Chapter I

INTRODUCTION
I. Indian Diaspora Literature: An Overview

The term ‘Diaspora’ is used to refer to any people or ethnic population forced or induced to leave their traditional ethnic homelands; being dispersed throughout other parts of the world; and the ensuing developments in their dispersal and culture. In the beginning, the term diaspora was used by the ancient Greeks to refer to citizens of a grand city who migrated to a conquered land with the purpose of colonization to assimilate the territory into the empire. The original meaning was cut off from the present meaning when the Old Testament was translated to Greek and the word diaspora was used to refer specifically to the populations of Jews exiled from Judea in 586 BC by the Babylonians, and from Jerusalem in 136 AD by the Roman Empire. This term is used interchangeably to refer to the historical movements of the dispersed ethnic population of Israel, the cultural development of that population, or the population itself. The probable origin of the word is the Septuagint version of Deuteronomy 28:25, “thou shalt be a diaspora in all kingdoms of the earth”. The term has been used in its modern sense since the late twentieth century.

List of prominent Diasporas

1. Acadian Diaspora or Great expulsion happened when the British expelled 10,000 Acadians between 1755 and 1764. The British sent members of the same community to different colonies to enforce assimilation.

2. Palestinian diaspora is a term used to label Palestinians living outside of historic Palestine -- an area today known as Israel. This diaspora began in 1948, when the Palestinians were excluded from Palestine (now called Israel).

3. The African diaspora encompasses the native people of Africa and their descendants, wherever they are in the world beyond the African continent.

4. Australian Diaspora is a new term, perhaps coined by the Southern Cross Group, to refer to the 860,000 Australians living overseas. The migrations have a variety of causes ranging from war brides and their children to the more recent migration of young Australians to Europe under working holiday visa programmes.

5. Bosnian diaspora as a phenomenon appeared after four years of planned ethnic cleansing in Bosnia.
6. Cornish diaspora refers to Cornish emigrants and their descendants in countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Mexico.

7. Tamil diaspora is a term used to denote people of Tamil Nadu and Srilankan Tamil origin who have settled in many parts of India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore Reunion, South Africa, Mauritius, Fiji, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, and French Caribbean islands, Europe, Australia and America.

8. The French Canadian diaspora includes hundreds of thousands of people who left Quebec for greener pastures in the United States, Ontario and the Prairies between 1840 and 1930s.

9. Cuban diaspora is the exodus of over two million Cubans following the Cuban Revolution and the resulting communist regime. It is the largest diaspora in the history of the western Hemisphere.

10. The Irish diaspora consists of Irish emigrants and their descendants in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, South Africa and nations of the Caribbean and Continental Europe. The diaspora contains over 80 million people and it is the result of mass migration from Ireland, due to past famines and political oppression. The term first came widely into use in Ireland in the 1990s when the then President of Ireland, Mary Robinson began using it to describe all those of Irish descent.

11. The Jewish diaspora in its historical use refers to the period between the Roman invasion and subsequent occupation of the land of Israel beginning in 70 CE. In modern use, the word diaspora refers to Jews living outside the Jewish state of Israel today.

12. The South African diaspora mainly consists of white South African emigrants, especially white African speakers who have fled the country for a number of reasons. There is also a growing black middle class in South Africa, many of whom are starting to emigrate as well, furthering the demographic weight of South Africans abroad. South Africans have largely settled in the United Kingdom, Australia, the United States, New Zealand and Canada.

13. The Ukranian diaspora, represented by the Ukranians who left their homeland in several waves of emigration, settling mainly in America, Australia and Europe.
14. The Southeast Asian diaspora includes the refugees from the numerous wars that took place in Southeast Asia, such as the World War II and the Vietnam War.

15. The Romanians, who emigrated for the first time in large numbers between 1910 and 1925, and left after the fall of the communist regime in Romania in 1989, comprise the Romanian diaspora and are found today in large numbers in USA, Italy, Spain and Canada.

16. The South Asian diaspora includes millions of people in South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Jamaica, Mauritius, Fiji, Singapore, Malaysia and other countries, who left British India in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, and millions who have moved to Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United States, the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates in recent decades. The literatures produced by these people are known as diaspora literature.

Nowadays the problem of migration is different from that of the early times. Today people are leaving their countries willingly under certain motives for the satisfaction of some personal ambitions. But in early times it was not migration at all; it was transportation of third world people as labourers to a slave island. That is why today people migrate only with ‘a part of total culture in which so long as they remained at home, they participated’. Therefore, their adjustment in a different social, religious, economic and political milieu is not so pathetic as was that of the early emigrants, because of the former’s education and determination. In early times, people were more or less illiterate and their illiteracy was the reason behind their nostalgia. Earlier, it was whole tribe or at least a wholly representative part of it that moved away, this shows their outer-migration because their inner world is occupied by their mother country. This outer migration of different races and communities creates racial, cultural and linguistic confusion and this becomes a great hurdle in the formation of a national culture.

Immigrants who find themselves caught up between their native land and the adopted land have a sense of dislocation and separation. The in-between world that the immigrant occupies makes the immigrant a Janus looking at the past and the future life. Immigration is a process that involves uprooting and replanting. Hence the
immigrant has a feeling of rootlessness. The major quest in an immigrant’s life is a search for roots. The process of transplantation makes the immigrant a victim of rootlessness. The notion of in-betweeness fuels a desire in the immigrants for a place to call their own. This is the main reason for the preoccupation with home in an immigrant. Home becomes for an immigrant “a mythic place of desire -- a place of no return.” (McLeod 2000)

There has been a surge of movement across geographical boundaries in the twentieth century. The migration, especially to the west has been fuelled by difficult conditions at home and the attraction of materialistic pleasure, peace and lucre outside. The age of globalization, therefore, belongs to the migrant. Migration forces a rethinking of the issues of culture and identity. Multiculturalism is the defining aspect of the new millennium. First-generation migrants are those who as adults, themselves made a move from one country to another. Second-generation migrants are the children of migrants, who were very young at the time of migration or were born in the country of arrival. In the literature of the second-generation migrants, a location between two cultures is often mentioned as a way of expressing a sense of belonging to neither the guest nor host community.

Regardless of these above mentioned debates the diasporic community shares an emotional attachment with the homeland. Many diasporic individuals try to maintain their ethnic, religious and cultural identities in the new land and sometimes sustain the desire to return to their homelands. Some of the characteristics shared by the diasporas are explained in the articles of William Safran and Robin Cohen. William Safran in his article, “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return” gives six characteristics as the collective experiences of diasporic people:

1. They, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original ‘center’ to two or more ‘peripheral,’ or foreign regions.
2. They retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland – its physical location, history, and achievements.
3. They believe that they are not – and perhaps cannot be – fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it.
4. They regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return – when conditions are appropriate.

5. They believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity.

6. They continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethno communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship. (Safran 83-84)

It is, however, disappointing that Safran does not take into context the difference that could emerge due to gender, age and class. Yet, another diaspora scholar, Robin Cohen does not approve of Safran’s six features of diaspora and he thinks that there are nine diasporic characteristics, which are as follows:

1. Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions.
2. Alternatively, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions.
3. A collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history and achievements.
4. An idealization of the putative ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation.
5. The development of a return movement which gains collective approbation.
6. A strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate.
7. A troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance at the least or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group.
8. A sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement.

9. The possibility of a distinctive yet creative and enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism. (Cohen 515)

He is also of the opinion that among the nine features all diasporas will have only some of these features and not the totality of it. Diaspora is mistakenly identified or used synonymously with terms such as exile, expatriate, migrant and transnational. Actually, the term denotes a larger semantic domain that include words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest-worker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community etc. It is also understood that there is a differentiation in the terms diaspora and migration. As explained by Alan McLeod in *Beginning Postcolonialism*, migrant identities means a person who is influenced by the past migration history of his/her parents or grandparents (207). He further states that because of emotions and experiences several differences are available between these two terms.

