Chapter I

Introduction

Diaspora is a global phenomenon which denotes the communities of displaced or relocated people who moved from their homelands to new lands for social, political or economic reasons. “Diaspora” means “to scatter” (like seeds), or “dispersion” (Greek for spread), or “Galut” (Hebrew for exile), and in the study of cultural movements, it refers to a loss of homeland, a shifting of population from one locale to another. The term “diaspora” is used to refer to many people or ethnic population forced or induced to leave their traditional ethnic homelands to other parts of the world. William Safran applies the term “diaspora” to expatriate minority communities which have dispersed from an original “centre” to two or more “peripheral” or foreign regions, who retain their myths about their homeland, and feel alienated in the new land. Hence, the word embodies the notion of a centre, a locus, and a ‘home’ from where the dispersion occurs. It invokes the images of multiple journeys to find out a secure root elsewhere.

Other terms used in similar contexts are ‘expatriate,’ ‘immigrant’ and ‘exile’ although there may be differences in the nuances of usage implying differences in shades of meaning. ‘Expatriate’ originating in Latin, refers to one who is away from a native land. In a negative sense it also means exile. Expatriation is actually a complex state of mind and emotion which includes a wistful longing for the past, often symbolized by the ancestral home, the struggle to maintain the difference between oneself and the new, unfriendly surroundings, an assumption of moral or cultural superiority over the host country and a refusal to accept the identity forced on one by the environment. The expatriate builds a cocoon around herself/himself as a refuge from cultural dilemmas and from the experienced hostility or unfriendliness in the
new country. It focuses on the native country that has been left behind, while immigration emphasizes the country into which one has entered as a migrant. The expatriate dwells on his “ex” status of the past, while the immigrant celebrates his present in the new country. The earlier versions of expatriate such as exile, refugee, and emigrant are today subsumed under the umbrella term diaspora.

In today’s world, “diaspora” as a descriptive term covers the whole of a migrant community bypassing the divisions made in the earlier literature between the first and subsequent generations of migrants, that is, between exile and expatriation. Critics often point out that politically charged words like “diaspora” and “exile” are “being emptied of their histories of pain and suffering and are being deployed promiscuously to designate a wide array of cross-cultural phenomena” (Krishnaswamy 94). There are scholars who have begun to speak of ‘internal diaspora’ as well. However, the term diaspora is still used generally for transnational relocation. The post-war use of the term “diaspora” is more inclusive than the usage and it foregrounds particular periods of colonial history or movements directly defined by the interests of the colonial power(s). As a concept, it can be located in a place or a people sharing a particular language, faith, and historical experience.

“Diaspora” is a Janus faced concept. There is emphasis on heterogeneity and the problem of identity. William Safran in “Diaspora in Modern Societies: Myths of Homelands and Return” discusses the fact that the word diaspora is used as a metaphoric designation for several categories of people – expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants, ethnic and racial minorities. For a diasporic person, identity is neither static, nor fixed; it keeps on changing with time. Because a person is aware of his/her life of the past and the present, he can conceptualize his identity in the chronological frame of time. Diasporas thus live in
one country as a community but look across time and space to another. The migrant
diasporas and their descendants experience displacement, fragmentation,
marginalization and discontinuity in the cultural ‘discourse’ of the subject countries.
The diaspora experience in the words of Stuart Hall can be defined “not by essence or
purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a
conception of ‘identity’ which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by
hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and
reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference” (402).

There are three types of diaspora: To the first category belong writers who
detest the idea of being called immigrant writers considering themselves as
mainstream Americans. The second category is the group of writers who shuttle
between different continents. Within this group, some write about their immigrant
experiences, while others physically live there but write of their home country or
about characters who go as aliens and try to fit into the western world. The most
complicated case is the third category of writers whose origin is India but whose work
has no connections as such with the mother country.

Diasporic literatures are inevitable in an era of globalization and upward
mobility wherein men and women cross oceans in search of greener pastures. Such
spaces are hybrid, liminal and marginal, wherein the cultures of the host country and
that of the immigrants intersect, thereby creating a multi-cultural space. “Desi”
literature on the other hand is that which is produced by writers whose experiences
largely remain rooted within the nation. In comparison, “diasporic” literature is
associated with voluntary/forcible migrations both in the pre-colonial and postcolonial
times and has thereby developed distinct cultures, which question the essentialist
models and interrogate the ideal of a “unified” culture, while reinforcing the
“centre”/margin binary models. Both the “desi” and “diasporic” works of art reflect and represent the multi-faceted realities of the Indian cultural discourse. Whether “desi” or “diasporic” the domestic arena is one of the major sites of struggle, endurance and creativity in all women’s writing.

Literary works of any nation have become kaleidoscopic in nature since every nation produces a plethora of both “desi” and “diasporic” literatures which ought to be perceived in a complementary, rather than a confrontatory perspective. The “desi” ideal of location and rootedness is contrasted with the diasporic notion of “dis-location.” There is a yearning for “home,” to go back to “the lost origin,” and “imaginary homelands” are created from the fragmentary and partial memories of their homelands. The recurrent theme of comparing ‘home’ culture with that of the ‘new’ world where the diasporic writer is settled is found in a lot of diasporic writing. This is often defined as a new form of cultural imperialism. Deborah Keahey says in his book *Making It Home, Place in Canadian Prairie Literature*:

> The state of being “at home” has several interconnected dimensions . . . The social dimension of being at home may involve the feeling of being part of a larger community, of having a role to play within human networks of family, friends, lovers, and colleagues, while the spiritual dimension might involve a feeling of harmony with nature, or of having a belief and value system that gives order and meaning to your life. (1-2)

Most of the diasporas consciously choose to migrate to an alien country of their choice, with the hope of living there. They migrate to live a happy life, yet in reality they struggle a lot for survival. The diasporic person is at home neither in the west nor in India and is thus ‘unhomed’ (Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*) in
the most essential sense of the term. Thus the concept and interpretation of ‘home’ become vital in all kinds of diasporic writing. Regarding the plight of an immigrant, Rudyard Kipling says, “He has lost his own country and has not acquired any other” (205). Their psyche is torn between the feeling of rootlessness and nostalgia. When they overcome such feelings, they get a new personality. As attaching themselves to the place where they live they gradually forget their own culture. At this point, their visit to the native land makes it appear alien to them. Once again their mind is torn between two cultures.

The twentieth century had witnessed migrations of Indians across the geographical boundaries for various reasons – employment, education, marriage and political reasons. These immigrants, especially the ones who moved to the United States of America, over a period of time have become ‘distinguished writers and intellectuals.’ The phenomenon of migration of Indian people to the United States of America and other countries, their status there, and their nostalgic feelings for the mother country as well as their alienation is the major subject dealt by diaspora writers. Gauri Shakar Jha talks about the different phases of diaspora in his *Current Perspectives in Indian English Literature*:

. . . the first is nostalgia for the homeland left behind mingled with fear in a strange land. The second is a phase in which one is so busy adjusting to the new environment that there is little creative output. The third phase is when immigrants start taking part in the shaping of Diaspora existence by involving themselves in ethno-cultural issues. The fourth is when they have ‘arrived’ and start participating in the larger world of politics and national issues. (87)
A huge number of themes based on postcolonial concepts like colonization, decolonization, psychological impact of colonization, quest for identity, sense of alienation in one’s own land or in a foreign land, return to the native land, cultural diaspora were the common themes used by the writers of the postcolonial age. Thus Bhabha’s term ‘mimicry’ exposes the postcolonial situation and the process of anticolonialism. Such exposition creates the voice of the Third World, the voice of the native. The sudden domination of the diasporic writings in the native sphere, the influence and pressure of post-colonial theory and culture poetics, allow one to travel into the creative spirit of writers of Indian origin who were expatriate yet local in tone and content in the post-colonial times.

The physical as well as the creative spaces of diasporic writers are often interesting paradigms of multi-lingual situations with numerous dialects and idiolects. The last two decades have witnessed a sudden rise in publications related to diaspora and its politics, international migration, and transnational community formation. Journals such as Diaspora: A journal of Transnational Studies, Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organization, Public Culture, Global Networks, Demography, Population and Development Review, International Migration Review, South Asian Diaspora and Transitions have been publishing studies related to these areas. These diasporic writings are articulate and intelligent, passionate and are far richer than most of the books of sociology published on diaspora.

Diasporic writers suffer from no persecution and seek foreign land for better opportunity. They are in the land of diaspora not because their forefathers had to leave their native land under some compulsion beyond their control but because they shall
be on their sojourn the length of which will be measured in terms of the duration of their academic degree or opportunities of engagement.

A diasporic writer and his writing seem to perform tight rope walking, balancing themselves on the common link of language between two solid and supportive cultures. The diasporic writer generally shows pro-national, pro-community or pro-religious leanings. Diaspora writers behave like transitional beings, in the process of moving from one cultural scenario to another, responding ambivalently to dual cultures, attempting to integrate between the nation and the self. While doing so, they remain attached to their ancestral customs, traditions, languages and religions. The immigrant writers are forced to write from the margins and therefore their focus is on alienation, hybridization, marginalization, community life or the local or national politics.

Diasporic writing generates multiple histories instead of a single view of events and past and present interweave to form a new space. As Gauri Shankar Jha says in *Dimension of Diasporic English Fiction* “a diasporic writer occupy a kind of second space, of exile and cultural solitude” (157). This hybrid location of antagonism, perpetual tension and pregnant chaos is called a third space by Homi Bhabha in his *The Location of Culture*. This is further explained by K. Satchidanandan in his “Self and Beyond”: “The reality of the body, a material production of one local culture and the abstraction of the mind, a cultural subtext of the global experience, provide the intertwining threads of diasporic existence.” This living ‘in-between’ condition is very painful and marginalizing for the diasporas. Uma Parameswaran in her article “Home is where your feet are and may your heart be there too!” points out: “When one arrives in a new land, one has a sense of wonder and adventure at the sight and feel of a landscape so different from what one has been
accustomed to; there is also a sense of isolation and fear; and intense nostalgia is a buffer to which many retreat” (32).

Diasporic writers also deal with themes of broken families, women’s emancipation – related tales of oppression and sexual violence or of gendered identities explained as colonial/postcolonial experiences, expectations and encounters, and cultural conflicts due to East – West encounter. They stand bewildered and confused, and show resistance to the discourse of power in various forms. In the following generations these confusions, problems and yearnings become less intense as they get influenced by the culture of that country and adapt themselves to it.

