Chapter 1

Migration and Its Cultural Implications

The concerns that the migrant writers raise through their works necessitate the knowledge of certain terms which come under the purview of cultural studies. A familiarity with terms like culture, multiculturalism, race, ethnic groups, place, space, diaspora and so on is necessary for a proper appreciation of diasporic works.

The term culture had originally been used to mean the tending or cultivation of something. However, the meaning of the word began to get extended with the passage of time. Culture for Matthew Arnold had been “coherence and order” (qtd. in Bertens 172) and the absence of anarchy. To Hoggart, it had been “all those activities, practices, artistic and intellectual processes and products that go to make up the culture of a specific group at a particular time” (qtd in Giles and Middleton 18). Viewed in this sense, the umbrella term includes in its wake pop music, films, religious rituals, and even the concept of family. Raymond Williams in The Long Revolution sees culture as “a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour” (57).

Culture, as Geert Hofstede views it, is a kind of “mental programming” where each person carries within him/her “patterns of thinking, feeling, and potential acting which were learned throughout their lifetime,” but mostly acquired in early childhood (4). Thus, through the process of enculturation, people acquire their culture and transmit it across generations. Experiences, memories, values and beliefs are shared because of common enculturation. As Lisa Lowe opines,
“culture is the contemporary repository of memory, of history, it is through culture, rather than government, that alternative forms of subjectivity, collectivity and public life are imagined” (22).

Cultural learning is entirely a human possession as it depends on symbols. Symbolic thought involves bestowing arbitrary meaning to a thing or event. As observed by Conrad Phillip Kottak, “Cultures are integrated and patterned through their [people’s] dominant economic forces, social patterns, key symbols and core values” (61).

People belonging to different cultures expose themselves to the elements of other cultures through the processes of colonialism and migration. As Robert Blauner notes in “Colonized and Immigrant Minorities,” “In the case of colonialism, metropolitan nations incorporate new territories or peoples through processes that are essentially involuntary, such as war, conquest, capture, and other forms of force or manipulation” (150). Migration, which V.D Kaushik defines as “an economic process causing movement of labour with capital, of people from one part of the world to another,” has been much more important than conquests in effecting culture contacts (189).

Migration has been endorsed on a large scale by globalisation, the ways in which hitherto distant parts of the world have become connected in a manner that has been unprecedented in history. As this interlinking makes long distance communication easier, faster and cheaper, developments in one part of the world can rapidly produce effects on geographically distinct localities. Thus, the world has shrunk into a single, global space connected by a vast expanse of technological, economic, social and cultural forces. The process of diffusion
(borrowing of traits between cultures), however is teleological to the idea of glocalisation, where there is an admixture of the global and the local. Cultural traditions that extend “beyond and across national boundaries” are referred by the term international culture (Kottak 68).

Migration can also be the direct result of natural disasters, political persecution or forceful banishment resulting from ethnic cleansing, overpopulation, contracting economic opportunities, famine, drought, war, religious persecution and political oppression. Thus, migration may be caused due to the “push out of the home country” by changing political, economic or social conditions (Shoub 2). The “pull of better conditions” or the promise of a fresh start existing in the host land may result in migrations caused by free will (2). Migrations have thus been prompted by the lure of “that ultimate configuration of land that would make them [the immigrants] rich” (Schlissel 88). The motives for immigration, as Maldwyn Jones observes, have been

\[\ldots\] a mixture of yearnings – for riches, for land, for change, for tranquillity, for freedom, and for something not definable in words. \ldots Whenever [the immigrants] came, the fact that they had been uprooted from their old surroundings meant that they faced the necessity of coming to terms with an unfamiliar environment and a new status (4 – 5).

Extensive migrations result in the formation of multicultural societies. A multicultural space is an assortment of different cultures coming from different societies. The term multiculturalism has been used to denote a state, a nation, a country, a region or even simply a bounded geographical location composed of
people belonging to different cultures or, in the words of Theo Goldberg, “to reference the undeniable variety of cultures inter – and intranationally” (7). A multicultural society inculcates in it “a notion of the distinctiveness of each culture, each separate from others” (Watson 1). This form of coexistence of different cultures acknowledges the fact that “human nature is varied”, emphasises individuality and rests on the “concept of ‘the good life’” which serves as a goal toward which most cultures strive and also relies on “generosity and good will” of the people (Friesen 27-28).

Multiculturalism arises out of cultural diversity, “the recognition of pre-given cultural ‘contents’ and customs, held in a time-frame of relativism” (Bhabha 155). A multicultural nation, for its smooth functioning has to adopt a cultural relativistic stance. The basis of multiculturalism is Geert Hofstede’s premise that though human groups and categories think, feel and act differently, “there are no scientific standards for considering one group as intrinsically superior or inferior to another” (7). Most multicultural states play a crucial role in promoting multiculturalism by defending “cultural variation as a part of the human heritage,” and thus encouraging “inter-ethnic contacts,” promoting “equality among cultural groups” and creating “a working definition of national collectivity” (Helly 164).

A multicultural society, in its ideal form, is one in which people from different cultures have established spaces for themselves, and justice without enforcement prevails. Multiculturalism, as vouched by “The Multicultural Bias of Indian Civilization” is also the means by which civilisations in the world “renew themselves” through the process of “accommodation… of the
perceptions of different peoples” (Paniker 21). This form of “epistemic cooperation” in its ideal form is difficult to realise and has for its themes

. . . the relations between Self and Other, . . . Subjects and subjects; between knowledge, power, pedagogy, politics and empowerment . . . and . . . relations between the sciences, social sciences and humanities; between meaning, ambiguity and representation; between History and multiple, intersecting histories, . . . between culture, domination, resistance, and self-assertion; and, broadly conceived, between identities and differences, homogeneity and heterogeneity (Goldberg 2).

The term multiculturalism was first applied in 1957 to describe Switzerland. However many theorists view multiculturalism as a term formulated by Western Canadians, in order to avoid the hegemony of any of the two sections of people, the Anglophones and the Francophones. Christian Joppke and Steven Lukes, in commenting on the origin of the term note that “As a word or a thing, ‘multiculturalism’ first appeared in Canada and Australia in the early 1970s” (3). Thus multiculturalism is also viewed as a term, which describes government policy. As opposed to the societal model called ‘leading culture’ developed in Germany and the melting pot ideology of the United States, multiculturalism demands that the migrants should preserve their own cultures and that different cultures interact peacefully in the same nation. Multiculturalism has now become the official policy of Canada. It had been incorporated into the official policies of different countries in the 1970s for different reasons. Thus:
Policies of this type have been adapted as part of national constitutions by, for example, the ruling Chinese Communist Party (in 1949), the Canadian government (in the 1970s) and in a more limited fashion, by the Australian government (in 1977) (Joppke and Lukes 164).

