Chapter I

Multiculturalism: An Accommodative Philosophy

The study of culture enables to understand the aspects of multiculturalism. Culture is revealed as the pure nature of people in a society. It is socially constructed with the reality and existence of life. Anthropomorphically, it is a valuable stimulus highly necessary for the social and linguistic constructedness of reality. It is regarded honourable, admirable, and a fundamental discourse for prevailing the credulity in the wisdom of the ages. It defines the belief, practice and habit of the people in a society that solves the ‘anthropocentric’ problems. It functions like an ecology that favours the ‘social ecologists’ to reform and rectify the areas of gender, race and class. Often it is taken as central to social sciences like sociology, psychology, politics, geography and the study of crime. The study of culture helps to understand and examine our approach to social life and interdisciplinary analysis. Culture establishes national and individual identity, and evaluates human life and society. In social reality culture provides potential opportunities for the evolution of a society. Culture vaguely points out to a variety of ‘capabilities and habits’ (Grenblatt 478) adopted by human beings. It encompasses all that human beings have and do to produce, relate to each other and adapt to the physical environment. Culture is the set of learned behaviours and ideas including beliefs, customs, values, morals, art, laws and ideas that are characteristics of a particular society.

The world culture comes from the Latin ‘cultura’, ‘a cultivating’ which has acquired a whole hum of meanings, and a whole sum of resonances in its passage through the ages. One of the oldest definitions of culture was given by the British anthropologist Sir Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917) in the opening lines of his book
Primitive Culture (1871): “Culture...is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, music, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Tylor 1). The lexical meaning of culture acknowledges the original meaning as ‘one whose language and customs differ from the speakers.’ Later on by extension and analogy it meant the cultivation of human beings. In its broadest sense it inherits values, visions, beliefs and ideas that create and sustain a community of shared interest and social action. In its limited sense culture means the manners and morals, and the taste of a people at a particular moment of time. Originally, it means the cultivation of organic materials. In the humanities the term tends to denote the arts; in social sciences it denotes the way of life of a people. In general, culture has been conceptualised as constituted world views, belief systems, aesthetic expression and other ideational phenomenon and as a relatively autonomous social process.

Historically, the study of culture as a separate and distinct realm, with its own specific properties was closely linked to philosophy and anthropology. By 1800 the word signalled the transition from nascent industrialization to capitalism and modernity. At the end of the eighteenth century culture was largely identified with the idea of civilization with holistic concepts such as world views. During the nineteenth century culture increasingly became intellectualised, identified with habits of mind and human values, defined idealistically in terms of ‘high’ rather than ‘low’ or ordinary culture. The nineteenth century writer and poet Mathew Arnold has taken an iconic status of the word culture when he described it as “the best that has been said and thought in the world” (Arnold 6). Subsequently, the idea of cultivation was broadened to encompass the human mind or spirit. This gives rise to the idea of the
cultivated or cultured person. Gradually people begin to think themselves cultured when they ‘get on’ in life.

Arnold in his *Culture and Anarchy* defines culture as a body of creative work which embodies high moral values. In his definition “reading, observing and thinking” are said to be the means towards moral perfection and social good. He was interested in two ideals—the avoidance of unbridled social conflict and the preservation of the best values of existing society. Arnold’s vision of the essential universality of culture is praiseworthy about hybridization of the arts and of identity itself. The need for dominant powers to adopt subordinate cultures is an issue as much of our time as Arnold’s also.

During the nineteenth century, a more anthropological definition of culture emerged. Culture was understood to be a ‘whole way of life.’ This understanding of culture emphasised ‘lived experiences’. It is within this definition that British Cultural Studies has its discursive and mythological origins. It was in the nineteenth century that the term culture was commonly used as a synonym for western civilization. The British anthropologist Sir Edward Burnett Tylor popularised the idea that all society pass through development stages, beginning with ‘savagery’ and pressing ‘barbarism’ and culminating in western civilization. From Tylor’s idea we can assume that western cultures beginning with ancient Greece, and their own way of life was superior. During the nineteenth century there was a great necessity to study the multiplicity of cultures with imposing the belief that western culture was the ultimate goal. In fact this was the concept of studying culture during this century. Later on during the later part of the twentieth century, the dominant definition of looking at culture was ‘us’ versus ‘them’. Every culture has certain characteristics and continuity
in the history of human civilization. No culture is static and every culture is in a state of flux in its continuity over the centuries.

The study of culture has made its presence in academic work as Cultural Studies within the arts, the humanities, the social sciences and even science and technology. Cultural studies appear to be everywhere over a range of practices. It has become a major area of interest during the rise of the nineteenth century and in the first half of the twentieth century. The cultural turn in literary studies became popular after the Second World War when the Birmingham University Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) started developing it as an area of study. Since then, the works done at the centre have acquired a mythological status in the field. The works like Richard Hoggart’s *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), Raymond Williams’ *Culture and Society* (1958), and E.P.Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working Class* (1968) are associated with CCCS and are regarded as the foundational texts of Cultural Studies. Raymond Williams stresses that culture is the “habit of mind; the state of intellectual development of a whole society; the arts; and the whole way of life of a group of people” (Williams 16). Culture is traditional and creative, and a whole way of life and community. It often becomes a consumable item to sustain life. The study of culture is the study of relationship between all the elements that contribute to a way of life. In a particular social and historical context culture endorses the public consciousness of the intellectuals and celebrates the quality of life of the middle and upper classes.

