years to come. Similarly in the Hindu mythology in the great epic the *Mahabharata*, the expulsion of the Pandavas and their hide for fourteen years, their secret movements to different places unfolded their cultural and political crisis. Not only in the *Mahabharata* but similar diaspora emerges with the banishment of Shri Ram, Sita and Laxman to forest. Their journey from Ayodhya to Shri Lanka vividly projects the everlasting impact on the minds, manners and mottos of respective places. It was an attempt to re-establish faith in the higher values in life.

A revolutionary change of diaspora in the European countries was seen during the Renaissance. The invasion of Turks forced the Greek and
Latin scholars to move towards the European countries. This flood of scholarship not only reviewed and revived the value of local literature; it also enriched the French and English literature by a new wave of human touch. The contemporary social values too got an additional dimension.

Undoubtedly, the prominent gift of diaspora is America as a country. Different people from different European countries set foot on the ‘New Soil’ in Mayflower and settled on the eastern shores in the form of 13 states. Gradually these settlers became to be known as a new civilization, the different roots flourished in the form of a huge powerful tree. The cultural Utopia of each clan still remains and causes clash and crisis. America today is the biggest centre of diaspora. Apart from being a great attraction for the young generation to fulfil their dreams, it has also been a vulnerable place where people have lost their roots. The first generation tries to have the hold of past. They are at times torn between ‘should’ and ‘should not’, but the next generation, being born and brought up there, unhesitatingly brush aside the old values and at times they even grade it as ‘worthless’ from utilitarian point of view. Today, when one is part of the wheel of globalization, the world has to give to each and everyone the feel of diaspora. Such polarity of life begets clash and crisis where, at times, culture is sacrificed at the altar of liberation. In name of identity,
self esteem and individuality, much good of social security is being shaken off.

According to a renowned political thinker, scholar and theorist Lord Bhikhu Parekh, a London based Professor of Political Science and a Gujarati by origin thus a scholar with diasporic identity, opines that diaspora is a mere extention of a particular community that resides outside its native origin; hence any diasporic group mirrors the image of the original community it belongs to. Diaspora is not a mere footprint of the original community extended beyond the boundaries of the native nation but it is a lively reflection of the community. It is in this sense that diasporic communities should not be treated as relics or remnants of the original community but as a live and progressive extension of the same. Systematic study of diasporic communities often known as Diasporology focuses on identification and evaluation of cultural traits of a particular community or society; not only that such study also reveals the strengths and weaknesses of a particular community or society by way of studying in comparison the the native and non native members of a particular community on the basis of their achievements and failures. Those who care to find this out will have to take the diasporic studies seriously. The history of Indian diaspora dates back to several centuries as Indians have travelled far East and even far West. However there have not been
instances of systematic migration till 1830. It was only after the abolition of slavery in Britain that a new way was made open for labours to work on contract basis in Britain and her colonized countries. Such migrations continued till the opening years of the 20th century after which, on the opposition of the Indian National Congress, such labour contracts ceased to be entertained. The second wave of systematic migration was witnessed especially after the Second World War and it has continued in the recent times also. Thus the history of Indian diaspora spans for nearly two hundred years. As per academic surveys, migrated Indians have been living in considerable numbers in as many as forty countries. Such Indian migrants have, on one hand, continued with some of the native traditions and on the other hand they have changed a lot as per their living conditions on ‘home away from home’. Thus many mini Indias exist at different places that share many things in common and at the same time they also differ to great extent if not in substance then certainly in their practices. In order to make systematic study of Indian diasporic communities, we have to make sincere attempts to know the structure of their family, caste system, concepts of God and religious practices, attitudes towards professions, food habits as well as life style in general.
Today, diaspora speaks of diverse groups of persons and communities moving across the globe. These people are not the suppressed; on the contrary, diasporic community of any country makes its presence felt in the host land through its contribution in politics, literature, cinema and other forms of Art. They are introducing their motherland to the people of the host land with their stories and thus acting as mediators or translators of culture and language of both the countries. These people are not only recognized outside their country but also in their homeland as the governments of many countries have made certain policies for them recognizing the value of diaspora population and their contributions in the development of their own country.

With the passage of time, as everything changes, there are changes to be traced in the multiplicity of diasporic activities, too. Owing to the interdisciplinary interests that the term ‘diaspora’ has earned today, it is used by anthropologists, literary theorists and culture critics to describe the mass migrations and displacements taking place especially in the second half of the twentieth century. This term which was originally associated with exile, is today related to its more positive and fertile meaning, that of fertility of dispersion. The scattered seeds (diaspora) tend to grow on the new soil, new surrounding and at the same time, inherit the characteristics of the mother plant. What we are more
concerned with are the experiences of all those who have migrated across the world leaving behind their respective mother lands. The theory of diaspora tries to unfold before us the hybrid and heterogeneous nature of its subjects and the concern lies about their culture, language and their experiences as ethnic groups. Homi K. Bhabha in his exemplary work *The Location of Culture* discusses:

> It is from those who have suffered the sentence of history- subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement- that we learn our most enduring lessons for living and thinking. (Bhabha.172).

This is the experience of the immigrant, the expatriate which is hybrid and heterogeneous in nature. Stuart Hall, another prominent theorist also defines the diasporic experience:

> Diaspora is defined, not by essence of purity, but by recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of identity which lives in and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity.(Hall.244).

The key words that we are here concerned with are ‘hybridity’ and ‘identity’that encompass the diasporic experience. Homi K. Bhabha discusses exciting ways of thinking about identity born from “the great history of the languages and landscapes of migration and diaspora.” (Bhabha.235). He discusses the three conditions that underlie an understanding of the process of identification:
1. ‘to exist is to be called into being in relation to an otherness, its look and locus’,

2. ‘the very place of identification, caught in the tension of demand and desire, is the space of splitting’ and,

3. ‘the question of identification is never the affirmation of a pre-given identity, never a self fulfilling prophecy, it is always the production of image of identity’ (Bhabha.44-45).

One’s existence, as Bhabha states, is in relation with the other. He talks about the existence of the other i.e the colonizer and the native i.e the colonized. The ‘otherness’ felt is not in the colonialist self or the colonized other but it lies in the disturbing distance in-between.

Edward Said’s *Orientalism* is another influential piece of writing when one attempts to discuss the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. It is one of the most influential books of the 20\(^{th}\) century in the study of diaspora. He discusses the nature and attitude of the West towards the East and sees Orientalism as a construct of the West and as a way to deal with the ‘otherness’ of the East, its culture, traditions, customs and beliefs. He examines that the West produced knowledge about the colonized land and has developed observations based on the assumptions that the East yields around it a gyre of mysticism, exoticism, peculiar structures of morality, sexuality and fixed sets and subsets of beliefs which are totally in contrast with what is seen and practiced in the West.
Edward Said coins two words ‘Orient’ and ‘Occident’. The word Orient (East) is described in a negative manner as a place of ignorance which is primitive, backward, unusual, irrational and abnormal; whereas, the Occident (west), as a contrast to the Orient, is outrightly and rather one-sidedly depicted as developed, rational, sensible and deliberately made familiar perhaps only to the western pockets of humankind. The ‘otherness’ of the East is brought out by the contrast in the meanings. The ‘Orient’ serves as the ‘other’ in a subservient position to the glorified ideologies of the western Occidentalism.

Stuart Hall in his essay ‘Cultural Identity and Diaspora’ begins with theorizing the 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; second, identity understood as unstable, metamorphic, and even contradictory- an identity marked by multiple points of similarities as well as differences. (Hall.234).

Among the diasporic groups, the first identity which is shared by such people having common history and ancestry gives them the feeling of being under one umbrella ‘one people’. It is this identity which, according to him, a Caribbean or Black diaspora must try to discover and bring to light through various media of expression. It is this identity that makes the Orient ‘the other’. This concept of cultural identity has been
the center of the vision of the poets and writers and has played a significant role in the postcolonial struggles that are responsible in reshaping our world. According to Frantz Fanon, this cultural identity is to be rediscovered in the post colonial writings as:

passionate research…directed by the secret hope of discovering beyond the misery of today, beyond self contempt, resignation and abjuration, some very splendid era whose existence rehabilitates us both in regard to ourselves and in regard to others. (Fanon.170.).