In the age of technological advancement where travelling is made easier and the distance shorter, the term diaspora has lost its original connotation; yet simultaneously it has also emerged in another form healthier than the former. At first it is concerned with human beings attached to the homelands. Their sense of yearning for the homeland, a curious attachment to its traditions, religions and languages give birth to diasporic literature which is primarily concerned with the individual’s or community’s attachment to the homeland. According to Rushdie, the migrants arrive from the native land and the migrants run from pillar to post crossing the boundaries of time, memory and history, carrying with them the vision and dreams of returning to their homeland as and when the migrants like and find fit to return. Stuart Hall in *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* (1994), states that it is an axiomatic truth that the migrant’s dreams are futile and it would not be possible to return to the homeland. The longing for the homeland is countered by the desire to belong to the new home, so the migrant remains a creature of the edge, the peripheral man (222-237).

In this context, the quest and assertion for identity has become the most common characteristics of Indian diaspora writers too. Many of the works of diaspora writers reflect the meditation over the problem of search for identity. The dispossessed person’s search for identity and alienation is commonplace theme in
modern fiction, but for most Indian novelists in English this quest has a particular Indian immediacy. The Indian novelists’ treatment of alienation, their persistence delineation of rootless characters and an awareness of his unfortunate predicament are symptomatic of their own problems.

It is an interesting paradox that a great deal of Indian writing in English is produced not in India but in widely distributed diaspora in the South Pacific, the Caribbean, South Africa, Mauritius and the Contemporary Indian diasporas in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia. The writing of diasporic Indians is not new, and it has attained very high standards as literature in all its forms -- not just in general prose and poetry but in the genres of drama, oratory, philosophy, theology, and literary history and criticism.

Indian diaspora can be classified into two kinds. They are,
1. Forced migration to Africa, Fiji or the Caribbean in the eighteenth or nineteenth century.
2. Voluntary migration to the United States, United Kingdom, France or other European countries for professional or academic purposes.

In Indian Writing in English (1962), Professor K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar states that modern Indian literature begins with Raja Rammohan Roy (1774-1833), who “was destined to act as a bridge between India and England” (30). The award of the Nobel Prize in Literature to Rabindranath Tagore in 1913 provided a stimulus to Indians to write in English, for Tagore’s content, arrangement, and style were exemplary, and many out of his fifty plays, one hundred books of poetry, forty works of fiction were either written in English or translated into that language by him. Mohandas K. Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and the creative writers Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, etc. who resided outside India for years, were quickly recognized as masters of English prose style.

Jerry Pinto, writing in the January 4, 1998 issue of Weekend (Bombay) magazine, acknowledged over a hundred English language writers working in Bombay alone; but few of them have made a name for themselves outside Maharashtra, except Nizzim Ezekiel, a diasporic Jew. The sociology and economics of creative writing dictate the living and writing where English is the dominant
literary language. Numerous writers have seen the necessity of short or long term expatriation. Some remain overseas, others visit India periodically to meet their families or for reasons of writing; still others become “bridge” (Mcleod, xiv) Indians, because they maintain two homes, one in India and the other overseas. In each case they contribute to the Literature of the Indian diaspora. Today it can be well said that the most important writing by Indians is produced in the diaspora by such writers as Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh, Rohinton Mistry, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Jhumpa Lahiri etc.

The contemporary literature, which deals with emotional problems, clearly reflects condition of man in modern society. Getting uprooted from the native cultural traditions and values, the loss of indigenous language, the expatriate position as a mere outcast or an unaccommodated alien together with multiple affliction on the psyche, all account for the theme of ‘identity crisis’ in expatriate fiction. For expatriate writers, Shyam Asnani rightly says,

“Though the writer’s individual talent should be rooted in the tradition of a particular society and culture, the real strength of the modern literary imagination lies in its evocation of the individual’s predicament in terms of alienation, immigration, expatriation, exile and his quest for identity.” (Asnani 63)

Makarand Paranjape (2001) differentiates two distinct phases of diaspora as the Visitor Diaspora and Settler Diaspora, similar to Maxwell’s Invader and Settler Colonialist. The Visitor Diaspora consisted of disprivileged and subaltern classes, whose forced alienation was a one-way ticket to a distant diasporic settlement. As in the earlier times, the return to homeland was next to impossible due to lack of proper means of transportation, economic deficiency and great distances. Hence the physical distance became a psychological alienation, and the homeland became the sacred icon in the diasporic imagination of the authors. V.S. Naipaul contributed to the visitor diaspora. Naipaul remarkably portrays the search for the roots in his novel A House for Mr. Biswas thus: to have lived without even attempting to lay claim to one’s portion of the earth; to have lived and died as one has been born, unnecessary and
accommodated (14). Similarly Mohan Biswas’ peregrination over the next thirty five years, he was to be a wanderer with no place to call his own (40).

The Settler Diaspora was the result of man’s choice and inclination towards the material gains, professional and business interests. It is particularly the representation of privilege and access to contemporary advanced technology and communication. Here no dearth of money or means is clear. They go there for economic upliftment and social status. Salman Rushdie is the representative of this Diaspora. Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* and *Shame* are the “novels of leave taking - - from the country of his birth (India) and from that second country (Pakistan) where he tried, half-heartedly to settle and couldn’t” (Aizaz 1992: 135).

In the light of the above discussion, the modern diasporic Indian writers can be grouped into two distinct classes. One class comprises those who have spent a part of their life in India and have carried the baggage of their native land offshore. The other class comprises those who have been bred since childhood outside India. They have had a view of their country only from the outside as an exotic place of their origin. The writers of the former group have a literal displacement whereas those belonging to the latter group find themselves rootless. Both the groups of writers have produced an enviable corpus of English literature. These writers while depicting migrant characters in their fiction explore the theme of displacement and self-fashioning. The diasporic Indian writers’ depiction of dislocated characters gains immense importance if seen against the geo-political background of the vast Indian subcontinent. That is precisely why such works have a global readership and an enduring appeal. The diasporic Indian writers have generally dealt with characters from their own displaced community but some of them have also taken a liking for Western characters and they have been convincing in dealing with them. Two of Vikram Seth’s novels *The Golden Gate* and *An Equal Music* have as their subjects exclusively the lives of Americans and Europeans respectively.

The diasporic Indian writers of the first generation have already established their credentials by winning numerous literary awards and honours. But recently the ranks of the second generation of Indian writers in the West have swelled enormously and many among them have won international recognition. Meera Syal, who was born in England, has successfully represented the lives of first generation as well as second
generation non-resident Indians in the West in her novels *Anita and Me* and *Life Isn’t All Ha Ha Hee Hee*. Hari Kunzru in his novel *Transmission* traces a part of the lives of three diverse characters Leela Zahir, an actress, Arjun Mehta, a computer expert, and Guy Swift, a marketing executive - traversing through Bollywood, the Silicon Valley, and London. Sunetra Gupta has shown with candour both the unpleasantness and the pleasantness of intercultural relationships through characters like Moni and Niharika from her novels *Memories of Rain* and *A Sin of Colour*. Jhumpa Lahiri’s book of short stories *Interpreter of Maladies* and her novel *The Namesake* convincingly illustrate the lives of both first generation and second generation Indian migrants in the US. This is possible because big issues like religious intolerance and racial discrimination are no longer the main concern of these writers. What matters now in the current world are the small things. Little, unacknowledged things gain enormous importance in changed circumstances. It is here that the differing reactions by Indian, Western, and diasporic characters towards similar situations are found to differ only superficially. It demonstrates that the inner needs of all human beings are the same. Alienation is a part of the experience of the Indian diaspora and even if people are at home in any part of the world it does not mean that they will not become victims of the sense of alienation. Increasing acceptance into the host society does not indicate that the diasporic characters can feel at home. Social alienation is replaced by metaphysical alienation.

It is also true that Indian diasporic writing is full of the feelings of alienation, love for the homeland -- a double identification with the original homeland and the adopted country, crisis of identity, mythic memory and the protest against discrimination in the adopted country. Diasporic writings are to some extent about the business of finding new angles to enter reality; the distance -- geographical and cultural, enables new structures of feeling. The hybridity is subversive. It resists cultural authoritarianism and challenges official truths. Ahmad Aizaz, in *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (1992) states that “one of the most relevant aspects of diasporic writing is that it forces, interrogates and challenges the authoritative voices of time” (126). Most of Amitav Ghosh’s novels depict contemporary issues of India. Amitav Ghosh in his book *The Shadow Line* (1990) says:
In India there is a drill associated with civil disturbances, a curfew is declared, paramilitary units are deployed, in extreme cases, the army marches to the stricken areas. No city in India is better equipped to perform this drill than New Delhi, with its high security apparatus.