Culture is emotionally and nostalgically associated with an individual’s sense of identity and belonging. Each culture has its own distinctive characteristics that separate each from other. A person’s identity is known through his culture. A person has many beliefs and desires but any set of beliefs and desires can not
constitute the identity of a person. For a person’s identity the ‘beliefs and desires’ should be an ‘enduring’ one because it is the ‘enduring beliefs and desires’ which people persistently hold and strive to realise which is crucial for identity. Rajeev Bhargava rightly remarks:

What is relevant to a person’s identity is what he values strongly. The identity of a person is defined not by an odd set of beliefs but by only those hold firmly, with good reason, and by values that can’t be reduced to mere desires, and are judged by him or her to be more important than unevaluated desires. Only those beliefs and desires that a person strongly values finds worthy are crucial to his or her identity (81-82).

The identity of a person is a matter of social construct. Many of these enduring beliefs and practices are embedded in social practices which are practiced by a community. A person’s identity is known through his culture. Culture is not only the way we do things but also defines our attitudes, thoughts, expectations, goals and values. It is the set of rules of our society---the norms that tell us what is and what is not acceptable in society.

Contemporary cultural theorists like Stephen Greenblatt defines culture “as an ensemble of beliefs and practices” (225) or “the forms through which people make sense of their lives” (Rosaldo 26). Culture has never been static, constrained and homogenous. Culture does not have rigid borders. On the contrary they are porous to multiple influences, and changes that are happening at an accelerated speed with cultural information and migration across the borders. The totality of life includes not just what people do, but how they commonly think and feel. When people become
aware that other people have different feelings, different beliefs and different habits from theirs then only they become aware that their culture is different from other people although they live in the same territory of a nation. When they compare themselves with other people in a different society then they become aware of cultural differences and similarities. Thus, culture is a regulator of human life and identity. Culture provides diverse ways of interpreting the social environment of the world and relating to other people.

The notions of race, identity and difference are central to cultural studies. Postcolonial movements developed nationalist struggles for reform in political and cultural scenario. It is necessary to understand the main historical and cultural genealogies of contemporary postcolonial critical practice for the proper understanding of multiculturalism. Culture is recognised as an area of conflict as well as consensus, a ‘space’ where differences of interest diverge as well as converge. Diaspora writings often raise the debate on the relation between the strengthening of cultural identity of particular groups by linking it to a tradition of writing and the liberal goal of celebrating cultural diversity and ‘multiculturalism’.

Multiculturalism starts to grow when migrant communities get settled in a new community and start to consolidate their cultural identity in their day to day life either in their accommodation or in citizenry for an identity and establish the self image in the hope of justice, civil rights and empowerment. Multicultural society provides the freedom of expression and right to practice without restriction for common good with tolerance and in democratic participation. Multiculturalism is the ideological and political premise that avoids confrontation in arguments between the conservatives and radicals. It acknowledges and recognises religion, faith, cuisine, culture of other communities, festivals, habits, customs and tradition and intellectual
curiosity. Usually multicultural society is found in democratic countries where right to practice and right to speech are guaranteed by the constitution of the country. Secondly, the pattern of governance allows the ideological governance for the strategies of religious solidarity, tolerance, conferring the right of nationality that help to discern the difficulties like cultural nationalism and xenophobia. The society that endorses the pride of ethnic minorities approves their opportunities, resists inter-ethnic hostility and promotes multi-ethnic harmony can become multicultural. In the postcolonial context and orientation of “Third-Worldization” (Ostendorf 55) in the First World, the fear for the loss of national culture is vanishing. This helps for the beginning of multiculturalism in strong democratic nations.

Multiculturalism becomes an accommodative philosophy because it deals with a society’s condition, policy, conflicting views in discussion, the health of a democratic tradition, public consciousness, historical condition and popular imagination. In social sciences multiculturalism grows into a conviction through social mobility, inter-marriages, and immense demographic changes. Multicultural society extends equality to the people of all languages, religions, races and satisfaction for consumption by promoting the policy or adhering the national law for an integration, representation and conviction rather assimilation. Multicultural and multiculturalism are words frequently used to describe the ethnic diversity that exists everywhere in the world today. Multiculturalism is a concept and context in the modern states in different political and historical circumstances. Attitudes and emphases of multiculturalism are compatible with national identity, tolerance of cultural diversity and globalization. Multiculturalism draws out the dimensions of difference on the issues such as minority rights, education, religious tolerance and the trend to global homogenization in Europe, the USA, India and China. It relates to the
crucial issues of identity, culture, education, religious practice and public consciousness. The assimilation of migrant communities; priority of their civil rights, religious traditions, economic orientations, pattern of family relationships, and communal identity is the pioneering spirit of multicultural enterprise.

Multiculturalism is one such type of struggle to construct an individual’s identity. Due to recent demographic changes people come from all corners of the world to the First World in search of a better life. They all settle there in a harmonious way without interfering in other culture’s values and traditions. Such type of multicultural society is composed of many people coming from diverse cultures. Multiculturalism describes diverse races in pluralistic harmony. Today most thinkers do not see race as biological but much of studies on multicultural has been organised on race and culture as if culture equals race. It sees diversity as plurality of identities. Within this pluralistic framework, identity is regarded as the product of an assemblage of customs, practices and meanings, an enduring heritage and a set of shared traits and experiences which is what we call culture. The Oxford English Dictionary defines multiculturalism as the characteristics of a multicultural society, the policy or process whereby the distinctive identities of the cultural groups within such a society are maintained or supported. Multicultural society is one where “it denotes is a society in which there exist several cultures” (Watson 1). From these definitions it seems that in a multicultural society the word culture plays a vital role. In multiculturalism culture is the basis of recognition of a person’s identity. In its simplest form culture is often used as referring to “a common language, a shared history, a shared set of religious beliefs and moral values, and a shared geographical origin...which taken together define a sense of belonging to a specific group” (ibid 1).
A multicultural society is a society generally found in a state, a nation, a country, a region or even simply bounded geographical location such as a town or a school composed of people who belong to different cultures. In such societies the word multicultural recognises the difference of cultures “as springing from a universally shared attachment of importance to culture and to an implicit acknowledgement of the equality of all cultures” (Watson 2). Hence the wider definition of culture as representing ‘a way of life’ and a narrower definition which associates a culture ‘with belief systems, values and practices’ that we have already discussed in the preceding paragraphs of this chapter, are both important in multicultural discourse.