In the United Kingdom, the government policies and statements have been influenced by multiculturalism since the election of the Labour Government in 1997. Though multiculturalism has been accepted by Australia after a long tradition of assimilationist and integrationist stances, still the response to the policy is varied and many in Australia are against multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism and nationalism are antithetical as fervent nationalism leads to the celebration of purity and monoculturalism. The terms multiculturalism and post colonialism are also found to operate in different fields. They exhibit conflicting tendencies, for, post colonialism promotes nationalism. Certain differences between the terms multiculturalism and post colonialism have been identified by Margery Fee:

Multiculturalism is a term that has wide currency, both with the public and the state, while post-colonial is found primarily in academic discourse. Multicultural tends to apply to local and contemporary national or even sub-national areas, such as cities, while post-colonial tends to apply to a global phenomenon, often implicitly grounded in a past era of empire-building, rather than the neo-colonial era of global capital (Par 3).
Not only do post-colonialism and multiculturalism differ in the realms to which they apply, but they differ in their guiding principles also. Thus, according to Fee:

Multiculturalism is often seen as an analysis that ignores political disparities, and has often been linked to well-meaning liberal attempts to view everyone as equal without having to grapple with historical, political or economic injustices. Post-colonialism contains an implicit anti-imperialist stance, one that is often somewhat muted by the historical perspective of most post-colonial analysis (par 4).

This vision of a multicultural society is an ideal one. In praxis, though the migrants who contribute towards pluralism, before actually embarking on the journey to the host land, may consider the prospects alluring, there are factors that may make the migrants regret their decision to migrate, after the actual displacement. The need to define oneself in relation to the surroundings, thus establishing a suitable identity, is felt by all people alike. If a person fails to do that in the new space, he will feel miserable. On expanding upon identity, one cannot ignore the role of the subjectivities of individual men and women in the role of ‘social actors’ in shaping the cultural forms and practices of a society. Identity finds itself related with culture in that “the identities that individuals adopt in order to define themselves are produced, at least, in part, from the cultural and social contexts in which we find ourselves and from which we draw certain assumptions about ‘human nature’, ‘individuality and the self’ ” (Giles and Middleton 30). Aspects of identity include social factors, physical
appearance, personality traits, nationality, religious beliefs, sex, family relationships, occupation, cultural interests, and many others. Individual consciousness alone cannot be equated with identity, for, individual consciousness is innate in every human being whereas identity may either be bestowed by others or chosen by us. Thus what one aspires oneself to be and the identity bestowed by others may be different. There is a view that a person’s being bestowed with one kind of identity prevents that person from being part of another identity. Theorists celebrate this as ‘difference’. As Judy Giles and Tim Middleton point out, “. . . each identity depends upon the other for its meaning. Identity and difference are about inclusion and exclusion” (34). Differences are marked symbolically by physical appearance and skin colour as well as experienced socially. Race symbolically marks difference and ‘otherness’. These symbolic markers of difference can affect the lives of people. Symbolic markers are very much important in the construction and maintenance of identities and differences. These identities may be inextricably intertwined and will depend upon and support the social processes and practices.

The locale or region (place) which one inhabits functions as one of the factors that determine one’s identity. The concepts of ‘place’ and ‘space’ attain great significance in any discussion about identity. For Fiske, place is “an ordered structure provided by the dominant order through which its power to organise and control is exerted” and “people of different groups construct their spaces by the practices of living within (these places) and against them” (qtd. in Giles and Middleton 111). “Space,” according to Fiske, is “practiced place and space is produced by the creativity of the people using the resources of the
other” (qtd. in Giles and Middleton 111). In the construction of space out of place, many opposing social interests and political conflicts are involved. Thus the identity of a person depends on the cultural context.

In sites where cultural contacts take place due to migration, people have a tendency to take pride in their own cultures and identify themselves as belonging to different ethnic groups. Ethnic group can be described as “a particular culture in a nation or region that contains others” (Kottak 113). R.M. Maciver and Charles.F. Page consider an ethnic group to be “a non-voluntary interest-conscious unity, generally without formal organization and relatively unlimited in size, within which each members are linked together by both primary and secondary relationships” (387). The concept of ethnicity has its basis on similarities in cultural traits among members of the same group and cultural differences between that group and others. An ethnic group can also be perceived as

... a segment of a larger society whose members are thought, by themselves or others, to have a common origin and to share important segments of a common culture and who, in addition, participate in shared activities in which the common origin and culture are significant ingredients (Yinger 3).

Ethnic groups themselves are almost similar to cultural groups, for “to say that there are different ethnic groups in the nation is to say that there are different cultures” (Kottak 114). Weber views ethnic groups as human groups entertaining “a subjective belief in their common descent” (qtd. in Dreidger 5). This subjective belief emerges from likenesses in physical type or in customs or
from both. It can also be rooted in memories of colonisation or migration. However this belief is significant in the propagation of group formation. Thus people who share a common language, religion, race or ancestral homeland with its related culture can be envisaged as belonging to an ethnic group, if they consider themselves to be different from people who hold fast to other cultures. They should also hang on to and actively participate in activities, which they consider intrinsic to their own culture. Ethnicity itself means “identifying with, and feeling part of, an ethnic group” (Kottak 114). Stuart Hall, in “New Ethnicities” opines that the term ethnicity “acknowledges the place of history, language and culture in the construction of subjectivity and identity, as well as the fact that all discourse is placed, positioned and situated, and all knowledge is contextual” (201). People may be excluded from other groups owing to their ethnic identity. Language, religion, geography, history, ancestry or physical traits act as markers that demarcate one ethnic group from another. Thus, “there is … a close connection between the notion of identity and the awareness of belonging to a distinctive group set apart from others . . . by race, religion, national background, or some other cultural marker” (Gleason 195). Thus, ethnic groups, as R.M. Maciver and Charles. H. Page perceive them, are “in-groups, maintaining cleavages between the ‘they’ and ‘we’ in social life” (387).

To Yinger, there exist different levels of ethnicity, for people who are adjudged by themselves and others as ethnically distinct are fully ethnic if they participate in the shared activities of the group. There are private ethnics who share the features of the fully ethnic in having been deemed by others as ethnics and the person is a hidden ethnic if he participates in the activities of the group
without identifying himself to be an ethnic. Group membership is defined sometimes in “cultural or linguistic terms” and sometimes in terms of “biological descent” (Shachar 96). Fernando Penalosa, referring to ethnic groups observes: “Where they are numerically, politically or economically weak, they are often referred to as ethnic minorities. . . Ethnic minorities have distinctive language or language varieties and hence are often linguistic minorities as well” (144).

Considering ethnic groups as minorities necessitates the defining of minorities. Minority groups, as Barth envisages them, are “groups actively rejected by the host population because of behaviour or characteristics positively condemned, though often useful in some specific, practical way” (31). Minority groups are “disadvantaged with respect to the power it has to control its own destiny” (Kaushik 185). Thus certain ethnic groups in a multicultural society are minorities not because of their smaller size, but because, as Wirth puts it, “they are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and… therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination” (qtd. in Maciver and Page 388).

The presence of a marginal or minority culture in a society implies the simultaneous existence of a dominant or hegemonic culture, the single culture which possesses the power and is promoted by the society, and which subjects the minorities to the knowledge that the latter belong to the category of ‘the other.’ Thus, ethnic super ordination and subordination very often prevail in contemporary multicultural societies. Ronald Takaki gives Antonio Gramsci’s definition of hegemonic culture in his “Culture.” It is
An order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional and private manifestations, informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religious and political principles, and all social relations (39).