In the light of this statement of Frantz Fanon, the study of diasporic writings calls for a newer approach that of going beyond the logistics of struggle, subjugation and sufferings to understand and realize how diasporic conditions have actually enriched human experiences by expanding horizons of one’s sensitivity and capability to cope with non-native life along with its subtleties and disparities. The point raised by Frantz Fanon is further taken up by Stuart Hall who discusses the second type of cultural identity in his critical essay “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”. According to him,

There is, however, a second, related but different view of cultural identity. The second position recognizes that, as well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant difference which constitute “what we really are”; or rather – since history has intervened – “what we have become”. We cannot speak for very long, with any exactness, about “one experience, one identity”, without acknowledging its other side- the ruptures and discontinuities which constitute, precisely, the Caribbean’s “uniqueness”. Cultural identity, in the second sense, is a matter of “becoming” as well as “being”. It belongs to the future as well as to
the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything that is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous “play” of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in mere “recovery” of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and positioned ourselves within, the narratives of the past. (Hall, 236).

It is this identity which enables us to understand the traumatic experiences of the colonized. It is through the cultural power that the colonizers got the power to make us feel as the “other”. Not only did the colonizers make the colonized feel as the ‘other’ but they also made them aware of their superiority over them. The colonizers dispossessed them of their cultural identity and as a result, as Frantz Fanon states, produced “Individuals without an anchor, without horizon, colorless, stateless, and rootless -a race of angels” (Fanon.176). The conception of the “Cultural Identity” is at once changed with the idea of otherness resulting from the very acceptance of one as being the ‘other’. It is in this way that the Diasporic study of literatures written by the writers away from their motherlands, provides insight into the retrospective and also prospective aspects of their writings. This is further explained by Stuart Hall in his statement:

Cultural identity is not a fixed essence at all, lying unchanged outside history and culture. It is not some universal and transcendental spirit inside us on which history has made no fundamental mark. It is not
once-and-for-all. It is not a fixed origin to which we can make some final and absolute return. Of course, it is not a mere phantasm either. It is something - not a mere trick of the imagination. It has its histories and histories have their real material and symbolic effects. The past continues to speak to us. But it no longer addresses us as a simple factual “past”, since our relation to it, like the child’s relation to the mother, is always - already “after the break”. 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 or culture. (Hall.237).

It is therefore implied that the study of any diasporic work imparts knowledge of linkages between the past and the future; at the same time what makes the study even more interesting is the fact that the interplay between the past and the present is creatively observed and interloped by the present that actually witness the links of the ‘gone’ and the ‘upcoming’. The “Cultural Identity” that we talk about today is a combination of the continuity with the past and the changes that have taken place with the passage of time along with its different experiences due to migration or slavery or transportation or colonization. It is often observed that the West has the habit of freezing the identity as it has done with the African identity. The Africans are known by the West as the primitives but the fact is that the ‘original’ Africa is no longer there today. It has also changed with the time. Similar is the case with India, perhaps, as the West still associates India with the snake charmers. India as a country is known to them by the stories put before them by their
forefathers during the Colonial Rule which still continues to be a fractional and even fictitious part of the identity of India. But it is a known fact that India has moved ahead progressively in all the aspects of life. The country they knew is no more there, so it remains only in the history as the past. It is in this sense that the cultural identity requires retrospection as Frantz Fanon states:

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 attempt to falsify and harm… A national culture is not a folk lore, 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.188).

Today we cannot but fail to mention ‘The New World’ that is America as the beginning of diaspora of difference, diversity and hybridity in the true sense of the term. Today America is represented by the people who have made it their ‘second home’.

Another prominent word, while discussing the diasporic experiences, is ‘hybridity’. On his discussions on hybridity, Homi K Bhabha introduces the concept of ‘borders’. For him borders are not the ‘ends’ but are important ‘thresholds’ full of ambivalence as they are the point where two places join as well as separate. According to Bhabha, border is actually a gateway, a point of melting, a place of collapse where political,
geographical, notional, psychological, social and even personal preferences and practices of the past and present, inside and outside are no more paradoxical or contradictory as they not only extend mutual consent and cooperation but also guard their competence in constant play of one another’s prowess. It is in this sense that hybridity finds its appropriate vicinity near such borders. Bhabha turns to Bakhtin and his hybrid which denies cultural totalization:

The… hybrid is not only double-voiced and double accented… but is also double-linguaged; For in it there are not only two individual consciousness, two voices, two accents, as there are (doublings of)socio linguistic, consciousness, two epochs… that come together and consciously fight it out on the territory of utterance…. It is the collision between differing points of view on the world that are embedded in these forms… such unconscious hybrids have been at the same time profoundly productive historically: they are pregnant with potential for new world views, with new ‘internal forms’ for perceiving the world in words. (Bhabha.58)

However, there is also a counter point found while discussing the term ‘hybridity’ in colonial discourse. Hybridity sometimes, is associated with a sense of abuse for those who are the products of mixed breeds. However, since the concept of hybridity occupies a central place in the post colonial discourses, it is no more a term of abuse but it is:

celebrated and privileged as a kind of superior cultural intelligence owing to the advantage of in-betweenness, the straddling of two cultures and the consequent ability to negotiate the difference. (Hoogvelt.158).
For Bhabha, hybridity is the process adopted by the colonial governing authority to translate the identity of the colonized (the other) within a singular framework; however such exercise is futile as it fails to producesomething either familiar or new. This new hybrid identity emerges from the interweaving of elements of the colonizer and the colonized, and challenges the authenticity of any essentialist cultural identity. Bhabha himself is aware of the dangers of fixity and identifies when he says in an interview with Rutherford: “all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity.” (Rutherford.211).

Furthermore, Bhabha introduces us to the ‘third space’ along with the concept of hybridity. This ‘third space’, according to him, emerges out of a tension between two cultures. In his essay ‘Cultures In-Between’, he talks about the ‘partial culture’ which he describes as - “the contaminated yet connective tissue between cultures.” He further explains “it is indeed something like culture’s in-between, baffling both alike and different.”(Bhabha.54). This ‘third space’ not only seems to be the juncture of translations and dialogues, it also raises questions towards the essentially rooted ideas of identity and the notional concepts surrounding the original culture. Further explaining the importance of this ‘third space’, Homi Bhabha in an interview with Rutherford states:
For me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original movements from which third emerges, rather hybridity to me if the Third Space, which enables other positions to emerge.(Rutherford.211).

Thus this ‘third space’ marks a new beginning of possibility in terms of meaningful identification and even productivity that the new identity carries with it. This newer opening not only questions the established notions of culture and identity but also provides new forms of cultural meaning; and thereby it significantly suspends the limits of the boundaries. The ‘third space’, therefore, is a place of opportunity for the growth of fresh ideas and it rejects anything fixed, so it opens up newer scope for fresh thoughts allowing us to go beyond the rigidity and limited focus of colonial binary thinking. Instead of exclusion and rejection, the new space, thus, has the capacity and tendency to include and accept. While discussing the ‘third space’, Homi Bhabha justifies his stand substantially as his concept of hybridity is based on the idea that no culture is really pure as it is always in contact with the other. According to him, Hybridization is an on going process; it, therefore, cannot be ‘still’. The happenings on the borderline cultures and in-between cultures have been prime concerns for him. For him the Location of Culture is spacial and sequential and the terms ‘hybridity’ and ‘liminity’ refer to space as well as time.
Can the Subaltern Speak? a proposition raised by Gayatri Spivak is best responded to by Homi Bhabha’s term ‘hybridity’. It is the concept of ‘diaspora’ that adequately explains the term ‘hybridity’ which in turn points out the notion of ‘in-betweenness’. The effect of ‘hybridity’ lessens the sense of ‘displacement’ that the term ‘diaspora’ refers to. The term ‘hybridity’, thus serves as a bridge narrowing down the distance between the West and the East, the colonizer and the colonized, the Occident and the Orient. The construct of such a shared culture saw the colonizer and the colonized being mutually dependent on each other.

Aiming at describing the identity of self and others, Bhabha says:

It becomes crucial to distinguish between the semblance and similitude of the symbols across diverse cultural experiences—literature, art, music, ritual life, death… and the social specificity of each of these productions of meaning as they circulate signs within specific contextual locations and social systems of value. The transnational dimension of cultural transformation—migration, diaspora, displacement, relocation… Makes the process of cultural translation a complex form of signification. The natural(ized), unifying discourse of nation, peoples, or authentic folk tradition, those embedded myths of cultures particularity, cannot be readily referenced. The great, unsettling advantage of this position is that it makes you increasingly aware of the construction of culture and the invention of tradition. (Bhabha.247).

The terms diaspora, displacement and relocation exhibit the dynamic nature of culture. Since the historical narratives on which culture tries to define itself are inconsistent, culture must be seen alongwith the context
of its construction. Thus, the term ‘hybridity’ can be viewed as a liberating power from the domination of colonizers forced upon the colonized by the formers’ bounded definitions of race, language and nation.