Since cultural protection has been given primary importance in the domain of multiculturalism, culture becomes the basis of recognition of an individual sense of identity and belonging. One of the main reasons for diverse cultures in the world is due to migration of people from one part to another due to cultural changes or some other socio-political and economic pressures. The geographical world is so complex and varied that cultures develop to regulate life so that people could survive. Culture is strongly associated emotionally and nostalgically with a distinctive way of life which, despite all its deficiencies, speaks directly to an individual’s sense of identity and belonging. People in a larger society having diverse cultures want their identity to be socially acknowledged, publicly endorsed, recognised and respected. Such recognition in the public is the cause of the beginning of multiculturalism which forms and embodies the politics of collective goals as well as politics of difference.

In the 1990s issues like cultural diversity and multiculturalism emerged. Many critics and supporters think multiculturalism primarily a matter of politics and demography. The term multiculturalism as a by-product of globalisation was initially
used as a resistance force to decentre discrimination against minority culture in Europe and America. It was used as a tool to dislodge antagonism that grew inside minority cultures because of discriminatory practices.

Monoculturalism as an institutional ideology emerged to create the impression of an intellectual tradition of European cultural production which is separate and unequal. In a way racism developed as a set of ideologies after the Renaissance especially with the industrialization of Europe and the process of colonization. This monocultural condition was represented in Arnoldian terms as “the best that has been said and thought in the world” (Arnold 6). ‘Keeping America White’ was a mandate of this monoculturalist approach. By the mid nineteenth century, this monocultural, ethnoracial Eurovision had become cemented in the US as hegemonic intellectual ideology and institutional practice. At the same time economy and technology of the world system came under the US dominance. The colonising system treated the colonised as uncultured, barbaric and their culture was treated as far more inferior. This deeply ethnорacialised Eurovision centred at the heart of monoculturalism continued to dominate the US ‘high culture’.

From the mid nineteenth century, a vast number of people migrate to the US in search of better employment, education and prospects of life. In fact continuous mass migration has been a feature of economy and society of the US. The absorption of the stream of immigrants in itself became a prominent feature of America’s national myth i.e. melting pot, a metaphor implies that all the immigrant cultures are mixed and amalgamated without state intervention. This metaphor suggests that all the immigrants get assimilated into American society at their own pace. It encourages every immigrant and each group of immigrants who came to America at the end of the nineteenth century started to think themselves as Americans. Gradually they need
to abandon their original local tradition until and unless they eventually become fully a part of the bright new alloy in the action of the melting pot. Peter McLaren a contemporary multiculturalist, indicates in his essay “White Terror and Oppositional Agency: Towards a Critical Multiculturalism” that the history of monoculturalism is contemporaneous with melting pot assimilationalism. Assimilation means “giving up all those ‘un-American’ values to be able to assume those that would fashion one American subject” (Goldberg 4), one united people, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principle of government in their manners and customs.

Diasporic discourse is filled with the words such as emigrant, concepts as expatriate, and terms as immigrant, migrant and transnational. Emigrant is someone who leaves his or her country in order to live in another country. Expatriate is someone who lives abroad for a long period or who is expelled or moved from his or her native country and withdraws his citizenship. Immigrant is someone who comes to live in a country from another country. Migrant’s sensibility offers them the new identity like an expatriate or immigrant or transnational.

But prior to the 1940s, the model of assimilation for the most part did not apply to Negroes because they were considered inherently inassimilable. The melting-pot ideology did not last long. This ‘coercive assimilation’ suppressed other cultures as inferior one and persuaded them to wither away and the dominant culture eventually becomes the only culture i.e. the ‘high culture’. It also implies a situation in which a minority group or groups are forced to abandon their behaviour in order to adopt that of the dominant culture. But it is not easy to abandon one’s own original culture because culture like blood gives an individual its life and individuality. It is instrumentally valuable for individual’s self respect. The Civil Rights and
Countercultural movements of the 1960s changed the social philosophy and signalled a shift from the prevailing assimilative standard to the new one of integration or salad-bowl. In the bowl “different constituents retain their distinctive flavours and forms but the dish as a whole is recognizably *sui generis*, having its own distinctive character as a result of its unique blending” (Watson 4).

In the USA, where there is now a much greater tolerance of religious freedom, partly due to the constitutional emphasis on the aspects of civil liberties, the new immigrant populations have entered from Hispanophone countries, and countries from Asia and Africa. The black slave population in the centrality of American history and the colonization of the Native Americans have the fundamental differences in their orientations in the host population. But due to government policy for democratic objectives the ethnic communities as well as immigrant communities are integrating into the fabric of the nation. The USA has accommodated different waves of substantial members of migrants at different periods. The cumulative experience of assimilating and integrating those populations establish a greater sensibility for accommodation. The migrants from Indian sub-continent in their allegiance towards their country of origin and accommodation in a host country enjoy a multicultural experience within the two nations. The experience of cultural differences within America’s population and respect to the philosophy of democratic liberalism and civil liberties favour the Indian immigrants like others to conceptualise, essentialize, and prioritize their cultural legacies in the preferred endorsement of ‘hyphenation’ and ‘hybridity’.

