

*Chapter - 3*

*Bombay-London-New York*

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This book is about recent Indian Fiction in English and about how and why we read. The writer recalls his childhood memories of writing with a wooden nib, his Naniji's funeral and about his disabled widow aunt. A. K. Ramanujan wrote a story in Kannada about the young man Annayya who came to know about his father's death from a photograph in a book. The library call numbers PK 321 and PL 480 hold a special significance. PL 480 is the short form of Public Law 480, 83rd Congress. Beginning in 1951, the United States provided wheat to India. The interest payable by the Government of India was used to fund "Cultural Exchange". The PL 480 library program for India and Pakistan began in January, 1962.

Under the National Defence Education Act of 1958, a South Asian Language and Area Center was started at Chicago. The environmental scientist Vandana Shiva points out, "The social and political planning that went into the green revolution aimed at engineering not just seeds but social relations as well." A comparison has been made between the

Indian Libraries and American Libraries. The facilities provided at the two places is quite different.

Ramahujan's protagonist Annayya discovers India in an American Library. Contrasting images arise in your mind that reflect the strange process through which books and libraries help you mark and discover the stations of your displacement. As C.L.R. James puts:

Time would pass, old empires would fall and new ones take their place. The relations of classes had to change before I discovered that it is not the quality of goods and utility that matters, but movement, not where you are or what you have, but where you come from, where you are going and the rate at which you are getting there.(5)

Amitava Kumar described the various uses of a newspaper in our country. How it is used as a sheet on the railway berth, as a plate for eating peanuts, as an umbrella to protect from rain and sometimes for more uncustomary use in toilets. The writer visited Khudabaksh Library in Patna which is the richest manuscript library on Islam in the world. *Bombay-London-New York* reveals the X record of the reading practice of Amitava Kumar and bears witness to his of becoming a writer. In fact it is the literary journey .

Amitava Kumar compares his departure from India to that of V.S. Naipaul's. In *Miguel Street* V.S. Naipaul leaves his tropical home to travel abroad. Naipaul described his journey from Trinidad, first to America and then England. His family had given him a

roasted chicken. The meal was eaten in his hotel room. Amitava Kumar's choice of the airport as the place to mark the beginning had come from Naipaul.

In Gandhiji's autobiography *The story of My Experiments with Truth* Gandhi tells us that there was a doggerel of the Gujarat poet Narmad that was popular among boys: "Behold the mighty Englishman/He rules the Indian small/Because being a meat-eater/He is five cubits tall"(43). A day was chosen by Gandhi and his friend. On a lonely spot by the river, Gandhi ate goat meat for the first time. He felt wretched and was unable to complete the meal. That night he was wracked by nightmares and remorse. Their surreptitious meals continued for over a year. Gandhi's conscience did not allow him to continue it and he gave up meat, saying to himself that he wouldn't take it as long as his parents were alive .

Indian writers actually form a very small group, the better known among them number fewer than a dozen, with the majority of the established ones now based in the West. These so loosely identified as "Indian Writers" are all writing in only one language, English. But India has seventeen languages recognized by the constitution, people write books and letters, make films, produce plays, print newspapers in all those languages. There are more than thirty-five languages that are used by more than a million people. The number of dialects spoken is estimated at around 22,000.

In India, the phrase "Indian writer in English" seems to have been easily adopted as a name. As Meenakshi Mukherjee has commented,

I were to write a novel in Marathi, I would not be called an Indian writer in Marathi, but simply a Marathi novelist, the epithet Marathi referring only to the language... No one would write a doctoral dissertation on the Indianness of my Marathi novel (2).

English is not just any language. It was the language of our rulers and continues even now to be the language of power and privilege. The protagonist in Vikram Seth's *Suitable Boy* added, “We are all accident of history and must do what we are best at without fretting too much about it. Even Sanskrit came to India from outside.” ( *Suitable Boy* 69).

A few lines are taken from the poem 'Against Nostalgia' by Amitava Kumar where he remembers all the sad and happy feelings during his stay in India.

They will not come back.

The smile on the lips of Safdar Hashmi.

The mornings.

On the days just after the Emergency had ended.

My first green kit.

My sister's childhood.

The glitter of her diamond nose-ring.

When Begun Akhtar sang.

The red paan she put in her mouth.

