CHAPTER I
THEMES AND TECHNIQUES:
A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

1.1 Introduction

Literature creates the imaginative reconstruction of life and gives aesthetic pleasure through its distinguishing traits like fictionality, invention and imagination. Literature is a creative art and complex association of manifold meanings and relationships. It is imbibed with the subject matters of deep and lasting human interest and significance. Literature is defined variously as “history of civilization” (Wellek and Warren 20), “great books notable for literary form or expression” (Wellek and Warren 21). W. H. Hudson emphasizes the subject matter of literature and considers literature as a vital record of what men have seen in life, what they have experienced out of it, and what they have thought and felt about aspects of life. Thomas De-Quincey’s twofold division of literature as literature of power and literature of knowledge underlines the Horatian formula of ‘dulce and utile’. Aesthetic value, style, composition, and force of presentation are the features of literature. Wellek and Warren discuss the various aspects of literature in Theory of Literature such as: organization, personal expression, realization and exploitation of the medium, lack of practical purpose, and, of course, fictionality, ‘unity in variety’, ‘disinterested contemplation’, ‘aesthetic distance’, ‘framing’, and ‘invention’, ‘imagination’, ‘creation’. Each of them describes one aspect of the literary work, one characteristic feature of its semantic directions. None is itself satisfactory.

(Wellek and Warren 27)
The literature is classified in various genres. The poetry, epic, drama, and novel are the major genres of literature. There are also number of specific sub-genres such as tragedy, comedy, satire, biography, essay, and short story. Poetry emerges out of the Greek word ‘poesis’ and it uses language in order to create aesthetic effect and meaning. It is the oldest form of literature and is evolved from religious hymns, folk songs, or oral traditions of epic. The first systematic effort towards defining poetry in Aristotle’s *Poetics* focused on the use of speech in rhetoric, drama, song, and comedy. Later on poetry was distinguished from prosaic form by emphasizing its features such as repetition, verse form, rhyme, and rhythm.

Plato alleged poetry for its mimetic and emotional character and for giving false impressions. Aristotle asserted the superiority of poetry over philosophy and history and glorified imitation as an imaginative reconstruction of reality. Philip Sidney defines poetry as “speaking picture” (Sidney 9) which both pleases and teaches. Wordsworth emphasizes the expressive character of poetry and defines it as “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” (Wordsworth 165). He gives immortal place to the poetry by stating that: “Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge - it is as immortal as the heart of man” (Wordsworth 175) because poetry is the combination of wisdom and delight. Shelley explores the connections between life and poetry by identifying poetry with “the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth” (Shelley 231). For him poetry is, “the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds” (Shelley251). Poetry is also seen as “escape from personality and emotions” (Eliot58). Matthew Arnold defines poetry as “criticism of life” (262) and provides comprehensive views about poetry.
The future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay. There is not a creed, which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve. Our religion has materialized itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. But for poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea is the fact. The strongest part of our religion to-day is its unconscious poetry. (Arnold 260)

Since the present study is based on the themes and techniques in the poetry of Meena Alexander, the following is the theoretical framework of themes and techniques used for analysis of Alexander’s poetry.

Theme is a central idea, a general concept, or doctrine, whether implicit or explicit in an imaginative work. Theme is sometimes used interchangeably with ‘motif’ which is defined as, “a conspicuous element, such as type of event, device, references, or formula, which occurs frequently in works of literature” (Abrams and Harpham 178). The term ‘motif’ or ‘leitmotif’ is also applied to the frequently repeated ideas, phrases, description, or images. According to critics, all literature involves an implicit theme and it is embodied and dramatized in the evolving meaning.

Generally, the subject matter and themes of poetry revolve around the private life and purely personal experiences. Experiences of man as man, great questions of life and death, sin and destiny, man’s relation with God, hope and futility of human life, the relation of the individual with his friends, relatives and entire social world, external world of nature
and his relation with it are recurring themes in literature. Desire for self-articulation, interest in men and women, their lives, motives, passions and relationships, eagerness to know the reality of life and flight of imagination motivate the poet towards creation of poetry.

The techniques of poetry imply the means and devices that poet uses in order to achieve the intellectual and emotional effects. Instead of consideration of extrinsic factors such as biography, history, sociology, psychology, the structure of poem is studied by emphasizing words, diction, language, image, meter, tone to arrive at the true meaning. The new criticism and ontological criticism also study poetry with reference to devices. Victor Shklovsky, the pioneer of Russian formalists in 1917, wrote the essay ‘Art as a Technique’ that makes the beginning of this approach. Mark Schorer defines technique in his essay, ‘Techniue as Discovery’. He writes:

Technique is the means by which the writer’s experience, which is his subject matter, compels him to attend to it; technique is the only means he has of discovering, exploring, developing his subject, of conveying its meaning, and, finally of evaluating it. And surely it follows that certain techniques are sharper tools than others, and will discover more; that the writer capable of the most exacting technical scrutiny of his subject matter will produce works with the most satisfying content, works with thickness and resonance; works with reverberate, works with maximum meaning.

(Schorer 387)
1.2 Diasporic Consciousness

The term “Diaspora” is confined to “the dispersion of the whole body of Jews living dispersed among the Gentiles after the captivity” (OED 321). However, it was extended in colonial period to describe the transportation of indentured labours from colonial countries to South Africa and other plantation colonies. They were called as labour diaspora or proletariat diaspora. In 1980s and onwards the word is used for all types of migration emptied of its original meaning full of pain and compulsion. Webster’s dictionary also extends the term “diaspora” to “any scattering of people with a common origin, background, beliefs etc”. (399).

Literally, Diaspora means to scatter or dispersal. In the study of cultural movements, it refers to a loss of homeland, a shifting of population from one location to another. William Safran has applied the term to expatriate communities, which have dispersed from an original center to two or more peripheral or foreign regions in his article ‘Diasporas in Modern Societies’. He has argued against the extended use of the term Diaspora as a metaphoric designation to describe the categories of expatriates, refugees, expel, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants and ethnic and racial minorities. He has opposed the generalization of term in his article, ‘The Jewish Diaspora in a Comparative and Theoretical Perspective’.

Robin Cohen revised William Safran’s list of features of Diaspora and finalized the consolidated list. According to him, Diasporas are characterized by:

Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically to two or more foreign regions. . . . in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions; . . . a collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its
location, history, suffering and achievements; . . .
idealization of the real or imagined home. . . a collective
commitment of its maintenance, restoration, safety,
prosperity, even to its creation; retaining relationship
through visits to homeland having the desire to return;
sharing a strong ethnic consciousness based on common
history, common cultural and religious heritage and the
belief in a common fate; aware of the troubled relationship
with the host societies; cherishing sense of empathy and co-
responsibility with co-ethnic members in other countries
with the hope of enriching with a tolerance of pluralism.

(Cohen 17)

Thus, Diaspora emerges out of migration, sometimes imposed; sometimes
voluntary and gives rise to traumas of dislocation and separation.

The Diaspora or the exile is “not just a demographic dislocation but
an important force in world culture” (Ghosh 243). It is directly related to
the indigenous traditions, cultures along with the identity formation and
cultural dissemblance in the alien land. The exile actually self-imposed
exile has been defined differently. For Edward Said, it is “one of the
saddest fates” (47), “dislocation or an inbetweenness” (52, 58). One loses
family and familiar place, becomes a sort of permanent outcast, and never
feels at home. He is always, “inconsolable about the past, bitter about the
present and the future” (Said 47). He suffers from dominant sense of
“otherness” and becomes “outsider” in a “state of being fully adjusted”
(Said 53). He can neither belong here nor belong there. Exile is self-exile
and does not mean to be “totally cut off, isolated hopelessly, separated
from your place of origin” (Said 48). However it keeps the immigrant
hanging in the middle, “neither completely at one with the new setting or
fully disencumbered of the old, beset with half involvement and half
detachment, nostalgic and sentimental on one level, an adept mimic or secret outcast on another” (Said 49).