This shift from assimilation to integration or from melting-pot to salad-bowl endorses the concept of multiculturalism. The historical basis for multiculturalism stems from the changes in the western societies after the Second World War. The
collapse of the great European empires, its replacement by the world economic hegemony of the US and mass global migration due to globalisation are responsible for the creation of multicultural society since the 1960s.

Multiculturalism has become the official policy in several western nations since the 1970s. The Canadian Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism is often referred to as the origin of modern political awareness of multiculturalism. In the western countries especially in the US and Britain the shift from monoculturalism to multiculturalism has taken place in the mid 1960s. In the 1960s the Black struggle in the US took a cultural turn against the white racism. Multiculturalism was a consequence of the Civil Rights movement in the US. Due to the Civil Rights movement liberal Americans gradually understood the importance of “allowing the American citizens its space and give them opportunity to build a foundation for their self respect on the bedrock of their own cultural traditions” (Watson 5). In Britain also in the 1960s, the South Asians and a large number of immigrants from countries known as the ‘New Commonwealth’ have taken refuge to assimilate. These new immigrants are ready to abide by the laws and norms of the prevailing society but they did not see it necessary to abandon their own ethnic culture in the name of assimilation. They realised that assimilation was not an important instrument to incorporate all the migrants into the society. Rather they preferred integration as a practical way forward to integrate all the citizens. As a result by getting influenced from the Afro-Carribeans Britain placed multiculturalism on the public agenda in the 1960s. Multiculturalism as an official policy started in Canada in 1971, followed by Australia in 1973 for integrating immigrants from diverse cultures.

Multiculturalism is seen by its supporters as a fairer system that allows people to express who they are within a society. It is granted as culture and grants
other cultural groups that are to be recognised and accommodated. Multiculturalism highlights cultural life and cultural expression. They argue that culture is not one definable thing based on one race or religion, but rather the result of multiple factors that change as the world changes. The term is used in two broad ways—either descriptively or normatively. As a descriptive term, it usually refers to the simple fact of cultural diversity. It is generally applied to the demographic makeup of a specific place, sometimes at the organisational level, e.g. school business, neighbourhood cities or nations. As a normative term it refers to ideologies or policies that promote the diversity or its institutionalisation. In this sense, multiculturalism is a society at ease with the rich tapestry of human life and the desire amongst people to express their own identity in the manner they see fit. In the present context:

Multiculturalism directs our attention...to the deeper philosophical and political implications of a coexistence of different orientations to engagement with the world, and the way in which those differences jostle for recognition within national and global boundaries, sometimes in relative harmony with each other sometimes in real conflict (Watson 107).

In other words multiculturalism means ‘pluralistic’ or culturally diverse or including a variety of cultures like the phrase ‘American society is multicultural’. In this sense multiculturalism suggests an interest in and celebration of a diverse array of experiences, communities and traditions of subordinated and underrepresented racial or ethnic groups. Such groups celebrate their traditions and cultures during their festivals by celebrating their food, dance, music and dress of their cultures. Such celebrations reinforce exoticism and orientalism which affirm the liberal idea of ‘tolerance’ of others unlike oneself. In this context tolerance implies that those in the
dominant or majority group are or should become benevolently and paternalistically willing to allow the ‘other’ to exist and act differently. The motto of the 1950s multiculturalism is ‘to live and let live’ which assumed that if people could keep significant aspects of their culture they would choose to integrate in their own way. The 1980s multiculturalism is soft multiculturalism of tolerance and equal rights. The twentieth century’s multiculturalism is hard multiculturalism of positive promotion of religion and ethnic identities.

Within the study of culture, multiculturalism challenges the way the West has conceived its reality and articulated in artistic works. The result is opening up a narrowly conceived western cultural canon to bring home some issues of high theory to contemporary global society by the West’s own imperial project. It reflects the historic shift from revolutionary nationalism to a post revolutionary condition especially in the third world. In the postcolonial era, the dominant cultures generate a stereotypical model to the colonised to accept. The colonised are always considered as inferior and uncultured. As a result the colonised people have lost self-confidence and found themselves as always inferior. People then lose respect for their own cultures and this hastens the progress of homogenisation induced by dominated cultures. In a way multiculturalism challenges the cultural hegemony of the West. Accordingly postcolonial writings turn to cultural matters where it fits well. Multiculturalism brings together “a set of issues that relate to the need for community, a sense of belonging to it, the importance of a secure sense of identity, of status and recognition, of particularity, and the need to recognise and maintain difference with others...that dominated mainstream political theory since the Second World War” (Bhargava 87).

In the postcolonial context multiculturalism is related to ‘diaspora’ which is sometimes used interchangeably with ‘migration’. It is generally involved as “a
theoretical device for the interrogation of ethnic identity and cultural nationalism” (Gandhi 131). Diaspora includes immigrants, the act of migration and the psychological-cultural issues which are linked to immigrant experiences. Immigration is known as diaspora, a Greek word, which was originally used collectively for the dispersed Jews after the Babylonian captivity living outside of Palestine. In lexicon language, the word diaspora means dispersal, scattering or fragmentation. Today it refers to any group or person so dispersed or transplanted from the homeland to the land of his choice. Literally it refers to “a scattering carrying within it the ambiguous status of being both an ambassador (cultural traveller) and a refugee (victim diaspora)” (Jain 11). While one requires the projection of one’s culture the other seeks asylum and shelter and relates more positively to the host culture. Diasporas are “the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into their new regions” (Ashcroft et.al. 68). Diasporic novels present global cultural context, the dimensions of Rushdie’s concept of ‘imaginary homeland’, Homi Bhabha’s ‘gathering’ experience, Stuart Hall’s ‘heterogeneity and diversity’ and Avtar Brah’s ‘diaspora space’. Diaspora writers have theorised the poetics of diaspora. In the postcolonial context and within the dynamics of the modern cultural theory diaspora starts with relation to plurality of cultures which emphasises and culminates in multiple cultures.