Due to the expanse of immigration and with the increase in the hybrid population across the world, today, we can say that the classification of black and white no longer carry the same power structures and prejudices that go alongside it; however the old labels still persist. The existence of racism in a diluted but persistent form can be seen in the most liberated and so called open society of the United States where in the year 2000, options for multiracial identification were included the census. The Presidential Election of Barrack Obama revealed, on one hand, that there was a collective acceptance of the hybrid bodies; however, on the other hand, he continues to be referred to as the first ‘African American President’. His Presidency is evidential of the change that has taken place in the acceptance of the ‘other’ but his being called an African American President still refers to the fact that the power of the racial labels still continues even in the most modern society. Hybridity cannot be seen as a conflict or struggle between two racial identities but it should be seen as a constantly mitigating factor between spaces.
Along with the concepts of identity, culture and race, even language has been identified as a symbol of nation and a mode of exclusion and/or inclusion. Frantz Fanon’s theory on the diasporic study addresses the power of language in the formation of identity: “To speak… means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization” (Fanon. 17-18). According to Fanon, by speaking the language of the colonizer, the colonized accepts a role in culture and in this case, the language no longer ‘belongs’ to the colonizer but it relies on the colonized to shape it. As With the language changes hands and the changing users render it altogether different perspectives, it is always in a state of flux and cannot remain the same; therefore, a paradigm shift in the meanings and practices can be observed and experienced. The hybridized languages have made new openings for multifarious studies in various branches of learning across the world. Herskovils’ notion of Syncreticism, Claude Levi-Strauss’s theory of bricolage and creolization are some of the examples that prove this point. In the post modern literature there is a rise in ‘hybrid genre’ and one can sense that ‘hybridity’ is now a celebrated term and is no more a marginalized and negative term and is accepted form of literature today. In these new developments the purist notion seems to be diminishing and the specific boundaries related to ‘belonging’ of the language to a specific area or place are fast dissolving.
There seems to be a U turn as, today, the colonized is giving back the crimes of the colonizer in the act of resistance in the latter’s own language, and thereby, questioning the ownership of the language. It is a force responsible in deconstructing the borders for the ethnic or the collective groups. One can affirmatively say that ‘hybridity’ liberates us from the stubborn boundaries of the society and at the same time permits us to think and act beyond them.

Another significant aspect while dealing with the diasporic experience is the concept of ‘home’. Whether it is forced or voluntary migration, one leaves one’s own country and settles into a foreign land. This migratory displacement leaves the migrant with the sense of homelessness and rootlessness. The migrants miss their own native land or homeland. The history shows that this craving for their homeland has been very acute as with such displacements, there was no possibility of returning to what the migrants identify as their ‘home’. The past experiences of ‘homelessness’ were that of nostalgia, as the distances between their motherland and the new home could not easily be covered due to the then modes of limited transportation facilities. Abdul R. JanMohamed speaks of four modes of border crossings: the crossing of the immigrants; the colonists; the scholar; and the crossing of border by exile. The stance, says
JanMohamed, of an immigrant to the host culture is positive but that of exile is negative. He writes,

The notion of exile always emphasizes absence of ‘home” of the cultural matrix that formed the individual subject; The nostalgia associated with the exile often makes the individual indifferent to the values and characteristics of the host culture. (JanMohamed.101).

This ‘homelessness’ according to Bhabha can be real as well as metamorphical. He uses the word ‘uncanny’ which means ‘unhomely’, to explain his homelessness,

I have lived that moment of the scattering of the people that in other times and other places, in the nations of others, becomes a time of gathering. Gathering of exiles and émigrés and refugees; gathering on the edge of ‘foreign’ cultures; gathering at frontiers; gathering in the ghettos or cafes of city centres; gathering in the half-life, half light of foreign tongues, or in the uncanny fluency of another’s language; gathering the signs of approval and acceptance, degrees, discourses, disciplines; gathering the memories of underdevelopment, of other worlds lived retroactively; gathering the past in a ritual or revival; gathering the present. Also the gathering of people in the diaspora: indentured, migrant, interned: the gathering of incriminatory statistics, educational performance, legal statues, immigration status. (Bhabha.139).

Bhabha has candidly observed the migrant experiences which are full of dualities. He brings out the uncanniness of the migrant experience through a series of ideas like ‘half life’, ‘partial presence’, ‘gathering the past’, ‘edge of foreign cultures’ and other such experiences that the migrants go through. The migrants live a ‘half life’ in a foreign land as they are not able to accept the new land completely. Their memories of
homeland haunt them and many times they live reviving their past. This experience of living a partial life is sometimes very disturbing for the migrants. The second generation migrants do not, perhaps, have the same nostalgic feeling as the first generation migrants have; however they, too, are linked to their homeland through the stories they hear from their parents. The picture of homeland created before them is based on what they have heard from their parents. Salman Rushdie, an Indian by origin, also talks about this partial identity of the migrants. In his book “Imaginary Homelands” he states,

Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, we fall between two stools, but however ambiguous and shifting the ground may be, it is not an infertile territory for a writer to occupy. (Rushdie.15).

This experience of being ‘in-between’ two cultures is what the diaspora comes across in the foreign land. Sigmund Freud, a pioneer of the psychoanalysis, offers the definition of uncanny: “the uncanny is that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar”. (Freud.124). Giving this definition, Freud makes the ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ definitions equivalent. According to him, it is through self observation and self objectification only that the uncanny can be analysed and understood. As per the theory of psychoanalysis, the uncanny is not something that we have control on and
nor can we access it directly. This feeling of uncanny as an involuntary recurrence of the old and the familiar is very close to what Freud calls ‘repetition compulsion’ which actually refers to the way in which our mind repeats the traumatic experiences in order to deal with them. The psychoanalysts believe that the traces of the past experiences remain present in the mind and they tend to surface in the present life of the human beings. This uncanniness breeds a feeling of alienation in the ‘other land’. However, such a sense of alienation is not a problem but very much a part of the diasporic experience. In fact, the sense of alienation proves to be a driving force to re-evaluate our identities and it should be considered as an opportunity. It does the job of opening up a space for us to reconsider how we have come to be and who we are. Bhabha talks about this sense of uncanniness of culture in the following manner:

Culture is *heimlich*, with its disciplinary generalizations, its mimetic narratives, its homologous empty line, its seriality, its progress, its customs and coherence. But cultural authority is also *unheimlich*, for to be distinctive, signifactory, influential and identifiable, it has to be translated, disseminated, differentiated, interdisciplinary, intertextual, international, interracial. (Bhabha.136-7).

Culture has a dual identity as the notions of it being homely, on one hand and unhomely on the other always keeps it ever changing. The migrants represent this dual nature of culture, since they are always looked at as
being tossed in between both: their ‘original culture’ and the culture of the ‘new land’.

The diasporic experience cannot be expressed in a simple way. It is a complex experience as it deals not only with the physical dislocation of migrants from a place called ‘homeland’ or ‘native’, but it also deals with the psychology of the dislocated persons; hence, it becomes a very complex phenomenon. While dealing with the diasporic experiences, it becomes inevitable to refer to the psychoanalysts so as to track the behavioral patterns of the migrants. In order to understand and analyse their experiences, one has to be aware of the role that their culture, language and idea of nation plays. According to Julia Kristeva, a Bulgarian psychoanalyst and philosopher, when we try to analyse a group identity like a nation, we should not try either to cure nation of its ills or to make the nation feel whole again. Instead, such analysis reveals that every nation is always in process, and so is always open to new cultural identities and forms. This openness in a way refers to the ‘hybridity’ that Bhabha talks about. Kristeva also talks about the uncanny relationship with the self and describes an otherness that is always within the self:

The foreigner is within me, hence we are all foreigners. If I am a foreigner, there are no foreigners. Therefore Freud does not talk about them. The ethics of psychoanalysis implies a politics: it would improve a cosmopolitanism of a new sort that, cutting across governments, economies, and markets, might work for a mankind
whose solidarity is founded on the consciousness of its unconscious-desiring, destructive, fearful, empty, impossible. (Kristeva.192).