Bharat coffee house on Fraser Road in Patna

Where we ate masala dosa after watching Sholay.

They will not come back

Even if you call them.

Not even the one whose leaving turned

All the leaves sere and brought winter to a barred door.

Amitava kumar discusses Bollywood saying

The Bombay of my childhood not only meant Homi Bhaba but also Bollywood films. A large number of Bollywood films are produced each year. These films and stars are not only popular in India but also in Turkey, Egypt, Nigeria and the areas of former Soviet Union. The Classic Hindi films produced a true picture of our society and also provided solution to some wide spread evils. A string of such films are: Bimal Roy's *Do Bigha Zameen*, Rajinder Singh Bedi's *Garam Coat*, Sombhu Mitra's *Jagte Raho* and Guru Dutt's *Pyasa*.(BLN 67).

The Narmada valley project involves a plan to build 3200 dams on the Narmada. Fifty six million people have been displaced by big dams, most of them Dalits and Adivasis. Arundhati Roy has criticized the Shiv Sena - BJP Government in Bombay for their dishonest bargains with foreign capital. Before elections they opposed the U.S. multinational Enron but after coming to power signed a highly suspicious deal with the same company. The Contract with Enron has borne bitter fruit. The power that the Enron plant produces is twice as expensive as its nearest competitor and seven times as expensive as the cheapest electricity available in Maharashtra.

Arundhati Roy draws a sharp equation between a dubious hybridity and equally a suspect cultural nationalism. She takes up the examples of a call center college near Delhi where young Indians are trained to answer telephone queries from the United States and the

united kingdom. The trainees are taught to speak in British and American accents. The business is predicted to become a trillion dollar industry. While on duty they change their names. Sushma becomes Susie, Govind becomes Jerry and Advani becomes Andy.

On the other hand, in India, there are also sites for breeding an indigenous, narrow cultural nationalism. In the RSS shaka or training camp only way to achieve nation's lost dignity is by amusing nuclear weapons, religious bigotry, misogyny homophobia and book burning. The two sites the call centre and the shaka are complicitious. "While one arm is busy selling the nation off in chunks the other to divert attention is paying a howling, deranged chorus of cultural nationalism. They are Siamese Twins Advani and Andy." (BLN 131).

"The blast from this fireball travels outward as a shock wave, crushing human bodies, clamaging lungs, rupturing eardrums. The nuclear reactions also produces neutron and gamma radiation. This would cause nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, diarrhea with blood in their stool, bleeding from the gums, loss of hair and extremely low white blood cell counts."(BLN 151) Amitava kumar has represented a terrible and pathetic scene of Bombay if nuclear bomb is dropped there. Everything inflammable would burn owing to the heat and light from the fireball. Fuel tanks and cooking gas cylinders would also explode. Within fifteen to twenty minutes cars, trees, buildings and the furniture inside them even the rubbish on Bombay's streets would coalesce into a huge consuming fire.

Amitav Ghosh describes the plight of the villagers of Khetolai, close to the site where the Indian Government had carried out the nuclear tests. The first nuclear test was conducted in the same place 1974. The villagers complained of contracting cancer and strange skin diseases. People sprouted saris on their skins. The cattle in the village had

developed deformities. He puts, “The pursuit of nuclear weapons in the subcontinent is the moral equivalent of civil war the targets the rulers have in mind for these weapons are in the end, none other than their own people.” (BLN 143).

When nuclear bomb was dropped on Hiroshima it produced explosion that was equivalent to 15 kilotons of high energy chemical explosive and that could kill anywhere from 160,000 to 866,000 people in Bombay if dropped. A 150 kiloton hydrogen bomb would cause 736,000 to 8,660,000 deaths. The initial energy released from the nuclear explosion is in the form of high energy X rays. The temperature can rise to millions of degrees. A fireball is formed, cooling by emitting radiation.

From the writer's early childhood, the first impression which he got about Bombay was Homi Bhabha the father of India's nuclear programme. In that era what made the country modern was found in Bombay. It was the city of the Tatas, including J.R.D. Tata who had pioneered many things in India. It was Tata who had given Nehru his plane in 1937 to conduct the first Indian political campaign by air. Tata belonged to one of the powerful Parsi families of Bombay. Homi Bhabha was also a Parsi.