South Asia is a sub region of Asia, usually taken as comprising the modern countries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The concept of “South Asia” is useful when referring to the countries of the region as a group. The South Asian diaspora, shaped by dispersions of people, ideas and beliefs that flowed from and through the Indian subcontinent is currently one of the world’s largest diasporas. It is this location that is being turned into an advantage and new waves of writings are coming out to articulate the concerns of the minority.

On the peripheries of mainstream culture, the diaspora can provide an empowered space that produces subversive narratives which complicate questions of American and South Asian identity. In his essay, “DissemiNation,” Homi Bhabha writes: “the boundary that secures the cohesive limits of the Western nation may imperceptible turn into a contentious internal liminality providing a place from which to speak, both of, and as, the minority, the exilic, the marginal and the emergent” (LC 213-14).

Several anthologies representing new and familiar voices are trying to define the contours of the imagined communities of the South Asians which present their
diversity in language, class, customs and sexuality. Women’s writing in South Asia that has a long tradition has attained a new maturity and variety in recent years. A Patchwork Shawl: Chronicles of South Asian Women in America edited by Shamita Das DasGupta highlights the significant contribution made by South Asian women in discussing ideological assimilation and resistance to marginalisation.

The Indian diaspora, the third largest in the world after the British and the Chinese, is spread over many countries and has significant economic, cultural and political presence in a number of them. It is drawn from different regions of the mother country, professing varied religions, laying claim to nearly dozens of castes and is involved in a wide range of occupations. The Indians have managed to develop distinct identities, ways of life and thought wherever they have settled. The Indian diaspora includes millions of people in Surinam, South Africa, Trinidad, Tobago, Guyana, Jamaica, Mauritius, Fiji, Malaysia and other countries. Millions moved to the United States, the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates in recent decades in search of job as well as for higher education.

Today there are well established ‘Little Indias,’ with the second and third generations of Indian ethnic origins. The Indian diaspora is now estimated to be more than 20 million worldwide – larger than the entire population of some nations’ states. Amitav Ghosh in his The Imam and the Indian Prose Pieces remarks about the worldwide migration of Indian diaspora:

The modern Indian diaspora – the huge migration from the subcontinent that began in the mid-nineteenth century – is not merely one of the most important demographic dislocations of modern times: it now represents an important force in world culture. The culture of
the diaspora is also increasingly a factor within the culture of the
Indian subcontinent. (243)

Normally, Indian diaspora means writers of Indian birth or ethnicity living abroad, who may be the first generation expatriate whose home was India – of nourishment, values, inclination, love and affection though it may not be a universal case, with distinct dissonance. It also refers to all those who either dispersed from India to various places or whose ancestors belong to India. It also means population outside India, particularly of those who have migrated to foreign lands and in the course of time renounced their Indian citizenship and now belong to the country of their migration but can trace their origin from another land. They may not have visited or lived in India. But for the present purpose they are treated as belonging to the Indian diaspora. Emmanuel S. Nelson defines the Indian diaspora as the “historical and contemporary presence of people of Indian subcontinental origin in other areas of the world” (x). Many are the first generation expatriates who continue to consider India as their true home, the place of their nurture, values and extended families as well as their deepest sympathies and attachments. It is an interesting paradox that a great deal of Indian writing covers every continent and part of the world.

The arrival of the diaspora writing into the world of Indian writing in English brought a sort of convulsion and a sort of antagonism between the East and the West, between the cultures and between the identities. The diasporic Indians have been performing a very important role - they have been projecting India to the world. Being away from the land of their ancestors, they have experienced the loss of self and by writing of this experience they hope to regain this self. However, this exercise often comes into conflict with the more rooted Indians and their perceptions of India and it is the Indian writers who have propagated the theory of postcolonialism.
The idea of “home” in the works of writers of Indian origin who have chosen to relocate themselves in the American continent is the theme of many diasporic writers. American way of life is called melting pot culture and many Indians in America are the third or fourth generation settlers who have reached the state participating in the country’s politics and governance. The American economy, literature and literary theory are thus indirectly dependent on the Indian immigrants who have settled there. However, these migrants have their own trials and tribulations there. As Uma Parameswaran says, “Writers tend to focus on the pains of discrimination and alienation, because ‘our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought’” (32).

The Indian diaspora lacks several important parameters of the Jewish diaspora. The most important one is a burning desire to return to the Homeland. Vijay Mishra has pointed out in his *The Diasporic Imaginary: Theorizing the Indian Diaspora* that “the old Indian diasporas . . . transformed the physical and cultural landscapes to such an extent that these landscapes are now meaningless without reference to them” (429). Migrant Indian writers living away from home are victims of the ‘in between’ syndrome. Severed, and moving away from one culture, they are grafted on the ‘other’ culture. Therefore the feeling of ‘in betweenness’ or living on the periphery, not being a part of but almost being a parasite upon a society, is generated. This in turn raises issues of ethnicity, identity, migration and cultural loss.

The literature of the Indian diaspora is an independent discipline that has many male and female writers as its patrons. Indian writers ever since India’s independence have been strutting around the world, stamping their feet strongly on the alien ground, aspiring for a better fertile and green pasture. Writers of the Indian diaspora, both men and women are making significant contributions to the Indian English literature in the
postcolonial era and thereby extending the boundaries of the nation as Rushdie writes in his *Imaginary Homelands*, “our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind” (10).

The earlier generation of diasporic Indian writers included men like V. S. Naipaul, who has had and continues to have a rather stormy relationship with the land of his ancestors. He was born in Britain and raised in Trinidad to place his grandfather had emigrated from India as an indentured servant. He studied at Port of Spain, and Oxford, became an editor of Caribbean Voices for the BBC. He is also known for his novels set in developing countries, the wistfully comic early novels of Trinidad, the bleaker novels of a wider world that has been remade by the movement of peoples, and the vigilant chronicles of his life and travels, all written in a characteristic, widely admired, prose style.

V. S. Naipaul received the Nobel Prize in 2001 for his novel *Half a Life*, a story about an Indian immigrant to England and Africa. To his credit he also has the travelogues, *The Middle Passage and An Area of Darkness* and *India: A Wounded Civilization. A Flag on the Island* and *The Loss of Eldorado* are his short stories. His collections of articles are *The Overcrowded Barracoon, The Mystic Masseur, The Suffrage of Elvira* and *Miguel Street* dealing with the rootlessness of Trinidadian society. *An Area of Darkness* has frustration and disappointment out of nostalgia for the old land. *A House for Mr. Biswas* is concerned with homelessness. His works are known for their pessimistic and cynical tone, often referred to as “suppressed histories.”
From the African diaspora has emerged M. G. Vassanji. A citizen of Canada, he was born in Kenya and raised in Tanzania and his identity easily straddles three continents. The focus of Vassanji’s works is the situation of East African Indians. As a secondary theme, members of this community (like himself) later undergo a second migration to Europe, Canada, or the United States. He examines how the lives of his characters are affected by migrations. He also looks at the relations between the Indian community, the native Africans and the colonial administration. Though few of his characters ever return to India, the country’s presence looms throughout his work; his 2007 novel The Assassins Song is set almost entirely in India, which deals with the Indian folk culture and myths. He is concerned with the effects of history and the interaction between personal and public histories. Public history is memory and folk history, as well as colonial history, all three of which are interrogated in his work. The colonial history of Kenya and Tanzania serves as the backdrop for much of his work. He is the author of seven novels, two collections of short stories, a memoir of his travels in India, and a biography of Mordecai Richler.

*The Gunny Sack* won a Commonwealth Prize. *No New Land* and *The Book of Secrets* won the very first Giller Prize. *Amriika* and *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* also received the Giller Prize in 2003. His travel memoir about India, *A Place Within: Rediscovering India* won the Governor General’s award. He is also the author of two collections of short fiction *Uhuru Street and Elvis* and *Raja*. In *The Book of Secrets* Vassanji focuses on the interaction between the Shamsi (Indian) community and the native Africans, as well as the colonial administration. Vassanji himself has never been to India yet he sees himself “as an Afro-Asian.”

Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth and Amitav Ghosh are other diasporic writers who, in their work represent the diasporic condition. The agonies of the diasporic
people, being stranded in an alien land, who had to adopt the alien culture either willingly or unwillingly is represented in the works of these writers. Cross-cultural human relationships are found in recent diasporic Indian English fiction. “India incorporate” idea leading to questions of identity and belonging have become hallmarks of diasporic writing in general. These issues of identity are both opposing and complementary markers to define modern fiction and as Bhabha avers “Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind’s eye” (NN 1).

Salman Rushdie was the first diasporic writer to articulate the predicament of writers with experiences of displacement and immigration. His novels are more about the economic and cultural globalization than about the urban or rural India with all its characteristics. Mingled with this outsider-feeling may sometimes be regret or guilt. Rushdie expresses it in his Imaginary Homelands: “The Indian writer, looking back at India, does so through guilt-tinted spectacles . . . we seem, to ourselves, post-lapsarian men and women. We are Hindus who have crossed the black water; we are Muslims who eat pork” (15). Rushdie’s book stands out as an example of uncertainty and insecurity, camouflaged by smugness and complacency. It is so easy, so convenient, and so comfortable to view the known and familiar as the only acceptable choice and to dismiss everything else as mediocre. The simple reason is that Rushdie is an “exile” looking back.

Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children won the Booker Prize in 1981, which sparked off the interest in Indian writing in English and consequently led to the theorization of postcolonial literatures and the focus on diasporic discourse. His first novel, Grimus, a part-science fiction tale, was generally ignored by the public and literary critics. Much of his fiction is set on the Indian subcontinent and concerned
with the many connections, disruptions and migrations between the East and the West. He wrote *Shame*, in which he depicts the political turmoil in Pakistan. His most controversial work is *The Satanic Verses*. He has published many short stories, including those collected in *East, West, The Moor’s Last Sigh*, a family epic ranging over some 100 years of India’s history.

