CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Displacement and Diaspora

The concept of displacement is pre-eminent in history and therefore it is fundamental to all spheres of study. In fact displacement as a concept shows amazing interdisciplinary applications. John Durham Peters in his essay “Exile, Nomadism, and Diaspora” writes that through the ages the vocabulary of social description has been dominated by mobility and displacement:

Consider some of the personae characterized by their mobility: Abraham, the sojourner and a stranger, never to return to his home; Odysseus, who finally returns to Penelope after his odyssey; Oedipus, an outcast from his city; the legend of the wandering Jew; flaneurs, loafers, and bohemians; gypsies, gypsy scholars, sea gypsies, and gypsy truckers; hoboes, tramps, drifters, vagabonds, and flimflam artists; sociologists, private eyes, men and women of the street; sailors, soldiers of fortune, adventurers, and explorers; border crossers of all sorts; gauchos, cowboys, and guerilla fighters; pioneers, pilgrims, and crusaders; knights errant, troubadours, minstrels, charlatans, and journeymen; Huns, Vandals, Goths, Mongols, Berbers, and Bedouins; tourists, travelers, hajji, refugees, immigrants, the stateless and the homeless; commuters, telecommuters, jet-setters, migrant workers, and Gastarbeiter; automobilists, bikers, and circus people. Movement is one of the central resources for social description. (18)

Dislocation / migration / exile / expatriation — whatever may be the mode of displacement, the basic idea of movement itself defines an individual. It is not the static state, but the temporality of all such conditions that becomes evident when a telescopic
view of the demography of the world is taken. Be it war of liberation in Bangladesh that forced an influx of refugees into India, or be it the ethnic cleansing in Uganda that forced the migrant Indians living there to migrate further to Britain and America, or be it terrorism in Kashmir that made the Kashmiri pundits shift to Delhi – all these examples are indicative of the extraneous circumstances that have given a defining quality to dislocated existence. The needs and demands of so-called “development” are continually displacing disempowered or unempowered and marginalizing populations in developing countries without providing proper rehabilitation. The struggle of the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) organization for the rehabilitation of the villagers displaced by the building of the Sardar Sarovar Dam on the river Narmada is such a case in point.

Even the sense of displacement is as potent as the act of literal displacement. An individual may stay rooted in a particular place and still succumb to the sense of being dislocated because the world around has changed. Unaided by any geographical shift the concept gains potency from chronological progression. Time is ever changing and so changes the world closely allied to it. If the Jewish diaspora has become synonymous with being perennially out of place in geographical terms, colonialism has given strong currency to the psychological sense of being out of place. Colonialism and imperialism are not overnight phenomena – their growth could take place in course of time only because of the mobility shown by the likes of Marco Polo, Columbus, Vasco da Gama, and Captain Cook. It accentuated binaries – master / slave, rich / poor, white / black, colonizer / colonized, centre / margin – by the process of discrimination. It is this “othering” that preoccupies the mind with a sense of being displaced or dislocated.
The modern or rather the postmodern world has given wider significance to the idea of finding one's place in the space of history, geography, society, and culture. The three colonial institutions of power, namely, the census, the map, and the museum (Anderson Ch. 10), have in the postcolonial world become empirical evidence for social, geographical, and historical / cultural belonging respectively. Homi K. Bhabha opines that:

the demography of the new internationalism is the history of postcolonial migration, the narratives of cultural and political diaspora, the major social displacements of peasants and aboriginal communities, the poetics of exile, the grim prose of political and economic refugees. (*Culture* 5)

Just as colonialism initiated large-scale migration either forced (slavery, exile) or voluntary (indentured labourers, soldiers), globalization also presents similar stakes of mobility. Globalization, which started in the late twentieth century, has facilitated the movement of both capital goods as well as people. In fact Meghnad Desai gives an interesting interpretation of globalization in his essay “Globalisation and Culture”. He writes:

What we call globalisation has had many avatars. In the pre-Columbine world, the Roman Empire was one phase of globalisation which stretched across Europe and much of Central Asia and North Africa. The Islamic phase began as the Roman Empire decayed and shifted the geographic centre of the globalised order eastwards towards India and its borders stretched even to China.

[...]
The Islamic global order survived onslaughts from the West by Christendom (the Crusades) and from the east by the Mongol armies. It absorbed the latter but the former proved intractable in the long run. Once the Columbine (or Da Gama) era began with the discovery of America and the sea route to India, both in the last decade of the 15th century, a new ‘world system’ was born. (M. Desai 18 – 19)

This new system in the world brought about by geographical discoveries was colonialism / imperialism. Desai goes on to further explain that what made this Western European globalization “hard to reverse was the clutch of industrial innovations which occurred in mid-18th century England” (19). It thus brings colonialism, imperialism, industrialization, and merchant capitalism under the single umbrella of globalization. In this historical perspective the latest phase of globalization, whose germ is said to have originated with the quadrupling of oil prices in 1973 (M. Desai 22), is not unique but merely an acceleration of a long-going process of mobility and displacement.

The economic and academic prospects along with cultural forces have made many people to migrate in the globalized world. Peter Kivisto in the “Introduction” to his book *Multiculturalism in a Global Society* depicts five major world migration patterns in the 1990s: Asia to USA and Canada, Central America to USA and Canada, Africa to Europe, Asia to Europe, and India and South-East Asia to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries (3). What this indicates is that migration is as good as any natural phenomenon. Kivisto further notes that “some of the world’s wealthiest countries are experiencing significant demographic changes as a consequence of the surge of immigration” (4). He tables the 1994 figures for the number of immigrants in advanced industrial nations (4) that shows USA as “the largest of the historic settler nations” (43). America has been the land of
opportunities for Blacks, Whites, Asians, and all other populations since the days of American Revolution because of the immense potential of its manufacturing sector. But in “the United States, South Asians only began to arrive in significant numbers after the change in immigration law [in 1965, abandoning the National Origins System set up in 1924] which was itself a spin-off from the civil rights movement” (Brown 55, 118). The impact of globalization has brought about a certain shift in the immigrant characteristics of the US. The fact that in the US “around three-quarters of all new immigrants have settled in six states: California, New York, Texas, Florida, Illinois, and New Jersey” (Kivisto 80), indicates that of late the places that form the hub of technology and service sectors have created major job opportunities. On the other hand, Britain presents the example of a nation that was relatively slow to show affinity towards its immigrant population:

Hostility to the newcomers – and in particular anti-Semitism – led to the passage of restrictive immigration legislation, beginning with the Aliens Act in 1905 and followed by a more expansive act passed in 1919. Despite the nation’s less than tolerant response to immigrants, newcomers continued to arrive well into the twentieth century, including Germans fleeing Nazi Germany and, after the war, displaced persons from Eastern Europe. During this time, relatively few people of color – from British colonies or elsewhere – could be found among the immigrants.