Immigration to the United States, where the male and female roles are more fluidly and more freely defined has put the traditional social values under stress. It is true, of course, that gender roles often are presented as a function of culture. South Asian women writers such as Bharati Mukherjee and Bapsi Sidhwa have focused on the cross-cultural identities that arise when a person crosses the national borders.

Another major theme in Indian diaspora literature is the relationship between parents and children. While second-generation children often reject their parents’ social expectations, immigrant parents are not simply flat representations of static societies. They are also individuals who have broken away from their original communities in moving to the alien lands. Thus, the second generation diaspora writers portray complex parental characters who are themselves double figures.

It is also very important to note that Indian Diaspora writers are different from one another among themselves in many ways. Their attributes vary with regard to their choice of themes, points of view and narrative techniques. Rohinton Mistry writes very differently from Jhumpa Lahiri. Meena Alexander is different from Rushdie or from the other Indian writers living and writing abroad. The cultural baggage which these diasporic writers carry is different and unique to the region from which they come. But they are unanimous in expressing nostalgic outpourings. Their ways of adapting is also different, for in India, there are vast differences with regard to time cherished traditions. It is only natural that when these diasporic writers start writing, they write about the customs, tradition, dress and cuisine, peculiar to the region from where they come. In a way they bring the same rich diversity that exists in India into their writings by portraying the minute details of their rites, dress and cuisine into the literature that they create.

Another aspect that sets the Indian writers as a class apart is their way of adoption of values and life in the country of their choice. This adjustment varies,
depending on whether the person is a first-generation or second-generation migrant. The first-generation immigrants are invariably more obsessed by the home they have left behind which is their land of birth and always suffer from a feeling of uprootedness that makes it more difficult for them to adjust. First-generation Indian-Americans are acutely aware of readily apparent cultural differences. The family becomes a battlefield where modernity clashes with tradition, where Indian culture clashes with American culture and where theory clashes with practice. American culture becomes the basis for interactions outside the home. Inside the home first-generation Indian-Americans attempt to preserve their cultural and religious heritage and expect to live according to Indian cultural values. For example, women are expected to maintain the household chores like cooking, cleaning, taking care of children, etc. in addition to holding part-time or even full-time jobs.

Like their parents, the second-generation Indian also compartmentalizes his or her life. At home and within the local community component they are governed by the compromised Indian lifestyle developed by their parents and the broader American community. Conflicts typically arise from the cultural clash of American individualism and Indian communitarianism. For example, a second-generation Indian-American’s desire to pursue an undergraduate degree in the fine arts will not be supported by the family. Career decisions are based on their impact on the family’s well-being, not the individual’s. The second-generation is able to assimilate the cultural import but their problems are of a different kind. Having been born in the new country they are able to become a part of the new culture more easily. But they face and experience a greater sense of rejection and are constantly reminded by their peers that they are different, that they do not belong to the adopted land and all this leads to a great deal of conflict in the minds of these easily influenced children born and brought up in a foreign land. The conflict is not only caused by their peers, but also, because they are expected to adhere to different values at home; the child grows up with two distinct personalities. This is especially true of Asian immigrants because, even though they belong to the second or third-generation they continue to remain aliens in the land of their adoption. One of the major reasons for this is the colour of their skin. They can never integrate and become a part of the white society like a German, a Pole, a Russian or any other European which ultimately yields into the issues related to their identities.
The diasporic experience is a composite one made up of collectivities, multiple journeys, still points and border crossings. In a piece titled “The New Empire within Britain”, included in the book Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism (1981-91), Rushdie points out that racism manifested a crisis of culture in the country of adoption. He writes, “British thought, British society, has never been cleaned of the filth of imperialism . . . even British born blacks and Asians are thought of as people whose real home is elsewhere” (131-132). The land of hope to which people migrate often turns out to be a living hell of racial discrimination. In the same article Rushdie observes:

A gulf in reality has been created. White and Black perceptions of everyday life have moved so far apart as to be incompatible... We stand on the opposite sides of the abyss... while the ground crumbles beneath our feet. (134)

It is not only homelands which are imaginary but even the land of settlement or adoption is also imaginary. “Britain” observes Rushdie is “now two entirely different worlds and the one you inhabit is determined by the colour of your skin” (1994:134). This reality is far removed from the dream of equal cross-cultural relationships and transplantation to a new culture.

Diasporic writing mostly becomes a response to the lost homes and to issues such as dislocation, nostalgia, discrimination, survival, cultural change and identity. Dislocation is one of the first feelings that haunt a diasporic community. There are several factors which are the reasons for the dislocation of a community from their home country to a foreign land. These can be broadly divided into two such as voluntary and non-voluntary movements. Voluntary movements, can occur due to two reasons namely i) educational need and ii) economical need. On the other hand, non-voluntary movements occur due to political and national compulsions and in the case of women, it could be marital causes. When diasporic people find themselves dislocated from the home society, they are upset mentally and strive to remember and locate themselves in a nostalgic past.

Most often the first generation of a diasporic community face loneliness and alienation in the new country and due to this they do not mingle with others in the
settled society. Even if they try to blend with the other community people, most of the time they find it difficult as they find that they are discriminated. A sense of alienation, loneliness and feeling of loss are inextricable for the diasporic people. Even though they face external problems like discrimination, their own inner problems like alienation and identity crisis cause more suffering to them.

One of the key problems that a diasporic community faces is the predicament with regard to identity. It is one of the most common themes in their literature, and in many cases the search for self-identity is portrayed as confusing, painful and only occasionally rewarding. Some write semi-autobiographical novels, delving into personal pasts in order to either discover or re-examine their motivations and affinities. Others use fictional characters and situations to question traditional norms, testing, trying, and occasionally reinforcing (whether internally or otherwise) notions of race and culture.

The second and later generations of the diasporic community generally display a dual identity. Although the second and later generations of the diasporic community consider the country in which they are born as the home country, the society still perceives them as outsiders and therefore they are caught in a hyphenated identity. Kwame Dawes’ words as quoted in Weedon’s article “Migration, Identity, and Belonging in British Black and South Asian Women’s Writing” substantiates this issue, “They were born there or have grown up there all their life. They are uncomfortable with the notion of a home elsewhere for they have no sense of exile. Their sole exile is the exile within their own home country.” (28)

One cannot assure that these common characteristics of diaspora are available in all the works of diasporic writers. Based on the theme of writing, diasporic writers can be divided into two types: writers whose works focus on their home country and writers whose works talk about the settled country. The first type of writers locates the novels in their home country in order to criticize it or to portray their home country and its culture to the foreign readers or use their work as a tool to remember their home country always. Works of Kamala Markandaya, Rohinton Mistry, Salman Rushdie, Kiran Desai, Ha Jin, etc. can be cited as example for this type. The second type of writers locates their works in the settled countries to reflect the changes they undergo or to tear the mask of multicultural nations by portraying its discrimination
towards them or to show their developed condition in the settled countries. Writers who belong to this category are Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, Uma Parameshwaran, Meena Alexander, Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni, etc.

Nirad C. Chaudhuri, V.S. Naipaul and Salman Rushdie made their return journeys from India in disillusionment. Naipaul’s return to India only promoted him to discover an area of darkness. Chaudhuri mentions that for him to live in Calcutta was similar to death. First-generation immigrants have a propensity to denigrate all things that belong to the adopted land. Yet their children, the second and third-generation immigrants may have accepted the culture of the adopted country and forgotten the home-culture. Thus the concepts of home continue as Uma Parameswaran says, “to exacerbate inter-generational frictions” (Jain 35). There exists a disparate culture within the diaspora itself.

It is remarkable to note that Sudhir Kumar in his paper Diasporic Consciousness of Gandhi in Contemporary Diasporic Literature edited by Manjit Indersingh calls Gandhi a diasporic writer who tried to mobilize the disparate and exploited ‘girmitias’ in South Africa and fight against racism and oppression. He created awareness among the Indians in South Africa touching upon their feelings of alienation, nostalgia, displacement and memories of their past. The diasporic discourse is largely political which involves unequal power relationship and Gandhi was the first activist to realize this fact. Sudhir Kumar says,

“This makes Gandhi, scores of decades before Homi Bhabha and Spivak could theorize the hybridity who showed through his words and deeds both, how well this “hybrid condition” could be used for political empowerment of the most deprived diasporic subjects.”