Vikram Seth has a place of his own. No two books of his have been alike, and yet each has borne the hallmark of its author. In *An Equal Music*, his first novel, he returns with a story intricate and intimate, rich with music, art, humour and emotion. At one level, it is a story about love, about the love of a woman lost and found and lost again. *A Suitable Boy*, a landmark in the history of Indian literature, reflects contemporary reality. It depicts the social and political life of the post-independent India. *The Golden Gate* confirmed his arrival. He has also written a libretto, *Arion and the Dolphin*, which was specially commissioned by the English National Opera. His embrace of the classical realist form has, inevitably, been seen in some quarters as a throwback to the past. Certainly, for better or worse, his fictional practice stands in stark contrast to the magic-realist vein of Indo-Anglian fiction pioneered by Salman Rushdie and subsequently refined by the likes of Amitav Ghosh.

Amitav Ghosh was born in Calcutta and grew up in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and India. He studied at the universities of Delhi and Oxford, has taught in a number of institutions and written for many magazines. *River of Smoke* is the second in the *Ibis Trilogy*, the first of which, the best selling *Sea of Poppies*, was shortlisted for the Man Booker prize in 2008. He currently divides his time between Calcutta, Goa and Brooklyn. One of the major voices of the diaspora, he can be considered at once an insider and outsider. He is, in a sense, never away as he frequents India and makes it centre stage in his novels. His wide exposure to various countries made him
comfortable to write about very different kinds of environment and he moves effortlessly across national frontiers. He has written four novels, a travelogue and a booklet exposing the nuclear arms race in both India and Pakistan. His latest work is a booklet, *Countdown*, in which he exposes the nuclear lobby in both India and Pakistan. He is also the author of *The Circle of Reason*, *The Shadow Lines*, *The Calcutta Chromosome*, *The Glass Palace* and *The Hungry Tide*. Most of his works deal with historical settings. His understanding of human values can be traced from the rejection of the authority of the imperial powers to set the standard for others. The imperialists imposed their culture thinking on their subjects through the self-ascribed role of the representatives of humanism and modernisation.

The commitment and the political stances of the millennium writers, who have just burst into the literary scene in North America, differ from the earlier generation of expatriate writers including Raja Rao and Santha Rama Rau. They do not carry their India with them wherever they go; neither do their characters blend into the American melting pot with miraculous ease.

The more recent among the writers of the Indian diaspora are Bharati Mukherjee, Vikram Chandra, and Rohinton Mistry. These writers have diasporic feeling with the motherland but also the feelings of acceptance and rejection manifested towards them by India herself. The postcolonial period was a period that paved way for many women writers. Sufferings of women in the male dominant society, suppression of women, man–woman relationship and emancipation of women were some of the common themes on which the women writers in India wrote. Although the immigrant writers or the diasporic writers lived in a foreign country they too wrote on women-centric themes with the same kind of Indianness as that of the Indian women writers writing in India.
Bharati Mukherjee, a Calcutta born Indian girl, went to the United States of America to attend two year creative writing workshops. There she met and married a Canadian writer named Clark Blaise. Thus she was caught in the conflict of two cultures of the East and the West, which is the main concern of her writings. After living for some years in Canada, she and her husband moved to New York, where they are settled now. She is a novelist, short-story writer, non-fiction writer and journalist. Like many other post-modern writers, she has taken up the problems and experiences faced by the Indian immigrants in the United States of America or the Western world. She explores the theme of immigration and transformation in three of her novels: *Wife, Jasmine*, and *The Holder of the World*, which reflect the full view of the metamorphosis of her women protagonists.

Vikram Chandra was born in New Delhi and is an Indian-American writer. His first novel, *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* won the 1996 Commonwealth Writer’s Prize for the Best First Book. It was inspired by the autobiography of James Skinner, a legendary nineteenth-century Anglo-Indian soldier. His most notable works include the films *Prem Rog* and *1942: A Love Story*, and *Chandni*, directed by Yash Chopra. *Love and Longing in Bombay* is a collection of short stories. *Sacred Games* is Chandra’s most recent novel.

Rohinton Mistry is one of the major expatriate writers, who settled in Canada. Though an expatriate, he gives graphic pictures of family life in India in his novels: *Such a Long Journey, A Fine Balance* and *Family Matters*. His works mark a new kind of writing, resulting from a fragmented, splintered world. As a diasporic Parsi writer, he has convincingly but also sensitively recalled his community’s passage through time and history with a sense of loss and nostalgia. He incorporates the post-colonial desire of decolonized and suppressed communities for identity and authentic
space for existence as a positive re-assertion within nationalist setups and their often disconcerting political practices. Right from *Tales From Firozsha Baag*, he has concentrated upon the Parsi community’s experience in the metropolitan, multi-ethnic Bombay wherein he highlights the small but noticeable changes, comedies and life’s ironies and grim tragedies. He is also different in a unique manner of being a Parsi and hence experiencing a diasporic situation even within India itself.

Suketu Mehta was born in Kolkata and raised in Bombay where he lived until his family moved to New York in 1977. He has attended New York University and the University of Iowa Writers’ Workshop. The autobiographical account of his experiences in the city of Mumbai, *Maximum City*, was published in 2004. This novel is a cogent fugue work with well-defined magnitude and direction. For an American it is an American Pop rock by Adam Mitchell Lambert. For an Indian, it is an Indian Classical by A. R. Rahman. For an immigrant, it is delight of Pop and Classical. Forecasting his indigenous existence as an immigrant writer, Mehta’s liminality allows him to cross many boundaries and achieve his literary objective. As a screenwriter, journalist and investigator he falls in line with dislocated Bombayites like Salman Rushdie and Rohinton Mistry.

Fiji has given writers like Sudesh Mishra, Satendra Nandan and Subramani. Bidisha Bandopadhyay (who incidentally never writes her surname) is a second-generation Bengali writer born and brought up in England. Her debut novel *Seahorses* is an urban pageant about three young British men and is in no way even remotely connected to India. Another interesting example is that of Abha Dawesar an immigrant South Asian woman writer with her debut novel *The Three of Us*. She creates a story that shrewdly explores sexual dependency. It forms the perspective of a white male investment banker in Manhattan, New York, whose affairs range from
having sex with his boss as well as his wife, all neatly timed with the help of mini-planner.

There are also other first and second-generation Indian writers such as Farrukh Dhondy, Hanif Kureshi, Atima Srivastava, Ravinder Randhawa and Sunetra Gupta. The Petroleum diaspora has given the bilingual Vilas Sarang. This is only a list of representatives and not a complete list of Indian diasporic writers.

Fiction by women writers constitutes a major segment of the contemporary writing in English. It provides insight, a wealth of understanding, a reservoir of meanings and a basis of discussion. Through women writers’ eyes a different world is portrayed and with their assistance the potential of human achievement is realized. In any appraisal of the diasporic literature, an appreciation of the writing of its women is essential.

The diasporic Indian women writers have to struggle to be accepted in the west. The fact that they are able to do it attests to their ability as writers. But despite achieving literary success in the west, they are compelled to play an ambivalent role of preservers of their culture and at the same time being agents of change. The experience of an Indian woman writer living in the west is liberating, but at the same time it creates problems of identity and cultural belonging. The women writers describe colonial and post-colonial experience from the angle of feminine sensibility, of multiple marginalisations with patriarchal and political constraints of their colonial homelands, and further as strangers in an alien western society: “newness comes into the world” (LC 326).

The diasporic women writers’ representations of diasporic discourses offer fresh outlook and alternative perspective into female realities. Negotiating multiplicity of affiliations – as women, as a minority, as women of colour, as wives and mothers –
the women writers of Indian origin articulate a variety of diasporic experiences through their emerging new consciousness. Significantly enough, they attempt to balance precariously between honouring and breaking traditions while building expatriate lives. They also characteristically chart out postcolonial diasporic realities of the emerging border zones and frontiers which have taken place in this period of globalization.

Indian experiences are viewed from the diasporic women’s lens that facilitates the empathetic understanding of the plight of the immigrants to America. The alienation of women by this discourse continues to occupy a subterranean level even today in Indian women’s writing, both in English and in the Indian languages. The most part of the generalized conflicts of tradition and modernity, country and city, language and identity, especially where English writing is concerned, has pushed this political vein of women’s writing deeper into the recesses of the unspeakable. Diasporic women’s writing is forced to comply with heterotopia. With the increased migration of Indian people to America, as part of the cultural diaspora there has been a further strengthening of stereotypes of women, which had been inscribed in colonial thought. Those contemporary representations keep on depicting the Indian women as being highly traditional, submissive and victims of patriarchal structures, notably arranged marriages as well as of cultural clashes.

With the entry of women writers like Bharathi Mukerjee, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Meena Alexander, Jhumpa Lahiri, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, etc., the English language has widened its umbrella in diasporic writing. Issues of history, historiography and colonialism have cropped up in many other works. Besides these aspects almost all the immigrant writers have also used the cultural and mythological motifs to drive home their Indianness. Though the
immigrant writers are away from their culture and society, they write about their experiences, the sufferings of women and man–woman relationship with great depth and realism.

Kamala Markandaya and Anita Desai are two such writers who have excelled in the analysis of average men and women and familial relationships against the backdrop of political, social or economic issues. Personal relationships form an important segment of Markandaya’s fiction, whether it is *Nectar in a Sieve* or *Some Inner Fury* dealing with inter-racial relationships and the concomitant problems, especially with powerful political pressures affecting the life of the characters. *A Silence of Desire* and *Possession* deal with the realm of spirituality while *A Handful of Rice* and *The Coffer Dams* go back to economic problems. *The Nowhere Man* is the most suitable work to explain the diasporic instinct of the works of diasporic writers where she critiques an Indian immigrant’s experience in Britain. Some of her recurrent themes are hunger, degradation, east-west encounter, rootlessness, fatalism, politics, human relationships and the rural versus the urban.

Anita Desai holds a prominent place with her themes of human predicament, frustration and loneliness in the insensitive and inconsiderate contemporary world. She has also given a new dimension to the Indo-English novels by turning from outer to inner reality. She received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1978 for her novel *Fire on the Mountain*; she won the British Guardian Prize for *The Village by the Sea*. She published her first novel, *Cry the Peacock* in 1963 and considers *Clear Light of the Day* as her most autobiographical work, which is set during her coming of age and also in the same neighbourhood where she grew up. Her new book *The Artist of Disappearance* is her best since *Fasting, Feasting* and shares the apocalyptic vision of her extraordinary novel *Fire on the Mountain*. Her *Bye-Bye, Blackbird* deals with the
theme of alienation revealed in the state of bewilderment and indecision, reflected in the love-hate relationship with the alien environment of Britain. She examines the whole range of relationships that engaged the consciousness of the post-independence generation. She explores man’s relationship with the universe and the meaning and purpose of existence.