This situation began to change significantly during the economic recovery that got underway after the Second World War, as waves of immigrants from its colonies or former colonies entered Britain. (Kivisto 138-39)
The British Nationality Act of 1948 gave many South Asians in the diaspora “citizenship of Britain and the Commonwealth, and the right to enter Britain” (Brown 116). The newcomers that arrived in Britain from the Caribbean, the Indian subcontinent, and Africa faced discrimination from the White British population. Such discriminatory attitude was somewhat rectified by the Race Relations Act of 1976. In less than twenty years’ time since that act the world-wide implementation of the GATT treaty brought in the stamp of globalization. In the globalized era Britain can ill-afford to be a discriminatory society. London has become one of the world’s most cosmopolitan cities. When Norman Tebbit called for loyalty test for people of subcontinental origin watching cricket in England as a sign of belonging he was, perhaps, unknowingly discriminatory and was maybe unaware of what a larger implication of such an idea can amount to. “Of course, every Scot would fail such a test while watching rugby at Twickenham” (M. Desai 23). The old European idea of nationalism is challenged and modern cosmopolitanism has gained precedence. The change in the British society and their social attitudes is the acknowledgement of the fact that the world is truly becoming a global village and society on the whole multicultural and multiethnic especially because of the interdependence brought about by globalization. Such inevitabilities make it perilous to forsake any sociological discourse on displacement.

The examples of the US and the UK are not exclusive and not without aberrations. The tragic events of 9/11 did raise doubts in the American psyche about welcoming immigrants but those were under exceptional circumstances and thus more of an exception than a rule. There are many nations that follow the sociological pattern of either the UK or the US and there are equally many nations that are averse to such
accommodating sociological forms. It is just to mark the trend that these two of the
developed nations figure here in the sociological depiction of immigration. Their
sociological patterns indicate that displacement has become such a fundamental
phenomenon and concept that all social changes and theories are guided by its
implication.

The phenomenon of displacement seems to define a nation as not of a displaced
population but of many displaced populations. This plurality inherent in world culture is
not new. To take an example from history, it is seen that since the coming of the Aryans,
India has received invaders, traders, and refugees in various migratory patterns. There are
the Greeks and the Macedonians who came with Alexander; then the spread of
Mohammedanism saw the displacement of the whole Parsi community from Persia to
India; then came the Arab traders followed by Persian, Afghan, and Turkish traders as
well as invaders; then came the Mughals, the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French, the
English, the Jews, the Chinese, the Nepalis, the Bhutanese, the Bangladeshis, and so on.
Much of these migratory peoples have undergone such assimilation in the melting pot of
India that they have become its natives despite retaining certain of their characteristic
traits. Identification of a society of plural cultures is as old as history itself. On the other
hand, it is, additionally, the identification of a people in such a society. Thus a variety of
populations, despite getting assimilated in the host society, retain their peculiarities.

Displacement gives birth to dislocated peoples variously recognized as diaspora,
exiles, refugees, migrants, immigrants, émigré, expatriates, deterritorialized, uprooted,
homeless, unhoused, visitors, tourists, travelers, nomads and so on. Edward W. Said
writes in his influential essay "Reflections on Exile" that anyone prevented from
returning home is an exile but, unlike Simpson, who takes a holistic view of exile, Said makes distinctions among exiles, refugees, expatriates, and émigrés.

Exile originated in the age-old practice of banishment. Once banished, the exile lives an anomalous and miserable life, with the stigma of being an outsider. Refugees, on the other hand, are a creation of the twentieth-century state. The word “refugee” has become a political one, suggesting large herds of innocent and bewildered people requiring urgent international assistance, whereas “exile” carries with it, I think, a touch of solitude and spirituality. (Said, Reflections 181)

Said then writes about expatriates who “voluntarily live in an alien country, usually for personal and social reasons” (Said, Reflections 181) and gives the examples of Hemingway and Fitzgerald who were not forced to live in France. “Expatriates may share in the solitude and estrangement of exile, but they do not suffer under its rigid prescriptions” (Said, Reflections 181). About émigrés Said’s opinion is that they enjoy an ambiguous status.

Technically, an émigré is anyone who emigrates to a new country. Choice in the matter is certainly a possibility. Colonial officials, missionaries, technical experts, mercenaries, and military advisers on loan may in a sense live in exile, but they have not been banished. White settlers in Africa, parts of Asia and Australia may once have been exiles, but as pioneers and nation-builders, they lost the label “exile”. (Said, Reflections 181)

John Durham Peters takes the three terms – exile, nomadism, and diaspora – to compare the varying concepts of mobility and writes that exile suggests “pinning for home”,

diaspora suggests "networks among compatriots", and nomadism "dispenses altogether with the idea of a fixed home or center" (20). He further explains that:

Diaspora teaches the perpetual postponement of homecoming and the necessity, in the meanwhile, of living among strange lands and peoples. Nomadism, exile, and diaspora will abide as existential options, these three: but the greatest of these is diaspora. (39)

It is true that diaspora induces the notion of the necessity of living away from the so-called home, but the perpetuity of such a notion makes the longing for home more acute. That is why "diaspora does not simply refer to geographical dispersal but also to the vexed questions of identity, memory and home which such displacement produces" (Ashcroft, Empire 217 – 218). Jana Evans Braziel in the introduction to the book Theorizing Diaspora writes that "diaspora has emerged as an internal critique of the binarisms (colonizer / colonized; white / black; west / East) that circulated and found currency within colonial discourse and that persist even within some spheres of postcolonial studies" (Braziel 4). Diaspora as a major product of displacement has become the point of contention for all cultural studies. In fact, for convenience, it can be taken as a holistic term to include all kinds of displacements but "the term 'diaspora' risks losing specificity and critical merit if it is deemed to speak for all movements and migrations between nations, within nations, between cities, within cities ad infinitum" (Braziel 7). The point of contention is that odyssey, sojourn, travel, and other such displacements differ from diaspora (also migration and exile) "in that the former constitute forms of territorial conquest or 'exploration', while the latter mark lines of
The word "diaspora" is derived from Greek - dia-speirein, which means to scatter through. It is often not only a one-time dispersal, but also successive dispersals. It can be a voluntary movement or a forced movement from the place of living to a newer region. This term is generally associated with scattering en-masse like the Biblical Exodus led by Moses, but is not exclusively so. John Durham Peters writes that diaspora, as a notion, is "inescapably tied to the Hebrew Bible, ancient Greece, Christianity, and their divergent intellectual, artistic, and political afterlives" (17). The word was first used in the third century BC Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures, Septuagint, intended for the Hellenic Jewish communities living in Alexandria (Braziel 1). The word was used to describe the Jews living in exile from the homeland of Palestine. If the history of the Jews is seen it will be found that it is rather the history of plight, persecution, and repression of the Jews. That is perhaps the prime reason behind the preoccupation of the rabbinical writings with the concept of the diaspora. In fact it has been argued that the idea of diaspora is the single most important contribution of Judaism (Boyarin).