Out of this trauma of migration, the literature of Diaspora emerges. The Diaspora writer has to identify himself with the prevalent social, political, and personal reality. He suffers from lack of nationality, despair and anguish, undefined social potential, non-identified existence, and imposition of the alien culture. So the immigrant writer struggles for identify formation through formation of literature. Paranjape observes in *In Diaspora: Theories, Histories, Texts*:

> Since Diaspora writing emanates from identify formation leading to further and more and more sophisticated articulation of identity, or manifesting community, nationhood, and also large global contexts, it is important to remember and perceive Diaspora space as at all times explanatory, fluid and dynamic so that intersections with histories, past and futures do not convey into rigid boundary laden states. (Paranjape 59)

Central to the concept of Diaspora is the process of migration. It is not casual travel but is about, “setting down and putting roots elsewhere” (Brah 182). Said’s *Orientalism* states that, geographical and political borders are constructed politically or ideologically. Their crossing brings out the dislocation and displacement because of “universal practice of designating in one’s mind a familiar place which is “ours” and an unfamiliar space beyond “ours” which is “theirs” is a way of making geographical distinctions that can be entirely arbitrary (Said 54). These imaginative boundaries also accompany “the social, ethnic, cultural ones” (54). In ‘Prologue’ to *The Literature of Indian Diaspora*, Vijay Mishra describes the world of Diaspora as, “Wandering between two worlds, one dead / The other powerless to be born; . . . hovered between two worlds,
our own, which even then seemed dead, and another, of the diaspora, not quite capable of being born in a world where the cultural logic of assimilation was the norm” (Mishra xvii).

According to critics like William Safran and Aijaz Ahmad, exile or Diaspora does not refer to those people who are living for professional reason by choice and not by force. Exiles are those, “who are prevented against their own commitment and desire, from living in the country of their birth by the authority of state... any state... by fear of personal annihilation” (Ahmad 84). Exile and Diaspora is “not privilege but impossibility, not profession, but pain” (84). Thus, the immigrants using the terms Diaspora or exile for them are exactly self-exile, except some like Salman Rushide and Taslima Nasrin sentenced by Ayatollah Khomeini and Bangladesh government respectively. However, in the contemporary world exile, immigration, Diaspora, and professional preference have become synonymous and mutually indistinguishable because of trend of using the word exile to describe the state of soul rather than fact of material life.

Although migration happens out of exile or self-exile, it causes the loss of geographical landmarks and separation from the land of origin. It affects the immigrants’ sensibility to fill him with the sense of not belonging. Rushdie defined it as excess of belonging in his *Imaginary Homelands*. He writes, “exiles or immigrants or expatriates are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back... we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost” (Rushdie10). In the process of looking back with the sense of “physical alienation” in mind, they “create fictions... imaginary homelands, Indias of mind’ (10). Haunted by loss, unable to recover what is lost, the expatriates become “wounded creatures, cracked lenses, capable only of fractured
perception” (12). Through these fractured perceptions, immigrants create the distorted vision of the world left behind.

The diasporic literature generally deals with the negative experiences of alienation, loneliness, home and homelessness, rootedness and existential rootlessness, nostalgia and past, identity issues, cultural encounter and assimilation, marginality and centre, memories and sufferings, frustration, multiculturalism, hybridity, cultural alienation, language grievances, and loss of sense of belonging. The diasporic literature deals continuously with such negative experiences. It does not have independent identity and unique characteristic to determine its separate status and to reflect the ‘Indianness’. It is just “maze of nothingness repeating the same sort of ideas in every piece of writing in almost all works of all writers; you may call it a negative procreation” (Jha 98). Jha calls it as labyrinth of tautology and nihility. Although such homogenization is not possible because each Diaspora has his individual experience to express, as Vijay Mishra writes, “All diasporas are unhappy, but every Diaspora is unhappy in its own way” (Mishra1). They are caught within episteme of real or imagined displacements and have to find shelter in the creation of literature to exist.

The migrant situation means being in nowhere place. Therefore in diasporic literature, memory plays indispensable role to record the diverse experiences of life. Memory is the power, act, or process of mind of recalling experiences, persons, happenings, and time. The memory is always in past tense, indicates absence or what is forgotten, and tries to make absent present. Rushdie writes in *Imaginary Homelands* that memory is “a process of filtration” used to make the absent present, “we make the past to suit our present purpose using memories as a tool” (Rushdie 23-24). From a purely psychological stance, memories originate in perception of experiences that leave some kind of trace in the human
brain, because, “. . . memory is such a flexible, selective, changing process that our ‘remembrance of things past’ are imperfect, distorted, or just not recorded at all. And we even think we remember events that never happened” (Morgan 183).

Memory also implies nostalgia, homesickness that could be remedied by romanticizing the past and aching for what is lost. Nostalgia is also important aspect of diasporic consciousness. By simultaneously distancing and bringing closer the imagined past, nostalgia exiles us from the present and the past is constructed as “Simple, pure, ordered, a shining geography” (Alexander, FL 197). In his article ‘Invention, Memory and Place’ Said defines memory as the record of the past incidents that are “manipulated and intervened in for sometimes urgent purpose in the present” (Said 177). Through making up memories, the diasporic poet continuously tries to catch the dead past before it fades away completely. It is this making and unmaking of memories that creates a deep sense of attachment to the past places and people by juxtaposing past incidents with present. Ultimately, it results in discursive formation of identity and the self. Manju Jaidka writes:

(in) the fictional world of diasporic writers we have, thus, Utopias and anti-utopias, real worlds and the imaginary. The demarcating lines are faint: the different worlds blend and merge so that they are not easily distinguishable, and the perspectives keep shifting. These worlds are a mix of memory and desire, memory of a bygone time and, perhaps, the desire to regain the same. (Jaidka 20)

The memory of the Diaspora poet is often fragmented, fractured, and displaced by struggle of life in adopted land, and “memory and its representations touch very significantly upon questions of identity, of nationalisms, of power and authority” (Said 175). The memories and the
past incidents of the migrants life may be different because there is mingling of real memories with the imagined, exaggerated memories and then memory, begins to be “used, misused exploited, rather than something that sits inertly there each person to possess and contain” (Said177).

Diaspora, as a dislocation from homeland, continuously dwells on “homing desire” (Brah192). It is not just a desire to possess, reconquer the physical or geographical territory, but it is a need for belonging to an identity rooted in the land of origin. Consequently, the dream of returning to the homeland and longing for space becomes the defining feature of the diasporic imaginary. The space implies both geographical and psychic space. Gaston Bachelard’s *The Poetics of Space* (1969) leads to a general understanding that geographical space is a synthesis of ‘home’ and ‘non-home’ while ‘self’ and ‘other’ represent the two contradictory aspects of psychic space. The idea of home is associated with a sense of warmth and feeling of oneness with the surroundings. Therefore, the separation from home besieges the immigrant by nostalgia, homesickness, a desire to return to homeland particularly to the ancestral home. The concept of home focuses home as a desirable place associating idea of home to a stable refuge and shelter - a place where one can feel a sense of belonging, a sense of being wanted – a place which offers the possibility of being loved as well as of loving. In fact, the word ‘home’ implies sweetness, comfort, love, friendship, safety, and stability. Edward Said analyses Gaston Bachelard’s idea of Space in his *Orientalism*:

The inside of house, he said, acquires a sense of intimacy, secrecy, security, real or imagined, because of the experience that came to seem appropriate for it. The objective space of a house-its corners, corridors, cellar, rooms is far less important than what poetically it is endowed with, which is
usually a quality with an imaginative or figurative value we can name and feel: thus a house may be haunted or homelike, or prison like, or magical. So space acquires emotional and even rational sense by a kind of poetic process, whereby the vacant or anonymous reaches of distance are converted into meaning for us there”. (Said 54)

For an immigrant home means, “a place of belonging, of origin, of birth, usually conceptualized as a national space, and that which is not home as that exists outside this national space” which is “geographically constituted socially restricted, and culturally signified” (Mythyala 96). The notion of home implies cognitive environment that provides shelter, security, and comfortability. Therefore, the concepts of ‘being at home’ and ‘homelessness’ are the matter of not only physical place but also of time, place and the memory space. That means, “One is at home when one inhabits a cognitive environment where one’s identity is best mediated and homeless when such a cognitive environment is eschewed” (Dutt–Ballerstadt 109).

The expatriate, travelling in the desire of new world often finds himself in the suspended state dangling between the past and the present, memories and the immigrant life, the ancestral home and the new adopted home. The desire to maintain the traditions and culture of the ancestral land and the pull of the new culture change the sensibility of the immigrant and take him to the uncertain world. Hence, he creates the imagined space for himself through writing as Brah observes:

Where is home? On the one hand, “home is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense, it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of ‘origin’. On
the other hand, home is also the lived experience of locality” (Brah192).

