

# CHAPTER II -- INDIAN DIASPORIC LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

## 2.1 Introduction

Diaspora Theory with its various features has influenced the literature of every language of the world. This literature is widely known as Expatriate or Diasporic Literature. It would be proper to examine features and aspects of such literature in which Indian Writing in English not only contributed greatly but also received international recognition and admiration in the past few years.

### 2.2.1 Diasporic Literature – Meaning and Features

Diasporic Literature is a very vast concept and an umbrella term that includes in it all those literary works written by the authors outside their native country, but these works are associated with native culture and background. In this wide context, all those writers can be regarded as diasporic writers, who write outside their country but remained related to their homeland through their works. Diasporic literature has its roots in the sense of loss and alienation, which emerged as a result of migration and expatriation.

Generally, diasporic literature deals with alienation, displacement, existential rootlessness, nostalgia, quest of identity. It also addresses issues related to amalgamation or disintegration of cultures. It reflects the immigrant experience that comes out of the immigrant settlement. Uma Parameswaran has defined it as follows;

-----first is one of nostalgia for the homeland left behind mingled with fear in a strange land. The second is a phase in which one is busy adjusting to the new environment that there is little creative output. The third phase is the shaping of diaspora existence by involving themselves ethnocultural issues. The fourth is when they have ‘arrived’

and start participating in the larger world of politics and national issues. (Parmeswaran, 165)

The immigrants, whatever their reason for migration be, financial, social, political, no matter whether they migrated for trade and commerce, as religious preachers, as laborers, convicts, soldiers, as expatriates or refugees, exiles (forced or voluntary), or as guest workers in search of better life and opportunities have shared some common things as well as differences which are based on their conditions of migration and period of stay in the adopted land. Mostly the migrants suffer from the pain of being far off from their homes, the memories of their motherland, the anguish of leaving behind everything familiar agonizes the minds of migrants. William Safran has observed that; “---they continue to relate personally or vicariously, to the homeland in a way or another, and their ethnic-communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship.” (Safran, 1991:23)

The diasporic Indians too, do not break their relationship with the ancestral land. There is a search for continuity and ‘ancestral impulse’, an effort to look for their roots.

Settlement in alien land makes them experience dislocation. Dislocation can be considered as a break with the old identity. They experience the sense of loneliness in an alien land feel as they face non-acceptance by the host society and also experience ethnic discrimination.

The immigrants attempt to assimilate, adapt and amalgamate with the society of their host country. Their attempts of adaptation and adjustment are not without their concern to maintain their original culture and identity. The marginal groups try to guard themselves against the dominant host group. The most important means used for insulation is the continuation of the cultural practices and social traditions. The first generation immigrants are always concerned with keeping the social, cultural baggage which consists of among other things their religion, language, music, art, dress, cuisine, etc. intact. Conscious attempts are made by the diasporic communities to pass their traditions to the future generation. The experiences of these cultural elements have been varied in different diasporic situations. Some of these elements have vanished, some have persisted or survived, others have experienced assimilation,

syncretism or change, and few elements ought to be rejuvenated. The immigrants in these situations are compelled to feel that they stand on the borderline belonging neither to their motherland nor their adopted country. In their attempt to integrate with the adopted culture while maintaining their inheritance, they develop a dual identity, and their culture becomes a sandwich culture. Their efforts for assimilation and failure to do so dishearten them. The feeling of rootlessness, alienation, confusion, nostalgia, dislocation and sufferings due to discrimination on the basis of race, culture, religion and language concludes into conflicts, fight for identity and on the other hand lead to birth of feeling of marginality in the minority group. This results in the creation of a fractured identity.

As they torn between the two places and two cultures and often languages; the expatriate writer navigates a new literary space. The diasporic literature arises under these circumstances. The broken psyche of the immigrants sheds off its psychosis into writing. Therefore, the migrant writer feels a forceful need to write and with their multicultural ethos and a profound understanding of socio-cultural and economic realities around them, they have been successful in transforming their experiences into writings. Another important reason for writing by the creative talent in the diasporic community is to make their existence recognized. The very act of creation is a purposeful effort to form a cultural identity.

Diasporic writing unfolds these experiences of unsettlement and dislocation, at some or the other level. A diasporic text can be investigated in terms of location, dislocation and relocation. The changing designation of home and accompanying nervousness about homelessness and unfeasibility of going back are recurrent themes in diasporic literature.

The expatriate literature also deals mostly with the inner conflict in the context of cultural displacement. The immigrants away from the families fluctuate between crisis and reconstruction. They are thrice alienated from the native land they left behind, from their new host country and their children. Diaspora literature is in constant conversation with the metahome. The longing to regain lost home often culminates in the creation of a different version of home. As Salman Rushdie observers;

“--- one physical alienation from India at almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of redeeming precisely the thing that was lost, that will, in short, create fictions not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indians of mind.”(Rushdie, 1991:10)

Nostalgia, loss, betrayal and duty are the foundations of new homes as diasporic protagonist adjust to new countries. In adjusting to new countries, issues of acculturation and assimilation become the central point as these immigrants negotiate the unbalance of their hyphenated identities. Usually, the first generation diaspora clings to food and clothes as the most obvious markers of Indianness that sets them apart and highlights their difference. The insistence on this difference is often a conscious declaration of belonging to another place. On the other hand, second generation diaspora declines and removes such identity markers to assimilate the dominant culture.

### **2.2.2 Writer’s diasporic condition and Diasporic Sensibility**

In today’s literary field, it is accepted by all that diasporic or expatriate writers are those writers who have preferred to settle in countries other than home country, distinguishing them from “Desi” or “rooted” counterparts. It should be noted that while early expatriate writing were generally those of a tourist on a short period away from home. Many of the present days expatriate have chosen to settle abroad. However, the present days writing by expatriate writers, the backdrop and inspiration is always derived from the homeland.