Meena Alexander was born in India and raised in Sudan. At eighteen she went to England to study. She has a special interest in poetry and poetics, questions of gender, migration and memory. Late in 1979 she migrates to the United States and settled in the New York City area, to lead an American life and explored her writing talent. With a status as an educated woman of the South Asian diaspora living and writing in the West, her scholarly work includes two books on English Romanticism; her work in poetics includes a book of poems and essays, *The Shock of Arrival: Reflections on Postcolonial Experience*. *Nampally Road* plunges into the tumult, squalor, and corruption of postcolonial India and this is a metaphor for contemporary India with its restless crowds. She treats her writing as a search for homeland, which is less physical than psychological, in particular her poetry, as a means of making sense of her multiple cultural, geographical and psychological positional ties.

Jhumpa Lahiri is an Indian American author. She is an Indian by ancestry, British by birth, American by immigration and targets the western audience by deliberately portraying the Indian-American life. She is a member of the President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities, appointed by the US President Barack Obama. As an Indian living in the United States of America, she has the experience of growing up simultaneously in two worlds. Her stories have American – New England and New York setting, but the characters are placed in the Indian setting and India is highlighted in the memories of her characters. The trauma of cultural dislocation and
displacement, an acute sense of loneliness and the pangs of estrangement suffered by
the Indian immigrants in America are the major maladies she tries to interpret through
her works such as Interpreter of Maladies, The Namesake, A Temporary Matter and
Unaccustomed Earth.

Kiran Desai is an Indian author who is a citizen of India and a permanent
resident of the United States. She is the daughter of the noted author Anita Desai and
the partner of Orhun Pamuk. She was born in New Delhi, India, and she and her
mother then lived in England for a year, and then moved to the United States, where
she studied creative writing. With her own immigrant experience, she portrays the
helpless Indians who wish to have the Great American Dream come true. Her first
novel, Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard was published in 1998 received accolades
from such notable figures as Salman Rushdie. The Inheritance of Loss is her second
novel.

Sunetra Gupta, yet another important novelist, was born in Calcutta and now
lives in Oxford. Her novels Memories of Rain and A Sin of Colour are set both in
Calcutta and in Oxford. The Glass Blower’s Breath is about a single day in the lives
of a butcher, a baker, a candle maker and the women they all love, set in Calcutta,
New York and London. Moonlight into Marsipan, the story of a remarkable discovery
made in a crumbling garage laboratory in Calcutta.

Uma Parameswaran – a poet, playwright, and short-story writer was born in
Madras and grew up in Jabalpur, India and moved to the United States. Currently she
is a professor of English at The University of Winnipeg. Since settling in Canada, she
has devoted much of her writing and efforts in the literary field to create an
identifiable South Asian Canadian diaspora. She wrote Sons Must Die, a play centered
on the Partition of 1947. Other plays are Meera, Sita’s Promise, Dear Deedi, My
Sister and Rootless but Green are the Boulevard Trees. Her most recent collection, What Was Always Hers, delves deeper into character relationships among South Asian women.

Indira Ganesan was born in Srirangam, India and moved to the United States. Her first novel, The Journey, was recognized by Granta’s first Best 52 American Novelists campaign. Her second novel, Inheritance, was published in the United States when she held a Mary Ingraham Bunting Award at Radcliffe College. Her latest novel, As Sweet as Honey gives an enchanting story of family life.

Chitra Banerjee was born in Calcutta on 29 July 1956 and spent the first nineteen years of her life in India. Her father, Rajendra Kumar Banerjee, an accountant by profession and her mother, Tatini Banerjee, a school teacher, brought up their four children in a modest middle-class ambience. As the second-born child and only girl among three brothers, Partha, Dhruva and Surya, Chitra Banerjee spent her childhood days in sibling rivalry and camaraderie. She studied at Loreto House, a convent school run by Irish nuns, from where she graduated in 1971. In 1976 she earned her bachelor’s degree in English from Presidency College, University of Calcutta. At the age of nineteen she moved to the United States to continue her studies as an English major and got her master’s degree from Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio, in 1978. Working under Stephen Greenblatt on the topic “For Danger is in Words: A Study of Language in Marlowe’s Plays,” she received her Ph.D. in English from the University of California at Berkeley in 1984. She did not begin to write fiction until after she graduated from Berkeley, when she came to realize that she loved teaching but did not want to do academic writing: “. . . didn’t have enough heart in it. I wanted to write something more immediate” (Mehta). In 1979 she
married Murthy Divakaruni, an engineer by profession. Her two sons, Anand and Abhay, were born in 1991 and 1994.

Chitra Banerjee and her husband moved to Sunnyvale, California, in 1989. For several years she was interested in issues involving women and worked with Afghani women refugees and women from dysfunctional families, as well as in shelters for battered women. In 1991 she became founder–member and president of MAITRI, an organization in the San Francisco area that works for South Asian women in abusive situations. In her essay “My Work with MAITRI” she says, “My work with Maitri has been at once valuable and harrowing. I have seen things I would never have believed could happen. I have heard of acts of cruelty beyond imagining. The lives of many of the women I have met through this organization have touched me deeply.”

Chitra Banerjee also associated herself with Asians against Domestic Abuse, an organization in Houston. Her interest in these women grew when she realized that there was no mainstream shelter for immigrant women in distress, a place where people would understand their cultural needs and problems in the United States. The experience she gathered from counselling sessions, the lives of Asian women opened up to her revealing unimaginable crises.

Chitra Banerjee has insisted on being read not as an Indian or expatriate writer but as an immigrant writer, whose literary agenda is to claim that America is being improvised by newcomers from the Third World. She is evidently accepted in her adopted country as an Asian American or a ‘woman of colour,’ but not as part of the ‘mainstream’ of American writing, or even of the ‘mainstream’ of American women’s writing. To her credit she won many prestigious awards instituted by Americans. As an award winning author and poet, she writes for both adults and children.
Diaspora dream figures are found prominently in all the fictions of Chitra Banerjee covering many moods of expatriation – nostalgia, frustration, uncertainty and despondence. She has presented a fascinating study of the problem of a displaced person in America as well as in India, as she told Neela Banerjee: “Young South Asians have come up to me and said, ‘I really relate to this story. This story has helped me understand my mother, helped me understand my culture.’ That’s a really good feeling.” The reason for the immediate success of women’s diasporic literature among the western and the immigrant readers is that they write from a perspective that is not available to a writer who has lived in India.

Chitra Banerjee’s journey from being a young graduate student to a mature writer seems to have come a full circle. She also admits, however, that being pigeonholed as an Asian American writer can be stifling. She strongly believes that writers have a social responsibility and she focuses on the life of immigrants as she confesses, “the idea of diaspora is very important to me” (Seshachari). Her works include a wide variety on themes and she directs much focus of the immigrant experience of South Asian women in her works.

The Indian experience in America and the conflict between the traditions of the novelist’s homeland and the culture of her adopted country is the focus of much of her fiction and poetic work. As she proclaims: “As immigrants we have this enormous raw material, which is often very painful and puts us in a position of conflict, which is very good for a writer” and further elaborates, “We draw from a dual culture, with two sets of worldviews and paradigms juxtaposing each other” (Parayath). And this precisely makes her an emerging literary celebrity of the present times.

After Salman Rushdie, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni emerges on the literary scene with a postcolonial diasporic identity. She lives with a hybrid identity and
writing partially autobiographical work. Most of her stories, set in the Bay Area of California, deal with the experience of immigrants to America, whose voice is rarely heard in other writings of Indian writers in English. She has published more than fifty magazines including *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The New Yorker*, and her writing has been included in more than thirty anthologies. Her works have been translated into eleven languages, including Dutch, Hebrew, Portuguese, Danish, German, and Japanese.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is concerned with crossing over from one culture to another without compromising either, negotiating new boundaries and remaking themselves. She has attempted to create a comprehensive picture of South Asian family life. She writes about what she knows and feels. She is at her best exploring the themes of love, friendship, assimilation, self-analysis and discovery: “involved in the process of social transformation” (*LC* 323).

In Chitra Banerjee’s writings, the diaspora with its shifting boundaries and conflictual encounters between different cultures is an important focus. Being the writer of the modern times, she has depicted in her fiction the problems faced by Indian and other third-world immigrants who attempt to assimilate into the American lifestyle. By discussing her private sphere of creative power one may copiously categorise her as an American author, as an Indian-American author, as an immigrant author. For the Indian academics she has written something known as “diaspora fiction” and to the American academics “immigrant fiction” and this kind of demarcation amuses her. The books depict the ordinary people, written in simple, unpretentious manner, often evocative of the stories written in Bengal.

Chitra Banerjee locates her texts at the troubled intersection of female subjectivity and national identities. She focuses upon sensitive protagonists who lack
a stable sense of personal and cultural identity and are victimized by racism, sexism and other forms of social oppression. Although she captures different aspects of the cultural encounter, the ways in which identities are ordered form a common matrix in her writings. The theme of capturing the Indian immigrant experience in the United States pervades almost each of her novels and short stories. Her main focus is on her women characters, their struggle for identity, their bitter experience and their final emergence as self-assertive individuals, free from the bondages imposed by the relationship.

Chitra Banerjee focuses on women’s issues. Her writing is that it allows her to create her own world, ‘a safe place’ from which she can explore a wide range of experience, especially a woman’s status in society. She sensitively portrays a lot of women and their mute, convoluted self-abnegation in her stories. For the courageous and sensitive treatment of large and significant themes, her works are regarded as outstanding contributions to Indian Writing in English. As Uma Parameswaran writes in “Home is where your feet are, and may your heart be there too!”:

Chitra Banerjee, the most recent star in the Diaspora sky, delves into the darker dreams and nightmares of womanscape and has an appreciative readership among feminists, but since her women characters are mainly Indo-American, there is a tendency to see them not as individuals so much as representative of the Diaspora, and we are back on square one perpetuation of negative stereotypes that the average north American reader has of Indian life and culture. (34)

Chitra Banerjee has won a readership for her poetry and fiction of immigrant life in America. Her novels occupy a unique place in the field of postcolonial diasporic life by depicting the condition of people with lost home who are displaced,
have become migrant in search of their livelihood. She foregrounds various socio-economic problems faced by the Indian diaspora in her novels. There is an effort to understand the inner dimensions of the female characters and to study their place in a society overridden by andocentric norms. Her novels are mostly concerned with the female protagonists’ quest for identity.