Hegemonic cultures very often arise out of ethnocentrism, “the tendency to value one’s own culture as superior and to apply one’s own cultural values in judging the behaviour and beliefs of people raised in other cultures” (Kottak 76). The majority ethnic group “may or may not be constituting a numerical majority, but it is the one which exerts greater influence and controls the bulk of the power within a given society” (Kaushik 185). The meaning of the term ethnicity itself gets redefined based on the idea of dominant or hegemonic group. The universalist and inclusive use of the term ‘ethnicity’ assumes that “we are all ethnic” whereas an alternative use of the word “excludes dominant groups and thus establishes an ‘ethnicity minus one’” (Sollors 191). Thus, the term ethnicity, defined from the dominant perspective, as recorded in “Culture as a Common Ground” designates “an absolute form of racial otherness” which conceals the “reality that the ‘mainstream’ itself is constituted ethnically but has been nationalized and generalized now to the point of absolute ideological dominance” (Radhakrishnan 90). Further, from the mainstream perspective, “the ‘ethnic’ . . . is that category that has not been successfully factored into the national equation and is therefore alien or eccentric to it” (90).

The view of the ethnic as ‘the other,’ maintained by the mainstream is true in the case of races also, for, as observed by Leo Dreidger, the social
construction of the concept of race reflects “ideological, political, economic, and cultural biases of those who have authority” (4). Cultural relativism, the argument that “behaviour in one culture should not be judged by the standards of another culture” (Kottak 76) may offer a solution to this situation, but is not often practically realised. Thus an ideal form of society where people belonging to each ethnic group or race experience a sense of importance can only be a dream and “where one ethnic group has control over the means of production utilised by another group, a relationship of inequality and stratification obtains” (Barth 27).

Conflicts, founded on demands for “prestige, respect, civil rights, political power, access to economic opportunity” are common between “majority” and “minority” ethnic groups (Glazer and Moynihan 5). This is because “cultural differences frequently involve different and sometimes irreconcilable contradictions in basic values” (Maciver and Page 393). The paranoiac view of the so-called mainstream, as Radhakrishnan contends in “Culture as Common Ground,” considers minority groups as “illicit, transgressive and lawless,” “disallows to other ethnicities the very same political and representational rights and privileges that made ‘the mainstream’ possible in the first place” (90). The preclusion of certain ethnicities from contributing to the existent national situation will result in tension. The label of difference foisted on the marginal groups by the hegemonic culture with a view to keep them subordinate will not be borne by them for long. The celebration of difference without involving hierarchisation is the ideal vision on which multiculturalism is founded. However, the contradictions and inequalities existing among different ethnic
groups will naturally lead to cultural resistance in actual situations. Cultural resistance has been described as “culture that is used, consciously or unconsciously, effectively or not, to resist and/or change the dominant political, economic and/or social structure” (Duncombe 5). Cultural resistance, as mentioned in “Culture as a Common Ground,” entails the shattering of binary oppositions like “Self-other, identity-difference, majority-minority, mainstream-special interests, us-them, integration-separatism” which the dominant structure tries to preserve against the vision of a common world by the oppressed constituencies (Radhakrishnan 90). With the marginal groups gaining awareness of the hegemonic mainstream’s efforts at universalisation and naturalisation of its own perspective as ideal, as Stuart Hall observes in “Notes on Deconstructing the Popular,” the field of culture has been made a sort of constant battlefield in our times “in the complex lines of resistance and acceptance, refusal and capitulation” (186). Nevertheless, it cannot be forgotten that cultural resistance provides a sort of “free space” for developing ideas and practices and prevents politicisation in terms suited to the hegemonic culture alone. New ways of seeing and being are constantly experimented and tools and resources of resistance are developed by the ethnic groups in their efforts to free themselves from the limits and constraints of the dominant culture. The spectrum of the results of cultural resistance ranges from survival to revolution. Survival is the point at which cultural resistance is merely a way to put up with the daily grind and injustices of life while holding on to a semblance of dignity. Rebellion is where cultural resistance contributes to political
activity against the powers—that—be. Results of this resistance may range from suffering repression to forcing meaningful reform, yet all of this occurs within the framework of the dominant power (Duncombe 7).

Revolution can be viewed as “the complete overthrow of the ruling system and the time when the culture of resistance becomes just culture” (7). Transnational writers effect this resistance in their works through “pre-figurative symbolic protests, ideological appropriation of a master text, lack of strategy and organizational structure, spread of idea and ideal—that mark cultural resistance today” (Hill 17).

Ethnic cultures also fall under the category of subcultures, for, very often, these are smaller than nations. Subcultures, according to Kottak, are “different symbol –based patterns and traditions associated with particular groups in the same complex society” (68). To Stephen Duncombe, a subculture is a “group that has been cut off, or more likely has cut itself off, from the dominant society in order to create a shared, inclusive set of cultural values and practices” (7). In a large nation like the United States or Canada, the basis of subcultures may be “region, ethnicity, language, class and religion” (Kottak 68).

Fernando Penalosa observes that some of the ethnic groups may be referred to popularly as races or nationalities (144). Thus ethnic groups which have a biological basis have been called races. Races, according to Maciver and Page are “human stocks that are genetically distinguished” and are “major human types that owe their differences from one another, especially their
physiological differences, to a remote separation of ancestry” (386). Nonetheless there are differences between ethnic groups and races, for,

Ethnicity is a social product primarily. It is a term used in a broader sense than “racial” identity. It connotes a cultural or social content or pattern. It is used today for a feeling given by a racial -- cum –social, or cultural and psychological consciousness (Beg 29)

Thus, in determining race, physical characteristics--“indefinite physical traits” (colour of the skin, texture and colour of hair, structure and colour of the eyes) and “definite physical traits” (stature, structure of the head, structure of the nose, blood group, length of the hands and feet, perimeter of chest) alone are taken into consideration, while ethnicity is culture related (Sharma 339).

Nevertheless recent anthropologists consider race also as a social construct. Conrad Philip Kottak observes:

The “races” . . . are cultural, or social, rather than biological categories . . . they are social races (groups assumed to have a biological basis but actually defined in a cultural arbitrary, rather than a scientific manner). Many Americans mistakenly assume that “whites” and “blacks,” . . . are biologically distinct and . . . stand for discrete races. But these labels . . . designate culturally defined and perceived, rather than biologically based, groups (139).

Thus, as long as disparities based on ethnicity and race exist, multiculturalism in its ideal form, which entails the absence of discrimination
will not materialise. Racism is “a matter of behavior, usually a manifestation of hatred and contempt for individuals who have well-defined physical characteristics different from our own” (Todorov 213).

The reactions of migrants, in multicultural societies, are said by sociologists to take the forms of assimilation, amalgamation, integration, adaptation and accommodation. These are discerned as variant acculturation profiles or diasporic formations. Acculturation, which is seen as either additive or substitutive, has been perceived as “the process of change toward greater cultural similarity brought about by contact between two or more groups” (Yinger 69) or “the shared modifications or additions to culture that result from a whole set of circumstances acting on both these cultures” (82). In short, it is “the exchange of cultural features that results when groups have continuous first hand contact” (Kottak 74).

Further, though parts of either or both cultures change with acculturation, each group remains distinct. Acculturation encourages cultural diversity, but “within the context of a strong commitment to national goals and institutions, thus expressing the ideas of belonging to two cultures at the same time” (Varma and Seshan 4). In simple terms, acculturation is a process associated entirely with the minorities, “the ways that minorities adjust themselves to the dominant group,” with “assimilation” and “integration” as its ramifications (Rudmin e-mail). This is a form of “social adjustment” where “the individual or the group begins to absorb slowly and gradually, somewhat unconsciously, the new circumstances in which it finds itself,” resulting in modification of social attitudes (Sharma 458).
In the case of highly antagonistic cultures, one cultural value is supplanted by another, which then forms one of the variants of assimilation. Assimilation theory suggests that “immigrant groups will be synthesized into a new group” (Dreidger 24). It is the same as melting pot ideology or monoculturalism. An assimilated ethnic population has been defined by Yinger as

… a group of persons with similar foreign origins, knowledge of which in no way gives a better prediction of the estimation of their relevant characteristics than does knowledge of the behaviour of the total population of the community or nation involved (39).