The Jews or the Hebrews originally lived in a place near the Euphrates delta called Ur from where they migrated into Egypt. When the Hyksos invaded Egypt in about 1730 BC they were helped by the Hebrews. So, when in 1567 BC Ahmose of Thebes expelled the Hyksos from northern Egypt, the Egyptians converted the Hebrews into slaves as a punishment for helping the Hyksos. Their repression continued until Moses led the exodus of the Jews across the Red Sea to Palestine, the Promised Land. But this was not the end of their sojourn. In 722 BC the Kingdom of Israel was liquidated by Assyria and
in 586 BC the Babylonians liquidated the Kingdom of Judah. In 70 AD the Romano-Jewish War led to the destruction of Jerusalem (Toynbee 530 – 31). The scattering of the Jewish diaspora continued to different parts of the European continent and later to America and Asia especially during the Second World War. The Jews found themselves everywhere in exile: from 1290 when Edward I expelled the Jews from Britain as an act of piety to 1942 when Hitler persecuted the Jews as an act to maintain the purity of the German race.

The Victorian novelist George Eliot in her book *Daniel Deronda* has dealt with the Jewish situation in Britain in the 1860s. The central character, Daniel Deronda, is a Jew whose Jewish identity was hidden from him by the instruction of his mother because she wanted him to have the identity of an English gentleman. When she reveals his Jewish identity to him, Daniel is glad of being a Jew, especially because of his experience with Mordecai, a devout Jew. But his mother is agitated at his reaction:

“Why do you say you are glad? You are an English gentleman. I secured you that.” [. . .]

“I chose for you what I would have chosen for myself. [. . .] How could I know that you would love what I hated? - if you really love to be a Jew.” (Eliot 538)

It is understandable to some extent that the mother with her experience of being a Jew was not happy with a Jewish identity. The common perception of the Jews being unscrupulous, practicing usury, having a Shylockian nature and other negative traits can be attested by the characterization of the likes of the Cohen family and Lapidoth. But there are equally characters like Mirah and Mordecai who are quite redeeming of their race. Even Daniel, before he met Mirah, was quite skeptical about the Jews.
Deronda could not escape (who can?) knowing ugly stories of Jewish characteristics and occupations; and though one of his favourite protests was against the severance of past and present history, he was like others who shared his protest, in never having cared to reach any more special conclusions about actual Jews than that they retained the virtues and vices of a long-oppressed race.

(Eliot 176)

Daniel, who is bred in the English household of Sir Hugo Mallinger, does not have a condescending attitude towards the Jews but he does have his reservations. It is only after knowing his true identity that Daniel identifies himself, not exactly with the actual Jews, but with the Jewish ideals. That he in the end eventually prepares to go to the East with Mirah and Mordecai recalls the recurrent trope of the Jewish diaspora — displacement / mobility along with the pangs of exile associated with such a condition:

In Jewish thinking, exile and diaspora are sometimes synonymous. The Hebrew terms galut and golah can be translated as both. Much in the Jewish historical experience of diaspora suggests the yearnings of exile: next year in Jerusalem!

(Peters 20)

The politics of the world often aggravates the situation. In Nazi Germany the condition of the Jews became intolerable. The displacement of the German Jewry becomes more than a mere historical fact.

In Anita Desai’s novel Baumgartner’s Bombay, Hugo Baumgartner, the German Jew, escapes from the holocaust of Hitler’s Germany by exiling himself in British India but his mother stays back in Germany. Baumgartner bears the cross of living in exile with the consolation being that his exile is a life-saving one. His mother has saved herself from
being in exile but at a grave risk to her own life. Moreover, long before Hugo has a literal 
displacement after the suicide of his father, he has experienced a displacement whereby he 
has not moved but the world around him has moved or rather changed. So, when Hugo 
has a physical displacement and migrates as a teenager to India, he already embodies an 
exilic state. It is perhaps this sense of being in exile experienced by the Jewish 
community in Germany that helped Hitler fuel his Aryan myth.

The imbalance created by the persecution of Jews in Germany makes Baumgartner 
define his self more in terms of being a Jew than as a German national. So, he is quite 
baffled when the British detain him at the internment camp in India because of his 
German passport. The camp officer is quite indifferent to the fate of refugees in Nazi 
Germany. In the camp, Baumgartner is among other Jews, yet he stays aloof because he, 
unlike others, cannot find any way “to alleviate the burden, the tedium, the emptiness of 
the waiting days”. The Second World War rendered the Jewish diaspora again nation-
less. The diasporic experiences of the Jews have made them not to rely on the myth of 
autochthony (Boyarin 90). But the Jewish community, despite outgrowing the myth of 
autochthony, still harbours a sense of displacement. In 1948, when the Syrian kingdom 
was divided with the creation of the state of Israel, a major political obstacle to the Jews’ 
return to Jerusalem was removed. Still, as John Durham Peters has pointed out: “the 
historical lack of zeal for returning to Jerusalem on the part of some Jews, grown 
comfortable in the diaspora, lifts the burden of homesickness from the notion of diaspora” (20). Actually, this reclaimed homeland of the Jews is not exactly the 
homeland of Jewish imagination fed by age-old memory of generations. Jewish identity 
is so intricately linked with the diaspora that they resist separate existence.
The Jews as a religious diaspora are very distinctive especially because of their perennial minority status. In comparison, the Christian diaspora remained a “subject minority” for hardly three hundred years after the crucifixion, and the Islamic diaspora, starting as a minority, “became a ruling minority within twenty years of the hijrah” (Toynbee 543). In course of time mass-conversions by these two religions brought them into majority in the vast regions they occupied. The Jewish religious identity was in a way further undermined and hence the continuous conscious effort to safeguard themselves as an “embattled minority” (Boyarin 107). Had the Jews not belonged to the religious tripartite of Judaism-Christianity-Islam, and had belonged to some radically different religious tripartite, for example, Hinduism-Buddhism-Jainism of ancient India, their psyche would have been certainly different.