It is agreed that the expatriate writer is like a voyager starting out from a fixed point and shifting along to wherever life takes him or her. The reason behind the journey is the desire to explore, to leave behind familiar spaces and move out into unknown regions, to reach out to the unbounded blue skies. The artist or a writer is just like a voyager, an explorer, who out of the quarrels with himself, out of his or her personal discontents, moves on impatiently, in search of new adventure, discovering new continents, new worlds, find solutions to problems encountered on route, often regretting world left behind, lamenting on the banks of Rivers of Babylon, or by the Thames or by the Ganges, coming to terms with the changing circumstances. As

Salman Rushdie maintains, “The immigrant, the man without frontiers, is an archetypal figure of our age.” (Rushdie, 2002:115)

It is not that expatriate writing is the 20th-century trend. As there have always been migrants or expatriates in the writer community. T. S. Eliot moved eastward, across the Atlantic; W. H. Auden moved west in the opposite direction. Sylvia Path, Ezra Pound, Seamus Heaney, all of them relocates themselves even before the term like ‘diasporic sensibility’ had come into regular use in the literary field.

It is often claimed that expatriate writer more often remains in what may be called a state of animated suspension, anxious about his new surroundings, unsure of his affiliations and his roots. In the expatriate condition, there is a loss of geographical markers, de-territorialization that seems unalterable. With this ‘de-territorialisation,’ there appears a change in individual sensibilities. Here, we can also equate this condition, with that of *Trishanku*, a famous story from *Baal-Kaand* of the ‘Ramayana’. As per the story, *Trishanku* is poised between three worlds, sea-earth-sky, the heavens, the earth and the underworld, hanging in between these three worlds, in the foreign form that is enforced on him, he becomes the master of a new world, not one he desired for, but one that is formed for him.

*Trishanku*’ is also the title of a collection of poems by the Indian-born expatriate writer Uma Parameswaran, who is now settled in Canada. This symbol of ‘*Trishanku*’ appropriately describes the predicament of expatriate writers. Similarly, a suggestive metaphor by Feroz Jussawalla, equally describes the condition of an expatriate as he says; “We are like chiffon saris – a sort of cross-breed attempt to adjust to pressures of a new world while actually being from an older one.”(Jussawalla, 1988:583-595)

The expatriate writer always tackles a number of buzz words like diaspora, immigration, nationality ethnicity, marginality, hybridity William Safran applies the terms ‘diaspora’ to

...expatriate minority communities which have dispersed from an original center to two or more peripheral or foreign regions, to people

who retain their myths about their motherland and feel alienated in the new land. (Safran, 1991:83-89)

As the expatriate writer experiences cultural, geographical and emotional displacement, there emerges a diasporic sensibility that mirrors the plural identity of the writer. Their writing is characterized by a pluralistic vision. There is a constant shifting between two worlds, voyaging back and forth between two locales. The writer few times visualizes his or her home country as a place of violence, poverty, corruption and sometimes it is romanticized. We also see that in the floating world, aggressive forces pushing him or her from all sides longing to hang on to old tradition, customs and ways but caught in the world he ultimately calls his own way not be the one he desired for, nor the one he left behind, but an uncertain land which he must merge now. This pendulum movement is found in most expatriate writing with the writer caught between the past and the present.

### **2.2.3 Role of Memory in Diasporic Writing**

Memories always remain a significant factor in expatriate writing. The memories evoked are of by past times, place and people as they were when the writer experienced them, as they are now, at this point of time they may immensely altered. Besides, these memories are now colored by imagination and nostalgia. In the fictional world of these writers, different worlds are negotiating each other, real world and the imaginary. The separating lines are thin and faint; the two worlds merge and fuse so that they are not easily noticeable, as the perspectives keep shifting. These worlds are a blend of memory and desire ----- memory of a bygone time and perhaps, the desire to get back the same. Very often, there is a wish to return 'home' which remains haunting presence and anguish of individual loss in the case of most expatriates. However, not all the writers are like Hari Kunzru as India is simply a country where his relatives live and where he occasionally comes for a holiday or to attend family weddings. Agha Shahid Ali, who taught Creative Writing at the University of Massachusetts, argued that he did not think that the relocation had done much to modify his thoughts and personality. Anxiety for belonging is also not so evident in the works of Shashi Tharoor, who has lived away from India all his adult life and occupied an important position in the United Nations and now functions as Indian MP. His concept of home is surely India even though he has led a roaming life,

the unsure suspension between different worlds, and the anguish of uprooted is not the case with him. However, still his work like *The Great Indian Novel* substantiates that the umbilical string has not yet been cut off. Another present-day writer Vikram Seth has created waves with his first novel *A Suitable Boy*. Through this novel, like most of the expatriate writers, he is looking back at a land left behind, a home that is on the edge of vanishing into the darker recesses of the memory.

### **Collective Memory**

In the study of diaspora literature 'Displacement' or 'Dislocation' is important notion that is used not only to express the physical movement of an individual from one place to the other but it also shows how with the movement of a person the aggregate of a whole nation, to which he or she belonged, carried with them. Dislocation leads to cross-cultural encounters that have always affected the lives of immigrants and there is constantly the possibility of rejection, confusion and tension when people from different cultures intermingle. This interaction portrays the immigrants caught in flight between boundaries, an astonishingly complicated web of memories, relationship and images. The migrants in the foreign culture lie in soft bond memory of the motherland. The relocation has its disgust for one thing when one does not have a home (where there is a sense of belonging) he has to live in the reminiscences, a collective memory representing a symbolic relationship between past and present.

### **2.2.4 Impact of Cultural Displacement**

The expatriate novelist's works investigate the cultural displacement and its impact. The uprooted immigrants face varied situations, problems of rejection and acceptance. If accepted, the problem would be an adjustment, coping with the anxiety, monotony, disappointment, isolation and finally they face failure and rejection.

Rejection: The works of expatriate writers depict the effect of cultural uprootedness and the never-ending experiences of which social rejection is central. Social rejection is when a group of people decides, to reject one or more persons from participation in their group. Social rejection can be of many different ways. Sometimes people out rightly reject someone by telling them they are not wanted. Sometimes, there is a

potentially more cruel rejection that is not easy to accept in human beings, and there is always a natural sentiment of the need for acceptance in groups.