Human society has developed a nomadic culture from time immemorial. People migrate from one part of the world to another for varied reasons. Various critics have cited different conditions for the migration of Indian people. Some argue that “when Budhists moved to remote corners of central and Eastern Asia” (Dhawan 10) people went to there and settled there. This is the first phase. The second phase started with the European colonisation in countries like Asia, Africa, and it lasted up
to the collapse of the European colonisation. During the imperial time the colonisers started luring cheap, submissive Indian labourers to work on their plantations. As a result a vast number of Indian communities migrated to South Africa, South East Asia and the United States. The third phase of diaspora took place during the post-colonial period. They wanted to move to the First World countries to earn the foreign currency under the label of ‘brain-drain’. These were the post 1960 immigrants. They were the ‘fortune-seekers’. This twentieth century migration to the developed western countries was voluntary, and industry and commerce oriented. They went overseas in order to satisfy their own personal economic needs. A background study of the history of Indian diaspora reveals that:

Large scale immigration of Indians was facilitated by the integration of peripheral economies into the emerging world capitalist system, the onset of a revolution in transportation and communication...the phenomenal trade surpluses...geographical discoveries...cheap and regulated labour force...A combination of factors made India (and China) an extant reservoir of cheap, docile and dependable labour...A new and significant phase of immigration began after India became independent in 1947. Broadly three patterns of immigration can be identified in the post-colonial immigration: (i) the migration of Anglo-Indians to Australia and England,(ii) the emigration of professionals to US, England, and Canada, and (iii) the emigration of skilled and unskilled labourers to West Asia...With the second and subsequent generations having emerged, and the emigrant population enjoying economic prosperity and socio-cultural rights, this stream of
emigration has resulted in vibrant Indian communities abroad (Jayaram 20-22).

Indian diaspora is varied and heterogeneous. They reject any attempt on homogenisation. From east to west, north to south India is vibrant and is politically, culturally, regionally and geographically varied. Therefore, the plurality of Indian diaspora can be seen in its formation.

In his article (B)ordering Naipaul: Indenture History and Diasporic Politics Vijay Mishra beautifully differentiates between old diaspora of ‘exclusion’ and the new diaspora of the ‘borders’. He finds the later interesting as it “feeds easily into the modern questions about ethnicity, postcolonialism, and the idea of nation state” (Mishra 206). Some argue that Indian diasporas are broadly classified under two headings: the first generation diaspora and the second generation diaspora. The first generation diasporas are indentured working class Indians of the nineteenth century who first moved to South Africa and then migrated to Great Britain and Canada. The second generation diasporas are basically the intellectuals, skilled professionals who went to the US, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia for economic and professional gains. These diasporas are further classified as the ‘sugar’ and ‘masala’ diasporas.

There is distinction to be made between the old and the new diasporas. This distinction is between, on the one hand, the semi voluntary flight of indentured peasants to the non-metropolitan plantation colonies such as Fiji, Trinidad, Mauritius, South Africa, Malaysia, Surinam and Guyana roughly between the years 1830 and 1917; and on 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
Indian diasporic communities are like a banyan tree and their nature is:

...like a banyan tree, the traditional symbol of the Indian way of life, he spreads out his roots in several soils, drawing nourishment from one when the rest dry up. Far from being homeless, he has several homes and that is the only way he has increasingly come to feel at home in the world (Parekh 106).

But apart from these differences the Indian diaspora is unique and their cultural solidarity, their feelings, traditions, culture and emotions towards their motherland bind them together as unique. For them India is an emotional homeland. Indian immigrants are assessed on two accounts: the PIOs (people of Indian origin) and NRIs (non-resident Indians). Assessing the two it can be said that:

...a common PIO-NRI diasporic unity firmly embedded in one cultural tie with Bharat...the homeland of our race, our civilization, philosophy, our democracy, our Indianness and the Mother of us all. This is to remind ourselves that no matter who we are, where we are, you can take an Indian out of India but nobody can ever take India out of the Indian (Sarmah and Sood 129).

The formation of Indian diaspora is the result of demographic dislocations. In the age of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalisation (LPG) people have been moving across borders throughout the world from homeland and culture to the hostland. They are migrating to the first world countries for better prospects of life, who are ever ready to ‘uproot’ and ‘reroot’. The New World offers them professional opportunity and financial betterment, and insists them on assimilation and acculturation with the
host culture. In the process of assimilation with the host culture they have the need to reject their old habits and traditions and in order to acculturate with the new they try to merge with the new culture. The host culture always rejects them in the name of inferior, uncultured and ill mannered. Consequently, many immigrants find this assimilation and acculturation a humiliating one and even impossible. The new diasporic writers are inclined to inhabit the “luminal or threshold zone of intercutting subjectivities that defines the experience of migrancy” (Mishra 287). The Indian diasporas carry their nostalgic past and convey their heteroglossic present in the process of assimilation, acculturation, and existentialization of ‘self’.