Having analysed, Kristeva rejects the idea of any authority of the native thrust upon the foreigner that is, the migrant. For her, we are all foreigners even to ourselves. This realization would, perhaps, increase the tolerance towards the ‘other’. Talking about tolerance, it should be noted that the West was forced to reconsider its place in the world as the study of the Sanskrit texts made them realize and eventually acknowledge the presence and the eminence of the other civilization. They realized the similarity in the Sanskrit texts and their astounding qualities that brought about an uncanny feeling; which despite being long denied its due importance, is now making its presence felt. For Bhabha, “The nation fills the void left in the uprooting of communities and kin, and turns that loss into the language of metaphor” (Bhabha.139). The concept of nation or the word nation itself arouses in us the feeling of patriotism, of home of something one is proud of. For him nations are forms of narrations,

The linear equivalence of event and idea that historicism proposes, most commonly signifies a people, a nation, or a national culture as an empirical sociological category or a holistic cultural entity. However, the narrative and psychological force that nationness brings to bear on cultural production and political production is the effect of the ambivalence of the ‘nation’ as a narrative strategy. As an apparatus of symbolic power, it produces a continual slippage of categories, like sexuality, class affiliation, territorial paranoia, or ‘cultural difference’ in the act of writing the nation. What is displayed in this displacement
Therefore, the theory of diaspora is a myriad of multifarious themes that at times seem contradictory to one another; however, a patient and scholarly approach to the same would surely reveal that they in fact are eye-openers to those who have, by dint of their global vision and experiences, cultivated greater level of sensitivity and sensibility towards the masses of people who continue to migrate and make the other world their home despite having one of their own back at their native lands. The theory of diaspora in itself is an experience of not only being the other one but also knowing the other ones, perhaps as one’s own or at least making them one’s own. It is this fecundity of diasporic study that has attracted scholarly attention of multidisciplinary experts and researchers to explore meditative deliberations of people, notions, ideologies and practices surrounding the world of diapsora across the globe. Among the diasporas world over, the Indian diaspora has a leading edge in the sense that it has not only experienced the tyranny of the colonizers but also made a niche wherever they have settled across the globe. The Indian diaspora has all the varieties to incite interests of academic and multidisciplinary researches who have been engaged and engrossed with its study in a rewarding manner. It has not only produced writers of
international repute, but also encouraged scholars to look at the indianness with adequate intellectual reverence. From among the western scholars, T. S. Eliot, Nobel Laureate and one of the most celebrated and influential creative writers and critics of the 20th century, has emphatically pronounced the echoes of the East especially referring to the Indian heritage of culture and literary creativity. It is with his remarks that the Diasporic experiences through diaspora writings with special reference to Indian diaspora writers are worth mentioning. He has made judgmental observations on the contemporary status of the third world immigrants:

The migrations of modern times… have transplanted themselves according to some social, religious, economic or political determination, or some peculiar mixture of these. There has been something in the re-movements analogous in nature to religious schism. These people have taken with them only a part of the total culture… The culture which develops on the new soil must therefore be baffling alike and different from the parent culture: it will be complicated sometimes by whatever relations are established with some native race and further by immigration from other than the original source. In this way, peculiar types of culture – sympathy and culture – clash appear. (Eliot.63-64).

The diasporic experiences essentially underline the partial culture brought by the immigrant to the new land and resultant clashes of culture they suffer from. The diasporic writings have a variety of experiences to share with the world. As we see variedness in the causes of migration, there is a
peculiar variedness seen in the expressions of the experiences in the diasporic writings. These experiences are those of sense of rootlessness, agony and pain arising out of homelessness, anxiety in the new land and the nostalgia for their homeland. As the migrants share in common the experiences of dislocation from their motherland, despite the differences in their cultures, traditions and practices, they bond with one another primarily on the basis of their similar status- that of migrants living on foreign lands and have consequently formed diasporic communities. When diasporic writings are talked about, it is found that these writings are basically rooted in the native culture; hence the writers from specific areas having specific cultures try to portray the same in their writings. Such diasporic experiences enrich their writings. These writings are creative outcome of fluidity, conflict and instability that the writers must have experienced being migrants. It is this anxious sense of dislocation that is the characteristic of the expatriate writers. The diasporic writings are unforgettable testimonials of the migrants as their works are results of their human conditions, sufferings, complexity of their vision, and more so, their ability to look forward without being able to forget the past. In *The Invention of Canada :Literary Text and the Immigrant Imaginary*, Arnold Harichand Itwaru writes:
The immigrant writer is not merely the author who speaks about the immigrant experience, but one who has lived it, one whose response is an irruption of words, images, metaphors, one who is familiar with some of the inner as well as the outer workings of these particular contexts. (Itwaru, 25)

Relocation to the new environment means shedding off the protective cover of the ‘known’ on the part of the migrants who at once feel vulnerable without the cover of the ‘known’. The immigrant writers have lived and experienced this vulnerability; therefore, the feelings of alienation blended with an acute sense of insecurity find a vent in their writings. The process of migration in the recent times is seen more with ‘The Third World’ countries that saw the light of independence especially after the end of the Second World War. On one hand the people of the third world countries were absorbed in the newly found national identity and on the other hand quite a few of them had to assume a new identity away from their homeland. At such a crucial juncture of establishing identity in an age of dilemmas, the process of migration for the people of the third world countries including the Indian Subcontinent especially seems to be a formidable task. Among the Asian countries, India has significant number of migrants and has thus created a profound impact as far as Asian Diaspora and Asian Diasporic literature are concerned.
The entire South Asian Diaspora, according to Vijay Mishra, can be put under two groups: the first one being the forced migrations on account of slavery and indentured labour and the second being the voluntary migrations of businessmen, professionals and students who have made a foreign land their new homeland for better opportunities and money. These two types of diaspora differ to great extent when we try to analyse how the attitude towards their homeland is shaped and formed. This difference may be due to the changed face of transportation as well as a rise in the acceptance of the identities of the ethnic groups and their acceptance in the new land. This difference in the old and new diaspora is very well brought out by Mishra as he puts it,

This narrative of diasporic movement is, however, not continuous or seamless as there is a radical break between the older diasporas of classic capitalism and the mid- to late twentieth century diasporas of advanced capital to the metropolitan centres of the Empire, the New World and the former settler colonies. (Mishra.422)

According to him, these two are “interlinked, but historically separated diasporas”. The old and the new diasporas, according to him, produce different literatures. This difference in their literature is due to the fact that the reasons of migration for the old diaspora were different and were mostly compulsions whereas the case is different with the new diaspora. Today going out of one’s own country is mostly not a sad affair or any type of compulsion. In most cases the reason is to go for ‘greener
pastures’. The old Diasporas experienced a kind of ‘break’ from their homeland which was traumatic. This trauma was experienced as their migration was a forced one and in most of the cases ‘returning back’ to their ‘home’ was not possible. This increased their sense of loss as they were in no condition to travel back to their motherland due to slow modes of transportation and above all the lack of economic means to make journeys back to their home. In most cases of the old diaspora, it was a one way journey where there was no return ticket. In the old diasporas, distance played an important role. This distance was not only physical but also psychological. Going away from the known land, known people, known places to unknown land, unknown people and unknown places was indeed difficult for them. These people who migrated from their homeland tried to freeze the image of their motherland as something that is sacred in their minds. They revived their connections with their sacred land in the memories of their past and remained emotionally connected with it. The old diaspora carried with it a baggage which was full of memories and things that not only reminded of their homeland but also created a safe and secure place around them, so to say, a part of their motherland. Mishra in his “New lamps for Old” says:

Their homeland is a series of objects, fragments of narratives that they keep in their heads or in their suitcases. Like hawkers they can reconstitute their lives through the contents of their Knapsacks: a
The old diaspora was cut off from the motherland but the new diaspora has an easy access to the motherland due to the fast means of transportation and the new technologies that have made this world a very small place. Talking about the position of the new diaspora, the fact that they were not forced to leave their homeland makes the migration process less traumatic for them and, therefore, their adjustment to the new place is somewhat easy compared to the old, forced diaspora. The new diaspora writers have immigrated by choice and therefore there is no guilt found in their writings. Looking at the present scenario, there is a lot of place for such writers and their writings; as, there is a great demand for such literature in the international market. A few years ago, this market was occupied by English, European and American writers only; however, today, the South Asians too have made their place in this market. Through the process of globalization, there is an access to multiple cultures and multiple choices of identities. The new diaspora is more eloquent than the old one as its existence is accepted and acknowledged across the globe. Prior to the discussion on the writers of the new diaspora, it becomes essential to discuss the old diaspora writers so as to bring out the variations in their writings.
After the abolition of the slave trade, a new strategy was devised by the colonial powers; which was the indentured system. Through this system they got the supply of labourers at very cheap rates from their colonies. The Indian indentured workers called *girmitiyas* formed a major part of the minorities in the West Indies, Malaya, Fiji, Mauritius and the colonies of the East and South Africa. The epic experience of the Indian diaspora is the *girmit* experience in the 1830’s and Gandhiji, the father of the nation can be very well called as the ‘pehla girmitiya’ who tried to organize these *girmitiyas* in South Africa and make them Politically conscious community. These girmitiyas were subjected to racial abuse and soon he realized that his place in South Africa was that of ‘a coolie barrister’. ‘Coolie’ was used as common appellation for all the Indians. The incident that took place in the train where he was insulted by a white passenger changed his life and eventually of South Africa and India. After the incident he thought about what he should do to fight injustice. He writes in his autobiography-

> I began to think of my duty. Should I fight for my rights or should I go on to Pretoria without minding the insults, and return to India without fulfilling my obligation. The hardship to which I was subjected was superficial-only symptom of the deep disease of color prejudice. I should try if possible to root out the disease and suffer hardships in the process.(Gandhi.94)
This was in a way, his resolution to fight back and get justice. Giriraj Kishore in *Pehla Girmitiya* talks about the same incident:

> There is no greater insult than cowardice. Behind his humiliation on the train, there was neither enmity, nor selfishness, but a pervasive psychological hatred. We are all part of that. While living with this pall of gloom, we can drill holes in this. (Kishore.105-106).