Quest for identity is an important issue in diasporic life. Identity is a marker, a landmark, and a sign pointing to what is distinctive in subject. Identity is also rational, associative of space, culture, and language. Though the term is derived from Latin “idem” meaning “same”, its English version highlights the distinctiveness as “always being itself rather than something else” (Heyes 3). Personal identity highlights one’s sense of self and its persistence. It is characterized by an emphasis on its inner voice and capacity for authenticity and the ability to find a way of being that is somehow true to oneself. The notion of identity has been problematic in the modern society. The increasing interest of the 1960s in the personal voice and the lyric speaker and the feminist assertion of women’s experiences in women-literature, have greatly revolutionized the concept of identity (Kinnahan 2).

In the immigrant situation, identities are made up of cultural representations, and literature is one crucial arena in which the making is done. In the immigrant discourse, a whole lot of rewriting is done in the making and unmaking of identities. From the personal to the racial, from the local to the distant the immigrant writer has to travel back and forth in order to forge an identity. The quest for identity initiates the points of events that are both visible and invisible. The socio-political changes in the host country have created new consciousness and enfolded in it the fluctuating identities. Out of the struggle of resettlement in host country and in an effort to straddle, two cultures come out the identities, which are “plural and partial” (Rushdie 15). Peter Barry also emphasized the divided, fluid and unstable nature of identity under the influence of post-structuralism and deconstruction (Barry 197).
The question of identity in the case of woman writer attains complexity for the reason that she has to counter double marginalization under the foreign yoke and the indigenous patriarchy. In spite of the post-structuralist rejection of the lyric speaker and theolarisation of the materiality of language, there has been a growing tendency in women writers to foreground personal voices (Kinnahan 4). The women are marginalized as the weaker sex and “lesser” individual. Consequently, the woman writer has to reposition herself through formation of literature. Her writing stems from her day-to-day common experiences and her multiple roles as wife, mother, and citizen. By using memory as a strategy, she rewrites both her personal and social history. However, the quest for identity by tracing the roots, by refereeing back to some stable point of origin becomes futile effort because there is no single, pure source in the multicultural context. According to Gloria Anzaldúa, the American Mexican writer, all identities are hybrids, formed over time through the interaction of multiple cultures and being transformed by new encounters in the borderlands between one culture and another (4).

The hyphenated situation, both in local space and outside, has been significantly affecting the identity crisis and leads to quest for identity as Muthyala observes, “To live in hyphen is to affirm a form of living that is double, fractured, anxious and unpredictable” (Muthyala94). The use of English instead of the mother tongue alienates woman writer from the readers of her space and makes her linguistically and culturally dislocated. However, the postmodernist quest for identity upholds the possibility of heterogeneous selves with multiple identities.

The process of assimilation and acculturation in the alien culture is not so easy. Neither totally detached from homeland nor fully adjusted with the adopted land, the diasporic subject always remains in the perpetual state of tension and irresolution making him hyphenated
identity and becomes “the sign of a mode of indeterminacy that foregrounds the transactional itinerary of practices of self-identifications” (Muthyala 98). Because of this indeterminancy, the quest for identity becomes inevitable. The new subjectivity is not an outcome of radical cultural and social transformation but production of past personal memory and the necessity of living in the place of dislocation as it is forced existence.

1.3 Feminist Consciousness

In every ideal social structure, woman holds a significant position as a better half of humanity but in reality, she is just lesser half. They are thought as inferior, other, lacking, and wrong. She has never been considered equal to man who is considered as norm, a human being, and the right being. Woman is always thought in terms of her anatomy. She is defined by limiting criteria, without reciprocity, as Simone de Beauvoir observes in ‘Introduction to The Second Sex’:

Woman has ovaries, a uterus; these peculiarities imprison her in her subjectivity, circumscribe her within the limits of her own nature. It is often said that she thinks with her glands. . . He thinks of his body as a direct and normal connection with the world, . . . whereas he regards the body of woman as a hindrance, a prison, weighed down by everything peculiar to it. ‘The female is a female by a virtue of a certain lack of qualities,’ said Aristotle, ‘We should regard the female nature as afflicted with a natural defectiveness’. (Beauvoir43-44)

Feminism is a movement of modern women. It owes its emergence to such biased misconceptions and depressing images of women. These biases and misconceptions work for the subjugation of woman and
protection of the interest of patriarchy and male domination. The term ‘feminism’ designates the movement for the protection of rights of women and implies correlations with the equal social, political, and economic rights of women with men. The term and movement became popular in 20th century with the western women’s struggle for ‘right for votes’ which came out to be the well-organized socio-political movement for women’s emancipation from the patriarchal oppression. The feminism as a movement struggles to secure women’s equal rights and opportunities as men, their freedom, individuality, honour, and dignity.

Feminism exists because women are, and have been oppressed everywhere and at every level of exchange in all modes of life. Marks and Courtivron define feminism, “as an awareness of women’s oppression-repression that initiates both analyses of the dimension of this oppression-repression, and strategies for liberation” (Marks and Courtivron x). In Encyclopedia Britannica, feminism is a term of later 19th century to designate the motive and ideas that underline the modern movement in favour of rights of women.

It would be interesting to focus what Rebecca West says about feminism. She writes, “I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is, I only know that other people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat or prostitute” (West 219). Woman is the silenced part of the humanity. She has to bear the burdens of being born in wrong class, race or sex, denied education, nourishment and many other forms of oppression. If she tries to raise voice about her life, her rights and choices, she has been called as feminist and her consciousness has been referred as feminist consciousness. Sandra Lee Barkty notes in her examination of the phenomenology of oppression that “Feminist consciousness is consciousness of victimization”. Women see themselves as victims and
receive “an altered perception of oneself and one’s society”. This victimization is the part of social reality imposed on them by an alien and hostile force outside of oneself. The oppression is created and perpetuated in the form of “the blatantly unjust treatment of women” and “a stifling and oppressive system of sex-role differentiation” (Barkty 15-16).

Feminists refer to the society and system of patriarchy as the hostile forces while some owe the oppression of women to men. The recognition of women’s victim status is directly related to the feminist awareness on a personal and collective level as Stephanie Genz observes, “Women’s feminist awakening and their raised consciousness are thus intimately connected with an acceptance of victimization and a growing awareness of alienation, both from society and from one’s self” (Genz 39). However the women are oppressed not only from the outside, but they are also victims of their personal beliefs and convictions, caught in “the prison of their own minds” (Friedan 265).

In such circumstances, feminism came into existence with feminine psyche trying to define woman’s role in society. The post modernist feminists such as Helene Cixous, Susan Gubar, Julia Kristeva and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak claim that traditional forms of female oppression still exist in modern society. Feminism challenges the age-long tradition of gender discrimination. Its main aim is reformist and intends to correct misconception about women in society and to suggest remedy for it. It tries to subvert the male strategies of oppression and gives better understanding of women’s condition.

The women’s movement of 1960s marked the renewal of an old tradition of thought and action for gender equality. The history of feminism is traversed into three waves. The first wave deals with the suffrage movement, which advocated for equal rights and gender justice for women. The feminist activities between 1960’s and 1980’s comprise
the second wave of feminism that struggled for civil rights of black. It encouraged women to understand aspects of their own personal lives. Girl’s education, female sexuality, marriage, prostitution, and housework are the crucial issues of the second wave feminism. The third wave of feminism began in 1990’s and responded to the perceived failures of second wave. It deals with the local and diverse views of feminism. However today’s feminism is made up of a number of different philosophical strands. It does not rely only on Western thoughts but derives the inspiration from particular moments in intellectual history.

The analysis of the contemporary views of women’s position, under the influence of modernization and social changes provides the contradictory images of women. On the one hand, there are middle class, educated women in metros and urban areas who are working, moving freely, and generating the impression of being capable, efficient, powerful women on the social, political, and cultural fronts. On the other hand, in smaller towns or rural areas or in the city slums women still suffer from social and economic oppression. The growing instances of violence against women at both rural and urban level are indicative of their status in society. However, their roles are not confined to the home and family. They have become breadwinner of the family. Yet they have to face the gendered discriminations in the form of the restrictions on their role in society, the gender stereotypes, and so on. The exploitation of Indian women ranges from female infanticide, the abortion of the female fetus, neglect, and undernourishment of the girl child, denial of education to girls, rape, pre-puberty marriages, wife beating, and the harassment of a bride leading to her suicide or murder.