(Kumar, 2007)

Sudhir Kumar argues that the contemporary diasporic writers such as Naipaul, Shashi Tharoor, Hari Kunzru, Salman Rushdie, Bharati Mukherjee and others have got a vital clue from Gandhi’s commitment to diasporic issues. They have realized that a creative writer needs to be an activist and crusader for justice and equality. Whether one agrees or not, Gandhi can certainly be called a first writer-activist who took up the diasporic issues like exploitation, oppression and erasure of identity in
South Africa and fought against racism in a new way. Giriraj Kishore in his book *Pahela Girmitiya* has described Gandhi’s saga of struggle against racial oppression.

Makarand Paranjpe in his valedictory address at Patan, Gujarat discussed diasporic creativity. He asks - where are we to locate diasporic literature? Is it a part of some national literature or is it a completely different genre of writing? What are the critical parameters to evaluate this literature? What are the characteristics of a diasporic text? Makarand suggests two ways of reading some of the texts of diasporic creativity. It should be read alongside their context but context should include a contrary text as well. There can be two kinds of contexts for diasporic text. One is a text by an English writer who actually lives in India. For example, Rushdie should be read alongside the writer like R.K. Narayan. The second context can be called vernacular context. For example, a writer living in Canada writes in Punjabi or any other Indian language other than English. He suggests that one way of reading *Midnight’s Children* is to read it alongside *The Legend of Khassak* by O.V. Vijayan. In doing so, we shall be able to evaluate the merits and claims of the diasporic writings. (Paranjpe, 2004) Just as Indian English writings threaten to submerge regional creativity, the diasporic creativity seems to submerge native Indian English creativity. In many universities abroad, the courses in Indian literature have around 80% of diasporic writings. This means that the diasporic writings are construed as representations of the homeland which is often not the case.

Makarand Paranjpe says that all works by Indian or South Asian writers abroad cannot be called diasporic texts. For example, *An Equal Music* by Vikram Sheth does not conform to the standards of a diasporic text. A diasporic text must have a structure of location followed by dislocation and relocation. There should be crossing of borders or boundaries, moving from one culture to another and sense of alienation, resistance, reaction, assimilation and so on. There must be longing and memory for home and the feeling of being exiled and displaced. A diasporic text must portray the experience of dislocation. Among the diasporic writers, we may find several types. Raja Rao lived abroad for more than half a century but never became the part of that culture. He was a permanent alien in alien country. Then there are some writers who are neither ‘here’ nor ‘there’. There are like ‘Trishankus’ to use the metaphor employed by Uma Parmeshwaram. The third category is that of perfect
immigrants who take foreign countries as their homes quite enthusiastically. However, their narratives certainly display hidden discontents and contradictions. Bharati Mukherjee can be cited as an example whose work *Jasmine* displays the fact the protagonist experiences the feeling of dislocation both in location from where she emerges and the location where she finally arrives. Thus, *Jasmine* is certainly a diasporic text with diasporic sensibilities.

Writers of the Indian diaspora have been fairly in the centre stage in the last decade, primarily because of the theoretical formulations which are now being generated by the critiquing of their work and the growing interest in cultural studies. Language and cultures are transformed as they come into contact with other languages and cultures. Bharati Mukherjee embraces a monolithic Americanness, irrespective of race and class. In the preface to her collection of stories *Darkness*, she notes:

> Indian-ness is now a metaphor, a particular way of partially comprehending the world. Though the characters in these stories are or were Indian, I see most of these as stories of broken identities and discarded languages and the will to bond oneself to a new community against the ever-present fear of failure and betrayal. (Mukherjee 1985)

Mukherjee wants to be labelled as an American not as Indian American, not hyphenated. Besides, she wants to be recognized as an American writer, in the tradition of American writers. Meena Alexander allies herself with the voices of other minority writers, particularly Asian Americans. She takes a nuanced and thoughtful stance about identity. She does not deny her past and links her present and past history as a South Asian American to that of other ethnic groups in the United States. Jhumpa Lahiri’s collection of stories presents a remarkable vision that certainly transcends narrow nationalism but which celebrates an ethnic heritage along with evoking an exemplary universal humanism. In the title story of the Pulitzer Prize winning short story collection, *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) the Das family returns to India from the United States. As they cross the national borders they are forced to recognize their own dual identities -- more American in clothing, speech, body language than Indian, though ethnically marked. Lahiri recreates national identity through ethnicized codes of communication both spoken and unspoken; culturally defined signals are
misinterpreted by Mr. Kapasi, who regards Mrs. Das as both native and also one who bears the stamp of the United States.

Among the writers of Indian diaspora, the most notable is Salman Rushdie, born in India but now living in the United States. Rushdie with his famous work *Midnight’s Children* (1981) ushered in a new trend of writing. He used a hybrid language -- English generously peppered with Indian terms -- to convey a theme that could be seen as representing the vast canvas of India. One of the leading recent novelists, Arun Joshi is preoccupied with the theme of alienation. The hero of *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* (1971) is alienated from his middle class culture, which makes him run away from civilization and join an aboriginal tribe. Vikram Seth, author of *A Suitable Boy* (1994) is a writer who uses purer English and more realistic themes.

In the contemporary era of globalization, Indian Diaspora literature is of utmost importance in many ways and is a powerful network connecting the entire globe. It helps in the circulation of information and in resolving many issues as the following:

1. It helps to re-discover the commonality and inclusiveness of India.
2. This literature works as a channel to strength the bonds between the different states of India and of India in relation with the other countries at large.
3. Diasporic opinion helps to break through the past alienation and isolation which caused much injustice and abuse of human rights.
4. It also serves as an outlet to the pent up passions, emotions and feelings, providing a ventilator to grievances and grudges. In other words diaspora literature helps as a cathartic indignation.
5. The welfare and wellbeing of the overseas Indians, a sense of security for them and India's greater concern for them is brought out through these writings.
6. Access made available to educational, social, professional opportunities and political empowerment.
7. It has made possible the removal of all kinds of limitations and barriers-traditional, cultural, linguistic etc.
8. It ignites and synergies common and shared values in addition to coalition building among the social and political diaspora.

9. In addition to strengthening, it also enhances ties and bonds with other countries including Pakistan, China, Bangladesh and other Asian Countries.

10. Diasporic literature also helps countries to bring about a strategic partnership based on prosperity, security and commitment to freedom and peace.

Writers like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Vassanji, Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Rohinton Mistry, Anita Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Meera Syal, Amit Chaudhury, Meena Alexander, Sunetra Gupta, Gita Mehta, Suniti Namjoshi, Shani Mootoo, Anurag Mathur, Amulya Malladi, Vineeta Vijayaraghavan, Anita Rau Badami, Abraham Verghese, Peter Nazareth and several others are still contributing to enrich the Indian English literature. In present time, most of them have been heavily influenced by the various literary movements taking place into west and largely spreading around the world such as symbolism, surrealism, existentialism, absurdism, confessional poetry, modernism, postmodernism and the expatriate writing. These authors use Indian phrases alongside English words and try to reflect a blend of the Indian and the other cultures.

Finally, one can say that the writers of Indian diaspora have roots in India or less frequently, in Pakistan, Bangladesh, or Sri Lanka -- but represent diverse geographical areas of the Indian Diaspora: from the South Pacific to South America, from the Indian Ocean islands of Mauritius and Singapore to the cities and suburbs of London, New York, Johannesburg and Toronto. The writers practise a variety of literary forms and represent an extraordinary diversity of ethnicities, languages and religious traditions. The women among them contribute to the perspective of gender along with the themes of ethnicity, migration and identity. A large number of these diasporic writers have given expression to their creative urge and have brought credit to Indian English fiction as a distinctive force.
II. Women Writers of the Indian Diaspora

“Literature cannot be the business of a woman’s life and it ought not to be”, declared Robert Southey in a letter to Charlotte Bronte. Yet, woman’s literary voices, successfully marginalized and trivialized by the dominant male establishment, however survived.