The European diasporic movements, apart from that of the Jews, got an impetus in the form of colonialism. No doubt, the mobility shown by the Germanic tribes and later the mobility produced by the Crusades are noteworthy, but it was colonialism that made it possible for “the temporary or permanent dispersion and settlement of millions of Europeans over the entire world” (Ashcroft, Key 69). The White diaspora in the form of colonizers reached Asia, Africa, Australia, and the Americas allured by economic prospects. In due course of time the Europeans who settled in many of these colonies developed their distinctive identities and a sort of creolization took place. In today’s world Americans, Australians, Canadians, Brazilians, or South Africans will find themselves more comfortable in their current national identities than with their European diasporic identities. Unlike the Jews, they do not harbour the sense of being in a diaspora
and thus have no illusion of returning to their homeland someday. But in the case of the British in India the situation was different. As Ranajit Guha points out:

The isolation of rulers from the ruled was integral to the colonial experience in South Asia. It could hardly be otherwise considering that the raj was a dominance without hegemony – an autocracy that ruled without consent. (40)

So, the British diaspora in India was very unlike the British diasporas in Europe or even Africa. The Indian Mutiny of 1857 was a reaction against these diasporic people living amidst the Indians. The revolt was more than a mere political or military reaction towards the ruling class, since it involved in places reactionary atrocities against British women and children. Post-colonial societies have often seen such social reactions, in rather uglier forms, in race riots and ethnic cleansing.

Colonialism made the colonizers rich and in turn many colonizing countries became hotspot migration destinations. The Irish migration to England was because England had become rich and prosperous. The Scots joined England to get a share of the spoils from the British colonies. Similarly, many Polish immigrants came to England. The UK of Angles, Jutes, Saxons, Normans, and so on became a nation of nations much before the current phase of globalization. Such was the condition of France and other European nations. In fact many from the Americas came back and settled in the continent. The White diaspora’s migration pattern across Europe, the Americas, and Australia remained unhindered because of the racial propinquity of the inhabitants of these places. Their movements across the colonies in Asia and Africa were equally free because they were the rulers there. The end of colonial rule marked the return of many white people from a number of colonies to their native lands.
The diaspora of the non-white people, especially of African origin, have a radically different trajectory of formation. Unlike the Whites, the Blacks were continuously faced with a power relation. During the colonial rule the colonial rulers consciously made the natives feel inferior to them. The hegemonic treatment meted out to the Aztecs, the Incas, the Chicanos, and even to the Australian aborigines exemplify the situation. Basically, the idea of colonialism was formed on the notion of racial superiority and the imperial expansion was justified by the concept of civilizing the uncivilized. That the civilized Westerners used this justification to trade in human beings as commodity proves that the theory itself was flawed. “The movement of people across the globe in the early modern period resulted in conquests, genocides, and trade in spices, sugar, and slaves' (Braziel 2). Slave trade was one of the major phenomena by which dispersal of the Africans took place to various destinations of the world. A large number of people of Negro descent in North America, in the West Indies, and in the European countries are a product of this human trafficking.

Charles V granted a patent to a Flemish merchant in 1517 to import 4,000 black slaves per year into Hispaniola, Cuba and Jamaica. The organization of European slavery over the next three centuries has its genesis in this trading concession. It has been estimated that during 300 years of its operation, over twelve million blacks were forcibly shipped in chains across the infamous Atlantic ‘Middle Passage’ to Brazil, the Caribbean and the United States. (Ashcroft, Key 212 – 13)
A vital point to note is that these displacements produced an exilic state for the black migrants without any scope of return. So, even after slave trade and slavery were banned, the black migrants in the colonies and the plantations did not see any real scope for return. African repatriation assumed figurative rather than literal significance in such guises as Rastafarianism, with its "slave beliefs in the soul's return after death to Africa from exile in the Caribbean" (Ashcroft, Key 206), and others. This was due to the fact that the African diaspora had little knowledge of where exactly in Africa they could return to and more so because they chose to live in their adopted country, where they had their own diasporic communities and had grown used to such a life.

The Black diaspora of the old and the current migration of the Africans to the Western countries cannot be compared with each other. It is because black Americans or black Caribbeans have just a token of their African identity in their consciousness. Whereas, the newer migrants have come out from a place that is not dark as was once conceived. They have their own nationalities, they remember their own culture, and they have taken the advantage of education from their once colonial masters. They have become "the Calibans and the Fridays of the new literature" (wa Thiong'o 200). Alastair Niven remarked on concluding the Indaba conference on the African diaspora that "Africa consumes 12% of the world's publications, but produces only 2%" (Niven 8) but he does not fall short of acknowledging the contributions of the great African diasporic figures of the past. Seen in the background of political turmoil, civil unrest, and the economic condition of many countries of Africa it is encouraging to note that Africa, aided by its diaspora, has not remained a continent of mere anthropological interest. The contributions of the Black diaspora -- be they from the Caribbean, the US, or the UK -- are
immense in various fields. It is not to be forgotten that when Hitler was raving about his racial myth it was Jesse Owens who gave him a rude shock by winning the hundred metres sprint in the 1936 Berlin Olympics. Owens belonged to the black diaspora and represented USA.

The other non-white diaspora comprising of the Asians in the West had its germ of formation not exactly in the slave trade but in the indentured labour system. After the European countries banned slave trade it was this system that provided cheap labourers to the colonies. The vast Asian continent had seen both inter- and intra-continental migrations – the Huns being a prime example – but the origin of the Asian diaspora as such was a product of the indentured labour system. The workers purportedly entered into this contract voluntarily, though, often, forceful coercion was the mode of recruitment. The “girmit” colonies in Fiji, Uganda, Nigeria, Mauritius, and the Caribbean were formed by such labour migrations. The end of colonial rule marked the re-migration of many of these people for better prospects into the lands of their masters who brought them there. The end of colonialism also marked the increased migration of people from the colonies to the West – especially from the British colonies taking advantage of their Commonwealth status.

The Asian immigrants are often called the “model minority” in the UK and the US because “they are thought to bring with them values such as industriousness and commitment to family that have helped many of them to make a rather successful economic adjustment to their new circumstances” (Kivisto 147). The claim for economic success is not sweeping because, for example, not all Bangladeshis in Brick Lane or all Mirpuris in Bradford are as successful as their Indian or Chinese counterparts. Religious
fundamentalism and terrorist activities, especially in the name of Islam, are some disruptive phenomena associated with the Asian diaspora. But the Asian diaspora in the West still plays a vital part in aiding the growth of a cosmopolitan world. The Asian diaspora is continuously growing and refashioning itself by the migration of engineers, doctors, scholars, and so on. *Chicken Tikka Masala, Mississippi Masala, Ang Lee, Jet Li, Sony™, Samsung™, and many more now symbolize the West.* Moreover, writers of Asian origin living in the West – like V. S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi, Michael Ondaatje, Kazuo Ishiguro, and Gao Xingjiang – increasingly define the West.