Though love and marriage are central concerns for women, the radical feminists have very untraditional approach to love. Love is considered more ensnaring for the woman than it is for the men. Women
willingly sacrifice themselves at the altar of love. In history, love, sexuality, and gender have often been used as the most potent weapons for the oppression of woman. Shulamith Firestone strikes at the very core of the issue. She writes, “love, perhaps even more than childbearing is the pivot of women’s oppression today” (Firestone 26). On the similar vein is Simone de Beauvoir’s statement in The Second Sex about love as “the curse that lies heavily upon women” (669). While J. S. Mill states “Marriage is the worst form of slavery for women” (Mill207). Annie Leclere calls love as the “Frightful prison of Love” and when this prison will finally be opened, “only then we know what pleasure, knowledge, language, really mean” (Leclere 237).

The feminists opposed to the economic or patriarchal system that forced women into loveless marriages. For radical feminists, marriage is at the very root of woman’s subjections to the man because through it man controls both her reproduction and her person. The concept of marriage and family degrades the wife as ‘unpaid domestic laborer’ and love has been targeted as a way of trapping women into accepting their own oppression. The radical feminists have criticized the way in which women have been made the victims of male lust both within and outside marriage whereas Shulamith Firestone in her The Dialectic of Sex (2003) relates women’s oppression to her reproductive capacity. According to her patriarchy has taken advantage of women’s biology, particularly their reproductive capacity to handicap them and hinder their advancement.

**1.4 Violence and Terrorism**

The term violence conveys the painful, awful, and terrifying sense and implies the use of physical force applied against the wishes of the individual or state. In the psychological context, the violent behavior is an intentional physical aggressive behaviour against person. The violence
can be understood as coercive, destructive behaviour using great deal of powerful aggressive energy and force that is often destructive, merciless, anarchist, turbulent, outrageous, and unlawful. The violence is inflicted upon or caused by one human being to another, generally inflicted by transgressor upon a victim, by powerful against powerless. The World Health Organization (WHO) in its first World Report on Violence and Health defined violence as, “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal development or deprivation” (Wikipedia).

There are various facets of violence. The colonial violence is the violence inflicted by the colonizers on the native. In India, colonial violence began with the first encounter between Indians and the Europeans. The Mutiny of 1857, the first Indian Freedom war fought against British was the first violent resistance against the colonizers. Though Fanon argues in The Wretched of the Earth that, colonial violence is responded by counter violence by native, the Indian people under the able leadership of Mahatma Gandhi were following path of non-violence. Therefore, colonizers encountered very less number of incidents of counter violence in India.

However, since Independence at the stroke of midnight, India has come across number of violent events. The imperial policy of ‘Divide and Rule’ culminated in the tragic partition of India. The seeds of Hindu-Muslim riots were visible during the war between India and Pakistan on the Kashmir issue. The nation’s partition was a tragedy as well as a reality. India’s independence was eclipsed by the tragic historical event of the assassination of the Father of the Nation on 30 January 1948. Its consequence was the communal riots all over India. India suffered
tremendously from three wars during the pre-emergency period. First, the Chinese attack in 1962, secondly, Pakistan launched the 1965 Indo-Pak war, and it was followed by 1971 Indo-Pak war for the Independence of Bangladesh in which India proved to be Victorious. Fighting also occurred between India and Pakistan for the cause of Kashmir.

Indira Gandhi’s imposition of the Emergency in June 1975 was a seminal event of utmost atrocities in the post-Nehruvian India that affected the entire national life. During the Emergency, apart from many atrocities, the main leaders of the opposition were arrested and harassed under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act. In the elections held after the lifting of the Emergency, Indira Gandhi was voted out of the office. However, she came back to power in 1980 once again.

India adopted the non-Proliferation Treaty, but did not adhere to it. India tested its nuclear capability with the fission technology in Pokharan in 1974 and latter in 1998. During the 1980s supply of American warfare to Pakistan increased challenges before Indian security. During the 1990, the soldiers of India and Pakistan have been exchanging fire and its outcome has been the Kargil war of 1999 in which our troops won victory. It has been Pakistan’s fourth war for Kashmir.

The communal violence between Hindu and Muslim is the major threat to the multicultural existence of India. The construction of secularism was adopted to Indian conditions by following the religious ideals of Mahatma Gandhi and the modernist outlook of Jawaharlal Nehru. However, since 1980s state secularism has been under attack by the political forces mobilized by ‘Hindutva’ and ‘Anti Secularists’. However, the major Hindu-Muslim violence in post-independence India after partition riots began after demolition of Babri Masjid in December 1992. Such willful destruction of the cultural heritage of other religions or civilization is called as “Cultural Terrorism” (Ahmed 27). This version of
terrorism gained prominence when the Taliban government decided to destroy the two enormous fifteen hundred years old Buddhist statues in the valley of Bamiyan. The consequences of the communal riots after the demolition of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya on 6 December 1992 in North India were resulted into the series of thirteen bomb blasts in Mumbai. The recent terrorist attack on World Trade Centre in America on 11 September 2001 and the Afghanistan crisis have immediately been followed by the attacks on the Parliamentary Building of India in Delhi and the USA Embassy in Kolkata. In modern times, violence has become an indispensable part of the historical reality in India and it is an indication of an aesthetic of indifference towards humanity.

Terrorism, a special kind of violence, is situated and defined in various contexts such as crime, politics, war, propaganda, and religion. The terrorist violence has been expressed typically in indiscriminate bombings, armed assaults on civilians, focused assassinations, kidnapping, hostage-takings, and hijacking. Terrorist violence is intended to terrorize. Any laws of war are not applicable to terrorism because it attacks on persons taking no active part in the hostilities. The innocents are killed in war and terrorism and both are equally repulsive. War and terrorism can be differentiated as unintentional war damage to civilians and intentional attacks on civilians. According to Alex Schmid, instead of understanding terrorism as violence, it can be better understood as propaganda. Violence aims at behavior modification by coercion. While propaganda aims at the same by persuasion. Terrorism is the mixture of both. It uses violence against one victim, and seeks to coerce and persuade others. Thus, “Terrorism often prefers to demonstrate to the citizens the state’s impotence of protecting them all the time” (Alex 207). By creating a climate of fear in order to manipulate target audience at the emotional level through media, it perpetuates terror in masses and the
success of terrorist activity is measured in the context of the amount of publicity it receives. The terrorist intention is to assure free access to the news system because “Terrorism without its horrified witnesses would be as pointless as a play without an audience” (Juergensmeyer 139).

The violence in the name of religion has been wrongly considered as sacrifice. The French Philosopher Blaise Pascal already noted in the 16th century that, “Men never do evil so openly and contentedly as when they do it from religious conviction” (qtd. in Alex 211). The religious terrorism is based on fundamentalism or a religious ideology. This obviously is fissiparous in nature as the global civilization is divided in multifarious religions. As Harmon puts forward, the rise of religiously motivated gunman is the most important fact about international terrorism since the end of cold war. Religion, ordinarily a wellspring of hope, life, and virtue stirs such deep passions that it also sometimes leads to violent actions, to war and even to terrorism (Harmon 27). Moreover, Islamic radicals are now the greatest threat to the US national security, proved by 9/11 incidents. Some critics see the 9/11 attacks by other side, “An act of terrorism can also be interpreted as a sacrifice with religious connotations, born from humiliation in the face of overwhelming power” (Alex 214). Thus the 9/11 attack has been seen in different terms as an attempt by Jehadis to establish a sectarian Islamic state, as reaction to the globalization and west hegemonic power and thirdly as reaction to violence of the West and the violence of the modern. Although whatever may be the reason; 9/11 attack succeeded in terrorizing US People and creating psychological stress on public.
1.5 Other Themes

1.5.1 Racism

Multiculturalism springs from the multicultural existence of the immigrants who belong to one country but whose origin lies in another country and what is more, they work in a third country. Though the concept of multiculturalism intends to offer equality and respectability to all cultural differences of the native and variegated immigrants, “the term ‘multiculturalism’ itself envisages within its corpus the basic concept of difference in culture, race” (Caldeira 24). Though multicultural society is highly egalitarian policy, the racial discrimination exists in it. When the ‘other’ cultures tend to be measured against ‘dominant’, they find themselves placed at the margins of the society. Multicultural society declares itself liberal towards immigrants irrespective of their nationality, religion, and race. However, the third world immigrants have to face the discrimination in subtle manner in various facets of their lives. To emphasize the hierarchization of power in Canadian multicultural mosaic, “multiculturalism” is ironically termed as “multivuluralism” in the novel No New Land (Vassanji 54).