Indian writing in English brings out the veracity of this statement. Last few decades have been catalytic for the growth of Indian writing in English by women writers. A new galaxy of writers has been witnessed. It is crystal clear from the distinguished awards they have bagged in the recent times, and by the way in which their names figure in any anthology on fiction that women are no longer ‘others’ in the Indian English literary scenario. In India, many women writers in English like Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Das, Nayantara Sahgal, Rama Mehta, Ruth Prawar Jhabvala, Shobha De, Shashi Deshpande, Manju Kapur, Neelum Saran Gaur, Indira Goswamy, Arundhati Roy, Jai Nimkar, Gouri Deshpande, Susan Vishwanathan, Eunice De Souza, Jaishree Mishra, Anita Nair, Suniti Namjoshi, Mrunal Pande, Namita Gokhle, Githa Hariharan, Manjula Padmanabham, Anjali Banerjee, Sonia Singh, Sabreena Saleem, Santha Rama Rao etc. have contributed immensely in the growth of Indian English literature.

Women writers of the Indian diaspora too have carved a niche for themselves. They include writers like Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai, Gita Mehta, Anjana Appachana, Abha Dawesar, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Bharati Mukherjee, Shauna Singh Baldwin, Ann Bhatta, Kavya Vishwanathan, Bharti Kirchner, Sujata Messey, Indira Ganesan, Jhumpa Lahiri, Shani Muthoo, Marina Budhos, Rani Dharker, Meera Syl, Anita Rao Badami, Uma Parmeshwaran etc. who have made their place in the world literature today. It is much important to note that most of the women writers of Indian English literature actually lived abroad. In this way, most of them belong to the category of Indian diaspora literature too.

Literature by woman presents an ‘imaginative continuum’. In women works, a commonality of motifs is observed. They deal with ample significant themes like gender issues and roles, female subjectivity, exploitation and oppression, the concept
of being ‘other’ in patriarchal society, the theme of growing up, self liberation via self quest, sexual deviance and sexual autonomy, human relationships, realism, magic realism, fantasy and surrealism, the image of the New Woman, traditional Indian culture, image of ‘exotic India’, globalization, migration, expatriation, the clash between tradition and modernity, east-west encounter, socio-psychological aspects, independence struggle and partition etc.

In the past, the work of Indian women writers has been undervalued due to patriarchal assumptions about the superior worth of male experience. One factor contributing to this prejudice is the fact that most of these women write about the enclosed domestic space, and women’s perceptions of their experience within it. Consequently, it is assumed that their work will automatically rank below the works of male writers who deal with ‘weightier’ themes. Additionally, Indian women writers in English are victims of a second prejudice, vis-à-vis their regional counterparts. Since proficiency in English is available only to writers of the intellectual, affluent, educated classes, a frequent judgement is made that the writers and their works belong to a high social strata, and are cut off from the reality of Indian life. The majority of these novels depict the psychological suffering of the frustrated housewife, this subject matter often being considered superficial compared to the depiction of the repressed and oppressed lives of women of the lower classes that we find in regional authors writing in Hindi, Bengali and other native languages.

Prior to the rise of the novel, many Indian women composed poetry and short stories in Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali, Urdu, Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada. Women were the chief upholders of a rich oral tradition of story-telling, through myths, legends, songs and fables. Once literacy began to filter through society, those stories were transformed into poetry and drama. The novel was not at first a common form, perhaps because the majority of women had less access to education than men. It was not until prose began to be used in the late nineteenth century by Bengali writers who had been exposed to European culture that the novel form took hold in India.

The emergence of women writers during the last quarter of the nineteenth century is of great significance as it marks the birth of an era which promises a new deal for the Indian woman. The zealous social reforms effected by William Bentinck and Raja Rammohan Roy had brought the Indian woman emancipation from the
tyranny of the ages and from cruel customs like sati. The battle for emancipation was taken over by a few educated women who communicated to the world their experiences as women as well as their ideas of social reform as writers. As Prof. Alphonso-Karkala observes in *Indo-English Literature in the Nineteenth Century*,

They tried to tell the world the obstacles women faced and the disadvantages they suffered in an orthodox Hindu world. These women writers struggled to give form and shape to their autobiographical accounts, which attracted publishers both in India and abroad. (78)

The writers of this group are Toru Dutt (1865-1877), Krupabai Sathianathan (1862-1894), Shevantibai M. Nikambe (1865-1895), Smt. Swarnakumari Ghosal (1856-1932) and Cornelia Sorabji (1866-1954). Krupabai Sattianandhan’s *Kamala: A Story of Hindu Life* (1895) and *Saguna: A Story of Native Christian Life* (1895) are frank autobiographies in fictional form.

Interestingly, only after the Second World War, women novelists of quality have begun enriching Indian fiction in English. Of these writers, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandaya and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala are unquestionably the most outstanding writers.

Depiction of the social scene has always been the strong suit of women novelists. Falling in the line with the same pattern and theme, Bhabani Bhattacharya’s (b. 1906) *So Many Hungers* (1947), followed by *Music for Mohini* (1952), *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1954), *A Goddess Named Gold* (1960) and *Shadow from Ladakh* (1966) – form an impressive achievement of his writing. The personal and national issues form a fine blend to give to these novels its universal appeal.

In the early migrant writers’ group Kamala Markandaya (b. 1924) comes first and foremost. Kamala Markandaya’s novels, *Nectar in the Sieve* (1954) and *A Handful of Rice* (1966), portrays the harsh economical reality in the rural India. Her notable works are *Some Inner Furry* (1957), *A Silence of Desire* (1961), *Possession* (1963) and *The Coffer Dams* (1969). Her marks as a novelist of Indian English fiction is the sufficient and suggestive of her prose. *A Silence of Desire* depicts rationalism and traditional religious faith. The works of the numerous women novelists of the
period offer a more sensitive picture of the theme of east-west encounter and identity crisis. Her novel *The Nowhere Man* (1972) deals with the identity of a male protagonist Srinivas who migrates to England to escape the wrath of the British Government as his father happens to be a freedom fighter of colonial India, who forces his son to go to England for his safety. The racist bias of white British instigates the identity crisis in Srinivas and puts him in a situation of a nowhere man. Markandaya portrays the ‘unhomeliness’ and fissured identity in her male protagonist who is unwelcome in an alien society.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala (b. 1927) has published six novels on the span of a decade: *To Whom He Will* (1955), *The Nature of Passion* (1956), *Esmond in India* (1958), *The Householder* (1960), *Get Ready for Battle* (1962) and *A Backward Place* (1965). She had opportunities of exercising her powers of close observation on a milieu that changes chameleon-like from local to cosmopolitan, from traditional to conventional, from naive to sophistication in her novels. She had dealt with the east-west encounter in *Esmond in India* and *Heat and Dust*. Her novels revolve around the theme of marriage and alienation. Atiya Singh remarks:

“Jhabvala takes an amused look at arranged marriages in India with her Jane Austenian tongue in the cheek style.” (Singh 1997)


“However, what makes them stand apart, is her bold proclamation of freedom for women, especially in their personal lives”. (Singh, 1997)

Gradually, many Indian women writers have explored female subjectivity in their works in order to establish an identity. Thus the theme of growing up from childhood to womanhood, that is, the *Bildungsroman*, is a recurrent strategy. Santha Rama Rau’s *Remember the House* (1956), Ruth Prawar Jhabvala’s first novel *To
Whom She Will (1955) and Kamala Markandaya’s Two Virgins (1973) are noteworthy examples. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni in The Mistress of Spices (1997), use magic realism in their novels. Suniti Namjoshi stands out for her use of fantasy and surrealism, and Anuradha Marwah-Roy’s Idol Love (1999) presents a chilling picture of an Indian dystopia in the twenty-first century. Other novels deal with various aspects of college life, such as Meena Alexander’s Nampally House (1991), and Rani Dharker’s The Virgin Syndrome (1997). Another theme to emerge is that of the lives of women during India’s struggle for independence, as seen for example in Manju Kapur’s Difficult Daughters (1998).