If in the society, participation takes place without maintenance of culture of the home land, assimilation is the consequence. Amalgamation, one among the many factors (toleration, intimate social relationships, amalgamation, cultural similarity, equality of opportunity for economic progress) promoting assimilation, leads “to the creation of blood relationships” (Sharma 459). Amalgamation assumes that “the temptation to join the majority will be too much for any minority group to resist” (Dreidger 26). Even in the case where cultural resistance persists, the rules by which the minorities still have to live and compete will be those enforced by the majority. According to amalgamation theory, “this practice indoctrinates them into the ethos of the majority, and assimilationists predict that minorities will disappear into the dominant group” (26). The factors that hinder assimilation include “strong feelings of superiority and inferiority,” “isolation,” “differences of colour and physiological
characteristics,” “cultural differences,” “domination and subordination” and “social persecution” (Yinger 460). However “Immigrants may vary in their desire to assimilate or retain their ethnic identity” (Kaushik 187). Thus “race, religion, language, name, culture specific customs such as dress and diet are visible factors identifying the newcomer. Race, however, is one insurmountable barrier to complete assimilation” (187).

Assimilation theory assumes that the ideal form of assimilation is one where ethnic groups give up their identity. Gordon has propounded the theories of cultural and structural assimilation. Above and beyond these, in the case of ethnic groups in the process of decline, there are other forms of assimilation like marital, identificational, attitudinal, behavioural and civic. Thus, according to Gordon:

Cultural assimilation includes the incoming group’s acceptance of the modes of dress, language and other cultural characteristics of the host society. Structural assimilation concerns the degree to which immigrants enter the social institutions of the society (e.g., political leadership) and the degree to which they are accepted into these institutions by the majority (qtd. in Dreidger 27).

Further, “cultural assimilation (change of language, dress, etc.) may take place, but structural assimilation (entry into professions, priMari Groups, etc.) may be impeded by racial visibility” (Kaushik 187). In marital assimilation, there is large-scale intermarriage with the host society whereas in identificational assimilation, there is a development of sense of peoplehood based exclusively
on host society. Attitudinal assimilation involves absence of prejudice from the host society. In behaviour receptive assimilation, discrimination from host society is absent. Civic assimilation takes place when there is absence of value and power conflict.

Coercive assimilation can be seen as one of the ways resorted by nationalist societies in rooting out multiculturalism. The destruction of multiculturalism is achieved by

. . . rooting out all cultures other than a single one which will become dominant . . . This pursuit of a monocultural society can, however, take a more benign form through a policy of what is sometimes labelled ‘coercive assimilation’ by means of which . . . other cultures are suppressed and the dominant culture eventually becomes the only culture (Watson 3).

In addition to assimilation, other processes like integration and accommodation, demarcated only by subtle differences, take place when culture contact occurs. The migrant’s involvement in both the cultures (integration) avoids marginalisation of the individual in the society. As Ram Nath Sharma observes, “Social integration is the harmonizing or unifying of social relations” (463). This does not require correspondence between various elements, but entails the proper organisation of those elements. “Socialisation,” “common aim” and “active relations between cultural elements” are the major characteristics of social integration and integration/multiculturalism is perceived as the most favourable strategy for the well being of the migrants (464). Accommodation is perceived by Floyd Webster Rudmin as “an older word for
acculturation or for some forms of acculturation, sometimes meaning assimilation and sometimes meaning integration” (e-mail). Accommodation has been patently defined by Ram Nath Sharma as “the first step from conflict to reconciliation and co-operation” (454). Thus accommodation is “coming to an understanding or common agreement” (454). Its methods include “yielding to coercion,” “compromise,” “arbitration and conciliation,” “toleration,” “conversion,” “sublimation” and “rationalization” (456 – 457). However, it is at variance from adjustment in that accommodation is an unconscious activity whereas adjustment is made willfully. Adjustment is the first step towards accommodation. Adaptation is the state in which the minority person feels comfortable in a host society, for it means “having better mental health, doing better in school, etc.”(Rudmin e-mail). It differs from accommodation in that it is a biological process rather than a social process, is the natural product of competition rather than an outcome of conflict and is the ultimate result of the process of biological evolution rather than a process of learning (Sharma 456). Alternation “highlights the sense of presence in two cultures” (Varma and Seshan 4). However, it assumes that the individual is “capable of alternating behaviour according to the needs of the given situation” (4).

Acculturation profiles are seen as ways by which identity formation takes place in a society. Depending on individual differences, each person is said to take up the identity of a traditionalist, an assimilationist or a liminal personae. A traditionalist has been defined as one, who, even after inhabiting the secondary space, clings to the traditions and cultural values of his country of origin. David Riesman terms traditionalists as tradition directed ethnics. The
behaviour patterns of tradition directed ethnics are controlled by the in-group culture. Extensive socialisation is absent and the people who belong to this category follow “a careful and fairly rigid etiquette” (Dreidger 37). Riesman views tradition directed ethnics to be part of a relatively unchanging order where

The conformity of the individual tends to be directed to a very large degree by power relations among the various age and sex groups, the class, castes, professions and so forth, relations which have endured for centuries and are modified but slightly, if at all, by successive generations (qtd. in Dreidger 26-27).

Tradition-directed ethnics, who habitually inhabit a rural, agricultural, or food gathering society, often form urban ethnic villages on migrating to the city. These enclaves, which are common in multiethnic societies, are often titled ‘Little Sicily,’ ‘Little Italy’ or Chinatowns; the name having a bearing with their origins (Dreidger 38). Traditionalists, oriented to traditional ethnic and cultural values are reluctant to change. Nonetheless, exposure to industrialisation is said to coax them to go through an inner directed state where they become conscious of their traditional state and other non-traditional forms of existence.

An assimilationist is one, who, on entering the host topos, discards the cultural values of his country of origin and cuddles those of the new space. Viewed by Riesman as other directed ethnics, assimilationists very often live in an industrial environment and are “oriented toward secondary others who have entered his social arena and influenced his values” (37).

Liminal personae are people who live in the space of the hyphen: they neither can fully discard the cultural values of their primary space nor can
blindly accept the values of the secondary space and consequently belong neither ‘here’ nor ‘there’. In the case of these marginals, the “change of residence and the concomitant breaking of home ties with traditional rural values and norms” result in “great cultural upheavals” that lead to “change and sometimes to disorganization and conflict” (Dreidger 38). The marginal man, who inhabits two worlds, is very often a person of mixed blood or at least a cultural hybrid. Though he aspires for full membership to a group, the new group excludes him. Hence, he cannot belong to either of the two worlds he is associated with. He is in a state between the culture of the home topos and the new culture. Unlike other migrants, to the marginal person “the period of crises and marginality tends to become a permanent personality characteristic” (Park 356-7). He is considered as “a person who could not cope in the new situation, a potential deviant who might look for outlets of expression in unacceptable ways” (Dreidger 39).

The kind of multiculturalism envisaged by Salman Rushdie, and termed as hodgepodge, “celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes from new and unexpected combinations, of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs” and rejoices in “mongrelization and fears the absolutism of the pure” (Joppke and Lukes 8). Here newness enters the world through ‘hodgepodge’ which is about the intermingling and fusion of cultures, even within the same individual” (8).