Loneliness: In loneliness, a psychological state, an immigrant experiences a strong sense of emptiness and loneliness. Loneliness is more than a sense of having company of another person. It is a feeling of being detached, disconnected, and/or cut off from other people so that it feels difficult or even often feel empty or depressed inside. Feelings of estrangement or isolation from the world are common amongst those are lonely.

### **2.2.5 Nation and Identity**

The terms 'Nation' and 'Identity' are very important in the study of diaspora literature. While thinking about the concept of nation and identity, it becomes necessary to investigate the way of living life and human existence, in the past and present. Problems of the nation, identity, national identity, individual identity, etc are the recent needs, which have surfaced, which were never experienced by mankind in the past. The life that people lived in the past was mainly introvert with themselves and their families. It was a life more given to the spiritual aspects and with less possible material needs. The question of the nation and national identity was neither experienced nor imagined by mankind in prehistoric ages. However, those primitive values, the way of life, the need for life and objectives of life have entirely undergone a change and notions like the nation, nation states, national identity have emerged. The 20th century observed scientific progress, and it also created a need for migration and mobility, in search of improved existence and more sophistication. With large-scale migration and mobility, the problems of nation and identity got new magnitudes, particularly in this LPG age. The immigrant has to think about his or her identity in the new environment and surroundings. The issues that surface raises numerous questions like does a person who knows to a new land, cease to be a native of his native land? There is one more point of view of looking at, and that is in the form of our oriental faith, that wherever a person goes, he cannot cut off himself from his roots. Migration and mobility, according to this belief may bring a change in the dress, language and way of living life but the spirit remains the same. The real problem of nation and identity emerges when such expatriate finds himself nowhere, even in the middle of the ocean of the human beings. He fails to detach himself from

his original roots and similarly fails to plant himself in the land of new culture. Sometimes the land of that new culture does not accept him fully, and such a state creates in him the feeling of nowhere that is nothing but the problem of nation and identity. Psychologically, every person wants to be acknowledged, in other words, the problem of nation and identity is associated with the human sense of belonging. One wants to accept and to be accepted. Whenever, any interruption takes place in this need, the problem of belonging emerges. It is not essential for one to take it for granted that the problem of nation and identity take place in the life of person only when he accepts migration and mobility. Since, it is a psychological feeling; there is a probability of its experience even within his native land.

Identity becomes the core issue in any investigation of diaspora, a particularly diasporic identity that is made of various factors and sub-factors. This diasporic identity is multi-level. It is also based on the history or conditions leading to migration, as well as the individual responses to these circumstances. This experience of dislocation is dependent on factors such as the generation of diaspora that one belongs, impact of globalization, why the diasporic has shifted away from his homeland and also the approach of the host country towards the diasporic community. There are some factors like language, dress, and socio-cultural environment that deepen the problem of nation and identity after migration takes place.

Expatriation involves nervousness of belonging to two communities on the part of immigrant that culminates a kind of conflict in him or her that something other people do not have to struggle with. The development that takes afterward is painful. It recognizes 'fluid identity'. It is an acknowledgment of substitute realities; this is a positive way forward, where we talk about each other's culture and redefine our anticipations and aspirations.

### **2.3.1 Intergenerational Gap – Changing Nature of Diasporic Literature**

There has been a great change in the concept of diaspora because of demographic changes and progress in communication technology during the last two decades. Fastest mode of communication, social networking sites have their impact on the experience of exile. A post-1965 migrating generation thinks India very differently

than a post-1980s and posts 2000s generation. Class and gender also play an important role in the shaping of not just the diaspora but also diaspora's interface with cultures. A major theme of in diasporic writing is their occupation of liminal space. In fact, diasporic writing is doubly liminal space. This writing remains an outsider looking in at the new culture, but it is also an outsider to the homeland, looking in at a past of space that has altered in their absence. Another significant theme is dual identity, the conflict between a person's ethnic inheritance and individual identity. This issue develops the tension between a desire for assimilation and the need for ethnic identity. This is at the base of the conflict between generations, between mothers and fathers who wish to preserve cultural ethnicity, and children want liberty to maintain their individuality.

These and many other issues and aspects have been highlighted and focused by Indian immigrant writers through their literary works.

### **2.3.2 Main Contributors of Indian Diasporic literature in English**

It is interesting to note that the history of Indian diasporic writing is as old as the diaspora itself. The first Indian writing in English is attributed to Dean Mohamed, who was born in Patna, India. His book *The Travels of Dean Mahomet* was published in 1794. It predates by about forty years the first English text written by an Indian residing in India. Kylas Chunder Dutt's 'Imaginary History' A Journal of Forty-Eight hour of the year 1945 published in 1835. The first Indian English novel, Bankimchandra Chatterjee's *Rajmohan's Wife*, was to be published much later in 1864. It proves that the contribution of the Indian Diaspora to Indian English writing is not new. It is also interesting to note that, the descendants of the Indian indentured laborers in the so-called 'girmit colonies' have mostly favored writing in English. Writers like See Prasad Naipaul and later Shiva Naipaul, V. S. Naipaul, Cyril Dabydeen, David Dabydeen, Sam Selvon, M.G. Vassanji, Subramanian, K.S. Maniam, Shani Muthoo and Marina Budos are important contributors in this field.