In the field of diasporic theory the pioneering theorists like John Armstrong, William Safran, Gabriel Sheffer, Walker Conner, and others took the Jewish diaspora as the prototype of all diasporas. Safran’s *tabula* to test the conformity of a diaspora, in his essay “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return,” was based on such an assumption. Susan Koshy and R. Radhakrishnan write:

> The long shadow cast by the Jewish diaspora on diaspora studies is also evident in the pattern by which the diasporic experience that were the first to be assimilated into more expansive definitions of the term were those that closely paralleled the Jewish paradigm of forced dispersal, like the African, Armenian, and Palestinian diasporas. By contrast, other diasporas identified with largely voluntary population movements like the Lebanese, Chinese, and Indian diaspora have been overlooked until recently. (2)

But the current notion of diaspora “speaks to diverse groups of displaced persons and communities moving across the globe” (Braziel 2) and it cannot be seen in exclusivist terms. Moreover, a distinction needs to be drawn “between the pre-modern or classical
diasporas – old-world Jews, Greeks, Parsis and Armenians – and the large-scale dispersal of significant ethnic clusters [. . .] witnessed in the time of late modernity” (Mishra, *Diaspora* 135). In fact, since the South Asian diaspora has seen so much migration since the Second World War, the South Asian diaspora itself has been divided into two phases – the old and the new diaspora “by designating one as a subaltern diaspora and the other as an elite diaspora” (Koshy 7) respectively.

The study of the South Asian diaspora, which comprises the Indian subcontinental diaspora, is often said to be “under-theorized, even though the South Asian diaspora is one of the oldest, largest, and most geographically diverse” (Koshy 2). The peculiarity of this diaspora is that,

Contrary to the tenets of diaspora theory which holds that a strong and active myth of return is a precondition of a strong diaspora, in the South Asian case the opposite can be just as true – a weak myth of return can coexist with and, indeed, foster a strong diaspora. (Koshy 7)

But the diversity within South Asia and within the Indian subcontinent itself is such that the diaspora they form is often not seen as a unit.

They have fashioned no single South Asian identity in the diaspora. Their very diverse origins mean that in their new homes they possess a whole range of identities which mark them off from each other – those of national and regional origin, of language, religion and socio-economic status. (Brown 111)

Susan Koshy and R. Radhakrishnan say that “it is only over the last three decades, with the creation of a transnational public sphere through music, film, fashion, cuisine, literature, and the internet, that the consciousness of being a diaspora of South Asians has
emerged" (9). It is very cogent because the diaspora is said to be a work in progress –
“the phenomenon of migration and of creating a diaspora is not a single event, not just a
matter of making the journey. It is an ongoing process that continues long after stepping
off a boat or plane in a new country” (Brown 60). Judith Brown rightly says that –

It takes courage, energy, a vision of broader horizons and an awareness of the
positive potential of change, and often connections, information and some
material resources, to make the decision to move thousands of miles, to uproot
oneself and often one’s family. (30)

It is this fortitude that has characterized all the diasporas and has sustained them over
time and often in adversity.

The Indian Diaspora and its Literature

The Indian diaspora has been formed by a scattering of population and not, in the
Jewish sense, an exodus of population at a particular point of time. William Safran
regards the Indian diaspora as “a ‘genuine one’ in that it is tri-continental, has an
extended history, plays ‘an auxiliary (or middleman) role within host societies’ and tends
to be ‘integrationist’ as well as ‘particularist’” (Mishra, Diaspora 40-41) but not fully.

None the less, it falls short of the norm because ‘an Indian homeland has existed
continuously’ [. . .] the ‘homeland myth is not particularly operative where the
Indian diaspora is in the majority (as in Fiji) or where it constitutes a large, well-
established, and sometimes dominant minority (as in Trinidad and Tobago, Nepal,
Guyana, and Sri Lanka)’. (Mishra, Diaspora 41)
Robin Cohen in his book *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* proposes different groups to categorize diasporas: victim, labour, trade, imperial and cultural. The Indian diaspora is seen as labour diaspora but Cohen also points out –

It is important to emphasize at the outset that I am not suggesting a perfect match between a particular ethnic group and a specific type of diaspora. [...] While they [Indians] are regarded as archetypes of a labour diaspora, they also have an important mercantile history. (Mishra, *Diaspora* 46)

The sporadic migration of Indians traces a steady pattern if a telescopic view is taken over a period of time: from the indentured labourers of the past to the IT technocrats of the present day.

Starting from 1641, Indians were taken as slaves by the Dutch and later the French to the Indian Ocean islands of Mauritius and Reunion. (Koshy 19)

About 1.5 million people left India under this system [indentured labour] between 1834 and its ending in 1917, with the largest numbers going to Mauritius, British Guiana, Natal and Trinidad. (Brown 30)

The relaxation of immigration controls since the 1960s in the US, Canada and Australia – especially the decision to allow more professionals – has proved to be a turning point in migration from India. (Singh 6)

The 1970s also marked the beginnings of temporary migrations to the Middle East from India. (Koshy 19-20)

Sudesh Mishra in his essay "From Sugar to Masala" divides the Indian diaspora into two categories -- the old and the new. He writes that:
This distinction is between, on the one hand, the semi-voluntary flight of indentured peasants to non-metropolitan plantation colonies such as Fiji, Trinidad, Mauritius, South Africa, Malaysia, Surinam, and Guyana, roughly between the years 1830 and 1917; and the other the late capital or postmodern dispersal of new migrants of all classes to thriving metropolitan centres such as Australia, the United States, Canada, and Britain. (276)

Mishra gives a perspective on the two divisions of the Indian diaspora on the basis of economics-driven theorization contrasting colonial and transnational practices:

Plantation capital is linked to the colonial practices of technologically privileged European nation-states in the nineteen and early twentieth centuries, while advanced capital is seen in terms of the global instability of markets and nation-states. It is also characterized by non-peasant forms of deterritorialization. The exclusivist practices of the agrarian migrants of the indenture period (1834-1920) are hitched to the logic of a modernity driven by colonial modes of industrial agriculture, whereas the border or hybrid practices of postwar migrants to the various urban centres are indicative of a transnational world. (Diaspora 136)

Vinay Dharwadker in the section titled “The Dominance of the Diaspora” from his essay “Formation of Indian-English Literature” writes that “since the late eighteenth century, Indians have migrated steadily to most parts of the globe so that at the beginning of the twenty-first century there are more than ten million people from India or of Indian origin in more than 130 countries” (256).