Cyborg politics or transversal politics refuses “essentialism, universalism, or organicism” in relation to all cultural positions (those of race, ethnicity, nation, gender, sexuality, class, religion) “in the recognition that these
positions are often multiple, creolized, mobile, and/or liminal” (Kerr 384). This version, if followed, can possibly enhance tolerance “in a globalizing world of growing migration and perpetually changing ethnosapes” (384). Nevertheless, this model also has to address questions of “political agency, ethical responsibility, and moral action in a far from perfect world” (384).

Communitarian multiculturalism has been expatiated on by Seyla Benhabib. As Benhabib notes, the communitarian multiculturalists would contend that “Culture is the context within which we need to situate the self, for it is only in virtue of the interpretations, orientations, and values provided by culture that we can formulate our identities, say ‘who we are’ and ‘where we are coming from’” (56).

Another version of multiculturalism, known as the mosaic, “the coexistence of distinct cultures held by separate groups,” has been explained in a report about the future of Los Angeles commissioned by the city government in L.A. 2000:

Think of Los Angeles as a mosaic, with every color distinct, vibrant and essential to the whole . . . More than one hundred cultural and ethnic backgrounds . . . exist together in Los Angeles . . . Each brings its own ethos, arts, ideas and skills to a community that welcomes and encourages diversity and grows stronger by taking the best from it. They respect each other as mutual partners (qtd. in Joppke and Lukes 8).
When in a mosaic, the constitution itself provides certain group rights for certain communities, the situation is called constitutional pluralism. Canadian society is considered to be a mosaic.

The category called critical/resistant multiculturalism voiced by Kathleen Kerr has postmodernism for its base. It contends that “the site of struggle is textuality: representations of race and ethnicity, class gender and sexuality” are perceived as part of larger ideological struggles that are subject to “displacement and play” (383). Here the preference shifts from a harmonic space based on static identities (that do not posit any problem) to social justice (that precludes the recognition of the instability of identities and the recognition of differences).

In the strong form of multiculturalism where citizenship is threatened, “Groups want to protect their cultural practices in a way that requires considerable separation from others” (Spinner–Halev 66).

In inclusive multiculturalism (liberal multiculturalism), groups “want their cultural practices accepted in and by the larger culture” (66). They do not let cultural practices become barriers to inclusion into the mainstream society. This form of multiculturalism offers two levels of citizenship: liberal citizenship that insists in the non-discriminatory treatment of the citizens and rules out at least physical harm without due cause and the second level that makes moral demands on the citizens. One of the noteworthy aspects of inclusive multiculturalism is that it “. . . wants people to be included in democratic discussion as full and equal citizens; they want to be listened to, and they want to be treated fairly in a social and political life in the schools” (68). As in
Spinner-Halev’s model, the liberal version of multiculturalism envisaged by Kathleen Kerr argues that “‘sameness’ over ‘difference’” should get legitimised (383). However, this liberal version does not interrogate the “manner in which this universalizing of humanity within social communities is made to coincide with the Anglo-American version of such communities” (383). Nonetheless, the left-liberal version of multiculturalism tries to offer a solution by “emphasizing differences between communities, connected with social values, attitudes, styles and practices related to race, ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality” and stresses on the importance of confirming the “‘authentic experience’ of different communities, and their justified use of lived, personal experience as the ground of political activity” (383). But it overlooks the complexities involved in affirming lived experience and the ways to deal with crisis and conflict.

Certain critics envision multiculturalism as a critique of Western universalism and liberalism. They perceive the theory as having affinities to post-structuralism and communitarianism and operating with the aim of “unmask [ing] the false universalism of the dominant group, […] and giv[ing] ‘voice’ to those groups who have been culturally oppressed’, that is, ‘both marked out by stereotypes and at the same time rendered invisible’” (Joppke and Lukes 5).

Multiculturalism is not without drawbacks and limitations, and critics are never hesitant in foregrounding these issues and offering polemical views. As Christian Joppke and Steven Lukes opine:

Multiculturalism inherited anthropology’s relativist, anti-elitist, and comprehensive notion of cultures in the plural. But it also
incorporated the preoccupation with the pride and shame inherent in the encounter between what were taken to be ‘superior’ and ‘inferior’ cultures (4).

One of the questions posed by the multiculturalists is whether minorities require group rights. Arguments are raised to support both sides and this has led to the classification of rights into group-differentiated and collective rights. Group-differentiated rights “refer to a differentiation of individual rights according to membership in groups” whereas collective rights refer to “those rights where the group itself is the barrier of the right” (Baubock 134). Rainer Baubock argues that each ethnic group should be granted the right specific to that particular group, for, it is what differentiates it from other groups, but feels that individual rights may be curtailed if they infringe the interests of the group. He further argues that the ethnic groups will be at a disadvantage if collective rights are denied as they need protection against ethnic discrimination. Nevertheless he is not blind to the benefits offered by collective rights:

If . . . pervasive prejudice among national minorities leads to structural disadvantage that seriously diminishes a minority’s economic opportunities and political representation, affirmative action which identifies the group as entitled to special concern may be justified. . . if states cannot be redesigned to become truly neutral with regard to the different cultural affiliations of their citizens, then disadvantaged minorities have to be compensated in order to regain the full value of their citizenship (144).
According to him, collective rights, when granted on such a basis will support the politics of cultural recognition.

Yael Tamir, on the contrary, feels that collective rights should not be recognised, for, the individuals have every right to safeguard themselves against the group. Nonetheless, group-differentiated rights should be allowed, for, “when individuals are unable to waive their rights, these rights turn into duties, restricting personal autonomy rather than protecting it” (163). Tamir further talks about the problems in not granting group-differentiated rights:

Individuals who are deprived of their ability to decide which rights to demand and which to waive, who cannot determine for themselves whether to retain their communal tradition, strive to bring about a change, or assimilate, or who cannot decide in which language to educate their children and what to teach them are deprived of their most basic liberties (164)

and hence comes to the conclusion that there is no such category of collective rights that are harmless to individual members. This brings in more problems. However collective rights are further classified into internal restrictions and external protections. Kymlicka views internal restrictions as the rights claimed by the ethnocultural groups against its own members that restricts “individual choice in the name of cultural ‘tradition’ or cultural ‘integrity’” (116). Their aim, Kymlicka observes, “is to restrict the ability of individuals within the group (particularly women) to question, revise or abandon traditional cultural roles and practices” (116). Liberal multicultural theorists opine that internal restrictions annul the autonomy of individuals and result in inequalities within the group.
Hence they treat these as unjust. External protections, according to Kymlicka, are those rights “which are claimed by a minority group against the larger society in order to reduce its vulnerability to the economic and political power of the larger society” (116). Theorists contend that the granting of such rights as language rights, funding of ethnic media, guaranteeing political representation and so on may promote justice among ethnocultural groups by ensuring equal justice for the majority and the minority.

Even in a situation where collective rights meant for protection against discrimination are allowed and the privilege of the communities to stand against individual interests is denied, the problem persists. Critics are not sure as to the kind of minority rights that are to be heeded or discarded as minority claims proliferate. The yardstick that can be used to identify the relevant kinds of oppression and rate oppression becomes problematic. Whether the group claims are to be granted on the basis of the minorities’ or rather their leaders’ claims becomes an issue.