The racism, with reference to immigrant experience, has been more than just expression of hate. The racism evidences “prejudice based on the race, colour, ancestry, ethnicity, religion, or national origin of the victim” (Goldberg 17). It is also “an international postmodern bias based on artificially and scientifically vacuous distinction between biologically conceived racial group” (Goldberg 19). Webster’s dictionary defines race as “one of the major subdivisions of mankind, regarded as having a common origin and exhibiting a relatively constant set of physical traits” while racism is “An excessive and irrational belief in or advocacy of the superiority of a given group, people or nation, on racial grounds alone” (1038). It is also referred as race hatred. The term racism implies the
concept of cultural hierarchization and “Otherness” which is not just a differential sign but implies a certain “lack of qualities” (Caldeira24). The sad truth about the racial discrimination is that the othered man is irritated, baited, and victimized for the prime crime of colour of his skin because skin is both constituted as both an index of identity and difference. The form of difference takes subtle shapes in varying degrees. In the immigrant situation, the skin is the chief signifier of cultural and racial difference recognized as common knowledge in a range of cultural, political, and historical discourses. It plays public part in everyday life of immigrants as well as natives.

Racist expression can be manifested in emotive effect, in intention and in outcome. The refusal of a landlord to rent room to black people or an employer to hire them is the common facet of racism. Such race-based exclusions are licensed by dominant racial group that reduces the victims, individuals and their racial group to a fixed and devalued understanding of possibility, propriety, and acceptability. Thus, racism is not mere hate but predicates preservation of the white hegemony, power by means of which they can control another person or his resources and relation to resources. Racist expression is “the assertion of power by perpetrators who often otherwise lack it, or it is the maintenance of relations of power, to remind an individuals or class of people who is that occupies the position of power” (Goldberg 21). The racism is “crime against humanity” and is committed by “the relatively powerful against the powerless, in class, gendered, and ethno racial terms” (Goldberg 261). The colour consciousness is the product of racist societies, which is directly connected to making the ‘other’ inferior. The racist creates his inferior as Fanon writes in *Black Skin, White Masks* (65). Thus, racism works towards projection of white supremacy.
1.5.2 Resistance

The resistance is the product and expression of deep dissatisfaction and disappointment with the contemporary nation and situation. It provides the platform to generate discursive practices against post colonialist and neo colonialist exploitation. It is a resistance to the all oppressors may be foreign colonizers or indigenous rulers. In order to understand the foregrounding of the resistance in contemporary writers, it is essential to peep into historical perspectives.

India got Independence in 1947 and marked the commencement of a new age. In his famous Independence Day speech, Jawaharlal Nehru promised that India’s tryst with destiny included not only the guarantee of political and economic self-reliance but also a commitment to the ideals of democracy and secularism. The Indian state confirmed its business interests and its coinciding responsibility toward ensuring a just, egalitarian society. However, by the late sixties tensions began to surface the plans for industrial growth, agricultural development and social reforms. The rural classes resisted the changes that they perceived to be working against them. Major peasant rebellions emerged and spread throughout the country. The earliest and perhaps most spectacular of these protests was the Naxalite movement, a series of decentralized revolts. In this movement, tribal and landless peasantry led armed resistance against the landlords and government. The early seventies also witnessed several riots over food shortages, railway strikes, and anti-price agitations along with campaigns protesting violence against women significantly. All these crises constituted a variety of alternative voices, which had been effectively silenced during India’s transition from colony to nation.

In response to these different movements or implosions, an obviously threatened and disturbed central government reacted with
increasing repressive measures, ultimately declaring a state of emergency in 1975. Indira Gandhi, then Prime Minister of India postponed elections and suspended civil liberties. It was insisted that as its extreme actions were necessary to the maintenance of order and social justice. The various activists from the revolutionary campaigns were arrested; hundreds of rebels were imprisoned, several urban settlements were annihilated overnight and the movements were either broken or driven underground. Jawaharlal Nehru’s vision of a socialistic India of equal opportunities for all and no political, economic, or social barrier in all fields was crushed down during the Emergency. In 1977, the emergency was finally lifted, elections were held, and for the first time in Indian history, the congress party was voted out of office.

The years that followed thus marked an important turning point in the history of India. The late seventies and eighties witnessed the rise of a powerful Indian commercial class in a changing international scene that was increasingly marked by the pressures of a global capitalist economy. However, the economic development policy resulted in increasing the gap between rich and poor. The problems like illiteracy, unemployment, poverty, crimes, pollution, increasing prices, violence against women, corruption, black money, bureaucracy were making the life of people more complicated and unbearable. The starvation, floods, and famines were adding to the miseries of farmers. In nineties, the liberalization of Economy created new challenges before the people of all classes. The problems of working class: industrial workers and agrarian workers became severe because of rising population, price rising and lack of welfare schemes. Increasing urbanization and slums contaminated the cities to its utmost capacity. The contemporary India witnessed the agitations on all the major issues like water distribution between states, dam building projects on various important rivers, pollution of rivers.
There was the rise of movements to protect the rights of displaced people. All these are examples of resistance, as resistance arises out of dissatisfaction. The gap between what is expected and what is happened marks the failure of the government and creates the site for resistance as Bhabha writes in ‘Signs Taken for Wonder’:

Resistance is not necessarily an oppositional act of political intention, nor is it the simple negation or the exclusion of the ‘content’ of another culture, as difference once perceived. . . (but) the effect of an ambivalence, produced within the rules of recognition of dominating discourses as they articulate the signs of cultural differences. (Bhabha 53)

The writers deal not only with political exploitation but also with exploitation in the name of religion, race, or gender or in academic circle. The depiction of victimized people of all classes and the history distorted by violence and war in literature emphasizes expatriate’s interest in the power relations between the victims and victimizers, the rulers and exploited. They register their resistance by giving voice to the exploited majority. “Women’s movements, peasant struggles or caste and class-based dissent, both during and after colonial rule, allow us to explore the distance between the rhetoric and the reality of the nation state” (Loomba 116). This resistance also attempts to tell other stories of rebellion and struggle.

1.5.3 Burden of Language

literary studies became a mask for economic and material exploitation and were an effective form of political control. The introduction of English studies was mainly intended at protection of British interests. The early generations of English educated Indians were contributing to the literature in mother tongue using ‘vernacular’ for the expression of the interiority and imagination while English was perceived as “rational and functional tool for polemics and persuasion” (Mukherjee 9). With the advance of English education, “English seeped into the intimate and personal domains of men of the elite classes” (Mukherjee 9). Still there has been an “anxiety of Indianness” (Mukharjee 166) which comes out of Indian writer’s effort to express an Indian experience through English. Raja Rao was the first Indian novelist who formulated the language problem that Indian writer had to face. In ‘Foreword’ to Kanthapura, he writes:

One has to convey in a language that is not one’s own the spirit that is one’s own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word ‘alien’, yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up, like Sanskrit or Persian was before – but not of our emotional make up . . . we cannot write like the English. (Rao i-ii)

However, the English language proliferated and penetrated into all aspects of civil strife through administration, profession, commerce, schooling, and media. However, infatuation with English is not without cultural strains. The writing in English creates distance between the writers and their domestic and cultural mooring, alienating them from their mother tongue.
English is the language of intellectual make up and the basis of elite formation in India. Writing in it resulted in a sense of alienation from Indian values and cultural structures, disaffection because language is not only central to literary formulations but also to socio-political and cultural ones. Language is means of communication and a carrier of culture. On the contrary, English is imposed on the natives to alienate them from the self, relatives, and culture. Such alienation always creates the burden which Indian writer has to bear while writing in English.

The poet who writes in English feels culturally alienated and linguistically exiled. The burden of writing in English arises out of writer’s relation with the mother tongue. Partha Chatterjee observes,

(In India)the bilingual intelligentsia came to think of its own language as belonging to that inner domain had to be kept up; language therefore became a zone over which the nation first had to declare its sovereignty and then had to transform in order to make it adequate for the modern world.

(Chatterjee 7)

To appropriate English and render it suitable to convey their experiences, culture, religion, and philosophy in a unique manner quite different from English mainstream writer is difficult task for Indian writer. As he tries to appropriate English, writer’s self is distanced from his native traditions, culture and thought process. Moreover, he faces “crisis of identity” (Parthasarathy 7) because “one of the basic problems for the poets has been to find an adequate and above all a personal language. A few have been successful. But by and large they have not been able to Indianize it” (7). The Indian using the English language feels to some extent alienated. Parthasarathy describes that sense of alienation in his poem ‘Home Coming’,
My tongue in English chains /
I return after a generation to you
. . . . I falter, stumble
Speak a tired language (TTCIP80)

The writing in English hinders the free expression of the intimate feelings. On the other hand, the mother tongue is full of naturalness, authenticity, emphasizes the emotional resonance, and invokes the regional and consequently national consciousness. However, English is other’s language that can hardly provide a vehicle for the expression of the political aspirations, intimate imagination, feeling, and history and for a diasporic writer “the habitations that language can offer are nothing but imaginary and transient - shelters” (Herrero 29).