The Indian immigrants carry their socio-cultural baggage wherever they go and try to create the atmosphere of their native culture. Their unique cultural identity marker, their cultural baggage, their own ‘gunny sacks’ distinguishes them from others. In fact women migrants play an active role in expanding various cultural activities. They can not break their ties with the ancestral homeland after staying in the new country for a long period. In order to preserve their culture and identity they often try to gather together occasionally during their festive times and also develop a relationship with other cultures. In order to maintain their cultural identity, they want to marry or to get married within their culture, maintain their family relationship, cling to their mother tongue and so on. In this cultural preservation, temples, mosques, gurudwaras also play a vital role. The construction of such temples, the establishment of Indian grocery stores, Indian restaurants, making of crossover films are evidences of a sense of community among the Indian diasporas. The practice of Indian rituals of birth, marriage, religious and cultural festivals etc. are also a manifestation of their sense of expressing their original Indian identity in order to weave a close-knit Indian community in alien environments. The indigenous cultures
thumping in their heart and flowing in their blood, pass on as cultural heritage to next
generations. But the new country behaves them differently. The immigrants feel
unappreciated and alienated. They try to depict their diasporic experiences through
their writings and “they continue to relate personally or vicariously, to the homeland
in a way or another, and their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity are
importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship” (Pandey 119).

The literature of the Indian diaspora is considered to be that body of
writings which are produced by writers of Indian origin who are living outside of
India in places like Australia, Trinidad, Fizi, Guyana, Mauritius, Malaysia, East
Africa or in Western countries like the United States, Great Britain, and Canada.
Diasporic writings are not a new trend but an exemplary feature of transnational
movement which gets manifested into written words. Writers are products of a
specific culture, drawing sustenance from it and enriching it with their lived
experiences. Terms like exile, immigrants, dislocation, displacement and expatriate
have also been used to describe them.

When we talk about Indian diasporic literature, names of many writers who
belong to this category come to our minds. They are Raja Rao, Kamala Markandaya,
V.S.Naipaul, Bharati Mukherjee, Anita Desai, Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Nirad
Mistry, Suniti Namjoshi, Uma Parameswaran, M.G.Vassanji, Kiran Desai, Pico Iyer,
Gita Mehta, Chitra Bannerji Divakaruni, Meena Alexander, Jhumpa Lahiri, Sunetra
Gupta, Meena Abdullah etc. These diasporic writers settled abroad in different
countries like Britain, Canada, America, England, Germany, Australia and West
Indies. They belong to both old and new generations. While “the writers of old
diaspora tend to concentrate on the chinks within, say the girmit enclave, the new
diasporic writers are inclined to inhabit the luminal or threshold zone of intercutting subjectivities that defines the experience of migrancy” (Mishra 287). Though they are culturally and geographically different from each other, their writings focus their awareness of being an immigrant. In their writings we find the use of memory and nostalgia that connect them to their past. This nostalgia and memory feed their imagination to churn out something ‘new and strange’. They all have traces in their works the predicaments and paradoxes that haunt their lives while traversing across the continents in the aftermath of colonisation.

The world of diasporic writings belongs to the in-between space, the cultural no-man’s land or creatively everyone’s world. A large number of diasporic writers have expressed their experiences in the form of creative text which have brought innumerable credit to the Indian English Fiction. The Indian diasporic writers make a conscious effort to re-establish social and cultural patterns whose roots have been traced back to India and its culture. They try to depict the diasporic experiences of the Indian immigrants who are migrated for varied reasons. They all share the same common experiences--trauma of being away from their homeland. Women diasporic writers of Indian origin are also nostalgic, homesick, homeless and rootless. Caught between two cultures, societies, countries and languages, their lives are painful for them. The women novelists of Indian diaspora are Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Anjana Appachana, Kiran Desai, Sujata Messey, Indira Ganeshan, Jhumpa Lahiri, Anita Rau Badami, Shauna Singh Baldwin, Uma Parameshwaram, Sunetra Gupta etc. Writers like Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, Sunetra Gupta, Anjana Appachana, Kiran Desai, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni are products of two cultures. They are educated westernised elites who have lived in the
multicultural and multilingual societies of many countries. They present two colourful cultures of two worlds in their novels.

Anita Desai is a Bengali from her father’s side and a German on her mother’s. Born and raised in India she lived the major part of her life in India but now resides in the USA. She has introduced the psychological novel in Indian English Fiction. She concentrates on the psychology of educated upper middle classes and focuses on personal struggles. She portrays the cultural and social changes beautifully by blending both the East and the West cultures effectively. Anita Rau Badami’s novels show the tumultuous effect of the past of new immigrants. Her descriptions on Indian life are rich with warmth and humanity. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni deals with the lives of immigrant experiences of immigrant women. She dissolves boundaries to help women to find their own identity. The author of the novels like *The Mistress of Spices* (1997), *Sister of My Heart* (1999), *The Vine of Desire* (2002), *Queen of Dreams* (2004) and collection of short stories *Arranged Marriage* (1995) and *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives* (2001) founded the first South Asian Support Group for women-“Maitri” and helps the battered women in America. Like Bharati Mukherjee she is interested in the issues of Indian diaspora women. Kiran Desai, daughter of a noted Indian diaspora writer Anita Desai, is the author of *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998) and *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006). Her characters are caught between two worlds-- being Indian and American which is the common theme of all diasporic writings. Shauna Singh Baldwin deals with the diasporic experiences of Indian immigrants during marriage, migrancy and partition. Uma Parameshwaram writes about South Asian immigrants in Canada. These immigrant women writers both in older generation and younger generation highlight the lives of Indian immigrants abroad. Their nostalgic response to their homeland and reaction to the
alien land lead them to a kind of hope for change of the alien land into a new homeland.

Academically the ‘voluntary diaspora’ or ‘diaspora of longing’ has three visible sections. In the first category writers like Bharati Mukherjee are the first generation Indian diasporic authors. The second group consists of writers who shuttle between different continents. These writers are born in their motherland but raise up in the host country. Sunetra Gupta and Meera Syal belong to this category. The third group consists of writers termed as the second generation Indian immigrants writers. They are born and brought up in the foreign country and as such have no direct link to their original homeland except some frequent visits with their parents. Within this group fall writers like Jhumpa Lahiri, Bidisha Bandhopadhyay, Abha Dawesar, Kiran Desai etc. These writers set some of their stories in their mother country i.e. India because of ‘a necessary combination of distance and intimacy’.