Moreover, when certain kinds of special rights are granted to certain groups, law will not be equally applicable to all. The preferential treatment doled out to minorities will result in legal inequality (which may sometimes go against multiculturalism and the loss of opportunities for the genuinely qualified). Joppke and Lukes comment on the situation in the U.S.:

The notorious example is US – style affirmative action, in which the members of minority groups are granted privileged access to education, employment, or the political system. In the case of privileged treatment, members of the majority society equally
(perhaps even better) qualified or situated lose out against members of a minority group. Accordingly, privileged treatment, which entails reverse discrimination, is inherently controversial, and requires extraordinary justification (Joppke and Lukes 14).

The granting of group rights also creates dilemmas concerned with accommodation when migrants with an entirely different culture enter the host land. As Joppke and Lukes observe, before granting rights, it has to be kept in mind that:

Multicultural claims-making aims prominently at recognition, not only at the redistribution of resources, which distinguishes it from traditional interest politics. To the degree that multicultural claims-making materializes in rights, it is rights attributed to individuals not qua individual, but qua membership in a group (14).

These critics also warn against the vested interest to maintain and expand the right and the dynamics of inter-minority competition that arise with the attainment of rights.

The granting of all groups rights cannot disentangle intragroup problems. Ayelet Shachar contends: “Who, however, is allowed to define what the group’s ‘essential traditions’ are? Which voices from within an identity group should be recognized by the state as representative of the ‘integrity of a group’s culture’?” (94). However Shachar defends genuine group interests against the state policies which pass for multicultural accommodation and maintains that a veiled
hierarchisation may take place when the state claims to accommodate all its migrants. Thus:

The accommodation of identity groups in a larger political community. . . is never just an action of ‘recognition’. . . given the interaction between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ forces, and the diversity within identity groups, the state, whatever shape its accommodation policies takes, inevitably impacts intragroup power relations and legitimizes certain interpretations of an identity group’s culture over other possible, competing, interpretations (Shachar 94).

Thus, according to theorists, intragroup marginalisation may take place in the present form that multiculturalism takes, in which the state may find difficulty in interfering. Thus, “unfortunately, rules which systematically violate members’ right as citizens are often built into a group’s most cherished cultural scripts” (Shachar 96).

Besides the problems surfacing out of the granting of group rights and intragroup problems, there are others that threaten the stability of the concept of multiculturalism. Critics observe that in liberal multiculturalism, the non-discriminatory treatment of citizens is asserted in the public sphere, but discrimination prevails in the private sphere. Discrimination against non-citizens is also outlawed, but it takes place at numerous levels. Laws are flouted every time. Here, as theorists contend, the citizens are expected to negotiate their private interests in favour of the public, but there is no legal obligation for it. Spinner-Halev observes that this is too much to ask of people and if the citizens
are unwilling to look beyond their personal interests, might will prevail over right. He also feels that minorities in liberal multiculturalism are parasitic of the nation of which they form a part, for:

> When members of excluded groups, who are forced out of mainstream society, argue that its history is wrongly neglected from history text books, they are not attempting to maintain a distinct cultural identity. Rather they want their history to be included in the country’s historical narrative (68).

Thus, to such critics, liberal multiculturalism is not a celebration of different cultures, for, what is being celebrated is the diversity of the nation as such. Theorists also observe that once an individual has become a national citizen, (s)he will no longer be remembered by the community to which (s)he belongs, but by the nation. Thus though the individual and the nation reap benefits from citizenship, the distinctiveness of the culture is not kept up and this is against the ideals posed by multiculturalism (68).

Theorists themselves suggest certain solutions to the problems posed by them. Though many theorists see the decision regarding group rights as knotty, Will Kymlicka views the distinction between internal restrictions and external protections itself as adequate in providing the potential framework for a ‘reshaped’ multiculturalism:

> . . . one which provides external protections to groups, so as to reduce inequalities between groups, but which ensures that all group members are able to exercise their basic rights, including,
their right to question and revise the group’s cultural traditions (116).

Yael Tamir suggests in this regard that “No right ought to be realized regardless of its costs, but no right should be eliminated just because it is impossible to implement it in the most extended form” (169). Regarding the problem of accommodation, Spinner-Halev suggests:

Accepting the diversity that multiculturalism is a part of will allow more people to enter what the walls (sic), but the poor will still remain outside. A robust version of citizenship, however, will work towards ensuring that everyone can build walls with the neighbours and friends. It will also ensure that the walls have many doors (84).

Spinner-Halev opines that the dependence on nation of ethnic groups in which the wealthy and the powerful take what they want from the government by ignoring the needy should be discouraged and that “the route to inclusion and to enhancing citizenship needs to include ways to get over – or reduce – the barriers of wealth and power” (84). Thus they prove that it is not the idea of multiculturalism that is altogether wrong; but alternative policies that would be more effective should be implemented and state that “the question we face is not whether to adopt multiculturalism, but rather which kind of multiculturalism to adopt” (115). Multicultural debates are sure to come up with answers to such a question.

Migrants, who bring about multicultural societies, may fall into different categories. Among the migrants, those who cannot return to their country of
origin or those who suffer a sense of loss and displacement owing to the separation from their mother country even though theoretical return to the homeland is possible are categorised as exiles (Ashcroft e-mail). It is difficult to demarcate accurately between the expatriates and the immigrants, but certain features that differentiate the two, can certainly be pinned down. This relates to their views regarding the host land. When immigrants are people who “migrate from one country to another with a view to permanent settlement,” expatriates are “those people living and working in another country who identify in a practical way with their country of origin and intend to return” (Ashcroft e-mail). Both the immigrant and the expatriate find themselves “located on the periphery of a society, a community or a normative stance” and have in common “deracination . . . a dislocation” and “an imprisonment within the present” (Jain 49). However, in the present day context, all these have been brought under the umbrella term diaspora.

Deriving its origin from the Greek term diasperien, with the parts dia – standing for “across” and – sperien denoting “to sow or scatter seeds,” the term diaspora had at first been used to refer to the movement of the Jewish people away from their home country after 538 B.C. The term had been used to denote “Dispersal (of the Jewish people) from their homeland, and then, the search for, and the attempt to, re-establish that homeland” (Varma and Seshan 3). However, this did not mean a peripatetic or nomadic existence. Though the term was initially used to denote these religious minorities (the Jews), the term has now extended its meaning to include emigrants from a nation who have moved to another land to constitute labour force (Indian and Chinese), traders (Chinese),
imperial power (British) and harbingers of a new culture (Caribbean). The *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* defines diaspora as “the movement of people from any nation or group away from their own country” (347). Thus, as Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur observe in their article titled “Nation, Migration, Globalization: Points of Contention in Diaspora Studies,” the term diaspora now suggests “a dislocation from the nation-state or geographical location of origin and a relocation in one or more nation-states, territories or countries” (1). This voluntary or forcible movement of peoples consisting of expatriates, political refugees, alien residents (first generation immigrants who have settled down in the host land but have not taken up the citizenship of the host land), expellees, immigrants and minorities, both ethnic and racial, has as its feature, according to Bill Ashcroft, “a central historical fact of colonization” (68-69). But how far Ashcroft’s statement can be taken for its face value has to be deliberated, for though diaspora involves ‘displacement,’ it need not necessarily be concerned with colonisation. It can refer to “any deterritorialised population that is seeking to reterritorialise itself” (Varma and Seshan 3). As Cohen notes, in the case of a diasporan, there is also an inescapable link with the person’s past migration history and a feeling of “co-ethnicity with others of a similar background” (qtd. in McLeod 207). These minority communities belong to “the transnational moment” (Tololyan 5). Thus, they are at the same time global and local and experience a “transregional worldliness,” routing and rooting themselves in particular landscapes (Clifford 452). This group of people who live outside their homelands were characterised by dispersal from “a specific original ‘center’ to two or more ‘peripheral’ or foreign regions,” the
retention of a “collective memory, vision or myth about their original homeland – its physical location, history and achievements” (Safran 83). The longing for, and memory of the home land, according to Sushma. J. Varma and Radhika Seshan, are “sustained through a set of usually (cultural) symbols” which “assert the unity of that community, and visibly maintain it as different from the ‘other’” (8). They also believe that they cannot be fully accepted by the host society and suffer from the consequent feeling of alienation, their concern for their homeland and their view of the same as the place to which they or their descendants should ultimately return (Safran 83-84). As Sushma. J. Varma and Radhika Seshan contend, the return “may be more imagined than real, but is, nevertheless, one of the undercurrents” (2).