Initially, Chitra Banerjee started writing for herself during the mid-1980s, she joined a writer’s group at Berkeley University and started writing poems. Her volume of poems *Leaving Yuba City: New and Selected Poems* (1997) include new poems as well as ones from *Dark Like the River* (1987), *The Reason for Nasturtiums*, and *Black Candle: Poems about Women from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh* (1991). These poems draw on similar subject matter to her fiction: womanhood, family life, exile, alienation, exoticism, ethnicity, domesticity, love, and romance. Her persistent concern with women’s experience often deepens as it is arrayed against varying cultural backgrounds.

The poem “The Brides Come to Yuba City” describes the reunion of the long-separated lovers. This volume of poetry won a Pushcart Prize, an Allen Ginsberg Prize, and a Gerbode Foundation Award. Chitra Banerjee’s poem “The Brides Come to Yuba City,” “Yuba City School,” represent a woman who struggles against rapid discrimination deliberately meted out by institutions, attitudes and actions that subjugate the immigrant in society. And it is by struggling against such dominating forces of an alien history and a foreign language that the individual identity emerges. The poems focus on mothers of the first generation. These mothers suffered the imprisoning walls of patriarchy, developing strategies of cunning and ensuring through their struggle and sacrifice their daughters’ passage to a happier and more creative life.
Chitra Banerjee’s “Yuba City Wedding” focuses on a subject that she has so far seen in the work of anthropologists: the interesting phenomenon of intermarriage between Sikh men and women from Mexico in the California of the 1940s. The group of poems about the immigrant experiences of the Sikhs is poignant especially.

In 1993 she edited *Multitude: Cross – Cultural Readings for Writers*, an anthology she uses in her own classroom; it is also used at many major universities in America. From mid-1997 to early 1998, Chitra Banerjee also wrote a regular column, “Spice of Life,” for the on-line magazine *Salon*, in which she focused upon the issues she knows best. Her anthologies include *We Too Sing America* (1997) and *California Uncovered: Stories for the 21st Century* (2004). *Grandma and the Great Gourd* is a children’s picture book illustrated by Susy Pilgrim Waters in 2012.

In 1998, commissioned by the New England Foundation, Chitra Banerjee also wrote a play called *Clothes*, which was performed by the New World Theater at Amherst College and at the International Drama Festival, Athens, Greece, in 1999. Her novels include *The Conch Bearer: Book One of the Brotherhood of the Conch* (2003), *The Mirror of Fire and Dreaming: Book Two of the Brotherhood of the Conch* (2005), *Shadowland: Book Three of the Brotherhood of the Conch* (2009). *One Amazing Thing* (2010) is about a group of people who are trapped in a visa office after a massive earthquake and about how they are surviving in the dark place with no way out of the debris surrounding them. Thus Chitra Banerjee weaves a suspenseful, astute, and unforgettable survivors’ tale.

Chitra Banerjee’s enthralling new novel, *Oleander Girl*, tells a love story of an orphan. The female protagonists of eight of the nine stories in Chitra Banerjee’s sensuously evocative collection *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives* (2001) are caught between the beliefs and traditions of their Indian heritage and those of their, or their
children’s, new homeland, the United States. Most of them depict life in the East and the West perceptively. The stories are touching tales of lapsed communication, inarticulate love and redemptive memories. They illuminate the difficult process of adjustment for women in whom memory and duty must coexist with a new, often painful and disorienting set of standards.

Chitra Banerjee’s versatility as a writer was confirmed by her first children’s book, *Neela: Victory Song* (2002). It is a historical novel set during India’s struggle for independence. A lot of mythical ideas from Indian culture have been adroitly interwoven into *The Conch Bearer*, which connotes power among other things and filled with blends action, adventure, and magic in a kind of quest fantasy. The novel *The Palace of Illusions* is a gendered representation of the epic *Mahabharata* narrated through the female consciousness of its female protagonist Draupadi or Panchali. The novelist portrays the character Draupadi who follows tradition as her virtue and who is independent to choose her husband and to curse the Kauravas against injustice. The postcolonial ideas of gender, class and race and their marginalization in the societal set up are represented through the characters like Draupadi, Karna, Ekalayva, etc. It is published in September 2003 and chosen as one of the best books of the year by *Publishers Weekly*.

Chitra Banerjee’s works flaunt the romanticism of the female body captured in the close ups of rituals and ceremonies from birth to death, constantly brutalised by greed and patriarchal power. The Indian woman is depicted as a passive victim suffering in silence at home and abroad. She approaches the themes of disillusionment and exile in innovative ways. She projects varied themes in her works like inter-racial marriages, mobile parents or preference for alternative sexualities, home and family, ethnicity and identity, body and sexuality through which she articulates a perspective
of women’s experience of exile in particular and women’s alienation in general. She brings her ideas into the story, which makes the reader feel about the character, and the reality with which she interweaves the story is really appreciable. The characters are very close to reality and find a balance between old treasured beliefs and surprising new desires. The heroines in Chitra Banerjee’s novels lead an imperfect life which shows how women struggle hard for their personal identity.

Chitra Banerjee says that if the Indian woman is to be relevant in the United States she must ground her struggles in the heart of whiteness. Grafting on cultural components make no sense in the New World, they should re-invent their personality, which takes the best of the both together in order “to raise hell globally.” The emerging of a new identity that draws on a new culture, as it were, a culture that never denies her own heritage but now accepts different facets of her new immigrant life to construct a “positive” identity of her own.

Arranged Marriage is a collection of eleven short stories which deal with conflicts arising out of love. It reflects a major area anxiety for the first generation immigrants from South Asia. The stories refer to a variety of forms between man and woman relationship and its success and failure. The forms of marriage/relationships are not limited to Asians or Asian-Americans. And with those discoveries and recognition, the South Asian-Americans and their culture as portrayed by Chitra Banerjee have become demystified and demarginalized. This short story collection articulates the Odysseyan saga of women who remain dislocated, disassociated and distanced from their mothers and motherlands.

Arranged Marriage received considerable critical acclaim and won the 1996 American Book Award, the Bay Area Book Reviewers Award and the PEN Oakland Award for fiction. Some critics have accused Chitra Banerjee of tarnishing the image
of the Indian community and reinforcing stereotypes of the “oppressed” Indian woman, but as Julie Mehta quotes the author in “Arranging One’s Life: Sunnyvale author Chitra Banerjee talks about marriages and stereotypes,” her professed aim was to shatter stereotypes: “Some just write about different things, but my approach is to tackle these sensitive topics. I hope people who read my book will not think of the characters as Indians, but feel for them as people.”

The collection of short fiction focuses on the same subject from a variety of angles and perspectives. One common theme that runs through all the stories is that Indian-born women living new lives in the United States find independence a mixed blessing that involves walking a tightrope between old beliefs and newfound desires. The woman, frequently an immigrant, deals with her memories, contemplates her status in marriage (frequently seen as crippling or suppressing), and dreams of ways out. Inspite of the lively potential of the subjects, in many of the stories there is a sense of sameness and predictability: the married women always come to dead – ends in marriage, the unmarried are nearly always self-sufficient, self-assured, independent and successful, and the husbands, with minor exceptions, callous, unfeeling and insignificant.

Sisterhood has been both an inevitable choice of theme and an important political statement. With the exception of two short stories in Arranged Marriage namely “The Bats” and “The Maid Servant’s Story” all her fiction centres on the Indian immigrants and their uneasy relationships with the unfamiliar world they have found themselves in; each one of them is, moreover, a woman - centred story, even if, as in “The Disappearance,” the point of view is not the woman’s. The wife in “The Disappearance” is a Calcutta woman who lives in America with her husband and manages to get out of a marriage that she dislikes, due to no apparent reason as the
husband sees it, other than the husband’s exercising of his normal authority. The immigrant woman in a bad marriage exercises greater freedom of will than the women who are non-immigrants. The failures of Indian patriarchy and Indian men are portrayed in this story.

In “The Bats,” an abusive husband repeatedly gets his wife to return to him, exerting on her a power analogous to the poisonous traps in a mango orchard that lure bats to their deaths. In “The Maid Servant’s Story,” a respectable banker seems to have a loving relationship with his wife, until it is revealed that he tiptoes in the privacy of night to seek a sexual liaison with the wife’s maid. This story is narrated by her aunt Deepa Mashi to Manisha who has just arrived from America to reveal her plan of marrying a Bengali professor at the University of California. Both these stories are set in India, and the wives in these stories are overpowered by the males in their lives as they are unable to free themselves from their undesirable marriages.

“Affair” traces the awakening of Abha, a middle-class Indian housewife living in America to her own individuality. It highlights the double dislocation of the migrant, middle-class Indian woman who, in most instances, is primarily a housewife. The discovery that her best friend is having an affair makes her rethink of her own marriage. Despite her initial suspicions, her friend’s lover does not turn out to be her own husband; but instead of feeling relief, the effect of this knowledge is to speed up her understanding of her relationship with him. She finally decides to leave him and live her own life with the possibility of economic independence after she is offered a well-paid job of compiling an Indian cookbook.

“Doors” suggests that cross-cultural marriages are often doomed to fail even between an American- raised Indian and an Indian brought up in the subcontinent. The character Preeti, after moving to America, has come to love the western idea of
privacy. She faces a dilemma when her husband’s cousin wants to come to live with them. She expresses her discontent with the situation, which shows her newfound decisiveness and her determination to oppose her husband’s view of the traditional Indian wife. “The Word Love,” on the other hand, analyses the different conceptions of love in India and in America. In “Silver Pavements, Golden Roofs,” the protagonist - a graduate student newly arrived in America, which she considers a land of illusion is brought face to face with harsh reality when she is assaulted on the mean streets of Chicago. In “Clothes,” Sumita’s husband dies, and she is faced with a dilemma whether to stay in America or to go back to India to live with her in-laws.

“The Ultrasound” deals with the issue of female foeticide and later enlarged into the novel *Sister of My Heart* (1999). This story presents two different situations of women in two different cultural settings. Anju and Runu are cousins but worlds apart in they face different situations in terms of space and experience. Runu’s husband belongs to a rich traditional Brahmin family in India, whereas Anju lives in America with her husband. Inspite of their meagre saving, after sending money to her in-laws, Anju enjoys more liberty than her cousin Runu in India. They both undergo ultrasound and amniocentesis tests during their pregnancies. When it is revealed that Runu is pregnant with a girl, her husband and mother-in-law pressure her to have an abortion because they would only accept a male child as the family’s first born. Runu opposes this and leaves her husband’s home with the guidance of Anju, who sees Runu’s coming to America as the only solution. The story is told by Anju in the first-person narrative voice, as are many of Chitra Banerjee’s stories.