Gandhiji, started the *Indian Opinion*, a weekly and poured his experiences and his beliefs of truth and non-violence in the editions. In his autobiography he states about this journal as an account of the Satyagrah campaign and also of the real conditions of Indians living in South Africa. Under one umbrella of Indian Diasporic community, people from all castes joined as one voice. They came up as one nation in the foreign land. He remarks in his autobiography

> In face of the calamity that had overtaken the community, all distinctions such as high and low, small and great, master and servant, Hindus, Mussalmans, Parsis, Christians, Gujaratis, Madrasis, Sindhis, etc., were forgotten. All were alike the children and servants of the motherland. (Gandhi.118).

The point to be observed here in context of diaspora is that the concept of homeland, motherland and nation, aroused patriotic feelings in the people and they were ready to even die for the sake of it. The Indian tradition is that of considering the ‘desh’ or nation as ‘bharat mata’ means India as a ‘mother’ and the sons and daughters of ‘bharat mata’ are always ready to die for her and fight for her self respect. It would be proper to quote
V.S. Naipaul who says that this sense of belonging to a common homeland and the common experience of displacement and colonialization, establish strong ties among these communities. In his work, *India: A Million Mutinies Now*, he says:

> cut off from India by distance, diasporic Indians developed something they would never have known in India, a sense of belonging to an Indian community. (Naipaul.7).

This psychology of the people worked well in the fight for justice in South Africa and it was possible for Gandhiji, a diaspora himself, to sow the seeds of independence in South Africa.

While talking about the old diaspora, one of the names that is inevitable to be mentioned is that of Sir Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul (1932-). He is a Trinidadian-British writer of Indo-Trinidadian heritage of Brahmin. He is known for his novels focusing on the legacy of the British Empire’s colonialism. In the year 2001 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature and has also won many other prizes. The main concern in his writings is his changing relationship with his ancestral land India. There is a shift of attitudes towards India that can be observed in his writings. He is not able to disconnect himself from his past that is India and so tries to relate himself with his ancestral land but in doing so he many times feels dispelled by its several shortcomings. Discussing one of his well
known books *An Area of Darkness*, one finds that he tries to discover his roots and his identity in India, a place from which he has been distanced and alienated culturally and emotionally. Being born in Trindad, his connection with India had been the stories heard from his parents about their ancestral land. He therefore did not have a first hand experience of what India was, and so, he romanticized the image of India in his childhood from whatever stories he had heard about India. In his book *An Area of Darkness* he confesses about his image of India-

> And India had in a special way been the background of my childhood. It was the country from which my grandfather came, a country never physically described and therefore never real, a country out in the void beyond the dot of Trinidad, and from it our journey had been final (Naipaul. 27)

For him ‘India’ was in the few articles that his ancestors had brought from India such as the brass vessels, gods’ idols and pictures, a ruined harmonium and other such things that had the value of belonging to India and therefore had great importance. The romanticized image of India through his childhood stories was shattered completely when he visited India for the first time. He shares his experience with the readers in his book *An Area of Darkness*:

> The India, then, which was the background of my childhood, was an area of imagination. It was not the real country I presently began to read about and whose map I committed to memory. (Naipaul. 41)
V. S. Naipaul comes back again and again to India in his writings and his love-hate relationship with the country is revealed in his confession in his book *India: A Wounded Civilization*, “India is for me a difficult country. It isn’t my home and cannot be my home; and yet I cannot reject it or be indifferent to it; I cannot travel only for the sights. I am at once too close and too far”. (Naipaul.8). There is a kind of difficulty that he faces in understanding India as, on one hand he is no more a part of it but on the other hand he very much feels that there is something within him that is a part of India which he can not do away with. In his third book, as his experience with India changes, his expressions also change. The picture of this changed India that he observes on his visit is noted in *India: A Million Mutinies Now*. He observes,

> Many thousands of people had worked like that over the years, without any sense of a permanent drama, many millions; it had added up in the forty years since independence to an immense national effort. The results of that effort were now noticeable. What looked sudden had been long prepared. The increased wealth showed; the new confidence of the people once poor showed. One aspect of that was the freeing of new particularities, new identities, which were as unsettling to Indians as the identities of caste and clan and region had been to me in 1962, when I had gone to India only as an Indian. (Naipaul.9)

the River (1979), The House for Mr. Biswas (1961), The Enigma of Arrival (1987) and his latest novel Half a Life (2001) are the works where he, through his characters he unfolds his own inner self as a diaspora himself. Most of these works deal with the themes of his homelessness and his feeling of loss of identity. Asha Choubey comments on his expertise in dealing with these issues,

Critics have spoken of his feeling of congenital displacement of having been born a foreigner, a citizen of an exiled community on a colonized island, without a natural home except for an India to which he often returns, only to be reminded of his distance from his roots. Naipaul’s protagonists grow away from their native culture and their growing up depends on their growing away. (Choubey 227)

His experience with India at first is that of a distant one but he is not able to brush aside his ancestral past and finds himself ultimately identifying himself as a part of India. All the books, written by him have India as the center of interest. Most of the diasporic writers have dealt with the notion of homeland and thereby have discussed their relationship with a country that is at once so far away and at once so near to them.

Among the old diaspora writers another name that comes up is that of Moyez G. Vassanji, better known as M.G. Vassanji. He is a person whose identity is a combination of his experiences of three continents. He celebrates hybridity as he is characterized by a complex ethno cultural identity that incorporates multiple countries like Kenya - his birth place,
Tanzania -where he grew up, India- his ancestral land, Canada and USA – where he studied and settled. He has never been rigid about his identity as he believes that India, Africa, Canada, USA all are a part of him, his identity. He visited India for the first time in 1993 and that is when he tried to rediscover his roots. Speaking about the life of diaspora in an interview with Chelva Kanaganayakan, he says,

There was a very strong tendency to look down upon and even deny the Indian connection. This was a colonial influence. But once I went to the US suddenly the Indian connection became urgently insistent: the sense of origin, trying to understand the roots in India that we had inside us. (Kanaganayakan.129)

In an interview with Murali Kamma he talks about the difference between himself and Naipaul:

V.S.Naipaul came from a different, older generation than mine. He left the Caribbean before they got independence. So they were much more detached- they could not go back to India. But our parents could go back. The Asian culture was much closer to us, the identification easier. Also I think we have different personalities. I don’t hold myself back and look at ‘them’. I identified so closely (with India) which was the shocking part of my trip. I have so many close friends, some of my closest friends are in India. (Interview by Murali Kamma)

While Naipaul has displeased Indians with his writings, Vassanji is gentle with them. Vassanji has written novels like The Gunny Sack(1989), No New Land (1991), The Book of Secrets(1994), Amrika (1999), The In-Between World of VikramLall (2003), The Assassin’s Song (2007), The Magic of Saida(2012) also a travel memoir ‘A
In his works he deals with the situations of the East African Indians. He also talks about second immigration and how their lives are affected by these migrations. The migrants are caught between two or more cultures and they live on borderland. The fact that they do not belong solely to any one place, creates a new kind of identity the ‘trishanku’ symbolizes. Talking about the diaspora writings he says in his interview with Murali Kamma that the real India is not represented in diaspora writings, “You got upper middle class stories, but not the heart and soul of India. Those (real) stories are told in Gujarati, Hindi, Malayalam. You didn’t get a good Indian representation because of lack of a good translation.”(Interview byMuraliKamma). According to him the real India lives in the stories written in the regional languages and we still have to bring them to the limelight by good translations.