Diaspora theorists contend that the hegemonic culture of the host land positions the (often) coloured diasporic subject within its dominant regimes of representation, that is, misrepresents him in popular culture, in order to assert its supremacy. Even when this is not the case, the ethnic culture precludes the emigrant from accepting the host culture. Radhakrishnan, in his “Is the Ethnic ‘Authentic’ in the Diaspora?” expatiates on the problem: “Most of them felt they could not escape being marked as different by virtue of their skin color, their family background, and other ethnic and unassimilated traits” (206). According to theorists, the migrant, who drags the cultural baggage of his nation of birth to the host land, finds that he is excluded from being conceded as part of the host land and hence his notion of home is always found to exist “elsewhere.” The diasporic citizens experience a double life, the ethnic private life and the public life where they have to adhere to the values of the mainstream. They, very often
are “the targets of racial slurs and racialized sexist slurs, and they remembered not receiving the total understanding of their parents who did not quite ‘get it’” (206).

The diasporic other cultivates an ambivalent desire to be part of the “violence, hostility and aggression” of the dominant culture of the host land which refuses to appreciate him. He finds that the ‘presence’ of the dominant culture there undercuts the importance of his inbuilt culture, thus contaminating the entire cultural discourse, as mentioned in “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” “by introducing the question of power” (Hall 242). Moreover, migrants have to interact with the locals when they are at work, at school or in public places, but try to maintain the values of the homeland.

However, considering this alone would only give half of the picture as diasporic identities are framed by “the dialogic relationship”(wherein dominant linguistic and cultural codes are subverted through local appropriation and creolisation) between the “simultaneously operative” twin vectors “of similarity and continuity” and “of difference and rupture,” which Hall points out in “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” (237).

The cultural identity of any diaspora, to generalise the Caribbean experience elaborated by Stuart Hall in “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” is centered on the homeland, which to Hall is “the great aporia” which bestows identity with the meaning it once lacked. The loss of identity in the host topos caused by the experience of migration “only begins to be healed when these forgotten connections are once more set in place,” restoring “an imaginary fullness or plenitude to set against our [the immigrant’s] past” (235). Racial
consciousness, as opposed to the tendency to assimilate, dawns on the migrants as a “profound cultural discovery” mediated by the realisation that the host land, which they had earlier thought of as a place of opportunity and promise, had not lived up to its promises. The diasporans while at the host land, realise that their propensity to travel has cost them their belongingness and find themselves out of place. They tend to develop an uncritical nostalgia for the past in the native land. The migrants, at this stage, long for the “absent topos” (Mishra 16). This takes root as they realise that the notion of a home in the host land is only a myth for them. The presence/absence of the home in the host land in this form signifies for the member of the diaspora, an identity that relates him with the homeland, which he cannot shed off while in the host topos.

Memory is very much crucial in diasporic existence. The migrant who lives in the space of the hyphen does not experience a sense of being ‘at-home’ either in the home land or host land and yearns for “reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost” (McLeod 211). The diaspora writers even show a tendency to elevate native space to cosmic space as is exemplified in the lines of the Punjabi writer Amarjeet Chandan, “my punjab is as big as the world/It is my unheard/all rivers flow from it/everyone hears the silence in punjabi/ it is a call of a fakir. . .” (qtd. in Kumar 101). But soon the diasporan finds that he is unable to reclaim the lost home, for this exists only in his memory of the past which is full of gaps and breaches. Hence, “while the diasporic community’s culture is theoretically the same as that of the home land, it may also be different from the home land itself” (Varma and Seshan 8). The notion of home of the diasporan is incongruent to his experience. Thus even when the home land exerts an
influence upon the life of the migrant, it remains for him an illusory place which helps “the mind to intensify its own sense of itself by dramatizing the difference between what is close to it and what is far away” and has only a “figurative value” the migrant “can name and feel” (Said 55). The migrants find that their view of the homeland as a refuge from their unendurable conditions was only a mirage. The pristine glory of yesteryears is lost to them forever. As Avtar Brah observes in *Cartographies of Diaspora*, home, becomes for the migrant, “. . . a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination . . . a place of no-return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of ‘origin’” (192). Home, as mentioned in “Is the Ethnic ‘Authentic’ in the Diaspora?,” becomes just another “ghostly location” for the diasporan as the hostland. Diaspora writings, which according to Stuart Hall constitute “a narrative of displacement,” recreate the incessant desire to return to “‘lost origins,’ to be one again with the mother, to go back to the beginning” (245). Hall identifies this “return to the beginning” to be like the imaginary in Lacan. As the beliefs of belonging are shattered, the diasporan feels that he has traded his own local tradition not for the cosmic which is a “signifier of the transcendental expanse beyond the world”, but for the global, “a term that stands for a barrier-free international market” (Kumar 102) and is guilt-ridden.

The notion of memory of the homeland as the heritage of a diasporic community itself becomes tricky, for it further raises the question, ‘whose memory?’ Thus “Is it the memory of a culture that has been transplanted? As the diasporan dwells in memories of the past, his relationship with the present becomes fractured and discontinuous. In Appadurai’s words, “the past is now
not a land to return in a simple politics of memory” (29). The objective correlatives from the sacred past are lost to the diasporan forever despite his desperate attempts to cling on to them. Thus the diasporans become laughing stocks, as they propagate foreign values while at the homeland, but in the host land, they remain better ethnics than persons who haven’t moved out of their home country. People inhabiting the diasporic space live a “guilt-tinted” life for not being able to live in their native space” (Kumar 100). The diasporans may be compared to “a world of signs wholly unmoored from their social signifiers” (Appadurai 29).

Diaspora involves decontextualisation and till the moment of recontextualisation, the diasporic subject will be in a cultural limbo as the space of the diaspora does not offer “a living zone of contact” (Kumar 100). However, realignment is not very easy and the constitutive aspects of evolution of the self cannot be underplayed. Home for the diasporan exists only in the realm of fantasy and the elevation to the exalted space of belonging is only epiphanic for him and not casual, for “the tragic and the transcendent are so compatible that the comic and ironical remain forever obliterated from the experience of the diaspora”(106). The diasporan perpetually suffers from a sense of cultural lag. The diasporic dislocation is not just “a journey across well-mapped geographies and cultures,” it also is “a toss up between the mythical domains of hell and heaven” (100). The metaphysics of flux creates existential angst in the diasporans. The diasporan is anguished by despair and repentance. He laments his homelessness. The state of the diasporan has been equated to be one of post-
death. The existential weariness of his dislocated self is expressed by diaspora writers.