Chitra Banerjee delineates Calcutta household in its 1970s and 1980s in the novel *Sister of My Heart*. The novel opens with the Chatterjee family, the three widows – Gouri Ma and Nalini and Pishi Ma. They are already deprived of its male
figures and its former economic status. Sudha and Anju are distant cousins and are brought up together. They are brought up closer than sisters, sharing their clothes, worries and dreams.

The chapters themselves are alternatively tilted “Anju” and “Sudha” and utilize techniques that are epistolary and exclamatory, with transcultural settings, a tone that is adjetival and highly lyrical, italicized stream-of-consciousness passages, and a romantic style. Slowly the dark secrets of the past are unveiled and test the cousins’ mutual loyalty. A family crisis forces their mothers to start the serious business of arranging the girls’ marriages, and the pair is torn apart. Sudha moves to her new family’s home in rural Bengal, while Anju joins her immigrant husband in California. Although they have both been trained to be perfect wives, nothing has prepared them for the pain, as well as the joy, that each will have to face in their new life. Chitra Banerjee’s work is regarded as a pastiche of the older Bengali texts and believe that her writing is an act of “rebellion” against traditional Indian indifference to women’s relationships, her theme of women’s friendship is not strange to an Indian, or, perhaps more appropriately, Bengali writing.

Chitra Banerjee’s first novel, *The Mistress of Spices* (1997), is distinct in that it blends prose and poetry, successfully employing magic realist techniques. It is being optioned for a film by British film maker Gurinder Chadha. It is also clearly inspired by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay’s *Kapalkundala* and *Devi Choudhurani* and by old grandmother’s tales of pirates and strange islands and magical transformations which reverberated through the pages of children’s magazines like *Shishusathi* and *Shuktara* of forty and fifty years ago. Its heroine, Tilo (short for Tilottama), is the “mistress of spices.” Born in India, she is shipwrecked on a remote island inhabited by women. Here she encounters an ancient woman who imparts
instruction about the power of spices. She has taken the body in Shampati’s fire and has vowed to become a Mistress. She is named after the sub-burnished Seasame seed, spice of nourishment. Her past life is dominated by fantasy and magic. The present life of Tilo is related to her service as a mistress in a spice store in the crooked corner of Esperanza where Oakland buses stop. The store has the inner room with its sacred and secret selves. When she happens to see the customers, she used to raise questions related to their problems. While she supplies the ingredients for curries and kormas, she also helps her customers gain a more precious commodity: whatever they most desire. She gives free advice to the local Indian expatriate community.

Each individual who comes to the shop is given different spices. There are women, children and men characters like Haroun, Mohan and Raven who seek help from Tilo. She catches glimpses of an abused wife, a naïve cabbie, a sullen – clinging to dignity, all of whom lack balance. To each, Tilo dispenses wisdom and the appropriate spice, for the restoration of sight, the cleansing of evil, and the pain of rejection. When a lonely American ventures into the store Tilo cannot find the correct spice. She falters and is unable to help him. The problem is that of communication – if she follows him her magical powers will destroy. Conflicted, she has to choose whether to serve her people or to follow the path leading to her own happiness. She has to decide which part of her heritage she will keep and which part she will choose to abandon.

Tilo seeks personal fulfillment by reaching the earthly paradise as desired by her American lover, Raven. She also gets an identity as Indian-American. At the same time she wants to continue rendering service to people with her magical, mystical and visionary powers. In continuum with the title, each chapter is named after a spice and discusses the trials and tribulations of an individual and the special characteristics of
the spices. Thus the reader gets a glimpse into a range of problems that surround the life of the diasporic Indian.

Chitra Banerjee’s *Queen of Dreams* utilizes the magic realist mode again. Like Tilo of *The Mistress of Spices*, Mrs. Gupta is an Indian immigrant who dreams the dreams of others to help them in their own lives. This gift of vision and the ability to foresee and guide people through their fates fascinates her daughter, Rakhi, the desi (American-born) daughter of Indian immigrants. As a California based painter, she owns a small business. She experiences both the advantages and angst of an emancipated, middle-class existence on the West Coast. She remains preoccupied with the mysteries of India. Mrs. Gupta struggles to keep her footing with her family and with the world in alarming transition. Rakhi also feels isolated from her mother’s past in India and the dream world she inhabits. She longs for something to bring them closer. She fails to understand the total lack of communication on the part of Mr. Gupta.

The very beginning of the novel highlights the husband-wife alienation theme by unfolding the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Gupta. The gap of communication between them is felt throughout the novel. Though their marriage is an unsuccessful one, they continue to live together. Rakhi finds solace in the discovery of the long-kept secrets of her mother’s dream journals after her death in a mysterious car accident. The sinister rival figure of a shadowy man in white who appears at crucial moments in the dream journals punctuate the story that mystically churns out an imagined saga of love, forgiveness and new beginnings. Thus Chitra Banerjee has presented exhilaratingly useful reappraisals of the South Asian immigrant women. Like the protagonists in Alice Walker and Toni Morrison, Rakhi acknowledges how deeply she owes to her mother.
Rakhi attempts to define her identity after knowing about India and its cultural heritage. She longs to have her mother with her when her life is shaken by new horrors. In the wake of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, her family members and her friends deal with dark new complexities about their acculturation. The ugly violence visited upon them makes the reader to view those terrible days from the point of view of immigrants and Indian Americans. They are punished just because of the colour of their skin or the fact that they wore a turban. As their notions of citizenship are questioned, Rakhi’s search for identity intensifies. She is haunted by her experiences of racism. During the struggle she finds unexpected blessings of the possibility of new love and understanding for her family members. The novel Queen of Dreams is concerned with the real issues confronting the second generation of today’s Indian-American community.

The Vine of Desire is a sequel to Sister of My Heart, published in 2002. It is a novel of depth and sensitivity and continues the story of Anju and Sudha, the two cousins of the earlier book. The young women now live in America. Their friendship is rekindled after a year of separation. The deep-seated love they feel for each other provides the support they need. The reunion gives Anju the strength to survive after personal tragedy. Sudha also gains the confidence to make a life for herself and her baby, Dayita, despite her lonely condition. This double burden of advancing Sudha’s and Anju’s present lives in America as well as in their mothers in India takes place simultaneously. Their intimacy is disrupted by the unavoidable stirrings of jealousy, when Sudha, the more beautiful of the two cousins is attracted by her husband Sunil. The unlikely relationships they form with men and women in the world outside the immigrant Indian community as well as their families in India profoundly transform them, especially when they confront the deep passionate feelings that Anju’s husband
has for Sudha. When Sudha arrives, the novel seems poised for a formulaic trajectory of adultery, conflict of loyalties and a traumatic breakdown of relationships.

Sudha, seeking a measure of self-worth and trying to assuage loneliness, succumbs to Sunil’s need for her and then flees from home to be a nursemaid to an old and ailing man. Sunil also moves away. Anju sticks to studies and makes it to the dean’s list. The novel ends with her metaphorical declaration that she had learned to fly. Chitra Banerjee deals with a new fact of immigrant experience in the sense that the movement is not necessarily a physical one or from the East to the West. By making Sudha decide to leave America, Chitra Banerjee reveals the rewards and the perils of breaking free from the past and the complicated, often contradictory emotions that shape the passage to independence.

Chitra Banerjee’s message is that inspite of having made momentous filial sacrifices, spending hard earned money, endangering one’s life all along the passage to the United States, one does not always make it. The Vine of Desire departs significantly from Sister of My Heart, in its meditation on the questions of home and identity in the South Asian diaspora.

Much of Chitra Banerjee’s fiction is informed by her personal experiences and often reflects her own thoughts and feelings. She provides insights and detailed information about the immigrants’ life and attempts to foster a better understanding of the expatriate experience. She uses them as important figures to interrogate the spatial location and dislocation. Both the expatriate and the immigrant live on the margins of American society and their attitude to the parent country and the past is brought out by the writer. The expatriate is forever nostalgic; the immigrant is aggressively future-minded. They undergo deep emotional, mental and physical sufferings to realise their ambitions and to experience a sense or liberation from their old, social and traditional
mores. Yet they brave it with determination, with a result that immigration is achieved at a heavy price.

Womanism is a feminist term coined by Alice Walker in her short story, “Coming Apart.” It is a reaction to the realization that “feminism” is “stronger in color” and a social change based upon the everyday problems and experiences. It is a social theory which is deeply rooted in the racial and gender oppression of black women. Broadly it seeks to eradicate inequalities not just for black women, but for all women. A Womanist is a woman who loves women and appreciates women’s culture and power as something that is incorporated into the world as a whole. So it looks out not only for women but also for the rights of women of colour, who are sometimes a step behind when it comes to social equality. Although Walker is credited for the term, there are other contributors to the womanism movement.

Thus Chitra Banerjee’s novels have succumbed to the trap of committing the fallacy of ignoring its technique which is as significant as the theme recounting the enigma of feminine existentialism not only in the post-colonial Indian society but also in the advanced progressive American socio-cultural milieu. Even after three decades of adaptation and assimilation, she maintains her affection for her cultural background, visiting India fairly regularly. Chitra Banerjee has an obsession with the common plight of immigrants. She chooses Indian women’s modern maladies of exile, loneliness, bewilderment, dislocation and loss of identity in an alien universe for imaginative expressions in her poetry and fiction. To put in other words she thoroughly expresses her diasporic consciousness in all her writings. Her works are known for the various postmodern and post structuralist techniques like myth, magic realism, dreams, illusions, folk tales, fables and stories.
Under the influence of the second wave feminism, some of the women writers in postcolonial diaspora use myths and folk tales and epic stories as feminist devices of subversion for female gender representation. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has remained faithful to her feminist impulse. Bound up in tradition as though it were an ill-fitting sari, her female characters have often struggled with domestic abuse, despair, and displacement. In this light she offers interesting readings in the form of the fictional representation of postcolonial issues of marginality of gender, race and class. In all her works, she portrays realistically the temperament and mood of the present American society as experienced by the immigrants in America. One of the significant themes of modern literature is the depiction of the immigrants’ experience of cross-cultural crisis, a subject which has assumed great significance in postcolonial writings. It is important to note that the experience of expatriation and immigration gave her the material for more than half of her work to update. They provide a lens with which to view the struggle for identity amongst women and to develop a critique to patriarchal structures that organize the life of Indian diaspora.