1.5.4 Subaltern Voice

The subaltern communities, consisting of women, children, religious minorities, tribal and outcastes, belong to a space that was considered peripheral or even alien to the normative codes of life. The term subaltern is used to describe the subordinate classes in the work of Antonio Gramsci. In The Prison Notebooks (1992), Gramsci appropriates the military term, originally used to designate the inferior-ranking soldiers who march at the foot of an army, and it applies to both subordinated people and subjugated systems of knowledge. By Gramsci’s definition, the history of the subaltern is necessarily fragmented and episodic.

Ranjit Guha’s essay ‘On some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India’ (1982) inaugurated the widespread use of the term subaltern. The subaltern classes and groups constitute, “the mass of the laboring population and the intermediate strata in town and country – that is, the people” (Guha8). Guha defined ‘Subaltern’ as “the demographic
difference between the total Indian population and all those we have defined as elite” (Guha8). However in the case of racial subaltern the line between oppressor and oppressed is drawn by caste and not by demographic difference or oppression. The articulation of subaltern voice is crucial for an effort of recovering the histories and perspectives of marginalized people including women, non-whites, non-Europeans, the lower classes, and oppressed classes. Marxists, feminists, and liberal humanists have been engaged in articulating the standpoint of the downtrodden to amplify the voices of the oppressed sections of society.

The term ‘subaltern’ is used to describe those individuals subordinated along the lines of class, gender, caste, race, and culture. It is popularized by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak through her essay entitled “Can the subaltern speak?” For Spivak subaltern means the oppressed subject whose voice has been silenced and she refers to immolation of widows as sati as an example of sexed subalterns. Leela Gandhi defines subaltern studies as, “an attempt to allow the people finally to speak within the jealous pages of elitist historiography and in so doing, to speak for, or to sound the muted voices of, the truly oppressed” (Gandhi 2).

According to Chakravorty Spivak, it is impossible for us to recover the voice of the subaltern, “The subaltern cannot speak. There is no virtue in global laundry lists with ‘woman’ as a pious item. Representation has not withered away. The female intellectual has circumscribed task which she must not disown with a flourish” (Chakravorty Spivak308). Women are doubly oppressed under patriarchy and imperialism. As they are caught between tradition and modernity, “there is no space from where the subaltern (sexed) subject can speak!” (Chakravorty-Spivak 306). Benita Parry contests Spivak’s views and argues that the homogenization of women’s silencing is not valid to the experiences of all colonial women because not all the widows were immolated as Sati.
but the fact is that some of them have survived and have spoken also. Bhabha also has the same view that the subaltern has spoken through the hybridity of colonial text, which contains native voice. Tharu and Lolita (1991) have also argued that the subaltern women have not lost their voice but have spoken. Chakravorty Spivak has restricted the concept of subaltern only up to the gendered subaltern. However, other subalterns are “the colonized/oppressed subjects whose voice has been silenced” (Das 145).

1.5.5 Death

Death, a permanent termination of the biological functions that sustain a living organism has been defined variously by various philosophers, psychologists, and scientists. Death is the condition of being dead. Death, an event as natural as birth, is an inevitable fact of human life. Death has always fascinated man. The death means, “Annihilation, ceasing to exist, would bring all of this planning and nurturing an end. There would be nothing in life to look forward to- no pressing on with the things you presently take to be significant, no fresh undertaking, no future self to look after, no you at all” (Luper 3).

As death means annihilation, then for most of us, most of time, dying would be very bad, painful. However, the ancient philosophers like Epicurus and Socrates tried to convince people that death could not harm us. Steven Luper quotes the letter of Epicurus (341-270) to Menoeceus, “Death . . ., the most awful of evils is nothing to us, seeing that, when we are, death is not come, and, when death is come, we are not”(Luper4). While Socrates considers death harmless and a portal to an afterlife in which we will continue to live well and in that sense unreal. In dying, people get deprived of the good things they would have enjoyed had they lived on. However, as death takes away good, it takes away bad with
good. The death provides escape to those suffering from the devastating loss of a loved one or painful degenerative diseases, proving it a very good thing. According to existentialists like Heidegger and Sartre, the awareness of death is a means of heightening sense of urgency in life that it would otherwise lack. Heidegger also claims that the awareness of death confers upon man a sense of his own individuality. (The Encyclopedia of Philosophy 307, 308)

1.5.6 History and Myths

In the narrow sense of the term, ‘History’ implies the science of the human past, the past, the past events in the development of a particular place, or a nation. In the wider sense, it deals with the development and human acts in the past. History studies “the development of the earth, of the heavens and of species as well as of human activities in the past” (Aron 15). A more common usage looks upon history as the record of the events rather than the events themselves. In general, it signifies some remarkable facts, together with is causes and effects. Sometimes, it is deployed to signify the description of things. It is also dubbed as a polite literature, as an authentic knowledge of different nations. Harry Elmer Barnes includes in history, “all we know about everything man has ever done or thought or hoped or felt” (Barnes3).

Myth, a central device in modern literature, covers an implicit area of meaning related to religion, folklore, anthropology, sociology, psychoanalysis, and fine arts. In a wider sense, a myth is a story dealing with origins and destinies of a community. It explains some of the happenings in nature and various rituals in man’s life. The images of ‘The Second Coming’ or ‘The Last Judgment’ are the best examples of myth that express man’s moral and spiritual evaluations. Myths explain Man’s intimate relationship with gods, demons, animals, nature, and the
mysteries, miracles, coincidences of human life. Myths embody the ethnic attributes of a particular culture; therefore, they become symbolic manifestations of that culture. K. K. Ruthven in his monograph *Myth* states, “Myth is nothing more than primitive science or history, or embodiment of unconscious fantasies” (Ruthven 1). From the psychological point of view, “Myths are the symbolic projections of a people’s hopes, values, fears, and aspirations” (Guerin et.al.159). Myth and literature reflect profound reality as Mark Schorer says, “Myth is fundamental, the dramatic representation of our deepest instinctual life, of a primary awareness of man in the universe, capable of many configuration, upon which all particular opinion and attitudes depend” (29). According to Allan W. Walter, “Myth is to be defined as a complex of stories – some no doubt, fact and some fantasy – which for various reasons, human beings regard as demonstrations of the inner meaning of the universe and of human life” (7). Myths are by nature universal, cultural, collective, and communal which involve all mental faculties.

In expatriate situation, myth making is an instance of the writer’s desire to hang on to old, back in time and space to grope for one’s emotional and cultural roots, to make the connection with the land of origin. The exploration in the history and myths is a kind of attempt of establishing identity and nationhood as the pre-colonial cultural history and myths had been devalued by the colonizers to prove their superiority. As Frantz Fanon discusses in his book *The Wretched Earth* (1976), the depiction of native as insensible to ethics, with negation of values, without morality and beauty, deprived of traditions and myth, is the orientalist picture, which has to be subverted in the culture and tradition of their own nation. Fanon’s another book *Black Skin, White Masks* also emphasizes the death and burial of local cultural originality of the colonized people by the white settlers. Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1995)
defines the Eurocentric Universalism which takes for granted both the superiority of what is European or European cultural tradition as ‘orientalism’ which discriminates ‘East’ as ‘Other’ and inferior to the ‘West’.

Taking into consideration such cultural colonization, the immigrant writers tend to recover the past through history and myths to evoke the pre-colonial version and indigenous cultural heritage of their country. Through the “rejection of Master Narrative” (Abrams and Harpham 237), they create counter narrative in order to fight their way back into a world history written by Europeans. The claim of national cultural sense of the past through history and myth, can maintain the “psycho-affective equilibrium” (Fanon 169) of the native as pointed out in The Wretched Earth. In order to contest the devaluation of cultural past, writer engages himself in recalling the past life. “Past happenings of the bygone days of his childhood will be brought up out of the depths of his memory; old legends will be reinterpreted in the light of a borrowed aestheticism and of a conception of the world which was discovered under the skies” (Fanon179). The reworking on historical ground is an attempt to reconstruct a new identity. In order to repossess its own past and take control of its own reality, Indian immigrant writers redefine themselves and their identity in the context of their roots, community, myths, history and culture. However V.S. Naipaul criticizes this attitude as “Old Indian attitude of defeat, the idea of withdrawal, a turning away from the World, a sinking back into the past” (141).