Arundhati Roy protested the nuclearization program in a country where even the basic necessities for hundreds of millions of people were only as real as a mirage. She wrote, “India's nuclear bomb is the final Act of betrayal by a ruling class that has failed its people”.(BLN 88) On the contrary after the Indian nuclear tests, the Shiv Sena Leader, Bal Thackeray, had declared in Bombay : “We have proved that we are not eunuchs anymore.” (BLN 98).

In the Indian diaspora the responses, and the narratives of the individual writers assume multiple forms. Writers like Nirad Chaudhari, Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul,

A.K. Ramanujam and others significantly differ from one another. They differ not only in their socio-cultural backgrounds and literary ancestry but in also their thematic preoccupations and literary styles. The diasporic experience includes the quest for identity which has a broad spectrum meaning and it has been manifested in various ways in the will to exist and survive all odds.

The diasporic literature focuses on the unsettlement or dislocation of an individual or race and the consequent alienation. Alienation leads to a sense of loss but life's strength lies not in losing but in the rediscovery of self. Naipaul could state in the following a valid sense of unbelonging :

Their romance was not mine, and it was impossible to separate them from their romance. I would have felt an intruder, as I felt in those district clubs where billiard rooms were still hung with framed cartoons of the 1930s where the libraries had gone derelict, the taste of the generation frozen...Indians could walk among these relics with ease: the romance has always been partly theirs and now they had inherited it fully I was not English or Indian; I was denied the victories of both.( Area of Darkness 118).

Naipaul the nobel laureate, has been considered the leading novelist of the English speaking Caribbean. His writings deal with the cultural confusion of the third world and the problems of an outsider, characteristic of his own experience as an Indian in the west Indies, a west Indian in England and a nomadic intellectual in a post colonial world. Naipaul treats the nativity as an object to demure a line towards freedom and escape, “ I

still thought of myself as a man just passing through. But where was the good place? I couldn't say...I was waiting for some illumination to come to me, to guide me to the good place and the 'life' I was still waiting for.” ( Finding the Centre 102-103).

He has also become much controversial because of his politically incorrect view of the half made societies. He has constantly refused to avoid unwelcome topics. In his latest novel *Half a Life* (2001) Naipaul goes back to his favorite theme: the dilemma of an immigrant. The story of Willie Chandran involves two sets of father son stories in the three generations of an immigrant Indian Brahmin family. Here again, fact and fiction, biographical information and historical facts, are all mixed up to create a wonderful fictional world.

Naipaul as an observer gives his comments through the protagonist Willie Chandran. On old Indian bureaucracy or while recalling the bitter experience of a shabby set up of a government office. Naipaul observes “The loss of the passport worried me more than everything else. Without my passport I didn't see how I could prove to any official in Africa or England or India who I was.” (Half a Life 176).

An attempt has been made to show, that the phenomenon of border crossing has immensely influenced three Indian Poets writing in English namely A.K. Ramanujan, Meena Alexander and Sujata Bhatt. Whatever the prospect of border crossing careerism, opportunism or material of professional prosperity - it is likely to generate a kind of indeterminacy, uncertainty, a sense of vacancy or rootlessness. And this gets reflected in the writing and enriches, enlarges and gives life to the writing adding to it a tensional quality in the writing that makes it authentic and genuinely human to the core. Border crossing also amounts to the fusion of ideas, images, ways of thinking and writing. It also

leads to the enlargement or constriction of vision depending upon the willingness and ability of the creative writer to integrate himself or herself to the already crossed boundaries or to dissociate or isolate from such territories.

V.S. Naipaul so conveniently declares the reason of his migration or his leaving home, in *The Enigma of Arrival* “And since I had to do something and since I had left home to be a writer and no other talent or vocation had declared itself in me, I had set myself up as a writer as deliberately as that. There was no joy in that decision.” (66).

In the case of Naipaul, departure from home, despite initial struggles conditions his willingness to settle in a new location, in a new culture, where more than anything else what gathers significance is the physical peace of setting. In search of this peace, Naipaul settles in a new place and accepts its landscape. Naipaul depicts this plight of his mind brilliantly:

I had no means of knowing that the landscape by which I was surrounded was in fact to have that quality for me. That I was to hear here; and more that I was to have something like a second life here; that those first four days of fog- before I went out walking on the downs - were like a rebirth for me.( *The Enigma of Arrival* 87)

Naipaul's purpose behind entering and accepting the new landscape is as clear as his disenchantment with India or Trinidad, as both had been the source of pain. In *Wounded Civilisation* Naipaul, explains “Indians have to reach outside their Civilization and they are at the mercy of them every kind of imported idea ....Indians have to reach outside their Civilization”(118).