Right from the beginning, taking cognizance of her prolific writing, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s works, especially her fictional pieces are continuously interpreted and analysed by the critics and reviewers. Her novels have been reviewed in various renowned reviews and journals and scholarly study on her works have been published in many critical anthologies. Her work is regarded noteworthy in constituting the canon of South Asian literature and Asian-American writing as well. A study of the literature of this Asian-American diaspora provides an opportunity for understanding this group’s relationship to America. Specifically, it portrays postcolonial Indians grappling with their consciousness of identity as a minority community, the strategies they employ to identify the “home” left behind and its
continuing presence in the psyche, rupturing the effect of migration, and how a new, integrated cultural identity emerges. Mrinalini P. Thaker's “The immigrant experience in *Arranged Marriage* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni” focuses on some of the short stories in this collection and analyses them from different perspectives. It also reflects on the impact of the cultural disarticulation on the protagonist and studies whether they end dejected and disillusioned or they learn to acclimatize and accept their conditions. It also evaluates their attitude and approach to life, whether they abandon their conventional values or preserve them.

In his article titled “Persisting Couples: Chitra Banerjee, Sandra Cisneros, and the Western Refuge,” Antonia Navarro Tejero’s focuses on two collections of short stories published within such context in the United States; *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories* by Sandra Cisneros and *Arranged Marriage* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni in order to revise the representation that both writers make of the women from their community versus western “liberated” women, and in relation with the portrayal they make of men within their communities. Asha Sen’s “From National to Transnational: Three Generations of South Asian American Women Writers” examines a representative sampling of canonical South Asian American texts – Bharati Mukherjee’s *Jasmine*, selections from Chitra Banerjee’s short story collection *Arranged Marriage*, and two short stories – “When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine” and “Mrs. Sen’s” – from Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Interpreter of Maladies*. Although all three authors are increasingly taught within American classrooms, the pedagogical approach to their texts is often framed by binary oppositions that privilege a modern America over a traditional India. By viewing these localised American texts from a transnational perspective, her article disrupts their pre-occupation with an idealised American national identity. It foregrounds the transnational elements in these writers
in order to show how each of their narratives can be read as a counter to the
hegemony of the overtly national paradigm it appears to uphold.

Sumana Cooppan’s “Creating Consciousness and Inventing Identity: An
Examination of Self-Perception, Multiple Consciousness and the Process of South
Asian Diasporic Identity Formation in Selected Works by Bharati Mukherjee and
Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni” highlights the South Asian diasporic experience of the
characters in America. For Mukherjee and Chitra Banerjee, this experience is best
characterized by a state of liminality. This condition, common to all diasporic
communities, is created by the constant oscillation between contradictory conceptions
of race and culture, time and geography. As a result of existing in this “in-between”
space, the South Asian woman living in America develops an altered consciousness in
order to relate to her South Asian culture while at the same time adapting to her
current American surroundings.

R. Malathi’s “Quest for Identity in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s Queen of
Dreams and Jhumpa Lahiri’s The Name Sake” is based on her M.Phil dissertation.
The initial part of this paper maps out the stream of Indian diaspora fiction in English
and the biographical details about Chitra Banerjee and Jhumpa Lahiri and their
literary works. The later sections deal with the theme of identity crisis as depicted in
Queen of Dreams and The Name Sake. Finally, the paper also discusses Chitra
Banerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri’s innovative use of narrative techniques
employed in these novels. Chitra Panjabi’s project entitled “Real and Imagined
immigrant identities in the public sphere: representations of South Asian women in
literary and television media,” explores representations of South Asian immigrant
women in the media, and the implications of those representations. The project
analyses in the theoretical frameworks of neoliberal theory and the feminist media
critiques of representations of women of colour appearing in visual media, and examines South Asian immigrant women characters appearing on current fictional television shows and in popular fictional literature in America.

Sudha Rai’s “Diasporic Location and Matrilineage: The poetry of Sujata Bhatt, Meena Alexander and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni” depicts the arc of diasporic location intersecting with questions of gender, especially with ‘matrilineage,’ in the three diasporic Indian poets. The intersection of the two domains—diaspora and matrilineage, is a significant threat, bearing unique cultural resonances which Banerjee builds at conscious and unconscious levels, in her texts. It also discusses the necessity of self-assertion in diasporic locations where the self-image is vulnerable and constantly exposed to a racist gaze.

Felicity Hand’s “The Old Rules Aren’t Always Right: An Analysis of Four Short Stories by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni” is a study of four of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s short stories from her collection Arranged Marriage which provide a literary representation of women’s experience of displacement. The stories deal with a number of issues relating to the experience of South Asian female migrants. Klarina Priborkin’s “Mother’s Dreams, Father’s Stories: Family and Identity Construction in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s Queen of Dreams” offers the intricate relationship between Rakhi, her dream–teller mother; the relationship the daughter develops with her father is explained well through cognitive cultural and literary theory, feminist psychoanalytic approaches, as well as evolutionary psychology. He discusses the ways in which the particular experience of the family on the dynamics of the mother/daughter relationships in South Asian immigrant families are analysed.

Debjani Banerjee’s “‘Home and Us’: Re-defining Identity in the South Asian Diaspora through the Writings of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Meena Alexander”
analyses the ways Chitra Banerjee’s characters grapple with and refute an essential identity linked to cultural roots. Rebecca Haque in “Women of the South Asian Diaspora: Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s *Arranged Marriage* and Ginu Kamani’s *Junglee Girl,*” focuses on the way Chitra Banerjee and Kamani develop brief, succinct images of women caught between the old world and the new world values.

Lata Chaturvedi’s “The Enigma of Female Bonding in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s *Queen of Dreams*” attempts to examine how the story of an emotionally distant mother and a daughter transcends cultural boundaries. Veena Selvam’s “Mistresses and Sisters: Creating a Female Universe: The Novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni” discusses Chitra Banerjee’s creation of a female universe in her two novels *The Mistress of Spices* and *Sister of My Heart.* She has taken effort to portray the conventional male world and it is a definite attempt at defining Chitra Banerjee’s distinctive domains. Lalita’s “Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni: A Rising Star in the Diasporic Literature” approaches Chitra Banerjee’s themes of disillusionment and exile in innovative ways. Balance between old treasured beliefs and surprising new desires is portrayed clearly. How women struggle hard for their personal identity is envisioned in Chitra Banerjee’s novels.

Reena Sanasam’s “Immigrant Dilemma and Feminist Sensibilities in Chitra Banerjee’s *Arranged Marriage*” explores immigrant Indian’s mixed experience and proves that Indian and American life is two different worlds. This is typical of the entire immigrant Indians where freedom does not come without a price. It places all the protagonists on the same plane, at one time it acts as a boon that shatters the inhibitions and taboos, with which they have been associated, and at another time they experience the void and nothingness of a superficial culture. Sandhya Rao Mehta’s “Tilotamma and the Bougainvillea girls: Creating identities in *The Mistress of Spices*”
reads a complex experience of emigration and Tilo’s quest for identity and how she responds to the predicament of the postcolonial diaspora.

Doris Kezia’s “Self-Identity through adapting and adopting of the host culture by immigrants: A study of Chitra Banerjee’s Queen of Dreams” projects Chitra Banerjee’s picture of ancient India and contemporary America through the mother, who migrated from India with her husband, and her daughter, a young artist and divorced mother living in Berkeley, California, trying to find her footing in a world which is alarmingly in the process of transition, torn by violence and horror. Ranjini Jothi Singh’s “A feminist critique: Woman’s struggle for freedom in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s Arranged Marriage” portrays the oscillation of the women characters between the urge for self-fulfillment and the demands for self sacrifice in the short stories of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni.

Anita Singh’s “Stairway to the stars: Women writing in Contemporary Indian English Fiction” gives an overview of women’s issues in the novels of Indian women writers. It includes Chitra Banerjee’s The Mistress of Spice. She portrays how Indian women writers try to reorganize the world realities, a step towards sanity in human relationships. Husne Jahan’s “Colonial woes in Post-Colonial writing: Chitra Divakaruni’s immigrant narratives” explores the way Chitra Banerjee’s storylines and characters develop around the trope of immigration. It also analyses the inevitable tension between postcolonial origins and an adjustment to a country viewed as the center of neo-imperial power. Ludima Volna’s “Indians in Exile: Self-assertion and (Re-) Creation in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s The Mistress of Spice” attempts to analyse the characteristic features of the principal protagonists’ development and of the milestones of their journey towards self assertion and liberation, a perpetual negotiation of their identities as perceived through significant items of the Hindu
cosmology imagery, namely, of fire and water, while the role of female stereotypes
play in this respect is examined.

B. Sudipta’s “Writing from Two Worlds: Novels of Chitra Banerjee
Divakaruni” examines Chitra Banerjee’s cross-cultural understanding and the crisis of
consciousness. She argues that the immigrant Indian woman feels the impact of the
cultural schism caused by dislocation more immediately than men and that because of
this she tends to look back even more as she evolves into a new being in the diaspora
setting. T. Sarada’s “Intersecting Boundaries: Desi and Diasporic Spaces in Ambai
and Chitra Banerjee” is an attempt at marginalisation. A comparative study is done in
Chitra Banerjee’s *Arranged Marriage* and Ambai’s two collections of short stories
wherein it proved that Indian women continue to battle from their marginalized spaces
thereby making their words, voice and creative spaces visible. She views the
representation of Indian reality to be inauthentic in diasporic writing, saying it is
myopic to hold that authenticity depends on location; rather for her it depends on the
faithfulness of the writer to the experience, be it desi or diasporic.

Urbashi Barat’s “Sisters of the Heart: Female Bonding in the Fiction of Chitra
Banerjee Divakaruni” proves sisterhood, a deep rooted and instinctual relationship
that brings together women who are very different from one another in every way. It
portrays their love, suffering and their agonies because of their husbands. Their
realisation of true sisterhood helps them to overcome all hurdles. Somdatta Mandal’s
“Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni” lists her publications of novels and other works. With a
detailed introduction the paper gives a complete picture of Chitra Banerjee. In Manju
Jaidka’s “The Writer as Trishanku: Indian Writing in a Foreign Space” the idea of
“home” plays a vital role in the works of writers of Indian origin who have chosen to
relocate themselves in the American continent. The changed perspectives like the
traditions and beliefs peculiar to their Indian background and experience are examined clearly.