V. S. Naipaul's characters like Mohun Biswas from *A House for Mr. Biswas* or Ganesh Ramsumair from the *Mystic Masseur*, are instances of persons who are generations away from their original homeland, India, but their inheritance gives them a realization of their past. They become examples of the outsider, the unhoused, for

the world to see. Naipaul's characters are not governed by actual displacement but by an inherited memory of dislocation. For them, their native land India is not a geographical space but a creation of the imagination. Their predicament can be explained in Rushdie's words as he remarks; "-- the past is a country, from which we have all emigrated, that its loss is part of our common humanity."(Rushdie, 1991:87)

Literature of old generation of diasporic Indian writers like Raja Rao, G. V. Desani, Santha Rama Rau, Dhalchandra Rajan, Nirad Chaudhari, Ved Metha., mainly look back at India and hardly ever record their experiences away from India as expatriates. It is as if these writers have discovered their Indianness when they are out of India. Evidently, they have the benefit of looking at their homeland from the outside. The distance offers detachment that is so required to have a clear insight of their native land. Gradually, the old diaspora of indentured laborers is replaced by the new diaspora of International Indian English Writers live in the market driven world. These writers register their away from India experiences and even if they look back at their motherland it is often in a melancholic tone rather than nostalgia. These modern diasporic Indian writers can be grouped into two different classes. One class includes those who have spent a part of their life in India and have carried the baggage of their native land offshore. The other class comprises those who have been raised since childhood outside India. They have had a vision of their country only from the outside as an alien place of their origin. The writers of the previous group have a factual displacement whereas those belonging to the latter group find themselves rootless. Both the groups of writers have created an enviable corpus of English literature. These writers while portraying migrant characters in their fiction investigate the theme of displacement, alienation, assimilation, acculturation, etc. The diasporic Indian writers' portrayal of dislocated characters gains immense significance if seen against the geopolitical background of the vast Indian subcontinent. That is exactly why such works have an international readership and a lasting appeal.

Two of the earliest novels that have effectively depicted diasporic Indian characters are Anita Desai's *Bye Bye Blackbird* and Kamala Markandaya's. *The Nowhere Man*. These novels reveal how racial prejudice against Indians in the UK of 1960's isolates the character and deepen their sense of displacement. Bharati Mukherjee's novels like *Wife* and *Jasmine* depict Indians in the US – the land of immigrants both legal and illegal – before globalization got its momentum. Salaman

Rushdie in his novel *The Satanic Verses* approaches the metaphor of migration by adopting the technique of magic realism. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni in her novel *The Mistress of Spices* depicts Tilo, the protagonist, as an exotic character to reveal the migrant's anguish. Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Shadow Lines* shows the extent of rootlessness encountered by character born and brought up on a foreign land. Amit Chaudhari, in his novel *Afternoon Raag*, portrays the lives of Indian students in Oxford. These writers also depicted the positive aspect of displacement. There are benefits of living as a migrant, the opportunity of having a double perspective of being able to experience diverse cultural modes. It is often this advantage that enables diasporic Indians, particularly of the second generation; face the dilemma of dual identities. Such ambivalence produces existential anguish in their psychology.

The ranks of second generation diasporic Indian writers like Meera Syal, Shashi Tharoor, Hari Kunzru, Sunetra Gupta, Jhumpa Lahiri, etc. have faithfully demonstrated the lives of both first and second generation immigrants in the US. This is possible because big issues like religious discrimination and racial intolerance are no longer the main concern of these writers. What matters now in the present world are the small things. Little unappreciated things gain enormous significance in changed conditions. It is here that the different reactions by Indian, westerns and diasporic characters towards similar situations are bound to differ only apparently. It reveals that the inner needs of all human beings are the same.

The great writers of Indian English fiction like Raja Rao, Mulkraj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Kamala Markandaya, had a strong dedication to expose cruel realities of life to effect the desired change in society. Nationalism, Partition Poverty, Peasantry, Subjugated Women, Rural-Urban Divide, East-West encounter, Feudal Practices, Casteism, and Communalism were some of the themes quite closer to their hearts. All of them are well known for realistic portrayal of contemporary Indian life. Taking departure from the first generation of Indian English novelists, the postmodern Indian English novelists have concentrated on an completely new set of themes which are wide ranging and inclusive as the life in the age of globalization is immersed in the emerging issues of globalization and subsequent multiculturalism, feminism, queer theories, diasporic sensibility, glamour, consumerism, commoditization, upward mobility, erosion of ethical values are some of main issues raised by contemporary novelists and short stories writers.

### 2.3.3 Portrayal of Diaspora issues in Indian Diasporic Literature

Portrayal of the various issues generated by the experience of migrancy and diaspora, such as displacement, alienation, rootlessness, fragmentation, racial discrimination, marginalization, crisis in identity, cultural confrontation and many others are largely portrayed in contemporary Indian Writing in English.

The term 'diaspora' was primarily used in association with the scattering and banishment of the Jews from their motherland and their nostalgia for their lost country and the cultural alienation experienced by them in the cultures of new location. However, in 17th century, there was a rise in migration from India. The nostalgia and longings of such people return to their homelands that were dislocated in the form of indentured labor have been captured very faithfully by V. S. Naipaul in his early novels *The Mystic Masseur* and *The Mimic Men*. Many people were uprooted in the 18th and 19th centuries for serving the British Empire in various parts of the world. The yearnings of these displaced people for their homelands indicated political freedom for them. In the early part of the 20th century, many Hindus, Muslims and mainly Punjabi Sikhs went to Canada for their employment as they worked as lumberjacks in saw mills. They had to work for lower wages and suffered ethnic hatred and discrimination. The protest against such atrocities by the Indian diaspora in Canada united them in 'Gadar Party' which becomes a leading force in the struggle for liberty going on in India. Sadhu Singh Dhama has portrayed this phase in his novel *Maluka* [1997]

A new aspect of this life in exile got added in post-independence period in India when many people in the sixties and seventies began moving towards developed countries on their own agreement either to avoid political or economic difficulties of their native land or to study or as professionals which Gayatri Chakravorty-Spivak calls as part of 'brain-drain'. Since then, this move to other countries has been ongoing. It is important to note that whatever the reasons for migration be, the immigrants do experience the sense of unbelonging and displacement in the new lands. They may try hard to assimilate or acculturate in the new cultures; they remained on the edge of the adopted culture and treated as other. While remaining on

the margins of the most cultures, they undergo complex experiences of anxiety, confusions, yearnings and aspirations. These Diasporas live in what Homi K Bhabha calls in between condition that is very agonizing to them, and there is a yearning for 'home' which remains a "mythic place of desire in diasporic imagination." (Bhabha, 1994:77)

They create 'imaginary homelands' from the fragmentary and partial memories of their homeland. They undergo cultural dilemmas, feel culturally displaced and endangered of their cultural identity at the ridicule of their cultural practices and symbols whose baggage they carry with them and try to maintain it. They also show resistance to the discourse of power in the adopted culture in various forms. However, the children born to migrants dwell in different spaces in the adopted culture because of their better assimilation and better settlements. Their confusions, feelings of rootlessness, displacement are also less deep and are not of similar nature as in the case of their parents and grandparents. Another fact of diaspora existence, reality, and experience in the world polity are that the treatment of them in the host country also depends on the color of the skin of the diaspora. Blacks and Asians born even in the white countries are thought of as people whose real home is elsewhere. It should also be noted that living in the new locations, diaspora identities do not remain cut off and isolated, rather interaction with the host culture and other cultural communities they continuously produce and reproduce themselves. The alteration in the subjectivities and modes of thinking of diaspora becomes possible because they have the advantages of living in the edging zone of two cultures and having association of two geographical spaces that overlap each other in, what is called a hybrid space or third space.