To add to the feeling of schism of the migrant generation, according to diaspora theorists, the children of the migrants who are born in the ‘new space’ will hold a different view of the ancestral homeland from that of their parents. Generational conflicts crop up as the later generations try to shatter the myth of the sacredness of origins held by the migrant generation. These conflicts, as Radhakrishnan opines in “Is the Ethnic ‘Authentic’ in the Diaspora?” occur because “The tensions between the old and the new homes create the problem of divided allegiances that the two generations experience differently” (206) as “the two generations have different starting points and different givens” (206). However, the children of the migrants born in the ‘new space’ also find themselves debarred from belonging ‘here’ or ‘there.’ Though they may want to adopt the tradition and beliefs of their country of origin, they very often find that they are not spared by their ancestors who cling on to the feverish, fundamentalist invocations to one’s sacred origins, from bearing the burden of the customs of the ancestral land where the later generations have never been. In the words of Sushma J Varma and Radhika Seshan:

As younger generations grow up in the new homeland, they learn about the original culture, through the eyes of the older generations. For them, the culture is a reflection of someone else’s memory, something with which they have no direct contact (8).
Thus they find themselves doomed to live in the ‘interstitial’ or ‘hybrid’ space and for them, imaginative border-crossings are as much important as the physical crossing of borders. The forcing of the culture on the later generation raises questions “about the nature of linkages with the homeland, and the nature of identity asserted vis-à-vis the homeland” (8).

The diasporic subjects who suffer from a feeling of being ghettoized, as mentioned in *Diasporic Mediations: Between Home and Location*, find themselves living in “the space of the hyphen” and trying to coordinate “the identity politics of one’s place of origin with that of one’s present home” (Radhakrishnan xiii – xiv) . What the diasporan fleshes out while in the host land is just a contrapuntal relationship: one in which the cultural praxis of his displaced existence is tainted by the coexistence of multiple cultures. The situation gets exacerbated as one realises that “Diaspora is not just movement across cultures, it also involves movement across ideologies” (Kumar 108).

The question as to why diaspora studies should be conducted now has been mulled over by theorists. The two reasons offered by Braziel and Mannur act as pointers to the relevance of this theory in the present context:

First, diaspora forces us to rethink the rubrics of nation and nationalism, while refiguring the relations of citizens and nation-states. Second, diaspora offers myriad, dislocated sites of contestation to the hegemonic, homogenizing forces of globalization (7).

Thus diaspora is only one facet of transnationalism which Mannur and Braziel define as “the flow of people, ideas, goods, and capital across national territories
in a way that undermines nationality and nationalism as discrete categories of
identification, economic organization, and political constitution” (8) in that
diaspora refers to the movement of people alone from one nation to another.
This is termed by Arjun Appadurai as “ethnoscapes” (25). Nonetheless it is
certainly one of the factors that contributes towards ‘glocalisation.’ Sushma. J.
Varma and Radhika Seshan explain:

Diasporic existence is global at one level, for it transcends national boundaries. At another, it recreates a local community and local identity, which is simultaneously a part of the host country, the home country and the global community (2).

Thus as the authors of “Nation, Migration and Globalization” suggest, “the boundaries of local/global like those of nation/diaspora are no longer so clearly distinguishable” (11). But this link with transnationalism often poses certain disturbing questions to the diasporan to which he has to find his own answers if he is to be comfortable. The questions, as stated in ‘Is the Ethnic Authentic in the Diaspora’ include:

How could someone be both one and something other? How could the unity of identity have more than one face or name? . . .

Which is the real self [of a diasporan] and which is the other?

How do these two selves coexist and how do they weld into one identity? (Radhakrishnan 120).

The questions that vex the diasporans also include how ethnic identity correlates with national identity. They also worry about the odds of a hierarchical structuring in the relationship where the national predominates over the ethnic
identity. They also apprehend that the relationship may produce a hyphenated identity, with the hyphen marking “a dialogic and non-hierarchic conjecture” (121). In elucidating this, the diasporic community resorts to the use of Mikhail Bakhtin’s idea of the carnivalesque which mocks the authority figures and destroys the hegemony of any ideology which claims to give a final verdict about the world and the meaning that life harbours. They dismantle the global/local dualism through their own life. Thus they have become in some respects close to the position described by Friedrich Nietzsche and quoted by Paul Gilroy:

> We who are homeless- . . . feel disfavour for all ideals that might lead one to feel at home even in this fragile, broken time of transition; as for “realities,” we do not believe that they will last. The ice that still supports people today has become very thin; the wind that brings the thaw is blowing; we ourselves who are homeless constitute a force that breaks open ice and other all too thin “realities” (50).

“It would . . . be necessary to examine what culture means to the diasporic communities—a way of asserting a difference, a mechanism for use in power politics, an aesthetic value system, or merely a fascination for the exotic” (Varma and Seshan 8). James Clifford contends that “diasporic cultural politics” is not “somehow innocent of nationalist aims or of chauvinist agendas” (452). Moreover, diaspora populations voice “purity and racial exclucivism” through violent articulations (452). But diaspora cultures cannot be considered separatist, “though they may have separatist or irredentist moments,” diaspora constructs
“alternate public spheres, forms of community consciousness and solidarity that maintain identifications outside the national time/space in order to live inside, with difference” (452).

The question of authenticity of the diasporic experience and diasporic writings has been voiced by certain critics. The problems that trouble these critics include those expressed by Radhakrishnan in his “Conjunctural Identities”:

Can there be authenticity without authenticity effects and authenticity markers? Who is the authenticity for, the self or the other? Is authenticity -to oneself a contradiction in terms, redundant, and is it different from authenticity-for-the-other? (222).

Stuart Hall opines in “New Ethnicities” that the present era requires a more diverse conception of ethnicity “to set against the embattled, hegemonic conception of” cultures (202). There is a need to “decouple ethnicity, as it functions in the dominant discourse, from its equivalence with nationalism, imperialism, racism and the state” (202) so that multiculturalism may become more effective with a reduction in the number of cultural conflicts. For the diasporans to experience happiness, Radhakrishnan mentions in “Diaspora, Hybridity, Pedagogy,” the parental generation needs to realise that they are living in a host land where their children may be ashamed of their ethnic names, that the children are “‘here’ and not ‘there’ because the parents decided to migrate,” “that the parents themselves and their generation are facing similar problems in their double-conscious lives” in the host land, and that these
problems persist beyond the efficacy of traditional solutions” (237). To him “All of these issues need to be confronted with searing and rigorous candor both intra- and inter-generationally without either generation pulling rank or youth” (237). The youth, to Radhakrishnan, also should realise that . . . even as they militarize their ethnicity sometimes to resist mainstream racism, and at other times, repress it for the sake of bland acceptance by the mainstream, they need to transcend the unutterable poverty of strategic identity politics and of a purely reactive- paranoid identity formation as well as the abjection politics of assimilation. They need to “imagine with precision” new spaces of representation where remembering and forgetting will take place critically, and in differential relationship to each other (237).

Diaspora literature, according to these theorists, should suggest how a substantive transnational configuration of the diaspora can be achieved besides its role of offering “a subaltern interrogation of” narrow nationalism (Kumar 111).