Immigrants whether ‘voluntary diaspora’ or ‘diaspora of longing’ live in one country but look across to the original homeland. Their identity can neither be placed only in relation to some homeland to which they all longed to return nor to that country alone where they settle down in. As immigrants they have to exchange one tradition for another, one culture for another, one home for another. As a result they create alternative worlds to which they have to inscribe. For them there is always a difference in terms of culture, language and race. Thus the diasporas always take the position of Greek God Janus, who has two faces. One face of the immigrant like the Janus faces towards the adopted land with his gaze fixed while the other face is turned backwards to the homeland which he pines for with nostalgia. They face the crises of dual identity and suffer from an ‘in-between’ condition. They are torn between two cultures.
The first generation Indian immigrants try to follow their original cultural cult because they are born and brought up in their country and hence have firsthand experience of their mother country. They may adopt a new country for settling but their memory and heart live in their native country. The new country and new memories in it can not erase their past memories in which their consciousness is constituted. But to the second generation immigrants who are born and brought up in the host country, it becomes their native country. Their ancestral country becomes an alien country to them where they seldom visit with their parents or they listen and read about it in fascination, love and imagination thinking it as their own, hence their ancestral culture distances from them. Again becoming a natural citizen of the host country their own ancestral country becomes an alien to them. They become the product of a ‘sandwich culture’ where their nationality helps them to interact and mingle with diverse cultures and understand the dynamics of cultures. This is the status of thought and impression of the first generation immigrants. Their sandwich culture gives them two identities and two cultures— one representing his native country and the country of his migration as well as the culture of their native land and the culture of the host country. Thus sandwiched between the host and parental culture, they try to celebrate their different cultural traits by clinging to their mother tongue. This is commonly found among the first generation immigrants.

The second generation immigrants in their multicultural status practice native culture in their inter-marriages, speak the language of the native country, adapting the names of host country, adopt the food habits and dress also. Although the notion of cultural preservation varies from first generations to second generations, the process of acculturation and assimilation continues. Due to their settlements in the foreign land, they sever all ties with their motherland, but in the process of
acculturation and assimilation, they experience dislocation and non-acceptance by the adopted country. The immigrants are never completely detached from their native culture either by their birth or settlement. They, especially the second generation immigrants are caught in a dilemma whether to conform to their native culture and tradition or adopt the new culture. While the first generation immigrants are invariably more obsessed with ‘home’ they have left behind and always suffer from a feeling of being ‘uprooted’ that makes it more difficult for them to adjust, the second generation becomes more able to assimilate but their problems are of a different kind. Having been born in the new country, they are able to become a part of the new culture more easily. Though the children born to migrant peoples they enjoy better settlement and place in that country where “their sense of identity borne from living in a diaspora community [is] influenced by the past migrant history of their parents or grandparents” (McLeod 207).

Immigration is a postcolonial phenomenon that gave birth to multicultural societies. Multicultural societies are the product in liberal societies and governments chiefly in a democratic set up. Postcolonial diasporas do not only migrate as a labour force but migrate for higher economic gain or for academic pursuit particularly to the US. Despite the immigrants’ success in their struggles they search for their identity because the native residents always reacted differently to them or they feel their identity is in crisis. Culture shock generates a feeling of depression and frustration in them when they realize this in new environment. Even the self-satisfied immigrants gradually find themselves estranged from the new environment. Despite their attempt to amalgamate, the alien culture distances them. The immigrants react to certain situations that are in conflict with their own upbringing in different ways. Cultural displacement makes them alienated and lonely in spite of their assays of adjustment.
The prime concern for these immigrants in an alien society is always to construct an identity and individuality of their own.

Diasporic writings, in its theory and practice, are the work of exiles or expatriates or immigrants who have experienced unsettlement at all levels. Postcolonial theorists like Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Du Bois, Arjun Appadurai, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and postcolonial novelists like V.S.Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, Kamala Markandaya, Bharati Mukherjee, Bapsi Sidhwa, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Sunetra Gupta, Indira Ganesan are either exiles or expatriates or immigrants by force or choice write their multicultural experiences with realisation or observation. There are two moves in the case of diasporic writers. The first one is temporal move which indicates a look backward to the past and to look forward to the future. At the initial stage they are outsiders and feel themselves ‘outsider’. They face the question in an alien world as ‘who am I?’ Therefore, the initial works of diasporic writers are autobiographic, nostalgia, rootlessness, homelessness, dislocation and displacement. The second move is spatial which involves their dislocation and relation, loss and gain by leaving the country and practicing culture as a metaphor of identity for their country. Indian diaspora writers deal with their space, move between ‘home’ country and ‘foreign’ country, between ‘familiar’ and ‘strange’ and between ‘old’ and ‘new’.

Diasporic writers write on various aspects of diaspora life depending on their own experiences. While they deal with culture as the central focus of identity they analyse ‘self’ and the ‘other’ as opposite. The ‘self’ is in constant need of an ‘other’ to adopt an attitude. The ‘other’ is always characterised by difference in terms of appearance, race, faith, ritualistic practices, language, political power etc. The memory of colonisation, enslavement, forced labour, rejection and assimilation varies.
from immigrants to immigrants. For every generation of immigrant writers, culture, history and memory interact anew. Though their narratives seem linear, their relationship to the past is not one in straight line. It has breaks, twist, and confronts. Diaspora ‘self’ has a ‘sense of belonging’ and longing for the past. Writer like Bharati Mukherjee has shed her past as an Indian. She says, “I need to feel part of the community I have adopted, I need to put roots down, to vote and make the difference I can” (Jain 240). Rohinton Mistry like the Jews wishes to locate the ‘self’ in a sense of community. His writings direct his ‘self’ to relate to his own community. Uma Parsameshwaran believes that “belonging is a transplantation and one needs to nurture the feeling--home is where the heart is” (ibid 239-240). Ashish Gupta also affirms that “one never leaves one’s country behind. Yet one can’t live in the past.”(ibid 17).