The case of Ramanujan is entirely different even if both Naipaul and Ramanujan share the similar experiences of migration and settling down. Ramanujan goes on celebrating his links with the original homeland. And it is through such celebrations that Ramanujan cleanses his faith in himself as an Indian. In the process of such interaction both the forces gather signification and both contribute to the formation of an identity. As Ramanujan admits:

English and my disciplines (Linguistics, anthropology) give me my outer forms - linguistic, metrical logical and other such ways of shaping experience, and my first fieldtrips, my personal and professional preoccupations with kannada, Tamil, the classics and folklore give me substance, my inner forms, images and symbols.

This is an expression of a post colonial identity an identity that recognizes the contingencies of the colonial experience and that does not fail to champion his substance, the configurations of his "inner forms" . An identity such as Ramanujan's does not intend to defamiliarise himself with either the inner or the outer forms, Ramanujan maintains a balance Naipaul adheres to the process of defamiliarising himself from the forces that shaped his past whether it is in Trinidad or India.

Salman Rushdie once said in an interview:

This is the thing I can't let go, which is where I am from. It is where I was born and brought up, where my parents came from, it is my mother tongue , it is all kinds of things obviously and those kinds of things don't change. They are part of what is given they are part of how I see the world why I am this kind of writer and not that kind of writer.

Even if both Naipaul and Ramanujan share the similar experiences of migrancy and settling. Ramanujan's choice of writing in English can partly be attributed to the colonial education that began with Macaulay's *Minutes* and partly to the flowering of a willingness within to bring to focus the essence of his native culture.

A.K. Ramanujan went to the United States for better prospects, remained there for the rest of his life, but could not dissociate himself from his Indian ancestry, his past, perhaps he never wanted to forget the feeling which was based on a series of realization of identity with India and Indians. Such identity was constructed historically, socially and culturally, and was ultimately affirmed personally. The past present becomes a part of the necessity of living, not just the nostalgia. This complex diasporic sensibility can be understood with reference to the assertion of Makrand Paranjape “ I am an Indian because I want to be one. My experience of belonging is conditioned by my values and affirmations; my identity then has not been thrust upon me but is something that I have accepted voluntarily.”(14).

An important need of any diasporic writer is to ensure his non cultural survival. This is possible only by maintaining a conscious distance from the adopted country. At the same time, there is no possibility of an easy return to the homeland either psychologically. Salman Rushdie says “ It may be that writers in my position exiles or emigrants or

expatriates are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt".(43)

Ramanujan's poetry is an attempt to resolve his diasporic tension and represent homeland in figurative speech through archetypal symbols, rituals and myths. There is neither any attempt to contemporize the past or connect it with the present. He, thus maintains a distance from the adopted countries and consciously remains in the periphery of self which is affirmed by his own choice.

If writing turns repeatedly towards nation, if just as repeatedly uprooted intellectual view the world as only a free intelligent can, going where the action is and offering reports. The intellectual uprooted against his will rejects the narrow enclosures that have rejected him. There is a great loss, and much yearning in such rootlessness. But there is also gain. The rootless nation is not a fantasy. (76)

A condition that he had to confront after fatwa was pronounced for Rushdie is, to a large extent, linked with imaging a nation and in his writing it means remembering India with fondness, exasperation and sadness. He writes:

Literature has no need for partitions are his cry. His return to India, post fatwa is intensely realized in post *Satanic verses* in 2000. "I have left India many times." He says but not leaving is also true because he has "a dream of glorious return". Rushdie has never been away from India and exile has meant a constant urge to return. This existential state,

so to speak has generated from him a genre of writing which has had a major impact on Indian Writing in general, both diasporic and native.

In *Midnight\_Children\_* he explores through the consciousness of Salim Sinai, the relation between personal family history and India's nationhood. Rushdie in his typical post-modern style and with the use of a chutnified English and the conventions of Magical Realism succeeds in writing a post modern historical novel, giving pith and substance of the private and public; the personal and the political and the family and nation. Rushdie not only in this novel but also in *Shame, The Moor's Last Sigh, The\_Ground\_Beneath\_Her\_Feet* seems to exemplify descriptive pronouncement that all Third world narratives are national allegories.