Diaspora writers like Rohinton Mistry and Salman Rushdie are a part of new diaspora writers. Rohinton Mistry is an Indian born Canadian writer in English. He was born in Mumbai, India. Almost all his novels and short stories are obsessed with the life style of this city. He has to his credit novels like Such aLong Journey (1991) which has been made into film, A Fine Balance (1995), Family Matters (2002) and a collection of Short Stories- Tales from Firozsha Baag (1987). His books deal with the Indian
social and economic life and the characters belong to Parsi Zoroastrian families that allow us to observe the traditions, customs and religion of this community in a minute way. His first novel, *Such a Long Journey* came into limelight and became an issue of debate and ultimately was removed from the syllabus. The reason was that it contained derogatory statements about some of the leading politicians of Bombay. The second novel *A Fine Balance* also has political linkages but they are from within as the novel deals with the Emergency period in India when Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister. In this novel also he is critical about Indira Gandhi though he never mentions her name but mentions her as the Prime Minister of India. The novel deals with four characters who come from different backgrounds and are brought together by the economic forces that were shaping the face of India. His third novel *Family Matters* also is situated in Mumbai and deals with a Parsi family. The domestic crisis in the middle class family is well brought out as they try to deal with the illness that has gripped the old man. Dealing with the illness and the cost of treatment, that is too much for the middle class, the novel deals with the changes that take place in the family due to religion, age, death and wealth. Rohinton Mistry, a Parsi is guided by his experience of double displacement. Being a Parsi, a minority community in India, many
times his writings deal with the marginalization that he has felt in the dominating Hindu culture of India.

Rushdie’s novel *Midnight’s Children* (1981) is a trend setter as far as the dealing of the subject of homeland is concerned. He portrays a chaotic India. It is an attempt to recreate the ‘past’ in imagination and to change the way we tell our stories to the world and also change our way of looking at the world. *In Imaginary Homelands* (1992) he writes “It’s my present that is foreign, and the past is home albeit a lost home in a lost city in the mists of the lost time”. (Rushdie.9). The chaos regarding the identity of a diasporic person is incorporated in his writings. Sharing his diasporic experience he writes in his book *Gunter Grass: On writing and Politics*,

A full migrant suffers, traditionally, a triple disruption: he loses his place, he enters into an alien language, and he finds himself surrounded by beings whose social behavior and code is very unlike, and sometimes even offensive to, his own. And this is what makes migrants such important figures: because roots, language and social norms have been three of the most important parts of the definition of what it is to be a human being. The migrant, denied all three, is obliged to find new ways of describing himself, new ways of being human. But I want to go further than such literalistic discussions; because migration also offers to us one of the richest metaphors of our age. The word *metaphor*, with its roots in Greek words of *bearing across*, described a sort of migration, the migration of ideas and images. Migrants- borne-across humans- are metaphorical beings in their very essence, and the migration, seen as a metaphor, is everywhere around us. We all cross frontiers; in that sense, we are all migrant peoples. (Rushdie. ix-x)
By declaring that we are all migrants, Rushdie, challenges the idea of home and identity and thereby demanding a shift in the definition of identity and nationality. Rushdie sees a migrant as a loser, as, with the dislocation he loses his identity and the ‘home’ and is put to a foreign land where everything seems to be unhomely or ‘uncanny’. In such a situation, he tries to find new definition of life and tries to survive on the new land.

The old diaspora writers considered ‘homeland’ as a sacred place that was not to be questioned, but, it is not so with the new writers. The new diaspora is a more settled diaspora and hence adopted more to their new home. Many times they compare their new home with their ancestral home and argue about the reasons for leaving it. Not only that these writers many a times cater to the western readers and present before them the India they want to see and are anxious to know about. The dangers hidden in the presentation of the diasporic representations of India is very well brought out by Makarand Paranjape,

Diasporic representations of India can be harmful and misleading in at least two related ways. First, they might end up usurping the space which native self-representations are striving to find in the international literary market place. Secondly, they may contribute to a continuing “colonization” of the Indian psyche by pandering to
Western market-tastes which prefer to see India in a negative light. Both these dangers arise not necessarily from a design on the part of the expatriates to “sell” India, though the latter possibility cannot be dismissed too easily. Rather, they are born out of the peculiar cultural politics of the diaspora. (Paranjape.19)

Makarand Paranjape talks about the new diaspora writers who are not ‘emotional’ but ‘practical’ about their homeland. The key word for them is ‘success’ and many times it so happens that in order to cater to the tastes of the West, who still prefer to see India as a poor and backward country, portray India as they like it. The fact remains that they are a big success also. They are selling India which perhaps the old diaspora writers never did.

The ‘position’ of the diaspora writers is really interesting. They are in a way a link between their ancestral home and their new home. They translate ‘India’ to the West and at the same time open the West before the readers back home. Their portrayals of their marginalization, rejections and the stories of the insults they have suffered in the foreign country are sent back home. The responsibility to tell the true story is on their shoulders. The diasporic writers draw special attention for the reason that they belong to a special category of writers who are by default credited with multiculturalism and transnationalism.
Among diasporic writers, the women writers draw special attention as their sensibility, consciousness and perceptions provide altogetherly different dimensions and rather vivid perceptions of those fragments of human realities which are characteristically specific to the writings of diasporic writers. The fact that the women’s writing has been considered an integral part of creative writing in the 20th century literatures of the world; the women writers from the Asian subcontinents have made their presence felt significantly on account of their exposure to the world outside their homeland as well as their grounding and orientation in the cultural traditions of the homeland. Before talking about the women writers of India, it is very important to know how women, facing all odds from the society, started expressing themselves through their writings. Virginia Woolf talks about the profession of writing for women, saying:

both the Army and Navy are closed to our sex. We are not allowed to fight. Nor again are we allowed to be members of the Stock exchange. Thus we can use neither the pressure of force nor the pressure of money….We cannot preach sermons or negotiate treaties. Then again although it is true that we can write articles or send letters to the Press-the decision what to print, what not to print- is entirely in the hands of your sex.(Woolf. 23)

The importance of money as a power is what Virginia Woolf has talked about many times. She insists on economic independence for women to have a stand in this male dominated society. In the past, a woman was
denied education. Freedom of expression was not her right. Women’s education has always been a controversial subject for this male dominated world because, with education a woman gets liberated and this liberated state of any woman is not acceptable to the society. Not resisting the preset norms of the society, outrightly favouring men, was considered to be a quality of ‘good woman’. As women started getting educated and started thinking, they realized the injustice done to them in every walk of life and as a result demanded for justice. Women’s writing initiated the whole feminist movement that provided impetus to the process of discovering ‘self’. And with the help of hundreds of women across the globe, who resisted to the male domination, there have been changes in the various national policies regarding the rights of women. The set structures of the society are questioned and broken by women and today, because of the ‘beginnings’ done by these women we have successful women in every walk of life. This beginning is well expressed in Virginia Woolf’s talk given to the women audience:

You have won rooms of your own in the house hitherto exclusively owned by men. You are able, though not without labor and effort, to pay the rent. You are earning your five thousand pounds a year. But the freedom is only a beginning; the room is your own, but it is still bare. It has to be furnished; it has to be decorated; it has to be shared. How are you going to furnish it, how are you going to decorate it? With whom are you going to share it, and upon what terms? (Woolf.297)
A lot of research is being done on such women writers who have given priority to writing. As a result Women’s writing has raised issues related to the patriarchal constructs of the society like marriage and family. Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One’s Own* writes – 

> Women have served all these centuries as looking glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size. (Woolf.33).

Today, a woman is not a magnifying glass for the world but a mirror that shows what you really are. It is true that women’s writing has a very slow development graph but it is due to reasons like – very little access to education and less number of women writers. An important point to be made here is that, their writings went unnoticed and were dismissed as worthless being limited and confined to the domestic life only. Not only this, but, their subordinate place in the society also was responsible for not being noticed as women were considered less rational and un-intellectual compared to their male counterparts.

But gradually the concept ‘woman for hearth and man for war’ is losing its worth. Today, we see a lot of women expressing themselves through their writings and they are also noticed and appreciated. Along with the quest of a woman to tell her story, the woman of today, also has many other stories to put before the world. With the exposure to the world and
new technologies, a woman writer is no more confined and limited in her subjects. Not only that, being a woman and being more sensible than man at times, she delicately handles the subjects related to relationships with greater psychological insight into everything that concerns human behavior and nature.

George Eliot in her essay “Woman in France: Madame de Sable” observed –

We think it an immense mistake to maintain there is no sex in literature. Science has no sex: the mere knowing and reasoning faculties, if they act correctly, must go through the same process, and arrive at the same result. But in Art and Literature, which imply the action of the entire being, in which every fiber of the nature is engaged, in which every peculiar modification of the individual makes itself felt, woman has something specific to contribute. (Eliot.8).