Immigrant writers like Jhumpa Lahiri and Sunetra Gupta focus on the themes that encompass characters who must find ways of reconciling themselves to their shifting and evolutionary identities that are the result of their migratory experiences. Jhumpa Lahiri is a second generation Indian immigrant writer and Sunetra Gupta is a first generation Indian immigrant writer. The tension between upholding Indian culture and imbibing American culture, between upholding family tradition and subscribing to the individual freedom and realization that one is an outsider even though one is born there is realistically portrayed in Lahiri’s fictional works. Sunetra Gupta writes about immigrant experiences and writes on the exoticism of their home country or of characters who go as aliens and try to fit into the western world. Both writers have their imaginary characters who can be understood in the context of postcolonial theory-- the theory of migrancy. Due to globalisation the boundary of the nations is becoming faded for receiving new culture or extending the culture to others. The first generation Indian immigrants’ sense of Indianness is varied
from the second generation Indian immigrants. As second generation Indian immigrants their origins are of varying shades. They consider their identity as transnational identity. The migrants who go through travel, nostalgia, homesickness, experience of rootlessness, alienation are called expatriates or immigrants or transnational.

Immigrants try to reroot, rebuild the home, assimilate and acculturate and replant themselves in the new soil. But they go through the process of homelessness, uprootedness, rootlessness, alienation, isolation, nostalgia, assimilation, acculturation and transformation. In the greater community of the world especially in a multicultural state or society their social identity is lost due to their migration from their homeland to adopted country. Diasporas negotiate the memory of old identity and the concreteness of the new one. In the alien society they are identified as expatriates, immigrants or transnationals. There is difference between expatriate, immigrant and transnational individuals are now interchangeably used to denote a person living in the country other than his own native country who have migrated for some purpose on different situations. Homi Bhabha rethinks about the question of identity of these migrants in his Location of Culture (1994). Diaspora creates an encounter between cultures, languages, thoughts and people which produce what Homi Bhabha theorised as ‘hybridity’. He sees the dislocations as a productive condition. The in-between space of migrants is the place to recast the identity of an individual. Their cultural identities undergo constant transformation. This constant transformation produces and reproduces them as anew. Their expatriate sensibility makes them write with their homeland in their bones. Yet they are aware of the cultural context of the country of their origin.
The new generation diasporic writers like Hari Kunzru, Suniti Namjoshi, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Indira Ganesan, Meena Alexander, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Sunetra Gupta etc. portray the world of their memory and desire. Their dislocation has given them plural dislocations with multiple cultures. These writers attempt to assimilate and expand the periphery and become the part of mainstream. They have the opportunity to tell the tale of their homeland and the adopted land. They begin to ask questions about their own culture and simultaneously pave their own way to form their own identity. Their in-between position and space gives them enough opportunity to produce and create. As a result they gain their new identity as having multicultural sensibility to belong to anywhere. Fluidity is at the heart of multicultural society. It offers both the writers the metaphors and symbolic locations to think about their identity in multicultural society. The Indian diasporas in the USA think their Indianness not “as a fragile identity to be preserved against obliteration’ but ‘as a set of fluid identities to be celebrated” (Mukherjee 3).

Jhumpa Lahiri and Sunetra Gupta are transnational diasporas. They are producers and consumers of synthetic cultures. These writers enjoy the new space and celebrate their multicultural sensibility in the new land. They are able to accept the changes, change themselves while encountering two or more than two cultures. They give due respect to their original cultural values and traditions and at the same time they celebrate the culture of the adopted country. Therefore, they are the ‘holder’ of multiple identities. Their transplantation into the new soil is a successful one. Their migration is not ‘loss’ but ‘gain’. They have developed social and cultural ties with the new land. These writers identify themselves with more than one culture, more than one country. Their transnational identity cut across the borders of at least two
national states and thus blur the distinctions between various kinds of cross border mobility.

Jhumpa Lahiri was born in London and raised up in Rhode Island inherit Indian culture as her root from her parents. Likewise Sunetra Gupta was born in Calcutta and spent much of her childhood in Ethiopia, Zambia and Liberia. She now lives in England. Their multiple ties and interaction with people from diverse cultures give them a multicultural identity which is very beautifully portrayed through their works. They have experiences of life in multiple locations irrespective of political boundaries. They are the migrating birds adaptive and collaborative to a new culture i.e. multiculture to which they contribute and inherit. Having accommodated with diverse cultures in different countries and at different situation of their life they write on multicultural sensibilities in their works. They translate cultural issues through their double disjunctive perspective. Their works provide multiple examples of such hybrid identity formation. Their writings narrate stories and experiences of Indian diasporas who acculturate, assimilate, and accommodate themselves in a new country like the USA, Canada and England. Their novels not only focus the struggle and suffering of Indian diasporas but also focus their accommodation in its multicultural environment where cultures as philosophies and life as experience unite together. In their subjective surrounding and emotive expression own culture stands as a dominant figure but when it comes with contact with others in the socio-political dynamics of the country the new gets its novelty and their inherited culture remains in essentiality for their satisfaction. Shifting the ‘self’ to ‘other’ in their physical or geographical displacement makes them the spiritual wanderers who like to anchor somewhere with the help of (multi)cultural way of life.

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