In the present global scenario, with interaction and intermingling of the cultures, the new routes and modes of thinking about diaspora identities are escalating. Various theorists now believe that the discourse and narratives of nation, ethnicity or race which are the modes of belonging and place individuals in assurance of roots are not appropriate any longer when the immigrants are thinking in different ways about their relations to the new place, home, and their past. Moreover, since the substantial change has been noticeable in the approach, location and identities of diaspora, the diaspora individuals and communities cannot be positioned only in relation to some homeland to which they all want to return. Avtar Brah and Uma Parmesvaran asserts

that diasporas after having crossed the political borders must cross the psychic borders and make a mark of identification and appreciation for themselves in the realistic, historical and political space of the place of relocation because as Uma Parmesvarn believes and claims; “Both exile and home is here, within the new homeland.”(Parmeswaran, 2003:107)

The creative writers all over the world have depicted these various issues sensitive to diaspora lives and experiences from different angles and perspectives but the space engaged by the Diasporas is so diverse that all the Diasporas cannot be clubbed together. In addition, their concerns and sensibilities differ to a great extent as per their generation, individual perceptions, and their community.

Many Indian diaspora writers writing in English and other languages too have portrayed in their literary works certain community, region and culture-specific conflicts in the new lands of relocation illuminating the multiplicity of Indian culture. But their major concern about diaspora issues have been dislocation, fragmentation, nostalgia for home, marginalization, racial hatred, cultural and gender hatred, conflicts, identity crisis, generation differences, transformation of subjectivities, emergence of new patterns of life with cross-cultural interaction and disintegration of family units of Indian diaspora leading to anguish, traumas and dilemmas suffered by the members of such families in varying degrees and mostly by the children of these unhappy and broken homes. Many of whom are revealed going off track in the cultural lawlessness of the western countries and inclining towards drug addiction, homosexual, and lesbian relationships.

Indian diasporic literature has raised different issues and aspects of immigrants' lives. The fictional narratives like Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* (1990), Meera Syal's *Anita and Me* (1996), Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2003), Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices* (1996) have shown the Indians living in England, America and where they have immigrated either to advance their financial condition or to seek jobs due to unemployment at homelands or for better education of their children or better professional opportunities. Their life of is full of hard work, tensions and anxieties because of various existential problems have also been portrayed in these texts and many immigrants are shown not feeling a sense of belonging and are longing silently for home. Some of these texts have also brought

out the predicament of the illegal immigrants who have to do tedious jobs at lower wages quietly, constantly living under the fear of police and the immigration authorities. Another aspect that surfaces from the novels like Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* and Chitra Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices* is the violence and sexual exploitation suffered by Indian women both at home and at workplaces for various reasons such as mismatched marriages with NRI men the feudal approach of the Indian husbands towards their wives and the sexual abuse of Indian women by comparatively better placed men of their own communities and even by the priests of temples and gurudwaras. But some of the female characters in these novels are also shown adopting different resistance approaches to emphasize their identities and live life of self-respect and dignity by revolting against the repressive relations and looking for the help of the police and NGO's.

Through this literature, we also witness people of the old generation who feel lonely as everyone in the home is busy from morning till eve. They are also presented feeling confused because of their inability to accept the new cultural ways adopted by their children and grand-children. Torn between the non-fulfillment of their expectations from their children as per the Indian cultural codes and the loss of their hold on the family units, they pass their time either in front of the idiot box or in the company of the people of their own generation and from their own communities if available in the neighborhood.

We also observe that the life of neglect at home led by the children of the over busy immigrants and the racial discrimination suffered by them in social surroundings and at schools. Meera Syal through the mental anguish suffered by the nine year old Meena, Chitra Banerjee-Divakaruni through the psychic repression and beatings hurled daily on Jagjit, a twelve year old Sikh boy by the white American schoolmates because of his wearing a turban and being consider Paki, reveal how often the Indian immigrants feel exploited, fight hard and look for different escape routes to make space for themselves in the culture of native. Like Jagjit some of them also get trapped in the group of the American mafia gangs from drug smuggling and other unlawful activities, who gives these neglected and harassed children support, money, motorcycles and assure them guns, the sign of power which they believe to be their permit to real America. The presentation of these grave issues related the children of Indian immigrants who are joining the mafia gang, either out of dissatisfaction, to

earn money or to oppose and overpower their racial hatred and discrimination faced by them constantly in the discourse of power at every step in the country of whites reveals the deep concern of the Indian diaspora writers for them.

This problem of racial antagonism took a dreadful form in America for the South Asians and especially for the Sikh diaspora after 9/11 which has been presented by Chitra Banerjee- Divakaruni in her novel *The Queen Of Dreams* (2004) where a second generation Sikh young man Jaspal is given nasty punches by a few American youths, though he keeps on crying that he is an American like them. This is an insecure situation of the diaspora identities, creates a question before the diaspora theorists of diaspora identities as to which nation do the diaspora actually belong. The nation which their parents and grandparents had once left to settle in the other one or the one that they had adopted and which never accepted them from the heart. Furthermore, such reactions of the American youth towards Sikh diaspora and the South Asians also raises few other issues, whether it was done because of their nationalistic feelings and the Sikhs suffered because of the mistaken identities or is it an manifestation of the feeling of resentment and revenge against the diaspora communities who are entering their country in large numbers because of their country's liberal immigration policy and are grabbing their job opportunities in their own country.