In *The Moor's Last Sigh* Rushdie concentrates on the small pepper corn and builds up a great saga of the encounter of East and West of the famous spice trade stemming from Cochin. The secular message Rushdie is sending out is that the Moor, who represents a church for one, is as much an Indian as a Hindu, A Muslim, a Christian or anyone else. In other words there are as many Indias as there are Indians and even the Moor is an Indian with rights and responsibilities.

The great ancient Indian poet Valmiki, while describing the pathetic plight of Laxmana even after their victory over Lanka has described the painful mental condition of one's being cut off from one's motherland very effectively. He provided a very powerful example of Indian diasporic experience.

Eyi suvarnamayi Lanka mama na rochate Jahani

Janmabhoomischa Swargadapi Gariyasi (Even the Golden Lanka

fails to please my mind, because my own motherland is greater and more gracious than even heaven.

Generally two reasons are found for one's remaining away from one's motherland. Either one is exiled or one goes to a foreign country to earn, or study further or stay there as a tourist. The literary works voicing the strongly rebellious spirit of the thinker and the intelligentsia who have been exiled or those who have migrated from the motherland, are also of great importance in this respect. *The Loss of El Dorado* is primarily a historical narrative about the colonization of the Caribbean islands in general and Trinidad in particular that Naipaul investigates. Naipaul investigates its various aspects i.e. social, Political, cultural legal, commercial and human and strives to reproduce a comprehensive picture of the then society. He exposes the brutality of the white colonizers and their ways of exploiting the ignorance and helplessness of the natives.

The diasporic writings are a record of the experiences of the diasporic communities living in varied socio-cultural settings. The diasporic Indian writing covers every continent and part of the world. It is an interesting paradox that a great deal of Indian writing in English is produced not in India but in widely distributed geographical areas. Indian Diaspora today extends from the Caribbean Islands, South Africa, Mauritius to the U.S.A., Canada and Australia in 44 countries all over the world. Nationhood constitutes a necessary apparatus in comprehending prospects of action, "As little children let's inquire with the same childishness as they, should we not try to do use a fire that threatens to consume away not just our home but the whole city." (719).

A large number of these diasporic writers have been giving expression to their creative urge and have brought credit to the Indian English fiction as a distinctive force. Some eminent creative writers have been accorded recognition for their endeavours, at home and abroad. It has not been the quantity but also the quality. Kiran Desai won the prestigious Bookers prize in 2006 for *The Inheritance of Loss*. Jhumpa Lahiri has been awarded the Pulitzer prize for *Interpreter of Maladies*, a Book of short stories that chronicle the lives of Indians. Immigrants in Boston Area Indo-Trinidadian author Sir V.S. Naipaul has been a powerful literary force for decades. Salman Rushdie is widely considered to be both the father of contemporary Indian English literature and one of the best living novelists, was awarded Booker of Bookers prize for *Midnight Children*. Like Rushdie, Vikram Seth is the author of the longest single volume English language novel *A Suitable Boy*. Seth projects a keenness for freedom in enlarging a society, “Only India, with its great past, its civilization, its philosophy, and its almost holy poverty, offered its truth; India was the truth.” ( *Suitable Boy* 33).

The immigrants, whatever their reason for migration be, economic, social or political no matter what they migrated for trade and commerce as religious preachers, as labourers, convicts or soldiers as expatriates or refugees, exiles, (forced or voluntary or as guest workers in search of better life and opportunities have shared common experiences. The commonalities as well as the differences are based on their conditions of migrations and period of stay in the adopted land. Mostly the migrants suffer from the trauma of being far off from their homes. The reminiscences of their motherland and the anguish of leaving behind the familiar agonizes the mind of the migrants.

The general characteristic of the diasporics is that they continue to relate personally or vicariously, to the homeland in one way or another and their communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship. They always dream of returning home.

Diaspora consciousness is an intellectualization of an existential condition, a sad condition that is ameliorated by an imaginary homeland to which one hopes one will some day return. Thus the diasporic Indians do not sever their relationship with their ancestral land. There is a search for continuity and ancestral impulse and an effort to look for their roots.