This special something is what only a woman can give in her writings. And it is this specific thing that makes her writings different from that of men’s writings.

Indian writings in English have developed to a great extent today but if the history of women writers is assessed, it dates back to middle of the nineteenth century when Toru Dutt penned some extraordinary work in English at a very young age. Other names also follow in the list like Krupabai Satthianandhan, Shevantibai Nikambe, Rajalakshmi Debi, Cornelia Sohrabji, Swarna Kumari Ghosal and Sarojini Naidu who have
carved a place for themselves in the field of Indian English Fiction. Their works encompassed themes like relationships, society, identity, conflicts, patriotism etc. The tradition of writing is carried further to new heights today by the women writers of this age. Today there are famous names like Anita Desai, Manju Kapur, Nayantara Sahgal, Kamala Das, Shashi Deshpande, Shoba De and many other women writers in India who have successfully probed into female heart and mind in a language that is read by most part of the world. Not only these women writers of India but ,the women writers of the Indian Diaspora such as Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Anita Rau Badami, Ruchira Banerjee and others, have, with their feminine sensibility and that ‘something specific’ explored the process called immigration in their works. Their works, keeping women in the center, try to expedite their experiences of being a woman immigrant and the loss they suffer of separation from homeland. Women, being more sensitive about personal relationships, the religion and customs and traditions, suffer more on the new homeland. Their stories are based on the loss of their cultural identities, sense of alienation, homelessness, uncertainty of their life in the new surroundings, the complexity that arises due to the female psyche in the context of her own self and the West that is so foreign to them in terms of way of living, customs, rituals, dressing, attitude towards
relationships and their total attitude towards life in general. Not only the physical displacement due to immigration is explored but the psychological impact of this dislocation on the psyche of the women immigrants is also discovered and expressed vigorously yet delicately.

These new writers have, in their writings, constructed a new world wherein the characters, who are dislocated geographically, suffer cultural dilemma and, what is noticeable in these writings is that the characters suffer from a kind of suffocation caused not only due to the new surroundings but also due to the inability to express themselves because of the language problem. It is not only the language or culture that is difficult for these characters to adjust to, but, one of the other major problems for these immigrants is that of food. It takes a lot of time for them to adjust to the new food habits which vary drastically from the native. These diaspora writers have, through their characters, tried to express the phenomenon called cultural migration, which affects the women migrants more, as they suffer from the psychological dualities that haunt them in the foreign land. Their haunting past, their attachment to their motherland makes them feel isolated, homeless and insecure. All these impacts constitute the psyche of the immigrant. The identity of the immigrants is constructed by their associations with their root culture, language, the myths of their country, the history of the motherland and
their personal relations in the new land. Their gender ideologies and racial prejudices continue to have deep rooted impressions. As a result their existence becomes complicated because of their consciousness of the two cultures and the ‘in-between’ life they live.

The Women Diaspora Writers from India have largely focused on the problems the characters face during their adjustment in the new society. Some of their characters come out very well and are able to come to terms with their new life much more easily while there are some who fail to adjust or the process of change goes very slow with them. Among these characters are the women characters who, with their psychological problems, are handled with utmost delicacy and fineness. In order to elaborate the above mentioned state of female writers, a brief study of some of the prominent women writers becomes necessary to understand the complexities of the process called migration.

Stories (1988). In one of her interviews, she unfolds her experience as an immigrant-

We immigrants have fascinating tales to relate. Many of us have lived in newly independent or emerging countries... When we uproot ourselves from those countries and come here, either by choice or out of necessity, we suddenly must absorb two hundred years of American history and learn to adapt to American society. I attempt to illustrate this in my novels and short stories. My aim is to expose America to the energetic voices of the new settlers in this country. (The Times of India, 1 Oct, 1989).

Bharati Mukherjee presents the world of immigrants who live the ‘hybrid’ life. Mukherjee’s women immigrants are mostly well educated middle class persons who suffer racial discrimination as well as gender discrimination. The themes focused in her writings are that of ‘nostalgia’, ‘cultural dilemmas’ ‘moral values’, ‘quest for self’, and ‘relationships’. A woman, wherever she lives and in whatever relationship she is in, adjusts more than a man under any given circumstances. As a daughter, as a wife, as a mother, as a sister or even as a lover, a woman is always a ‘giver’ rather than a ‘taker’. This adjusting nature is always a plus point when she has to adjust to a new land. Bharati Mukherjee categorically says in an interview with Michael Connel:

The kind of women I write about... are those who are adaptable. We’ve been raised to please, been trained to be adaptable as wives and that adaptability is working to be woman’s advantage when we come over as immigrants. (Connel.25)
The protagonists of these women writers, struggle between their Indian identity and the new assumed American identity. The experience of going through this struggle is painful but it cannot be done away with. Through their protagonists, these writers try to portray their own experiences as immigrants. Their own ‘in-betweenness’ and their nostalgia about their homeland is seen while the characters juggle between two cultures. Even if the writers are second generation immigrants, there is a fragment of their homeland in each one of them that connects them with it. In Mukherjee’s *Desirable Daughters*, one of the female characters, Tara, coming from a conservative Bengali family, who marries and immigrates to America, had dreamt of a life that was liberating, “the life she had been waiting for… the liberating promise of marriage and travel and the wider world”(Mukherjee. 81). Tara had dreamt that the life after marriage in America would be different from India, but, to her disappointment her husband turns out to be a typical Indian male and denies her the freedom of doing the kind of work she likes. The feeling of suffocation and the shattered dream of being independent makes her take divorce from her husband. She becomes a single mother but, one incident in her life brings her back to her husband and they reunite realizing each others faults. Going back to Calcutta for a change connects her, once again, with her cultural roots and restores
calmness in her life. This novel is Tara’s search for identity. She wants to be completely free from any Indian baggage in America and her attempts to be westernized move her away from her roots and she suffers the trauma of suffering alone on the foreign land. Andy, her live-in lover signifies the west, who tries to destroy her, and her husband Bishwanath signifies the homeland. It is her re-connection with the past and her ex-husband Bishwanath that restores peace in her life thus realizing the importance of her cultural roots and her ethnic past. Mukherjee admits in her book *Days and Nights in Calcutta:*

> Identity is the external layer related to colour, race, class, social position, economic status, nationality and a whole lot of other outward indicators, while the self is the deeper layer, the core self, constituted through cognitive process, reflections of memory, education, media exploration and exposure. It is also constituted by the fall of choice amongst other things. It is affected by an awareness of identity and comes into being through social dynamics. The diasporic journey into the past or to the homeland is often in search of wholeness. (Mukherjee. 287)

Female identity and culture are inter-related. Brought up in a conservative background and burdened with the responsibility of caretaker of the culture and traditions, a woman, especially an immigrant suffers the pain of living in between the traditional life of the country and the changed life of the new land where in, her imbibed culture and traditions have very little space in the new life style. The conflict and the
contrast in most of the things, beginning from food habits to culture and traditions, is what puzzles the immigrant woman as she is not able to decide what to do with the Indianness that is within and the West that is without. They cannot totally absorb the west and cannot totally reject the east. The female protagonists like Tara in The Tiger’s Daughter, Tara in Desirable Daughters, Dimple in Wife, Jyoti in Jasmine are characters who present the cultural dilemmas and sense of alienation confronted in the foreign land. Their attempt to liberate themselves on one hand and their bondage with their roots on the other hand, puts them in a difficult and confusing position. Bharati Mukherjee presents her characters in a state of dilemma faced due to the contrast in their life situations. The two contradictory cultures are before them and they are trapped between being a typical Indian wife and the independent woman of the west. The writer observes the mental condition of the immigrants and surmises that it is not the distance only that affects them but it is also the ‘time’ factor that plays an important role. For the immigrants, the present is always linked with the past through their memories of their homeland and the distances created due to the time generating feelings of loneliness and sense of loss. The immigrant psyche is in a state conflict and this conflict is the dilemma. There is no way out except to suffer this state, as withdrawal is not the solution and there is no escape to this trauma that a
person suffers being away from his homeland. The temporariness that prevails in America is understood by the immigrants after their stay there for a short duration. Jasmine, one of the characters of Bharati Mukherjee observes about America:

In America nothing lasts, I can say that now and it doesn’t shock me, but I think it was the hardest lesson for all me to learn. We arrive so eager to learn, to adjust, to participate, only to find that monuments are plastic, agreements are annulled. Nothing is forever; nothing is so terrible or so wonderful that it won’t disintegrate. (Mukherjee.160)