Literary works like Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* Meera Syal's *Anita and Me*, Chitra Banerjee- Divakaruni's *The Queen of Dreams* have also depicted the issue of intergenerational gap of the Indian Diaspora where the first generation parents expect from their children to live by the value system of Indian culture which they force on them at home through food, dress, customs, rituals, language, beliefs, etc. but the children encountering different cultural surroundings outside, find the latter have fascination, sandwiched between the two cultures and confused like Gogol in *The Namesake* and Meena in *Anita and Me*, who daily hear and bear the racial comments because of their brown skin as they are not able to decide which is their real 'home' India or the country where they have been born and brought up. Jaywanti Dimiri has analyzed these dilemmas of the second generation diaspora very appropriately as she comments;

Expatriate experience is problematic for the second generation immigrants of the third world for specific reasons. Born and brought up on foreign soil expatriation for this neo- class of immigrants hangs the background as an imaginary reality, free from the stigma of nostalgia and the popular symptoms of angst, loneliness existential rootlessness or homelessness, their predicament is in many ways worse than that of their predecessors. Despite their assimilation and acculturation they cannot escape from being victimized and ostracized. (Dimiri, 2000:28-33)

We also find description of the crumbling family units of Indian diaspora because of commercially negotiated marriage, fast growing divorce culture among the Indians, expectations of Indian values by the male Indian immigrants from their green card holder America / Canada born wives, changing power relations in the house and also because of cultural and racial clashes. However, writers like Chitra Banerjee-Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri have also shown, certain characters making conscious attempts to keep their family units together and adapting themselves to the requirements of the culture and lifestyle of their children.

Hari Kunzaru, in his novel *Transmission* (2004) has dealt with another contemporary realistic aspect of the professional Indian Diasporas particularly the Tech-skilled people whose dreams of making dollars and name for themselves in Silicon Valley of America get crushed because of the saturation of job opportunities. Out of frustration, they find negative means of taking revenge and expressing the rage that prove devastating for them and their families back home.

A few Indian diaspora writers like Jhumpa Lahiri in *The Namesake* and in her short story *The Last and Final Continent* and Kavita Daswani in her *For Matrimonial Purposes* (2003) have portrayed positive aspects of diaspora experiences which broaden the scope of the perception and bring change in the subjectivities of their characters. Through their protagonists they have described that cultural interaction not only opens new routes for them connecting to culture of new location and of their homeland but also makes them mobile carriers of cultures and ways of thinking to both the lands and more lands and make a good amalgamation of these, thus creating new third cultures and shaping third history. According to Vijay Mishra, the latest

progress of information and communication technology and the fastest means of transportation have enabled; “--- the late modern hypermobile diaspora make the cultural assimilation faster, bring global and local cultures together and transplant and reinvent their home cultures in new lands.”(Mishra, 2000:67-85)

### **2.4.1 Sociological Profile of Indo – American Diaspora**

Indo –American diaspora is one of the important diasporas which has exerted the massive impact on the literary world and produced literary genius of our time. As Jhumpa Lahiri is the recent author of Indo- American writing, before taking into account her literary contribution, it would be proper to take a brief note /review of the background of Indo – American writing of which Jhumpa Lahiri belongs as a second generation expatriate writer.

Let us first understand the sociological profile of Indian diaspora in America.

An Indian American is a resident or citizen of the United States with origins in India. They both born in India and immigrated to United States or are born in the U. S. and have Indian heritage. Indian population is spread across the U. S. primarily in the urban areas in general and the large metropolitan area in particular. They are regarded very affluent community. Like the terms ‘Asian American’ or ‘South Asian American,’ the term ‘Indian American’ is an umbrella expression applying to people of widely varying socio-economic status, education, places of residence, generations, views, values, lifestyles and appearances. They are known to assimilate into American culture effortlessly because they have no language barriers and come from a similar society.

Indians are among the largest ethnic groups migrating to the USA legally. Immigration of Indian Americans has taken place in many waves since 1790, followed by a few hundred Indian emigrants through the 19th century.

However, significant emigration from India to U.S. has taken place in two distinct phases from 1904, and after 1965. The first wave is a part of larger Indian Diaspora generated by British Colonial repression in India, the emigrants were mostly Sikh farmers along with political refugees and activists, middle / upper-class students from various groups, who come to gain political support from British rule. The second

wave after 1965 included mostly students and professionals from the educated middle and upper classes in search of a better standard of living. After LPG and IT revolution, in 1990 Silicon Valley of American is dominated by Indian IT professionals.

A basic reality for most of the first generation, Indian Americans is that they have grown up bilingual. Those who have had the benefit of being educated in English medium school have grown up with English as another 'native' language. Unlike Chinese, language was no hurdle for Indian immigrants. Their cultural traits, excellent knowledge, good work habits have earned them the label of 'model minority.' For a large section of an Indian immigrant community, the bonds to India endure. Their consciousness and sensibility include strong and highly differentiated regional consciousness, having to do with language, food, religious affiliation, dress, etc.

#### **2.4.2 Literary Profile of Indo- American Literature**

Indian American literature is among the very 'young' literature in the United States, hardly forty years old.

(A) Memoirs: Writing by immigrants from the Indian sub-continent is associated with personal and communal identity, memories of the homeland, and the active response to this 'new' world. Writers express their personal, familial identities and socio-political contexts, explaining how and why they come to be where they are and to write what they do. Ved Mehta's autobiographical inquiry in *The Ledge between the Streams* deals with his personal and familial detailed in an old fashioned way.

Bharati Mukherjee widens the autobiographical tradition of Ved Mehta in quite different ways. Society is the subject matter of her memoir, *Days and Nights in Calcutta*, co-authored with her husband. It is a work in which Mukherjee reveals her nostalgia for her home city.

Meena Alexander turned to writing for strength, catharsis, and alternate possibilities. The title of her memoir *Fault Lines* gives insight into one of the main preoccupations, self-creation, and identity formation in the context of migration.