Settlement in alien lands make them experience unsettlement and dislocation. Dislocation can be regarded as a break from the old identity. They feel alienated in the adopted land as they suffer non-acceptance by the host society and face social discrimination.

The immigrants try to assimilate, and adapt and integrate with the society of their host country. Their attempts at adaptation and adjustment are not without their concern to preserve their original culture identity. Seth explains in *Heaven Lake*, “Between them is a light paper kite, rhomboid, tail less, like the ones we have at home, a prisoner of string and wind, flying now in one direction, now in another, with no appreciable trend or endeavour” (146).

Thus the marginal groups try to insulate themselves from the dominant host group. The most important tool used for insulation is the continuance of the cultural practices and social custom. The first generation immigrants are always concerned with preserving the socio cultural baggage, which consists of religion, language, music art

dress, cuisine etc. Conscious efforts are made by the diasporic communities to pass their traditions to the future generations.

The experience of these cultural elements have been varied in different diasporic situations. Some of these elements have disappeared, some survived or persisted; others have experienced assimilation, syncretism or change; and a few elements have sought to be revived.

The immigrants in these situations are forced to feel they stand on the borderline belonging neither to their maternal place nor to their foster country. In their attempt to merge with the host culture while preserving their heritage they develop a double identity and their culture becomes a sandwich culture. Their attempts for assimilation and failure to do so disillusioned them. The feeling of rootlessness, alienation, discrimination on the basis of race, culture, religion and language culminates into conflicts. The fight for identity and finally lead to a feeling of marginality in the minority group.

Caught between the two worlds, the expatriate negotiates a new space, caught between two cultures and often languages; the expatriate writer negotiates a new literacy space. The diasporic literature thus arises under these circumstances.

They have also sought to recognize how they differ from many of the practices and prejudices that still characterize Indian society. The continuity of their conscious and unconscious connection colours their views and sometimes reluctantly, sometimes apologetically own, while others proudly uphold and applaud it. The search for this identity and part identity goes on and finds expression in their writings. The story of Indian Diaspora is one of sweat and toil often washed with tears of achievement despite impediments of educational disadvantage and economic progress.

The expatriate writer, writes with India in his bones, yet is aware of the literary and cultural contexts of the country of his residence. Diaspora may have its trauma, anguish and challenges but finally it is about open spaces and not about closure. It is about intermingling and interruption. It is the joy of double vision and the pain of being split from a different history, distant culture and a fluid memory which characterizes the diaspora, it is Indianness and its experience.

The experience of migrancy varies from person to person depending upon the level of education, age, background and point of entry. But neither dislocation nor absorption can be total. There has to be an ongoing involvement with reality. Post-colonialism is often referred to as the theory of migrancy but it does not help one to approach and get attached to diasporic writing.

The expatriate experiences of V.S. Naipaul feature in his works as that of a minority culture adapting to a cosmopolitan society, changing value systems and its impact on the characters of the novel. Naipaul's magnificent obsession is India's as he himself admits. Naipaul's sensibility is British though he grew up in Trinidad. Naipaul shows how the western oriented Creole culture of Trinidad corroded Hindu traditional customs and beliefs. Naipaul's writing in India: *A wounded Civilization* reveals that a root Brahmin sensibility has been overlaid with western vision as result of which ultimately there is no home for him in India. He has a split sensibility guided by his Western outlook.

The splintered psyche of the immigrants sheds off its neurosis in the form of writing. Therefore the native immigrant writer feels a compelling need to write and write back. The diasporic writers with their multicultural ethos and a deep understanding of socio cultural and economic realities around them have been successful in transmitting

their experiences into writings. Another important reason for writing by the creative talent among the diasporic community is to make their presence known. The very act of creation is a deliberate attempt to forge a cultural identity.

Their works of literature illustrate their own awareness of their history and heritage, their society and its problems, its achievements, its limitations and frustrations. The important questions which are often relegated to the background are how the home country is affected by diaspora space and does it, in anyway assist the process of decentring.

Diasporic writings reveal the experiences of unsettlement and dislocation, at some or the other level. A diasporic text can be examined in terms of location dislocation and relocation. The shifting designation of home and attendant anxieties about homelessness and the impossibility of going back are perennial themes in their stories.