As Bhikhu Parekh has pointed out, it is a myth that Indians have been reluctant to travel overseas. In fact, a good part of their history has been enacted outside of
India as they have traversed the world through the centuries. Buddhist missionaries to South and South East Asia, the travelers to East Africa, the indentured labour to different parts of the British Empire, and the recent employment in the Gulf countries, together with the economic migration to the industrialized developed West have composed the scenario. (Sharma 111)

The Indian diaspora has also been quite resilient. This characteristic can be seen in many facets of the Indian diaspora from America to Africa.

By 1890 the size of the Indian community there [California] was nearly 72,500. [. . .] As all immigration from Asia was stopped in 1917, and Indians were denied citizenship and therefore the right to own land from 1923, they had to adapt to a very hard situation, often by marrying local women, mainly Hispanics, as local laws forbade marriage to white women. [. . .] Despite these problems Indians struck deep roots in California and became known as good farmers and reliable neighbours. (Brown 38-39)

In East Africa when ethnic cleansing forced the Indians to re-migrate, most Indians migrated further to England and the US rather than coming back to India. “By the end of the century Indians whose origins lay in East Africa accounted for about one-third of the total UK Indian population” (Brown 71). The crux of Indian diasporic community is the Indian family life. But, as Judith Brown writes,

At one stage social observers predicted a crisis for South Asian family life and the erosion of cultural norms because of the growth of the diaspora-born population, and portrayed young South Asians as caught between ‘two cultures’. However, this is now evidently a far too simple set of assumptions. Despite tension and
occasional breakdowns it is clear that many parents are adapting and modifying their views on key issues.  (Brown 92)

These instances have negated the belief that South Asian diaspora, and especially the Indian diaspora, is rigid and resistant to adaptation. What has become a matter of concern, and again contrary to scholars' belief “that religion would increasingly become a private matter in a context of the continuing secularism of public life” (Brown 177), is the fact “that religious pluralism is in many places a very public rather than a private matter, and of increasing public and political concern” (Brown 177). Thus the Indian diaspora forms a ripe study of a conglomerate of external political forces and internal community dynamics and their inter-relations.

The vast Indian diaspora has a veritable presence in the world and is conspicuous not only because of its size but also by its achievements. Names like Har Gobind Khorana, S. Chandrashekhar, and V. Ramakrishnan in the field of science, Amartya Sen, Homi K. Bhabha, and Meghnad Desai in academics, V. S. Naipaul and Salman Rushdie in literature, Laxmi Mittal and Amar Gopal Bose in entrepreneurship, Manoj Night Shyamalan and Mira Nair in films, Zubin Mehta in music, Anish Kapoor in sculptural art, and many others are well recognized in the world. According to Amitav Ghosh, “the modern Indian diaspora – the huge migration from the subcontinent that began in the mid-nineteenth century – is not merely one of the most important demographic dislocations of modern times: it now represents an important force in world culture” (243). Especially after Indian independence the Indian diaspora has taken wings and the community has acquired a new identity due to the mutual processes of self-fashioning and increasing acceptance by the West.
It is interesting to note that the history of diasporic Indian writing is as old as the diaspora itself. In fact the first Indian writing in English is credited to Dean Mahomed, who was born in Patna, India, and after working for fifteen years in the Bengal Army of the British East India Company, migrated to “eighteenth century Ireland, and then to England” (A. Kumar xx) in 1784. His book *The Travels of Dean Mahomet* was published in 1794. It predates by about forty years the first English text written by an Indian residing in India, Kylas Chunder Dutt’s “imaginary history” *A Journal of Forty-Eight Hours of the Year 1945* published in 1835 (ref. Mehrotra 95). The first Indian English novel, Bankimchandra Chatterjee’s *Rajmohan’s Wife*, was to be published much later in 1864. It shows that the contribution of the Indian diaspora to Indian writing in English is not new. The descendants of the Indian indentured labourers in the so called “girmit colonies” have predominantly favoured writing in English, the lingua franca of the world. The likes of Seepersad Naipaul and later Shiva Naipaul, V. S. Naipaul, Cyril Dabydeen, David Dabydeen, Sam Selvon, M. G. Vassanji, Subramani, K. S. Maniam, Shani Muthoo, and Marina Budhos are significant contributors in that field.

V. S. Naipaul’s characters, like Mohun Biswas from *A House for Mr. Biswas* or Ganesh Ramsumair from *The Mystic Masseur*, are examples of individuals who are generations away from their original homeland, India, but their heritage gives them a consciousness of their past. They become itinerant specimen of the outsider, the unhoused, for the world to see. Their attempts at fixity are continuously challenged by the contingency of their restless existence – a condition grown out of their forefathers’ migration, albeit within the Empire, from India to Trinidad. Naipaul’s characters are not governed by actual dislocation but by an inherited memory of dislocation. For them their
homeland India is not a geographical space but a construct of imagination. Their predicament can be explained in Rushdie's words: "the past is a country from which we have all emigrated, that its loss is part of our common humanity" (12).

The word "India" denotes not only a geographical space — it is a concept, it is a shared history, it is a shared culture, and it is a term of emotional attachment. Thus when the diaspora links with India it does so in more ways than one. According to Amitav Ghosh:

The links between India and her diaspora are lived within the imagination. (247)

The symbolic spatial structure of India is infinitely reproducible. It can be encapsulated in a microcosm [...] and it can be exported wholesale to be reproduced in other countries. (248)

The place, India, becomes in fact an empty space, mapped purely by words. (249)

Anybody anywhere who has even the most tenuous links with India is Indian; potentially a player within the culture. The mother country simply does not have the cultural means to cut them off. (250)

According to Salman Rushdie:

This word 'Indian' is getting to be a pretty scattered concept. The Indian writers in England include political exiles, first generation migrants, affluent expatriates whose residence here is frequently temporary, naturalized Britons, and people born here who may never have laid eyes on the subcontinent. (17)

And according to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak:

'India', for people like me, is not really a place with which they can form a national identity because it has always been an artificial construct. 'India' is a bit like saying 'Europe'. (Quoted in Parker 15)
What these assertions point out is that the terms “India” and “Indian” are terms of endearment, terms of self-fashioning – to assert that one belongs and is not rootless.

The idea of India as a nation was an indirect effect of colonial rule and the idea was nurtured not only within the colonial boundaries of India but also “in the greater India of the diaspora” (Paranjape 234). Makarand Paranjape points out that “Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi became a Mahatma not in India, but among the indentured labourers whose rights and dignity he fought for in distant South Africa” (234). Thus it is seen that it is not always the homeland that creates the diaspora but the diaspora also fashions the homeland. Paranjape explains that “a nation needs a diaspora to reaffirm its own sense of rootedness, while the migrant who did not feel like an Indian in India may suddenly discover his Indianness as a diasporan” (233). The novels of the older generation of diasporic Indian writers like Raja Rao, G. V. Desani, Santha Rama Rau, Balachandra Rajan, Nirad Chaudhuri, and Ved Mehta predominantly look back at India and rarely record their experiences away from India as expatriates. It is as if these writers have discovered their Indianness when they are out of India. Obviously they have the advantage of looking at their homeland from the outside. In an interview with Nikhil Padgaonkar for Doordarshan, Edward W. Said reflected thus:

I think that if one is an intellectual, one has to exile oneself from what has been given to you, what is customary, and to see it from a point of view that looks at it as if it were something that is provisional and foreign to oneself. That allows for independence – commitment – but independence and a certain kind of detachment. (Said, Interview 13)
The detachment afforded by distancing is necessary to have a clear perception of one’s native land. The Indian-English writers, notably, Raja Rao became an expatriate even before the independence of the country; G. V. Desani was born in Kenya and lived in England, India, and USA; and Kamala Markandaya married an Englishman and lived in Britain (ref. Mehrotra 180, 186, 226). Nirad C. Chaudhuri preferred the English shores because his views were not readily accepted in India. Through their writing, the diasporic Indian writers help to define India.

According to Vinay Dharwadker, “the diaspora has perceptibly modified the four primary zones of contact that have provided a social framework for Indian-English literary culture” (254). The four zones of contact that he identifies are the zone of employment, the zone of marriage and family, the zone of religious conversion, and the zone of intercultural friendship and social relations. The modern Indian diaspora is not identified by the indentured labourers of the past but by professionals holding white-collar jobs. There are little impediments to interracial or intercultural marriages. The modern Indian diasporic community is made of varied religious backgrounds and they do not need religious conversion to identify themselves. The change in the attitude of the West towards migrants has contributed a lot in ushering in globalization that promotes intercultural friendship and social relations. The race relations acts and legislation to wipe out racial discriminations have made Westerners more accepting and accommodating toward the Indians living among them. The world as a global village is both multi-ethnic and multi-cultural and so Indians have to compromise neither their ethnicity nor their cultural values to belong to the cosmopolitan society of the modern world. In fact Indian festivals and diasporic gatherings are increasingly getting highlighted in the West. Just as
Indians celebrate Christmas with Westerners, Westerners are also willing to join in celebrating Diwali with the Indians. The diasporic Indians in the West, because of their economic prosperity, high educational qualifications, and eminent social status, are seen as valued contributors in the progress of their adopted countries. It is precisely because of these very reasons that the native country, India, also welcomes these diasporic Indians.

Immediately after Indian independence, though, this was not the case. India “constituted its own citizenship, but did not extend this to Indians overseas and encouraged Indians in the diaspora to take the citizenship of the countries where they lived” (Brown 116). According to Gurharpal Singh,

> After 1947 the indifference of the Nehruvian state to the plight of overseas Indians, despite the general enthusiasm with which the latter had greeted the arrival of independence, gave currency to the assumption that the future of overseas Indians lay in negotiating an equipoise with the host nation-state. (5)

But there has been a change and since “the late 1980s the limited patterns of exchange between the various settled communities of the Indian diaspora and India have been dramatically transformed in volume and content” (Singh 5). Post the economic liberalization of 1991, diasporic Indians have “played an active role in foreign direct investment in India” (Singh 1). The Indian government now acknowledges the importance of the diasporic Indians by providing them non-resident Indian or NRI status and thinking of according them dual citizenship. NRIs are wooed not necessarily to come back to India but to contribute substantially towards its prosperity. The government every year, to mark Mahatma Gandhi’s return from South Africa, celebrates on 9th January “Prabasi Bharatiya Diwas”. Such celebrations keep refreshing the link between the
diaspora and the country of its origin. The “Prabasi Banga Sammelan”, a three day festival of Bengalis in North America, held every year at Houston in early July for the past twenty-five years, is of late getting media coverage in India. This is because Indians in India are also interested to know about the country’s prosperous diasporic community and keeping in touch with them. It strengthens the assertion that India is “constituted as much by the notion of the periphery as [. . .] by the notion of the centre” (Ghosh 250). It is also an implicit admission of the fact that the global migrant stands as the defining image of the age.

The status of eminence that the Indian diasporic community enjoys in the international arena is no longer a fiction. A couple of recent news anecdotes each about Indians in the US and Indians in the UK will help to prove the point. The Calcutta edition of *The Telegraph* reports on 9th June 2004:

> Indian immigrants have the highest life expectancy among California residents, exceeding even the state average [. . .] Among the 19 ethnic groups studied, Indians had the highest life expectancy of 84.3 years. (6)

It reports on 18th April 2005:

> Indian American parents launched a campaign to change the way their history is taught in Fairfax, the nation’s 12th-largest school system. Their lobbying has prompted school officials to rethink presentations of India and Hinduism in classrooms and has sparked efforts to develop a more sophisticated and thoughtful curriculum. (7)

It reports on 23rd April 2005:
Calling someone an "immigrant" can be racially insulting, the Appeal Court in Britain ruled today, in the case of a woman patient who called her Indian general practitioner "an immigrant doctor." (8)

And it reports on 1st September 2005:

British Asians make up 4 per cent of the population of the UK, but contribute £103 billion to the economy — about 10 per cent of the country's entire economic output. (Backpage)

Moreover, and not surprisingly, in the West "by the last two decades of the century, Indian men were earning more than their white counterparts, as were Indian women" (Brown 73). It is therefore quite understandable that writers belonging to this milieu of displaced population have a sense of pre-eminence as litterateurs. Makarand Paranjape notes "that instead of worshipping the leftovers and relics of a now inaccessible homeland as the old diaspora of indentured labourers did, the new diaspora of international Indian English writers live close to their market, in the comforts of the suburbia of advanced capital but draw their raw material from the inexhaustible imaginative resources of that messy and disorderly subcontinent that is India" (252). These writers record their away from India experiences and even if they look back at their homeland it is often in an elegiac tone rather than with nostalgia. Paranjape explicates this point in considering the novels of Rohinton Mistry (251). Ultimately what is happening is that Indian writers in the West are increasingly identifying themselves with the literary tradition of the migrant writers of the world. Rushdie says that "Swift, Conrad, Marx [and even Melville, Hemingway, Bellow] are as much our literary forebears as Tagore or Ram Mohan Roy" (20).
Colonial and post-colonial India are divisions that are now more relevant to a historian than a litterateur because Indian-English literature has transcended the barriers of petty classifications and has become amalgamated with mainstream English literature. A major contribution in this regard has been that of the Indian writers, like Rushdie and Naipaul, who live as world citizens. Indian-English writers like Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Shashi Tharoor, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Sunetra Gupta, Rohinton Mistry, Jhumpa Lehiri, and Hari Kunzru have all made their names while residing abroad. The non-resident Indian writers have explored their sense of displacement poignantly by dealing not only with a geographical dislocation but also with a socio-cultural sense of displacement.

The diasporic Indian writers can be grouped into two distinct classes. One class comprises those who have spent a part of their life in India and have carried the baggage of their native land offshore. The other class comprises those who have been bred since childhood outside India. They have had a view of their country only from the outside as an exotic place of their origin. The writers of the former group have a literal displacement whereas those belonging to the latter group find themselves rootless. These two groups of writers do not experience something extraordinary that is alien to the other migrants from South Asia.

Among the first generation of migrants there was often a persistent sense of the subcontinent as home, a feeling of loss and a wish to return some day, even though this became less of a practical reality as people put down social roots and grew older in their new homes. But among those born abroad in the diaspora there is a clear sense of the place of birth and residence as home in a practical and
affective sense, the place where they go about their daily business of work and play, where they make friendship and in turn raise their own families, the place whose language is the one which they find their most natural means of communication, the environment in which they wish to succeed. (Brown 179)

The writers give voice to these predicaments. They show how the South Asians “in the diaspora often think of themselves in composite and multiple terms, reflecting that experience of having more than one source of personal origin or means of self-identification” (Brown 179). Both the groups of writers have produced an enviable corpus of English literature. These writers while depicting migrant characters in their fiction explore the theme of displacement and self-fashioning. The diasporic Indian writers’ depiction of dislocated characters gains immense importance if seen against the geo-political background of the vast Indian subcontinent. That is precisely why such works have a global readership and an enduring appeal. The diasporic Indian writers have generally dealt with characters from their own displaced community but some of them have also taken a liking for Western characters and they have been convincing in dealing with them. Two of Vikram Seth’s novels *The Golden Gate* and *An Equal Music* have as their subjects exclusively the lives of Americans and Europeans respectively.

Two of the earliest novels that have successfully depicted diasporic Indian characters are Anita Desai’s *Bye-Bye Blackbird* and Kamala Markandaya’s *The Nowhere Man*. These novels depict how racial prejudice against Indians in the UK of the 1960s alienates the characters and aggravate their sense of displacement. Bharati Mukherjee’s novels like *Wife* and *Jasmine* depict Indians in the US – the land of immigrants, both legal and illegal – before globalization got its impetus. Salman Rushdie in the novel *The Satanic Verses*
approaches the allegory of migration by adopting the technique of magic realism. The physical transformation of Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha after their fall from the bursting jumbo jet on the English Channel is symbolic of the self-fashioning that immigrants have to undergo in their adopted country. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni in her novel *The Mistress of Spices* depicts Tilo, the protagonist, as an exotic character to bring out the migrant’s angst. Amitav Ghosh’s novel *The Shadow Lines* has the character Ila whose father is a roaming diplomat and whose upbringing has been totally on foreign soils. She finds herself as much out of place in India as any foreigner. But when she conjures up the story of her doppelganger Magda being rescued by Nick Price from Denise, it shows the extent of her sense of rootlessness. Amit Chaudhuri in his novel *Afternoon Raag* portrays the lives of Indian students in Oxford. Similarly, Anita Desai in the second part of her novel *Fasting, Feasting* depicts Arun as a migrant student living in the suburbs of Massachusetts. The important point to note is that in a cosmopolitan world one cannot literally be a cultural and social outsider in a foreign land. There are advantages of living as a migrant — the privilege of having a double perspective, of being able to experience diverse cultural mores, of getting the leverage provided by the networking within the diasporic community, and more. But it is often these advantages that make diasporic Indians, especially of the second generation, encounter the predicament of dual identities. Such ambivalence produces existential angst in their psychology. The world simply refuses to become less complex.

The diasporic Indian writers of the first generation have already established their credentials by winning numerous literary awards and honours. But recently the ranks of the second generation of Indian writers in the West have swelled enormously and many
among them have won international recognition. Meera Syal, who was born in England, has successfully represented the lives of first generation as well as second generation non-resident Indians in the West in her novels *Anita and Me* and *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee*. Hari Kunzru in his novel *Transmission* traces a part of the lives of three diverse characters Leela Zahir, an actress, Arjun Mehta, a computer expert, and Guy Swift, a marketing executive - traversing through Bollywood, the Silicon Valley, and London. Hari Kunzru refused the John Llewelyn Prize in 2004 for his novel *The Impressionist* because the prize was sponsored by *Mail on Sunday*, which has an acerbic editorial line against migrants. Sunetra Gupta has shown with candor both the unpleasantness and the pleasantness of intercultural relationships through characters like Moni and Niharika from her novels *Memories of Rain* and *A Sin of Colour*. Jhumpa Lahiri’s book of short stories *Interpreter of Maladies* and her novel *The Namesake* convincingly illustrate the lives of both first generation and second generation Indian migrants in the US.

It is interesting to note that many of these diasporic Indian writers of the second generation have found their literary heritage in the Indian literary tradition in addition to the tradition of Western literature. Lahiri’s works have been compared with the works of Ashapurna Debi, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, and Rabindranath Tagore (Das 76). Similarly, Sunetra Gupta’s works have been linked with the works of Bibhuti Bhushan Bandhopadhyay, Jibanananda Das, and Rabindranath Tagore (Chaudhuri 582). This is possible because big issues like religious intolerance and racial discrimination are no longer the main concern of these writers. What matters now in the current world are the small things. Little, unacknowledged things gain enormous importance in changed circumstances. It is here that the differing reactions by Indian, Western, and diasporic
characters towards similar situations are found to differ only superficially. It demonstrates that the inner needs of all human beings are the same. Alienation is a part of the experience of the Indian diaspora and even if people are at home in any part of the world it does not mean that they will not become victims of the sense of alienation. Increasing acceptance into the host society does not indicate that the diasporic characters can feel at home. Social alienation is replaced by metaphysical alienation.