Abraham Verghese's *My Own Country* is a moving memoir of how human participation and engagement with a community make any place a home. This

autobiography of a doctor specializing in infectious diseases, battling with AIDS patients in a small town in Tennessee, unfolds the satisfaction that many professional Indian Americans feel about their specialized work.

(B) Poetry: Poetry is not as popular as the novel or short-story but still, there is some major contribution by the Indian diaspora in Indo-American Literature. A. K. Ramanujan occupies an important place among Indo- American poets with a wish for connectedness and the absence of connection are the two facts of Ramanujan's poetic world. Meena Alexander's *Migrant Music* deals with belonging and home which are created by the excavation and re- composition of the past. Agha Shahid Ali is a Kashmiri exile. The themes of homeland, loss and exile are central to Ali's work. *The Half-Inch Himalayas*, a collection of poems depict in four sections; the very spaces opened up in exile. *A Nostalgist's map of America* is a volume that reveals alien spaces of hyphenated identity. Sharat Chandra's *April Nanjangud* views and remembers India through an expatriate's sensitive awareness. *Once or Twice* also contains some of his earliest passionate reflection of America's attitude towards its immigrants. *The family of Mirrors* is an extension of earlier immigrant themes. His *Immigrants of Loss* deals with universality of dislocation and sharply divisive nature of American social hierarchies Vikram Seth, a well known Indian expatriate novelist has also contributed to his collections of poems like the *Golden Gate* and *All You Who Sleep Tonight*. Poets like Vijay Seshadri, Ravi Shankar, Maua Khosala, Prageeta Sharma have also contributed their literary talent.

#### (C) Novel and Short-Story

Bharti Mukherjee is one of the prominent expatriate writers who reject the tradition-bound society of the East as she reaches out for the more empowering and individualistic society of the West. Her novel *The Tiger's Daughter* depicts a young women's unsettling return home to Calcutta after years abroad. The wife is about the desolation of an immigrant woman of middle-class Bengali origin devoid of her support structure in a foreign society. *Darkness* portrays the despair produced by the encounter with Canadian racism. Her *Middleman and Another Stories* reveals immigrant experience in US and Canada in ironic vein Mukherjee's later novel *Jasmine* shows the possibilities of remaking oneself in the New World.

Meena Alexander's writing shares her experiences of exile. Self creation is a familiar theme of Meena Alexander's work. In *Manhattan Music* she portrays how New World Hybrid Dopti, a personification of the old world mythic Draupadi, saves Sandhya from an attempted suicide, as if to say that the challenge of exile is in survival and not in death. Vikram Seth shot to fame with *A Suitable Boy*, followed by the novel *Equal Music* and the non-fiction funnily memoir *two lives* written at the suggestion of his mother. Chitra Banerjee- Divakaruni's writing has come late in life and is directly linked with her migrant condition. Her *Mistress of Spices* is a novel that threads magic, memory, and immigrant life into a story of love and survival. Most of her fiction and poetry deals with the theme of gender and migration. Writers like Indira Ganesan, Amulya Maladi, Sanjay Kumar Nigam, Hema Nair, Vijay Lakshmi, etc. have also dealt with various aspects, dimensions of expatriate sensibility.

### **2.4.3 Second Generation Writers / ABCDs**

American Born Confused Desi (ABCD) is a term that refers to people of Desi origin, living United States. 'Confused' refers to their confusion, regarding their identity having been born in America or lived there since childhood and been more closed to American culture than to their native culture. Their bonds in India are arbitrated by their parents. This second generation is more aware of struggles of people of color in the United States and attempts to review the inequalities of race and class. Another point that should be noted is that second generation women often find that they are subject to more paternal demands and limitations than their male counterparts. Dating often becomes an uncomfortable issue in the lives of teenage daughters. Conflicts faced within the home by the Indian American women are the subject of Sushama Bedi's novel *The Fire Sacrifice* and is a recurring theme of fiction and poetry in the recent anthologies.

Jhumpa Lahiri represents the second generation diasporic 'desis' whose relationship with America as well as India is thoroughly different from that of the first generation. Lahiri portrays the situation of second generation expatriates who confidently asserts their ethnic identity in multiculturalists situation.

#### **2.4.4 Sub-group of Bengali diasporic writing within Diasporic Indian Fiction**

The exclusive thing about Indian diasporic writings lies in the fact that the Indian diaspora differs from another diaspora. Unlike other Asian diaspora, the Indians, despite being 'Indian' do not involuntarily share a common faith, language, cuisine, dress, etc. The result is that the variety we have in India gets echoed in the literature of the writers of diverse background typically based on regions and sometimes on castes and religions.

Rohinton Mistry writes in a different way from Jhumpa Lahiri or other Indian writers living and writing abroad. Writers write about the customs, traditions, dress and cuisine, peculiar to the region from where they come. In a way, they bring same rich diversity that we have in India in their writings by portraying the microscopic details of their rites, dress, cuisine, etc. into the literature that they create. The comprehensive handling of the fish or the description of the vermilion in Jhumpa Lahiri creates 'Bengaliness' or Rohinton Mistry can describe Parsi habits and traditions. These regional sub-groups make Indian diasporic literature in English somewhat unique and different.

In the great success of diasporic fiction of Indian writers, particularly in the last two decades of the 20th century – there has appear a substantial sub-group within diasporic Indian fiction that is writing in English from the Indian state of Bengal, the country of Bangladesh and by *Probashi Bengalis* (diasporic Bengalis) outside the two Bengals. This sub – group contains writers like – Bharati Mukherjee, Amitav Ghosh, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Sunetra Gupta, Nalinaksha Bhattacharya, and Joydeep Roy – Bhattacharya, Bidisha Bandopadhyay, Adib Khan, Amit Choudhary, Chitra Bananarjee - Divakaruni, and the three recent authors Amal Chatterjee, Ruchira Mukherjee, and Jhumpa Lahiri.

While reading these writers, we find the manifestation of delicate Bengaliness in their writings. These writers use language, themes, moods that are very culture specific. This includes many Bengali passions like local food (*luchi, tarkari, ilish parotas, narus or jilepi and shingara*) politics, sports, endless and (discussion) as well as debates on philosophy, music, cinema, literature and obsession of writing itself.

