Preface

The proposed project undertakes to analyse some select expatriate writings and interpret them in terms of the images of India portrayed in them.

The word 'diaspora' goes to its Greek root which means to 'sow, scatter, disperse'. The term which gradually began to be applied in diasporic communities in Europe and America, such as Armenians and America spilled over in discourses dealing with the immigrant, the expatriate, the refugee, the guest worker, the exile and so on. However Indian diaspora as a metonymy has been seen as a powerful source for the hermeneutics of the liminal, the border of culture, the inassimilable, and the margin. The hybrid and hyphenated identities of the expatriate writers have compelled them to write and assert their voice in the literary world.

Out of the many who belong to the tribe of expatriate writing, Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, Bharati Mukherjee and Gita Mehta have portrayed many perspectives of India for the readers. The images of India that have emerged in their works show that the writers have revived their emotional and cultural bonds with their motherland. In an attempt to interpret India to the western audience or in a more personal effort to answer their questions and misgivings and clarify to themselves what India means to them or what they have imbibed and understood of India, these expatriate writers have depicted images of Indian society, history, tradition culture and civilization. By making frequent jaunts to India they have relived the Indian experience of life, all its paradoxes and after going back to their western homes have churned out many novels and stories for the avid readers.

The present project addresses itself to isolation of these images and analyse them in terms of the cleft-psyche of expatriate writers.
The thesis has been divided into six chapters. Chapter one is purely historical in nature. It attempts to study briefly the story of migration of Indians to other countries, some as indentured labour force during the British rule, and some as British passport holders opting to live away from India. This Historical survey covers the whole gamut of migration of Indians to various countries in the west and in Asia. Being purely historical in nature this chapter does not claim to have taken much of indepth research. But as an introduction it serves a purpose.

In the chapter two the nature of the expatriate in terms of his cultural and emotional compulsions is discussed. An attempt has been made to study expatriate psyche torn between the nostalgic memories and longings between the mother country and the host country and his love for comforts offered by an opulent society with a high degree of advancement in science and technology. There is always a feeling that haunts any expatriate of being rootless, whether he is in India or outside. Some of them left India some two to three generations back yet others flew off with various charms extended by the opulent society, or the matrimony that landed them in a foreign land.

Chapter three is designated to discuss the glory of India of the past and present portrayed in some selected novels of Gita Mehta, Bharati Mukherjee and Salman Rushdie. I have analyzed the areas where there novelists have uncritically admired everything that’s Indian, presumably out of their patriotic sentiments. India had always been a place that has drawn lot of reverence from writers, intellectuals and scholars from all over the world. Forster could see hundreds of India after he wrote A Passage to India.
Chapter four studies the negative images of India that are portrayed in V.S. Naipaul’s novel and in some of the works of Salman Rushdie. The expatriate writers sometimes describe with ghoulish glee the poverty, the squalor, dirt, corruption and communal hatred, caste barriers which have been the curse of Indian society. While one appreciates the candidness with which they present the dark side of the country, an effort will be made to examine the motives behind such negative attitudes.

The fifth chapter discusses that a vast country like India with a long tradition and multidimensional culture and innumerable languages and ways of life, superstitions, sartorial culinary habits cannot be put into the strait jacket of absolute terms, like good and bad, glory and ugliness. There are many grey areas which do not fit into the frame work of good and bad of the expatriate vision of India. It’s perhaps this grey area of life in India that is closer to the truthful understanding of the country. Expatriate writers have not entirely excluded this area of life from their works. The present chapter deals with such areas of life which are realistic but not ugly or glorious. Perhaps the common man comes into the picture in this area. So some of the works which deal with this aspect of Indian life are subjected to analysis and interpretation in this chapter. To speak about India in any novel in totality or just in few pages would require some exceptional qualities of precision or else its runs the risk of becoming irrelevant. Especially it becomes controversial when it has been dealt by an expatriate.

Chapter six is conclusive in its nature drawing on the interpretation of the various chapters. It also examines the expatriate attitude and his, creative art which influence each other; how sometimes his preconceived attitude, construct can define the nature of his art. The expatriate creative art and his intellectual attitudes melt in this chapter.