One of the most prolific writers of Indian diaspora literature, Anita Desai is a veteran in the writing field. She has been short listed three times for the Booker Prize, for her books: Clear Light of Day, In Custody and Fasting, Feasting in 1980, 1984 and 1999 respectively. For her idyllic prose novel The Village by the Sea, Desai won the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize in 1983. She was honoured with a Sahitya Akademi Award for her novel Fire on the Mountain in 1978. Along with being a novelist, Desai is also the Emeritus John E. Burchard Professor of Humanities at the Institute of Technology at Massachusetts. One of her popular quotes on writing is, “Someone who wants to write should make an effort to write a little something every day. Writing in this sense is the same as athletes who practice a sport every day to keep their skills honed.” Anita Desai is one of the first Indian women who took up writing as a serious business and since her first novel Cry, The Peacock in 1963, she has produced works which has put her on the A-list of writers. Her latest work is The Artist Disappearance published in 2011. It is important to note that though contemporaries, Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal are virtual contrast in the portrayal of female characters and their attitudes to marriage. While Anita Desai’s female characters desperately struggles to make their marriage a success, howsoever unfulfilling they may be, Sahgal’s heroines opt out of it.

Bharati Mukherjee, one of the chief writers of the Indian diaspora literature, has spent much of her career exploring issues involving immigration and identity with a particular focus on the United States and Canada. Her earlier works, such as The Tiger's Daughter and parts of Days and Nights in Calcutta, are her attempts to find her identity in her Indian heritage. Bharati Mukherjee’s study of the abnormal mind of
the frustrated Bengali wife in New York in *Wife* (1976) is a classic example of the study of the theme of identity crisis. She teaches at the University of California at Berkeley. She won the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1988 for *The Middleman and Other Stories*.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (b. 1956) is one of the most significant woman writers of Indian diaspora literature who brilliantly portrays femininity in its vivacity. Her female protagonists are memorable and real representations of diasporic Indian women. Tilo in *The Mistress of Spices* (1997) is a genuine representative of diasporic identity. Born in India, lived on seas, educated to be mistress on Spice Island and finally living in America on her vocation ultimately merging herself into its culture still retaining her individuality, Tilo represents all diasporic paradigms. Divakaruni’s women characters represent vivid identities of diasporic life like marginalized, rebellious, docile, traditional and modern, all types in her novels and short stories. Her *Sister of My Heart* (1999), *Arranged Marriage* (1995), *One Amazing Thing* (2010) and *Mistress of Spices* all deal with these different identities. The portrayals of Jayanthi in “Silver Pavements and Golden Roof” (*Arranged Marriage*), Geeta, Hameeda and Tilo in *The Mistress of Spices*, Sudha and Anju in *Sister of My Heart*, Uma and Malathi in *One Amazing Thing* represent younger women, first and second generations who find their true identity in American land by assimilation. The older generation’s migrational woes with diasporic fissured identity is represented in the characters of Mrs Ahuja (*The Mistress of Spices*), Mrs Pratima (silver pavements) etc. The woman in the story “The Disappearance” (*Arranged Marriage*), is another typical example of a woman venturing out of wedlock in exploration of her identity caused by traumatic conditions of diaspora and the influence of alien society marked for its individual freedom.

The portrayal of gender in Sunetra Gupta’s (b. 1965) fiction, another first generation immigrant settled in England, is marked with surrealist identity. Her women characters are dreamy and idealistic. They set out with an impossible task of searching for ideal love in their diasporic life. Failure, to them, is a step for learning, which instigates them to find themselves in a world of instability and motion. Her notable works are *Memories of Rain* (1992) and *A Sin of Colour* (1999).
Jhumpa Lahiri, the mighty one, made her debut with her collection of short stories, *Interpreter of Maladies* in 1999. The book won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2000. Her first novel *The Namesake* was published in 2003, later adapted to a movie version by director-producer Mira Nair in 2006. *Unaccustomed Earth*, her second short stories collection, was published in 2008. The most recent work of Lahiri is a novel entitled *The Lowland* (2013). Jhumpa is also a member of the President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities, appointed by the U.S. President Barack Obama. Being an Indian-American, her work belongs to the generation of Indian origin writers whose story speaks poignantly of the tales of exile. Her collection of short stories brings forth the sensitive dilemmas faced by Indians or Indian immigrants with themes like marital difficulties, miscarriages, and the disconnection between first and second generation U.S. immigrants.

Kiran Desai (b. 1971) is one of the most celebrated authors in the country, since her novel ‘*The Inheritance of Loss*’ won the 2006 Man Booker Prize. The novel was also awarded the National Book Critics Circle Fiction Award. Even though she is a citizen of India, Kiran is a permanent resident of the United States. Writing does come naturally to Kiran, being the daughter of the noted writer Anita Desai. The Inheritance of Loss is Kiran’s second book. Her first book ‘*Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*,’ a novel, published in 1998 has received many praises from distinguished figures like Salman Rushdie. The first book won the Betty Trask Award, a prize awarded by the Society of Authors for new novels by citizens under the age of 35 of the Commonwealth Nations. Her second book has received praises from critics throughout the United States, Europe and Asia and attracted a large number of audiences around the world.

Gita Mehta (b. 1943) is the renowned writer of the novels like *Raj* (1989) and *A River Sutra* (1993) and non-fiction books like *Karma Cola* (1979) and *Snakes and Ladders* (1997). But beside that she has even written numerous articles for various Indian, American and European magazines and made documentaries for European and American televisions. Her works have been translated into thirteen languages and published twenty-seven countries. She had lived in New York, London and India.

Githa Hariharn was born in 1954 and educated in Mumbai, Manila and the United States. She is the writer of three novels, *The Thousand Faces of the Night*.

The women writers of diaspora have been writing variously upon the lives of men and women. There is vivacity in the portrayal of gender which range from old generation to new generation and represents the various situations of women’s life in an alien land. These women writers portray the predicament, joys and sorrows, and mainly the issue of identity of men and women of Indian Diaspora in the alien land. As women writers they view gender from a woman’s point of view and thus extend the boundaries of human experiences from different perspectives and dimensions. With the rise of women diasporic writers, the images of immigrated women have often been discussed in literature. It has been debated that feminism is now an outdated issue and the women have successfully achieved equality and defied patriarchal norms. More so, Indian women writers in foreign land are equipped with better themes than the perennially penned subjects like rights of women, injustice, gender inequality and so on.

A recurring theme in many of the novels of the Indian diaspora women writers of the recent years is an exploration of a woman’s identity, a study of herself. There is, in the novels of all the women writers -- old or new, a marked pre-occupation with nostalgia, dream and introspection. Trends in recent fiction unmistakably indicate how the new novelists are trying to tread fresh paths and this is the surest sign of the continued vitality of an art. Occasionally, the works of Diaspora women writers are termed as Antinovels that coined by experimental fiction that gives out certain traditional elements of novels. It is coined by Jean Paul Sarte in 1948. It illustrates everyday reality which contains all cultural conflicts and worries as its content. It is the proper subject matter of the novelist interested in representing reality without imposed interpretations. The reader would be able to reconstruct reality from direct experience. Most of the women writers of Indian diaspora literature have portrayed the enclosed domestic space and perceptions of their personal experiences. They have
composed almost every imaginable type of work: novels, poems, letters, biographies, travel books, religious commentaries, histories, economic and scientific works etc.

Interestingly, the last four decades have noticed a change in the image of women in their works. The conflicted female characters searching for their identity replace the long-established depiction of suffering and altruistic women. They assert themselves and defy marriage and motherhood. Recently their writings depict the diversity of women rather than limiting with the lives of women to one ideal. Further, the novels emerging in the twenty-first century furnish examples of a whole range of attitudes towards the imposition of tradition. Some of the novels offer an analysis of the family structure and the caste system as the key elements of patriarchal social organization.

The landscape of contemporary literature has been transformed by the rising tide of globalization. Texts are now crossing the borders of nations and cultures, as newly emerging authors express myriad voices of those once considered a subaltern. Women writers have moved away from traditional portrayals of enduring, self-sacrificing female protagonists towards the characters who search for their true identities, no longer characterized and defined simply in terms of their victim status. In contrast to earlier novels, female characters from the 1980s onwards assert themselves and defy marriage and motherhood.