Most of the works of these writers also give an exact record of Calcutta dockside often minutely presented in the mode of realism. This city is also constantly used by this sub-group in their literary works.

Another noticeable thing about this sub-group is that the sense of nostalgia in the form *Bengaliness* also spreads through the writings of second generation writers such as Jhumpa Lahiri. Though she lives in the U. S, her literary works faithfully mirror Bengali culture and sensibilities. Through these works, she has minutely portrayed Calcutta and middle – class Bengali milieu.

Unlike Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee - Divakaruni, and Sunetra Gupta, Jhumpa Lahiri is a class apart in the sense that her second generation diasporic position does not bond her to Calcutta (Kolkatta) by birth. Born in London, raised in Rhode Island, Connecticut and presently living in New York, she deals faithfully with dislocation and disappointments of immigrant's lives also showing Bengali strain in them. All the nine stories of her debut literary work *Interpreter of Maladies* set in America and India are unified by the pattern of exclusion, loneliness and search for fulfillment. They do not confine themselves only to the experiences of migrants and displaced individuals. Though she speaks about universal appeal, most of Lahiri's Indian characters are Bengalis and her prose scattered with details of conventional Bengali names, food, cooking, and wardrobe, giving character and flavors to her stories. Also, as a Bengali, the idea of marriage loomed large in her life. Lahiri initially drew heavily on her experiences of Calcutta as it gave her a perception of her inheritance. Through this perspective, she convincingly portrays the universal nature of human existence that goes beyond the boundaries of region, religion, nation, etc. Before analyzing her literary works, it is essential to take note of Jhumpa Lahiri's personal and literary profile.

### **2.5.1 Jhumpa Lahiri -- Brief Biography**

Jhumpa Lahiri, born on July 11, 1967 in London is a contemporary and internationally acknowledged Indian (Bengali) American writer based in New York City. Her real name was Nilanjana Sudeshna but when she was enrolled in school, the teachers decided that Jhumpa (the nickname and easy to articulate) should be her school / good name. Lahiri grew up in Kingston, Rhode Island, where her father Amer

Lahiri works as a Librarian at the University of Rhode Island. After receiving B. A. in English literature from Barnard College in 1989, she had many degrees from Boston University, M.A. (English) M.A. (Creative Writing), M.A. (Comparative Literature) and Ph.D. (Renaissance Studies). In 2001, she married Albert Bush, a journalist who was then Deputy Editor of Time Latin America. She lives in Brooklyn with her husband and two children and has been working as a Vice-President at PEN American Centre since 2005. Apart from other awards, she has received prominent awards like Pulitzer Prize for fiction for her short-story collection, her debut literary work *Interpreter of Maladies* (2000), PEN / Hemingway Award (1999), due to her extraordinary literary genius. Her first novel *The Namesake* (2003) was adapted into the popular Hindi film of the same name. Lahiri's latest literary work *The Lowland* (2013) has won DSN award for South Asian Literature in Jaipur Litfest in Feb.2015.

## **2.5.2 Literary Career**

### **Interpreter of Maladies-1999 (Short-stories Collection)**

Initially, Jhumpa Lahiri's short stories faced rejection problem from publishers. Her debut short stories collection, *Interpreter of Maladies* was finally released in 1999. The stories address sensitive dilemmas in the lives of Indians immigrants settled in USA, with the themes such as marital difficulties, human relationship and the disconnection between first and second generation of U. S. immigrants. The collection has received prestigious Pulitzer Prize (2000) for fiction.

### **The Namesake- 2003 (Novel)**

In 2003, Lahiri published *The Namesake*, her first novel. The story covers thirty years life span of the Ganguli family. The Calcutta-born parents emigrated, as young adults to the United States, where their children Gogol and Sonia grew up experiencing the constant generation and cultural gap with their parents. A film adaptation of *The Namesake* was released in March 2007, directed by Mira Nair and starring Kal Penn as Gogol and Bollywood stars Tabu and Irfan Khan as his parents.

### **Unaccustomed Earth- 2009 (Short-stories Collection)**

Lahiri's second collection of short stories, *Unaccustomed Earth* was released in April 2008. Upon its publication, *Unaccustomed Earth* achieved the rare distinction of debuting at number one on The New York Times bestseller list.

### **The Lowland – 2013 (Novel)**

Jhumpa Lahiri's latest novel *The Lowland*, published in Sept.2013 deals with the diasporic dilemma on the background of Naxalite movement took place in India.

### **2.5.3 Literary Focus**

Lahiri's writing is featured in her 'plain' language and very clean, neat and engrossing narrative technique. Her characters are mostly Indian (Bengali) immigrants, navigating between the cultural values of their birth-place and their adopted nation. Her writing is autobiographical and frequently draws upon her own experiences as well as those of her parents, friends, acquaintances, and others in Bengali communities with which she is familiar. Lahiri investigates her characters' struggles, dilemmas to faithfully reflect the details of immigrant psychology and behavior.

Her first two literary works, *Interpreter of Maladies* and *The Namesake*, spotlighted mostly on first generation Indian American immigrants and their struggle to raise a family in a country very different from theirs. They describe their attempts to keep their children familiar with Indian culture and traditions and keep them close to their cultural roots even in an alien land.

The stories of her third literary work *Unaccustomed Earth* have dealt with the destiny of the second and third generation immigrants. As subsequent generations become more and more assimilated into American culture and are at ease in the construction of perspectives outside of their country of origin. Lahiri's two novels *The Namesake* and *The Lowland* highlight the needs of the individual. She shows how later generations of immigrants depart from the restrictions of their parents who are often devoted to their community, family, and other immigrants.

## 2.6 Summary

The present chapter has attempted to examine the reflection of Diaspora Theory and its various aspects in literature by discussing features of Expatriate or Diasporic literature. It has also analyzed the Indian contribution to diasporic literature in English. Further, the chapter has traced out diasporic as well as recently emerged Bengali sub-group in Indo – American Writing to which Jhumpa Lahiri belongs as a contemporary writer, having worldwide recognition for her literary genius.

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