Plastic signifies the temporary nature of everything. It is the modern world where we have houses of concrete, but the ideas, values, morals, the way we live, all is temporary and undergoes change with the situation, place, time and age. It is not integration but the disintegration that prevails everywhere.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is also a well known name in the Indian diaspora writers. Her novels – *The Mistress of Spices*(1997), *Vine of Desire* (2002), *Queen of Dreams*(2004) and collection of short stories not only present a dilemma of location and dislocation but also try to synthesize the dilemma. Chitra Banerjee presents, “the deepest fear and trauma faced by women in India and here (USA) show them emerging at least in many cases as stronger and self reliant woman”(Kamath, Interview).
It is the assimilation in the life of the characters that is portrayed. They suffer the loneliness, feel alienated in the foreign land but at last they assimilate with the new found culture. They embrace the change in life and are not rigid characters. Her well known novel, *The Mistress of Spices*, is on the lines of magic realism. The experiences of the immigrants are presented in the backdrop of myth, magic and romance. Tilo, the narrator of the story holds magical powers related to spices. She runs a store of spices and this store is a meeting place for all the immigrants. It is true that we, the people of India love spicy food and the spices that we have in India are very special to us and the proof is of course the packets of these spices being taken to the foreign lands even today. Coming back to the novel, America is the land of dreams for the people who have chosen this place as their second home. The stories of her immigrant customers revealed to her in the store, becomes an outlet for her own fears and uncertainty of being an immigrant herself. In one of her interviews with Katie Bolick, Chitra Banerjee says, “Moving away from home culture often allows a kind of disjunctive perspective that is very important- a sleight sense of being an outsider being out of place.” (Bolick, Interview).

In the novel *Queen of Dreams*, Chitra Banerjee, presents her characters not as submissive and invisible immigrants but they are the ambassadors
of the Indian culture. Rakhi, one of the characters takes pride in asserting and promoting the Indian culture in America. She says:

The American public will learn what a Bhangra remix is, and it will electrify their souls. Sonny will make more money and more. His name will sneak its way up the charts. His fans will adore him, men and women both. (Divakaruni. 181).

Rakhi, identifying herself with the immigrants and feeling one with them says with pride,

Some wear western clothes, and some are in Kurta Pyjamas but what I notice most of their faces… they hint at eventful pasts lived in places very different from this one, difficulties and triumphs, I can’t quote imagine…they are my countrymen. We share the same skin colour. (Divakaruni.217).

This sharing of the common history, the common past of the country, common roots and common culture is like our umbilical chord that binds us to our country. Chitra Banerjee in her novels as well as short stories has discussed through various characters, the innate bonding with the nation. She encounters the west and the east and her approach is that of assimilation and towards formation of a global identity.

Uma Parameswaran, also a diaspora writer of second generation, belongs to the group of Indo-Canadian diaspora writers. Her works like The Door
I shut Behind Me (1990) and Dear Didi, My Sister (1989) deals with the nostalgia that the expatriates suffer from. She deals with the concepts of ‘home’ in her writings. Uma Parmeswaran believes that nostalgia has a place of its own but it should not paralyze the immigrant’s capacity in adopting and adjusting to the new surroundings. In her work The Door I Shut Behind Me, Trishanku and Other Writings (1998), she explores the difference in the experience of being a diaspora male and a female. Her character Chandrika is more open to the new place and its people than Chander, her husband. This difference in the adaptability in the nature may be due to the traditions of the society where a woman is supposed to leave the house where she was born and has to go with her husband to his house and consider and make it as her own. Because of this a woman is able to love and adapt her two homes without conflict. For Chander it is difficult as he narrates: “Like the mythological kings, Trishanku, they stood suspended between two worlds, unable to enter either and making a heaven of their own”. Uma Parmeswaran believes that if there is discontent in the new place, you tend not to adjust and end up feeling lost. She declares: “The exile is a universal figure. We are made to feel a sense of exile by our inadequacy and our irrelevance of function in a society whose past we can’t alter and whose function is
always beyond us” (Parmeshwaran.106). What marks her writings is a balanced view of the diasporic experience.

The panoramic survey of Indian women diasporic writers discussed herein (above) reveals that the fictional world of these writers is distinctly different from not only their male counterparts but also those writers who have not seen the best of both worlds - the home land and the home away from home. The Indian women diasporic writers meritoriously differ in their writings on several accounts including education, professional exposure, extensive travelling, refined tastes, transnational sensitivity and better understanding of cross cultural identities and practices; many of these qualities not found among native writers writing in regional languages. The Indianness in literature has certainly achieved newer milestones owing to the creative efforts of Indian women diasporic writers who, in turn, have achieved success at two levels: in the first place, as champions of the voice of women and secondly as Indians who have succeeded in their settlements abroad. Such multiple recognition, doubtlessly speaks of their merits both as individuals and as writers too. Having discussed the above Indian women diasporic writers, it is worth including two more eminent Indian women writers - Jhumpa Lahiri and Manju Kapur who have made significant contribution in the field of women’s writing with diasporic angle being one of their focal points.
Manju Kapur was born in Amritsar, the capital of Punjab State, India. Brought up in a North Indian Hindu family, she grew up within a culture with a blend of traditional and liberal practices. Unlike millions of other women of her age and time, she was fortunate to have firm and continuous parental support to obtain her post graduation in English from Dalhousie University located at Halifax, Canada. After gaining international exposure for her education, she preferred to be grounded back to India when she married Mr. Gun Nidhi Dalmia. She chose Delhi as her base, for both, domestic as well as professional life. She has been teaching English Literature at Miranda House College, New Delhi, also her alma mater as this is where she completed her graduation. *Difficult Daughters*, her first book published in 1999, won the prestigious Commonwealth Writer’s Prize and received accolades especially from the literary circles of Europe and Southern Asia. In the year 2011, her another novel, The Immigrant was short listed for the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature. She has been a writer of substantial influence through her fictional worlds that narrate the tales of Indian women characterizing their real life circumstances in order to bring out the shades of Indianness. Apart from *Difficult Daughters* and *The Immigrant*, her other novels include *A Married Woman, Custody* and *Home* that make her fictional world full of varieties in terms of characters, situations, issues,
conflicts, attitudes and sensitivity pertaining to the women's world especially. As a writer, she champions the cause of women on the basis of her own exposure to international education, professional and economic independence, experience of individual freedom and a stable married life. Thus her treatment of themes and issues related to the lives of Indian women is realistic, unbiased, mature, thorough and appealing. She is a woman writer with clarity, simplicity and modesty since her novels are never charged with extremism of any sort that other women writers are at times accused of and blamed for.

Jhumpa Lahiri, nee Nilanjana Svedeshana Lahiri, exhibits multinationality, multiculturalism and ethnic multiplicity in her own life. Born in London, England to Bengali parents of Indian origin, her family moved to the US when she was just two. She went on living in Kingston, Rhode Island. She graduated with BA in English Literature from Barnard College in 1989. Her bright academic career includes M.A. in English, M.F.A. in Creative Writing, M.A. in Comparative Literature and PhD in Renaissance Studies from the prestigious Boston University. She began her professional career with teaching creative writing at Boston University and Rhode Island School of Design. She married Alberto Vourvoulian Burn, a journalist and settled down in Rome, Italy. She has two children – Octavio and Noor.
From her brief biographical details it is obvious that she is an individual with varied human experiences, exceptional exposure to various cultures and multinational background. All this has contributed a great deal to the fact that as a writer she has been received with meritorious acceptance and critical acclaims. She has been recipient of the following awards and recognitions

- The Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 2000 for her collection of short stories *Interpreter of Maladies*
- O Henry Award in 1999 for her collection of short stories *Interpreter of Maladies*
- PEN/Hemmingway Award for Best Fiction of the Year in 1999 for collection of short stories *Interpreter of Maladies*
- Received the Frank O’Connor International Short Story Award and Asian American Literary Award for her story ‘Unaccustomed Earth’in the year 2008 and 2009 respectively.
Compared to other women writers, Jhumpa Lahiri has greater luxury of diverse professional and personal background. Her richer and wider exposure to various countries and lifestyles help her look at various aspects of the Bengali culture found in her fictional world with seasoned maturity and flexibly balanced approach as a writer. It is surprisingly noteworthy about her fictions that all of them revolve round the life of various Bengali families whether in India or abroad. Her real association with the Bengali culture and her literary fascination of the same make her belong to the category of Indian diasporic women writer despite her rare exposure to the real Indian life. Following are the titles of her works studied here for this research: *The Namesake* (novel), *The Interpreter of Maladies* (Collection of Short Stories), *The Unaccustomed Earth* (Collection of Short Stories) and The lowland (novel) which has been shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize of the year 2013.