The works of Indian diaspora women writers in the twenty-first century furnish the examples of a whole range of attitudes towards the imposition of tradition, some offering an analysis of the family structure and the caste system as the key elements of patriarchal social organization. They also re-interpret mythology by using new symbols and subverting the canonical versions. The works of Indian women writers are very significant in making society aware of women’s changing demands, and in providing a medium of self-expression.
III. *To Know Self: The Concept of Identity*

“To know who I am is a species of knowing where I stand… it is the horizon within which I am capable of taking a stand.”

The term ‘identity’ has so extensively been used in the fields of sociology, psychology, philosophy and literary criticism that it defies all attempts at a precise definition. Basically, it implies the recognition of one’s existence or at least a trait of it which relates him with his group, his class, his race, his profession, his religion or his country. It enables us to understand the person, as well as the various roles the person has within each community that she or he is participating in. The concept of identity (as opposed to social identity, or role identity) describes who they are, their feeling, their hopes and desires, their interests, the essence of the person as well as the characteristics of the person. Apart from where do they stand? What do people perceive about their status? Where do they stand in terms of their *asmita* (existence)?

A ubiquitous term taken for granted, ‘identity’ is an intrinsically psycho-social concept with multifarious temporal and spatial connotations. Defined generally as “who or what somebody is” the term is derived from the French word *identité*, which has its etymological roots in the Latin noun *identitas*; *-tatis* itself a derivation of the Latin adjective *idem* meaning "the same." Thus essentially comparative in nature, it emphasizes the sharing of a degree of sameness or oneness with others in a particular area or a group at any point of time. Psychology and Sociology relates it to an individual’s concept of his self in relation to the community, country or culture he belongs to. The Lexicon Webster Dictionary defines identity as,

“The condition of being oneself or itself, and not another; the condition of character that distinguishes a person or a thing; individually.”

(1971: 475)

According to Encyclopaedia Americana, “Identity means in general the state of being the same” and “the idea of a continuity underlying the notion of personal identity” (1953: 664). Thus, the personal identity is the continuation of one’s self, a

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part of which remains in the process of evolving with the passage of time. The question of identity is closely related to one’s social interaction against which one’s reputation or notoriety is measured. Much also depends on one’s perception of what he is in the society’s eyes – distinctive, unique or otherwise.

The problem of identity, though probably as old as the civilization itself, is widely pervasive in the modern times and affects countless people all over the world. It is essentially the same problem though of a different dimension which has always confronted the newly-married Indian girl transplanted onto an alien soil of her husband who strives to strike new roots, adopts his surname, forms new habits and modifies her manners in order to fit into the designated slot of a new identity in the new surroundings, in her new roles, with her new relations and so on. An Indian immigrant driven out from his own country and settling down in another confronts the same kind of problems at the international level.

Classical conceptions of identity are permanence amid change or unity in diversity. According to Locke, the idea of identity originates in a comparison of the very being of a person or thing, observed to be existing at a determinate time and place with the same, existing at another time and place. Hume suggests that the key to identity is time; the notion of identity arises when invariableness is attributed to an object or a person on being observed through a variation in time. Philosophers from Descartes to Kant accepted Hume’s explanation that identity means the sameness of someone or something. Personal identity may be defined in Eriksonian terms as “the self-sameness and continuity of one's existence in time and space and the perception of the fact that others recognize one's sameness and continuity.” He differentiates this with ego identity that reveals the quality of this existence, or the style of one’s individuality, that coincides with one's meaning for significant others. A person's identity springs from biological factors, group identity, and vicissitudes of personal development. The psychosocial identity, that is, the identity in relation to one's caste, class, nation, or culture gets transmitted to the infant's earliest bodily experiences. An assessment of the hierarchy of positive and negative identity elements, present in an individual's particular stage of life and historical era, is necessary to study psychosocial identity. Disturbances of the individual sense of identity like alienation, identity confusion, depersonalization, and psychic fragmentation have psychosocial
factors at their root. Often, identity confusion and psychic fragmentation are the results of traumatic events and are observed in pervert-delinquent and bizarre-extremist behaviour.

Erikson defines crisis as "a necessary turning point, a crucial moment, when development must move one way or another marshalling resources of growth, recovery, and further differentiation" (Erikson 1959). This definition is applied by him to crisis in the development of the individual. In adolescence, identity problems are most obvious as the individual gets closer to his times and the ego has to organize experience according to its specific capacities using available ideology. Erikson attributes crises to stages of development earlier and later than adolescence. Erikson recollects that the term 'identity crisis' was first used in the Mt. Zion Veteran's Rehabilitation Clinic during the Second World War, referring to the problem of people who had lost a sense of personal sameness, historical continuity, and a central control over themselves, owing to the pressures of war. What was originally considered to be a common operative pattern of disturbances was later identified as ‘a pathological aggravation, an undue prolongation of, or a regression to, a normative crisis 'belonging' to a particular stage of individual development.’ (Erikson 1959)

Erikson traces the well known eight developmental stages or ages of man, each of which poses a crisis and requires the solution of a specific task. Each solution in turn becomes the source of psychosocial strengths originating from the individual's psychobiological heritage. The first crisis in the child's life is basic trust vs. basic mistrust and the favourable resolution of this crisis gives the child drive and hope. The second stage is the crisis of autonomy vs. shame and doubt and the favourable outcomes are self-control and will power. The initiative vs. guilt conflict if resolved successfully gives the child direction and purpose. The fourth crisis is the dichotomy between industry and inferiority, and the strengths derived from a happy resolution of this are method and competence. The next developmental stage poses the crisis of the polarity between identity and role confusion, and the beneficial outcomes are devotion and fidelity. A favourable ratio of intimacy against isolation brings affiliation and love while that of generativity against stagnation breeds production and care. When ego integrity overrides despair, the outcomes are renunciation and wisdom. While discussing the ego's synthesizing power in the light of its central psychosocial
function, Erikson uses the term ego identity but self-identity is the term used in the context of the integration of the individual’s self and role-image. Ego in psychoanalysis is a theoretical term referring to a hypothesized metapsychological structure different from the total self in Lichtenstein's theory, humanistic psychology.

Identity crisis or the quest for identity is basic to the life of every human being. It is innate in every man. So search for identity is an archetypal and universal motif in the literature of all ages. At the personal level, the quest is for the evaluation of a personal value system. This quest also includes one's quest for new roots as man seeks an anchor, substance and bedrock in life. The purpose behind all quest is to attain a personal view of life and world which could make existence meaningful and give a sense of belonging to man. Literature embodies the process, the subsequent crisis of self, its quest and the subsequent discoveries.

Identity crisis is no longer confined to the individual. It can characterize a group, an institution, a class, a profession or even a nation. An individual's sense of identity is neither completely conscious nor unconscious. Although at times it appears to be exclusively the one or the other. At some places identity is referred to a conscious sense of individual, uniqueness, at others to an unconscious, striving for community of experience at yet other places as a sense of solidarity with a group's ideals.

The 20th century has faced the dissolution of old convictions and dogmas and as a result, man is caught in the whirlpool of uncertainty, perplexity and bewilderment. A typical 20th century man finds himself estranged not only from his fellow men but also from his innermost nature because he can find nothing to depend upon in the moments of extreme despair. He suffers from a gnawing sense of restlessness which gets manifested in the alienation from oneself, from one's fellowmen and from nature, the awareness that life runs out of one's hand like sand and that one will die without having lived, that one lives in the midst of plenty and joyless.

The state of identity confusion leads to heighten the sense of alienation and exile. The people who were born and brought up in alien mixed surroundings have identity stemmed in their lives. To assert that a person's identity however frail it may
be he/she has to demonstrate considerable account of girt and courage in the face of
overwhelming oddities. Psychosis, delinquency, psychosomatic disorder, political
passivity, protest and sometimes even suicide are the extreme manifestations of the
sense of loss of a person's identity.

Heinz Lichtenstein conceives of identity as a musical theme and its variations.
A primary identity gets outlined through the processes stimulated by the maternal
libidinal cathexis to the child. The mother reflects back to the child a configuration of
its existence and presence.

"This thematic identity will be 'developed' in the course of life as an
infinite variety of identity transformations, as a simple musical theme
is developed into a symphony." (Lichtenstein: 1977)

This development is reversible and hence the relevance of primary and
secondary methods of identity maintenance. If the primary method is based on
narcissistic mirroring, the secondary method is based on acting and eliciting a
Corresponding supportive reaction from the others.