1.6 Techniques
1.6.1 Poetic Devices

The poet uses rhetorical figures that are some common figures of speech, which deviate or depart from the competent user’s standard or
literal uses of language. Through deviating; the figures of speech achieve special effects. Dr. Hugh Blair wrote in his ‘Lectures on Rhetoric’ that figures of speech are the chief refinements of speech. They are invented after the advancement of language and humankind. He further added that, “want of proper names for every object, obliged them to use one name for many; and of course to express themselves by comparison, metaphors, allusions, and all those substituted forms of speech, which render Language figurative” (Barfield 52).

Critics have attempted topologies of figurative or poetic imagery. They have listed about two hundred and fifty figures and classified them under two or three categories such as sound figures or sense figures, verbal figures and figures of thought. However, the most relevant groups can be figures of congruity and figures of similarity. The traditional figures of congruity are metonymy and synecdoche. Simile and metaphor are figures of similarity.

The thematic study is restricted to the study of what poem says, however, the study of techniques intends to understand how a poet expresses himself. According to L. G. Alexander, every poem is unique and has some special qualities of its own that are called as poetic devices. L.G.Alexander has classified poetic devices in three categories: structural, sense and sound. Structural devices include contrast, repetition, and illustration. Simile, metaphor, and personification are sense devices. Sound devices include alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhyme, assonance, rhythm. Except these three main devices, there are other devices, which are to be focused in the study. They are paradox, transliteration, allusions, synesthesia, apostrophe, voices, exaggeration (hyperbole), rhetorical questions, invocation, inversion, antithesis, parallelism.
1.6.1.1 Structural Devices

a. Contrast

The two opposite pictures are juxtaposed side by side to have the effect of contrast. Sometimes contrast is direct and obvious but sometimes it is implied (Alexander LG 15).

b. Illustration

Illustration is an example that usually takes the form of a vivid picture through which a poet may make an idea clear (Alexander15)

c. Repetition

The device of repetition is used to emphasize particular idea, to express strong feelings of joy, speed of the action. Sometimes the words and sounds are repeated merely for the pleasure that they give to the ear. The repetition of the grammatical constructions, prepositions, nouns gives the poem its movement. Sometimes the effect of the repetition is also strongly onomatopoeic.

1.6.1.2 Sense Devices

a. Simile

Simile is a special sense device, in which the unrelated ideas or objects are brought together. Simile is a direct comparison and can be recognized by the use of words ‘like’ and ‘as’. Conceive and epic simile are the highly elaborated types of similes. Conceive is the farfetched comparison while epic similes are formal, sustained similes in which the secondary subject or vehicle is elaborated far beyond its points of close parallel to the primary subject or tenor.

b. Metaphor

Metaphor is like simile except that the comparison is not direct but implied; the words ‘like’ and ‘as’ are not used. One kind of thing is applied to a distinctly different kind of thing, without asserting a
comparison. In an implicit metaphor, the tenor is not itself specified, but only implied. A mixed metaphor conjoins two or more obviously diverse metaphoric vehicles. A dead metaphor is one, which like ‘the leg of the table’ or ‘heart of the matter’ has been used so long and become so common that we have ceased to be aware of the discrepancy between vehicle and tenor.

In *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1936) I. A. Richards uses the term ‘vehicle’ for the metaphorical word and ‘tenor’ for the subject to which that word is applied. According to this view, a metaphor works by bringing together two dissimilar thoughts of the vehicle and tenor in a way that affects a meaning which is the product of their interaction and should not be understood by assertion of similarity between the two elements. Richards viewed metaphor simply as rhetoric or poetic deviation from ordinary usage. It permeates in all languages and affects our perception and conception of the world.

The most widely accepted definition of metaphor is by Blair, metaphor as “a figure founded entirely on the resemblance which one object bears to another. Hence it is much allied to simile, or comparison; and is indeed no other than a comparison, expressed in abridged form” (Barfield 295). While for Northrop Frye “all metaphors are similes” (Frye *Anatomy of Criticism* 123). For Owen Barfield, “The most conspicuous point of contact between meaning and poetry is metaphor” (Barfield 40). The metaphors can be interpreted variously as they form the various meanings, which are vague and evocative of more and more subtle echoes and reactions.

c. Personification

The inanimate objects are given a human form or they are made to speak. An animal, idea, or thing is given human characteristics. By using comparative metaphors and similes, personification gives living
characteristics to non-living objects. The ‘pathetic Fallacy’ is kind of personification used recurrently in ‘the clouds smile’ and ‘flowers dance’. There is another poetic device defined by I. A. Richards in his Practical Criticism that is Animism. Animism is the projection of human activity into inanimate objects of thought. By personifying the objects, poet gives a dignity and passion to the objects, which he presents. According to Richards, “Sometimes personification allows us to say compendiously and clearly what would be extraordinarily difficult to say without it” (Richards 200). Through personification the abstract concept is also spoken as if it were endowed with life or with human attributes or feelings.

1.6.1.3 Sound Devices

a. Alliteration

Alliteration is a sound device that involves the repetition of initial consonant sounds at frequent intervals.

b. Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia is sometimes called as echoism and suggests, “a word, or a combination of words, whose sound seems to resemble closely the sound it denotes” (Abrams and Harpham 204).

c. Rhyme

Rhyme is the repetition of sounds at the end of words.

d. Rhythm

When read aloud, the sounds of the poem having a definite pattern or stress appeal to the ear. Such pattern of sound is called as rhythm.
1.6.1.4 Antithesis and Parallelism

Parallelism uses grammatically parallel structures in two or more clauses or lines. In antithesis a contrasting ideas are made sharp by the use of words of opposite meaning in contiguous clauses or phrases with grammatically parallel structure manifesting parallelism.

1.6.1.5 Exaggeration

Exaggeration is a great overstatement used to evoke strong feelings or create an impression, which is not to be taken literally.

1.6.1.6 Paradox

“A paradox is a statement which seems on its face to be logically contradictory or absurd yet turns out to be interpretable in a way that makes sense” (Abrams and Harpham 206). Cleanth Brooks claims in his *The Well Wrought Urn*, “the language of poetry is the language of paradox” and further defines paradox as, “the language of sophistry, hard, bright, witty; it is hardly the language of the soul” (Brooks 1).

1.6.1.7 Transliteration

Transliteration is the act or product of transliterating, or of writing words of language by means of the characters of another alphabet.

1.6.1.8 Allusion

Pushpinder Syal defines allusion as, “reference through naming, quotation, part-quotation, description, representation of direct speech, reporting of direct speech etc. and alluding can be seen as referring”(Syal 12). All kinds of references can be allusions, when they refer to something from another context, in another text, the real world, or a historical context. Quotations, indirect references, references to the historical, cultural extra-textual context work as allusion creating new significance of meaning.
1.6.1.9 Synesthesia

In literary sense, the term is applied to “description of one mode of sensation in terms of another” color is attributed to sounds, odour to colour, sound to odour and so on (Abram and Harpham 308). The loud colors, bright sounds, sweet music are the examples of synesthesia. Richard Fogle explains the term synesthesia as “a particular species of imagery which purposes chiefly to establish relationship between the differen nods of sensation, finding for example, analogies between colour and music, music and odour, odour and colour”(Fogle 101).In synesthesia the images reflecting different sense experiences are juxtaposed together.

1.6.1.10 Apostrophe and Invocation

Apostrophe is “a direct and explicit address either to an absent person or to an abstract or non-human entity” (Abrams and Harpham 267). If such address is to god, muse, or other supernatural beings to assist the poet in his composition, it is called as invocation.

1.6.1.11 Rhetorical Question

Rhetorical question is a device of grammar. A rhetorical question is “a sentence in a grammatical form of a question which is not asked in order to request information or to invite a reply, but to achieve a greater expressive force than a direct assertion” (Abrams and Harpham 268). The rhetorical question implies forceful assertion that makes the poem persuasive and imparts rhetorical tone to utterance of poet’s feelings. The questions in poetry put forward the inner thoughts of the poet in philosophical manner and reflect his concern about the world.

1.6.1.12 Anecdotes

Poetry tells us a story, describes an object or situation, narrates an event, or simply expresses feelings. Poet uses anecdotes, as the most
personal and indirect form of fictional expression through poetry, through
which poet can speak directly to an audience as narrator does in stories.