Diasporic writings are concerned with the writer's or his/her community's attachment to the homeland, but this attachment is countered by a yearning for a sense of belonging to their current place of abode. Some of the Indian Diasporic writers have turned their attention on India to assess and understand the nature of their relationship with the land of their ancestors. They have probed and explored their own Indianness in its uniqueness; its new geo political and social context, its separation from the forces and factors that changed the fact of India in the year following the emigration of their ancestors.

Anita Desai articulates important questions regarding tradition versus modernity, dwindling of conventional value system, lure of getting rich even through questionable means, ambivalent cultural responses to the impact of west, social and economic disparities, colonial consciousness as a hangover of British rule etc. Desai has successfully

portrayed the theme of multiculturalism in her later novels. She had added a new dimension to the Indian English fiction by writing about existential concerns about alienation, estrangement, anxiety, anguish and the threats to individual identity. All her existential concerns have made her a typical modern writer. Her focus was being on the inner climate of sensibility of her characters. An understanding of the feeling of nothingness in human being in the modern set up, the sense of futility, the quest for identification in a multicultural world.

Desai's *Bye Bye Black Bird* is an authentic study of human relationship bedeviled by cultural encounters. The novel is most intimately related to her own experience. It is drawn from her experience of living with Indian immigrants in London. Dev, the chief character of the novel, is an Indian who goes to London to study in the London school of Economic. He is however confronted with an initial problem of adjustment in a foreign land. Dev's longing for living the life with its variety and multiplicity remains unsatisfied in the new atmosphere where people live selectively and invisibly. They feel everyone is a stranger and lives in hiding, the world makes him nostalgic about India - the India of familiar faces, familiar sounds and familiar smells. While in India one knows everything about one's own neighbour. London seems to him a cold wasteland. Existence in such a style and alien surroundings and circumstances is highly traumatic for him. He is particularly unhappy with the treatment accorded to immigrants in England.

Naipaul writes for English speaking people. He never cared for the land of his birth and his people. Trinidad was for him a destitute society. "Without history, without Achievement." He did not care for India either. He had no gratitude for India his ancestor's birthplace. He remained homeless.

Salman Rushdie was born in Bombay in 1947 to Muslim Parents. His family moved to Karachi in Pakistan after partition but he came to Britain. The experience of migration, belonging to a minority and facing hostility from the integral part of his works makes him different. One of the major preoccupations of Rushdie's art is the issue of migrant identity. Many of his characters are migrants drifting from shore to shore in search of some imaginary homeland. Obviously the author identifies himself with his migrant personae in search for identity, is perhaps the one securing theme in Rushdie's works and the themes of double identity divided selves and thus shadow figure persist in his writings.

Rushdie describes the world from the unique point of view of the migrant narrator. He is also conscious of his role in this regard in re-describing the world and thus creating a new vision of art and life. His novels and stories derive their special flavour from the author's superb handling of the characteristic post modern devices. Rushdie has been rightly compared with such literary innovators - stalwarts of our times as Gunter Grass, Milan Kundera, Gabriel Garcia and Marquez.

The Major themes of the novels of Vikram Seth are alienation in modern American society, nuclear insanity, homosexuality, the image of American women and disintegrating family life in America. He spent 23 years of his life in India and then migrated to US. His novel *The Golden Gate (1968)* has been described as an American/Californian novel instead of an Indo - English novel which is true linguistically and thematically.

Having explored and commented upon all the facets of immigrants life and problems, the writer seems to have gone full circle in his perception and analysis. Seth

seems to reiterate Hanif Kureish's Shadwell in Buddha of Suburbia "The immigrant is the everyman of the twentieth century". The problem of dislocation, relocation, urge for assimilation and acceptance as equal and yet the deep -seated unbiblical gravitation for the land and customs of t he native place and community. Economics, geography and culture each pulling the immigrant-by choice or imposition in different directions. He leads a dual existence-One dictated by and visible in his life outside the house and the other after he returns to his residence. The new world remains the shirt. It cannot become his skin a bit of kanning at the most projected or acquired only the individual actually knows. Passport Photos are mere photos -a capturisation of the external features. These are photos of a person-not the person-who misses, craves and yearns for his roots. There is no transplant of humans -their soil, water and air they need is not geographical and botanical, it has emotional and cultural dimensions to it.

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Bombay London NewYork is abbreviated as BLN.