Antony Ophilia’s “Trans-cultural Elements in Chitra Banerjee’s Short Story “The Word Love”” analyses the different concepts of love in India and in America. The two different attitudes towards sex and love, western and Indian, and thus the trans-cultural conflicts are discussed. B. Sushma’s “Spice in a Woman’s Life: A Study of Mistress of Spices” examines Chitra Banerjee’s blending of myth, magic and reality which is explored through the eyes of the female protagonist. Myth and magic pertain to Tilo and the spices whereas the reality is about the condition of the Indian immigrants in America and Tilo’s solutions to their problems. Wenying Xu’s “Reading Feminine Mysticism in Chitra Banerjee’s Queen of Dreams” foregrounds the primitive, the feminine, and the non-rational and argues that Chitra Banerjee deploys these forces in her novel to challenge and subvert the discourse of realism presupposed by science.

Ashalata Kulkarni’s “Gender Realities and Diasporic Dilemmas in the Fiction of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni” analyses the diasporic issues of identity homelessness, alienation and struggle for assimilation and acceptance. Diasporic dilemmas and gender realities are boldly and realistically dealt with. Omendra Kumar Singh’s “Dialectic of the “Other”: A spatial study of Chitra Banerjee’s Queen of Dreams” highlights the contradictions of space in the wake of new conceptions. It presents a dialectical analysis of space in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s novel, Queen of Dreams. She argues the vexed issues of identity and coexistence of the “Other” in contemporary American society. As Praggya M. Singh and Deepika Gandhi say in their review:
many immigrant feels a crisis of identity when placed in diasporic situations but the degree of crisis is variant among them. Some migrants have got a slight taste of such a crisis and for others it leaves a very bad taste, some take these crises as a gateway to their assimilation and some tend to become cultural cringes. The confrontation with the biracial world leaves different impact on different people who either assimilate or dissimilate. (162-63)

C. Bharathi and S. Kalamani’s “Existential Immigrant Lives: Alienated Protagonists of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s Queen of Dreams” examines the American experience as one of “fusion” and immigration – a “two-way process.” The souring of the American Dream, fears and anxieties, the immigrant Indian’s response to the emptiness and loneliness, the protagonist’s search for identity in an alien country and the troubles and tribulations are pictured clearly. “A Study of Family Relationships in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s Queen of Dreams” by C. Bharathi and S. Kalamani deals with the protagonists’ distance from her father and her husband. Mrs. Gupta’s distance from her husband and her relationship towards her daughter is analysed in a more elegant way. “Portrayal of sister-friend in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s Sister of My Heart” by C. Bharathi deals with the life and bonding of the twin sisters namely Anju and Sudha.

“How Human Relationships in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s Short Stories – A Study” by K. Sandhya deals with two of her short stories from The Unknown Errors of Our Lives and Arranged Marriage portrays a plethora of delicate affinities among human beings in a broad spectrum. She argues that these relationships acquire new dimensions with their perplexities, because of the writer’s settling down abroad with her roots in Bengal. Lavina Dhaingra Shankar’s “Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni” depicts
her biography, major works and themes, and critical reception of *Arranged Marriage*, *The Mistress of Spices* and *Sister of My Heart*. It also lists out her poetry collections and other works. “The ‘Other’ Voices in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s Poems” by Sharada Jayagovind attempts to listen to the “marginalised” voices of “others” in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s poems. The poems portray mothers, peasant men and women of India who have been neglected by history, the expatriate Punjabi farmers in America – who find a voice in Chitra Banerjee’s poems. The poems from the collection entitled *Leaving Yuba City* highlights the subaltern and marginalised voices. “An Adventurous Journey into the World of Mystery and Fantasy in the Children Stories of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni” is an M.Phil project by M. Sadhana.

The review of literature makes it quite obvious that Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s fictional works render more than just reading. There are ideas and aspects implicit which can be made more palpable by carrying out an analytical study. With the assistance of a theoretical concept, critical inquiry could be further strengthened.

The research methodology, theoretical corroboration and parameters set constitute the framework of the present study. Theoretical concepts from Homi K. Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture* and *Nation and Narration* and Simone De Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* are incorporated to provide a framework for the analysis of the works taken for study. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* is followed for citation and documentation.

The researcher proposes to make a meticulous study of select novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and to explore the contemporary middle-class woman’s painful journey from subjugation to emancipation. The review of literature undertaken makes it obvious that the novels are surcharged with several aspects like women and their
problems, myth, education, male domination, love and marriage, marital discord, human relationships and self-realization.

The aims of the present research study are:

- To project specific problems faced by women characters of India especially with their displaced counterparts
- To portray the problems that arise due to the conflict between tradition and modernity and the emergence of the ‘New Woman’
- To analyse the immigrants’ struggle for identity and assimilation

The “India incorporate” idea leading to questions of identity and sense of belonging have become the hallmarks of diasporic writing in general. In his “The Commitment to Theory” Homi Bhabha says “the aim of freedom of knowledge be the simple inversion of the relation of oppressor and oppressed, centre and periphery, negative image and positive image” (LC 28). These issues of identity are both opposing and complementary markers to define modern fiction. The diaspora with its shifting boundaries and conflict or encounters between different cultures is an important focus. This thesis entitled “From Subjugation to Emancipation in Select Works of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni” attempts to analyse Chitra Banerjee’s fictional characters and their interaction between two cultures which leads to a gradual transformation as evidenced by the application of various concepts.

The present study is divided into five chapters including Introduction and Conclusion. The introductory chapter gives an overview of the prominent diasporic writers, with special reference to Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and her achievements as a writer. As a forerunner of the emerging Indian women she has juxtaposed the traditional Indian and contemporary American way of life in all her works for the
readers to relish. This chapter includes a review of the literature and thesis statement followed by a briefing of the entire thesis.

Chapter II deals with human relationships. The life of human beings revolves around relationships in some form or other. And it is relationships which make all the difference in life. This chapter attempts to analyse the nature of basic familial bonds – the bond that exists between a man and a woman, the ties between parents and children, and loyalty between a master and his servants. These three groups combined with the family as a whole reflects the rich tapestry of the society in miniature. The concepts of “arranged marriage,” “love marriage,” “affair” and other arenas of relationships between women and men are presented as existing not in isolation but within the context of the much larger framework of relationships in any woman’s life.

The novels are about incompatible marriages and the resulting frustrations of married women who struggle to keep their identity intact while seeking equal opportunities within and without the familial threshold. This study penetrates into an intimate and domestic chronicle of the subtle tyrannies suffered by women and the pain of coming to self-knowledge. It also depicts personal relationships, as it cuts right to the heart of family life in two divergent cultures – the East and the West.

Chapter III presents the impact of globalization and modernity on women in general and the Third World women in particular. Chitra Banerjee’s fictional works show a longing for retrieval of human values at the backdrop of the modern situation. She charts out her diasporic journey while standing firmly on the native tradition. In “Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India,” Lata Mani has shown that the re-constructions of women’s experience can thus be fundamental to the invention of “tradition,” and modernity,” both of which, Mani argues, are colonial constructs (119-156). Indian woman has been a silent-sufferer and an upholder of
Indian culture. In this context one reminded of Simone De Beauvoir’s words “a man is socially an independent and complete individual; he is regarded first of all as a producer whose existence is justified by the work he does for the group: we have seen why it is that the reproductive and domestic role to which woman is confined has not guaranteed her an equal dignity” (446).

The new education has awakened the real self of women. As a result of this they have gained confidence and strength and started thinking of independence, assertion, and self-reliance. With some amount of economic freedom, women have changed the traditional rules and emerged as the ‘new woman’ to seek a new identity. This chapter analyses the present-day women’s realization of the unjust nature of certain traditional norms and how they try to throw off the yoke of subjugation imposed on them by their selfish, shallow and egotistical husbands. The women are all in search of their true image, as they are tossed between the traditional values imbibed from childhood and the new values bestowed upon them through their association with the west.

Chapter IV presents the immigrant experiences, which are multifaceted and emphasise on the problems of cultural identity that immigrants face in the process of assimilation or acculturation and transformation. This chapter focuses on the way the writer develops brief succinct images of women caught between the values of the old world and the new world, how women cope with cross-cultural relationships, and how women ultimately try to achieve self-esteem and autonomy denied to them within their own somewhat insular and bigoted community. It also portrays the immigrant’s attempt to find a place in the mainstream of American life. Chitra Banerjee’s characters seem convinced in the American lifestyle and about its ultimate superiority.
The synthesis of two cultures makes woman a complete human being and it gives them a true perspective where they can see traditional Indian and contemporary American way of life co-existing in a rapidly changing, speed mongering world. The American experience has transformed the passive Indian existence and has filled them with confidence and self-reliance. They refashion themselves to meet the demands of America. Chitra Banerjee drives home the idea that maintaining the Indian cultural heritage and at the same time knowing and participating in the American culture is important for survival in today’s world.

Chapter V attempts to amalgamate an analysis of the previous chapters with the review of the observations, findings, recommendations and attempts to account for the possible causes of this result. Chitra Banerjee has not only presented a female point of view but has also subverted the patriarchal authority over women in India and in America. She projects conflicting issues—the oppression of Indian women; their education; and the effect of westernization or ‘development’ on them. Her women continue their fight against the hostile environment. They are positive in their attitude and refuse to accept defeat. She has successfully portrayed women’s fret and fever in an uncongenial atmosphere, their trials and tribulations, their tireless efforts to assert identity in a callous society. When they have a chance, they struggle and discover happiness, and at other times they settle for whatever they can achieve, rather than stagnate under male suppression. She pushes her heroines to the edges of their worlds, and liberates them for a new world order.

The present study “From Subjugation to Emancipation in Select Works of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni” endeavours to examine the protagonists struggle for survival in the East as well as in the West, throwing adequate light on the special techniques employed by Chitra Banerjee as her novels are intriguing, scintillating and
obsessive. In the following chapters this study proposes to study themes of Human Relationships, Tradition Vs Modernity and Cultural Encounter. Such a study, it is hoped, will be highly rewarding as it contributes to the area of women’s struggle from subjugation to emancipation.