1.6.1.13 Voice and Persona

In literary discourse, there is a speaker, who has determinate
personal qualities and who expresses attitudes toward both the characters
and materials within the work and towards the audience for whom work
is presented, which is called as voice. The persona in the poem is term
applied to the first person speaker who tells the story in a narrative poem
or novel and whose voice we hear in a lyric poem.

1.6.1.14 Dramatic monologue

A monologue is a lengthy speech by a single person. Dramatic
monologue is the component of poem as soliloquy is of play. A single
person utters the speech that makes up the whole of the poem.

1.6.1.15 Stream of Consciousness

Stream of consciousness is a phrase used to describe, “the
unbroken flow of perceptions, memories, thoughts and feelings in the
waking mind” (Abrams and Harpham 293). The stream of consciousness
as a narrative technique in modern poetry reproduces the full spectrum
and spontaneous flow of speaker’s mental process.

1.6.2 Poetic Diction

Language of literature is language of communication and is laden
with embellishments of various kinds and verbal artistry. The language
springs into being from it is uttered, heard, or thought by men. Therefore
the language in poetry is much more than the system of signs and signs
by which it is conveyed. Owen Barfield writes about poetic diction that,
“When words are selected and arranged in such a way that their meaning
either arouses, or is obviously intended to arouse, aesthetic imagination,
the result may be described as, poetic diction” (Barfield 13). Shelley calls
Encyclopedia Britannica defines poetic diction as “grandiose elevated and unfamiliar language, supposedly the prerogative of poetry but not of prose” (online). The reference of poetic diction owes its origin to Aristotle’s remarks in *Poetics* that it should be clear without being mean. The subsequent generations of the poets paid more attention to moral points and avoided meanness without cultivating significant clarity. They strictly followed the poets of past generation and used heavy expressions, archaic words and elaborated language that seemed artificial to the poet critic William Wordsworth. He rebelled against it and advocated the use of language really used by men in poetry. But Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria* (1817) objected Wordsworth’s theory by saying that Wordsworth himself was not following it in many of his poems. However, the modern critics have taken different stance by declaring that there is no peculiar diction to poetry, though there may be diction peculiar to an individual. The diction is the conscious power of choosing terms with an effect of peculiar precision from the wide range of available words. So it is individual characteristic. The diction comprises of concrete imagery, abstract concepts, words from other languages, phrases, and repetitive phrases, allusions, geographical words, inversions and deletions, unconventional versification, academic references, archaism, scientific words, hyperbolic words, symbols, metaphors, similes and epithets. In the present study, the focus will be on specific types of words used by Meena Alexander.

1.6.3 Imagery

Imagery is one of the most common terms in criticism and is variable in the meaning. It implies ‘mental pictures’ as experienced by the reader of the poem, to the totality of the components which make a poem.
C. D. Lewis in his *Poetic Image* states that an image “is a picture made out of words” and that “a poem may itself be an image composed from multiplicity of images” (Lewis 17-18). In all these senses, imagery makes poetry concrete as opposed to abstract. Imagery that is images taken collectively is used to signify all the objects and qualities of sense perception referred to in a poem or other work of literature, whether by literal description, by allusion, or in the vehicles of its similes and metaphors. Along with implying a visual reproduction of the object denoted, it also includes the qualities that are auditory, tactile (touch), thermal (heat and cold), olfactory (smell), gustatory (taste), and kinesthetic (sensations of movement).

*Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* explains that an image is the reproduction of some experience perceived physically or felt under the spell of hallucination or dream, or it may be imagined by the sensitive mind (363). In *The Imagery of Keats and Shelley: A Comparative Study*, Richard Harter Fogle states that the imagery is “the expression of sense-experience channeled through sight, hearing, smell, touched and taste” (Fogle 3). Although these expressions try to represent the original sensations felt by poet’s mind, it is a fact that, imagery cannot take place of original experience. Images may be explicit as in the form of simile or an implicit as in the form of metaphor. By emphasizing an idea through analogies and parallels, imagery makes it more concrete and objective.

T. S. Eliot explains the process of image making as “The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an ‘objective correlative’ in other words, a set of objects, a situation, particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked” (Eliot 100). The most important function of imagery is expressiveness. In
the new criticism, imagery is not mere a device of decoration but has become the essential component in poetry, and is a major factor in poetic meaning, structure and effect.

Q. Z. Alam’s book *The Dynamics of Imagery* classifies images into major groups such as Nature Imagery, Animal Imagery, Bird and Insect Imagery, Body Imagery, Agriculture and Horticulture Imagery and so on. There are also other categories such as Human Imagery, Imagery of death and darkness, Imagery of Light, Stone Imagery, Landscape Imagery, Scatological Imagery, Imagery of ruin and devastation, Sex and Erotic Imagery, and Surrealistic Imagery. There are also some general and recurring images. In the present study, I intend to use these categories for the classification of imagery in Meena Alexander’s poetry.

1.6.4 Symbolism

Symbol is a word or phrase that signifies an object or event, which in its turn signifies something or suggests a range of reference beyond it. Northrop Frye defines symbol as, “A Word, a phrase or an image used with some kind of special reference” (Frye71) and suggests that all words are symbols as they symbolize sounds. The principle of manifold meaning has been an established fact about symbolism. Symbols are formed of the two things, an image and idea or conception that symbol suggests or invokes. Generally, symbolism is the representation of reality on one level of reference. The symbolic meaning of the word is different from the emotive meaning of the word in literature.

In the earlier period, people have confused symbol with allegory. Blake first distinguished between symbol and allegory. Symbol is characterized by translucence of the special in the individual, or of general in the special, or universal in the general. An allegory presents a pair of subject (an image and a concept) but a symbol only one (the image alone), allegory is relatively specific in its significance while symbol
remains indefinite, suggestive in its significance and hence symbol is higher mode of expression. W. B. Yeats in his essays ‘Symbolism in Painting’ and ‘Symbolism in Poetry’ expresses his views on the symbolism. According to Yeats, allegory is product of memory whereas a symbol represents reality, which is unchangeable. The symbols are employed to create deeper effects and subtler indefinable shades that enable the artist to approach the divine. The symbol also differs from metaphor and simile as it lacks the paired subject, which is identifying feature of these devices. The symbol has two correlated references, one literal and second symbolical.

In symbolism, instead of extreme naturalism, “an emphasis is on the literal aspect of meaning.” (Frye 80). Symbolism intends to describe a mode of literary expression in which words are used to suggest states of mind than for their objective, representational or intellectual content. Representing the vague and fleeting impressions before the mind’s eye, symbolism concentrates on the inner experience. Withdrawing outer actuality of human life, symbolism returns to concentrate upon the more and more private and personal experiences, which lead symbolism to the flaw of over concentration on the exotic and bizarre. The concept of symbol comprises of categories like conventional or public symbols and private or personal symbols. The symbols with particular determinate symbolic significance are conventional or public symbols; the cross, the colours like red, white refer to particular symbolic reference. In order to use the unconventional symbols, poets exploit widely accepted and shared associations between an object or event or action and a particular concept. The general association of fox with cunningness, eagle with heroic endeavor, setting sun with death, rising sun with birth, winter with desolation and death, spring with happiness, climbing with progress and
descent with surrender or failure acquire symbolic significance in many of the poets.

Apart from the general categories of symbolism, there are particular types of symbolism that can be found in poetry that may cause a little difficulty in dealing with them. Murphy has classified them in two categories in his book *Understanding Unseen* (1975). First is the use of associated objects, metonymy; sometimes which is associated with a person or institution and activity is used to symbolize the whole (crown is associated with royalty and is used as symbol of King’s authority). The second is the use of a part for the whole that is synecdoche (the word ‘factory hands’ refers to the workers to work in factory and ‘five hundred souls’ symbolize five hundred people).

Symbols are essentially the connotative words that are also evocative and emotive, and make language rich and expressive. In my study, I intend to interpret the conventional symbols along with the personal symbols by taking reference of the circumstances in which poet lives and had lived and the influences which have moulded her sensibility. Because symbolism is one of the remarkable device of interpretation of poetry as Freud writes in his essay, ‘Symbolism in Dreams’, “Symbols are stable translations” (Freud184). There is always relation between the symbols and unconscious and there is “a symbolic relation between dreams and the unconscious” (Freud185). The symbols will be interpreted to explore the unconscious and latent elements of poet’s sensibility.