"Observation of the 'whole person' confronts us with the infinite
sequence of bodily and behavioural transformations during the whole
life of the individual.... The perception of the 'whole person' means the
process of abstracting an invariant from the multitude of
transformations." (Lichtenstein: 1977)

Thus, self has a time dimension and it encompasses the changing phases of
childhood, adolescence, the life that is still ahead, and also the potentialities that
existed but were not actualized. In Lichtenstein's own words, self may be defined as
"the sum total of all the transformations which are possible functions of an early-
formed invariant correlation of the various basic elements of the mental apparatus"
(Lichtenstein: 1977). Thus, self-experience includes all the past selves and the not-yet-lived future. The potential selves that one could have been are merged with the
actualized selves that one was and is. The relationship of the potential to the
actualized selves during a lifetime constitutes the uniqueness of personality. This
uniqueness forms an invariant which is the key to the identity theme of the individual
and the first note of this is struck in the epi-genetic landscape. The development or the
actualization that occurs would be the resultant of the possible transformations of the invariant correlation, the possibility for the given individual to translate the organizing directions from the invariant correlation into actualities corresponding to the potentialities of his psychological structures, and opportunities given to him.

Jung begins by equating ‘self’ with total personality but with his insight into archetypes it becomes the midpoint of personality around which all the other systems are constituted. His psychology of totality is based on the mandala that represents self, the nucleus of the psyche. Jung takes the concept of the mandala, or the magic circle from Hindu writings, where it is a square in a circle, the square representing the four corners of the world. Among mythological representations of the self, a mandala motif has an important role; the roundness symbolizing a natural wholeness and the quadrangular formation representing the realization of this in consciousness. It is actually a universal symbol and is often used by Vijayan. The most significant feature of Jung’s personality theory is the concept of a transpersonal collective unconscious that forms the most powerful system of the psyche. It stores the latent memory traces from a man’s past that include not only the racial history but also his pre-human ancestry. The racial unconscious is the storehouse of the experiences of past generations and it predisposes man to react to the world in a selective fashion. The racial unconscious aids the study of the personal unconscious which consists of repressed, suppressed, forgotten, or ignored experiences. A complex is an organized group of feelings, thoughts, perception, and memories in the personal unconscious. Archetypes are universal thought-forms or ideas that create emotions, images, and visions and are deposited in the mind by experiences that have been repetitive over generations.

The persona is the public personality, a role assumed to suit the demands of social convention, tradition, and the individual’s archetypal needs. This is contrasted with the private personality and genuine feelings that exist behind the facade. The anima is the feminine archetype in man and the animus is the masculine archetype in woman. These archetypes, conditioned by sex chromosomes and sex glands, are the products of the racial experiences of man with woman and woman with man. To Jung, man's behaviour is conditioned by his individual and racial history or causality and also by his aims and aspirations or teleology. The teleological or futuristic attitude
gives man hope and something to live for. The stages of development are not very clear cut in Jung.

Sexual values begin to appear before the child is five and reach their peak during adolescence. In one's youth and early adult years, the basic life instincts and vital processes keep ascending. In late thirties and early forties youthful interests as well as pursuits slow down, cultural interests take their place, and man becomes more introverted and less impulsive. The prominent values become wisdom and sagacity and slowly get transformed into spirituality. A spiritual man experiences transcendence of life or perpetual continuation of life through transformation and renewal, that is, renovation or rebirth within the span of the individual life cycle. He is capable of getting spontaneous, ecstatic or visionary experiences without ritual. The process of the development of an integrated personality is called the individuation process.

Binswanger uses the term world-design for the all-encompassing pattern of an individual's mode of being-in-the-world and this is similar to the identity theme of Lichtenstein. Boss expounds the notions of mood, pitch, or attunement which are the deciding factors of an individual's actions and perceptions. Existential psychology lays emphasis on man's freedom to choose, which does not ensure the wisdom of the choice. Man can realize his potential; he can live authentically, or choose to live unauthentically. Existentialists accept guilt to be inborn and hold that though hurts and insults can be transcended, guilt cannot be transcended, since no man can fulfil all his possibilities.

Self is a psychological process. It is a dynamic concept which implies a sense of identity. It is the sum total of the physical and mental attributes of the person including his will and actions in both the individual and the social dimensions. The concept of self raises such questions before an individual as Who am I? How can I find out? What I am? To answer such questions it is necessary for each individual to have knowledge of his or her – “self”. Societal changes are responsible for the dissatisfaction with the self as object among many people in the contemporary world. People cannot identify themselves fully with others, individuals as well as institutions, since the social structures themselves are unstable and dynamic. In such cases the
evolution of self as process can generate a unique aspect of self which reflects through the process of self-development. According to Gardner Murphy,

“Self is a center, an anchorage point, a standard of comparison, an ultimate real. Inevitably, it takes its place as a supreme value.”
(Gardner 1947)

Identity becomes a core issue in any exploration of diaspora, especially diasporic identity that is composed of various factors and sub-factors. The usage of the word ‘contaminated’ only perpetuates the complexity of combining pluralities in the singular self of the diasporic being who efforts hard to root himself with the out-of-reach native land that dominates his unconscious or subconscious memory. Not only is the diasporic identity multi-layered but also, based on the history or circumstances leading to imagination, as well as the individual responses to this situation there are various identity groups in diaspora. Member of the diasporic community are referred to by different names based on the criteria of judging their individualistic positions in terms of geographical as well as psychological displacements as traders, indentured labourers, exiles, refugees and expatriates: the experience of displacement is dependent on factors as the generation of diaspora that one belongs, effect of globalization, why the diasporic has moved away from his homeland and also the attitude of the host country towards the diasporic communities in it, particularly the racialism and discrimination (aptly depicted in Kamala Markandaya’s The Nowhere Man) that diasporic individuals are subjected to in the adopted land.

While thinking about the problems of nation and identity, it becomes essential to examine the way of living life and human existence, in the past and present. Problems of nation, identity, national identity, individual identity etc. are the recent needs, that have emerged, which were never experienced by mankind in the past. The life which people lived in the past was largely introvert with himself and his family. It was a life more given to spiritual aspects and with as less as possible material needs. So, the question of identity-crisis was neither imagined nor experienced by mankind in the primitive times. The whole globe was a nation for him and he never imagined any boundary lines on the faces of the earth. Since most of his needs were satisfied within the surroundings only, there was no question of mobility and migration. The
earth was his nation and man’s understanding about himself was his identity. Gradually, those primitive values, way of life, needs of life and goals of life have completely undergone a transformation. Man has continued drawing lines on the face of earth and thus he goes on imprisoning himself more and more. The irony of the truth is that, when there were no political lines on the face of earth, he was satisfied with his life in his small village and the earth was home for him. Now he has drawn the lines and wants to cross it, creating the problem of his sense of loss of his true-self and identity-crisis.

The twentieth century proved to be the century of scientific advancement, industrialization, globalization and materialism. It created a need for migration and mobility, in search of better existence and more bright future. Of course, whether it is better existence or not in reality is one more debatable issue. But the fact is that human mobility, witnessed in the twentieth century brought with it several problems and the issue of identity-crisis is the major one of them. The basic issue which emerges here is: Does a person, who knows to a new land, cease to be a native of his native land? Should he consider himself a native of new nation and new culture? There is one more angle of looking at it and that is in the form of our oriental belief, that wherever a person goes, he cannot disconnect himself from his root. Migration and mobility, according to this belief may bring a change in the dress, language and way of living life, but the spirit remains the same. The actual problem of identity-crisis emerges, when such a person finds himself nowhere on the alien shores. He fails to disconnect himself from his original root and equally fails to implant himself in the land of new culture. Sometimes the land of that new culture does not accept him fully and such a state creates in him the feeling of nowhere-ness that is nothing but the problem of identity-crisis.

Finally, one can assert that psychologically every person desires to be accepted, in other words it can be said that the problem of identity is after all a psychological and emotional problem, because it is concerned with human sense of belonging. One wants to accept and to be accepted. Whenever any disturbance takes place, in this need, the problem of belonging emerges. It is not necessary for one to take it for granted that the problem of identity takes place in the life of a person only
when he accepts migration and mobility. Since it is a psychological feeling, there are chances of its experience even within the native land.

References:


