Introduction
Constructing Diasporic Identity

Diaspora studies has emerged as a natural extension of the postcolonial theories of the 1980s and 1990s. Most of the early postcolonial theories have been based on the notions of resistance: on the struggle of the colonized to preserve or revitalize their indigenous culture in the face of imperial hegemony. So postcolonial studies incorporates discourses of colonial oppression and native resistance. Since the colonial past lingers as a historical burden on the former colonial subjects, much of their creative energies has been spent to decolonize their minds. They find it essential to construct a postcolonial identity to experience complete autonomy and freedom as a cultural community with an essentially hybrid identity.

Industrial revolution resulted in the expansion of trade and commerce. This led to the expansion of the empire and the creation of colonies. Large-scale migration began with colonization. Early migration was by the colonizers from the centre of the Empire to the peripheries. Since most of the European nations were colonizers, there was an exodus from Europe to the other continents. As the empires declined and new nation states emerged, a counter-migration began. The recently liberated colonized former subjects of the developed colonial centres, began to migrate to the lands of their oppressors. This flow gradually expanded to encompass a global migration of people from the developing countries of the east to the developed countries of the west. This swelling global migration has led to the rapid growth of new diasporas in the west.

Recent postcolonial literature, criticism and theory have been animated by the experiences of migrancy and living in a diaspora. The literature produced by “diaspora writers” has proved to be very popular in western literary criticism. The new nation-state and its mainstream literature have attempted to define identity by fixing categories of race, ethnicity, class, gender and geography, and thereby creating culturally homogeneous entities rooted in geopolitical sites.

Diaspora writing resists this type of categorization and provides an alternative, an impetus based on flux and fluid subjectivity. It constructs a hybrid identity evolved from the problematic space of “in-betweenness” where the native culture and the host culture intersect. New possibilities and problems engendered by the experiences of migrancy and diaspora life have been studied by academics like Homi K. Bhabha, Avtar Brah, Rey Chow, Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, Vijay Mishra, Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak and Robin Cohen among others. Studies of diaspora theorists reveal how the conflicted territories of centre-periphery, citizen-stranger, pure-hybrid and subject-object, intersect and collide at diasporic intersections. These binaries also carry with them traces of their past configurations. Their affiliations with poststructuralism, postmodernism and postcolonialism add still greater complexity to the already multi-accented term of “diaspora.” In their introduction to Theorizing Diaspora, Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur caution against the uncritical use of the term diaspora. They emphasize the