Chapter II

Production of Literature in Multicultural Society

Transnational and transcontinental migration in the historicity of a nation is the cause of the beginning of multiculturalism. The rise of political ‘isms’, liberal values and sanction of constitutional rights to the different communities, races and religious groups irrespective of their beliefs, practices, faith and customs make a society multicultural. The area and scope of multiculturalism, its production and practice in society, its impact and relevance on life and sensibilities become a highly frequent and popular ethos of literature in the recent times. Writers, policy makers, sociologists, social anthropologists (un)consciously use the multicultural aspects in their writings. The term is commonly used to describe societies which comprise of different religions, races, languages and cultures. It denotes a society, a state, a nation, a country, a region in which there exists several cultures or composed of the people who belong to different cultures.

Multiculturalism is a term being commonly used in literary parlance since 1960s to refer to the complexities of cultural variegations of postcolonial societies. But early 1970s is marked as the beginning of the multicultural movement first in Canada, Australia and then in the USA, UK, Germany and elsewhere. Historically it came into use during the early 1980s in the context of reforming the public school curriculum in America. In the United States multiculturalism arose from the monocultural commitments. Monoculturalism as an institutional ideology emerged in the United States in the late nineteenth century to create the impression of an intellectual tradition “the best that has been said and thought in the world”(Arnold 6). The eugenic end of American politics was “keeping America white” (Goldberg 5) as
an educational mandate of American culture. By the middle of the twentieth century this reflection of Europe turned into a tradition which later on fashioned as a hegemonic intellectual ideology and institutional practice in the United States. Multiculturalism influenced ethnoracialised Eurovision of the monoculturalism and dominated the high culture and the United States’ academy also.

Over the last two hundred years, people from various parts of the world especially from Mexico, Latin America and Asia have been migrating to the First World, i.e. America, particularly for academic pursuits or for economic gains. These migrants who have been dislocated by arriving in the First World, try to melt down in the multicultural ‘melting pot’ or try to fit themselves as the part of America’s cultural mosaic. Migrancy, specially upper class elite migrancy from India, provides newness to the reconstruction of society in the first world both economically and culturally. But the native and accepting society is so resilient that it assimilates the cultures of the immigrants easily for mutual benefits. But in certain situations like emotional adjustment and nostalgic reverberation these immigrants “face a clash of opposite cultures, a feeling of alienation which causes an attempt to adjust, to adopt, to accept, and finally either form a separate identity as racial group or be assimilated and hence acculturated” (Nityanandam ix). The contemporaneous development of monoculturalism and melting pot assimilationism underlies the policies concerning ethnoracial immigration to the US. In order to represent its political and cultural values the U.S. advocates the assimilation of the immigrants by giving up their un-American values to assume the hegemonic white culture. But prior to the 1940s, this model of assimilation was not applied to the Negroes as they were considered inherently inassimilable.
In American academy to create a more culturally diverse curriculum that had roots in the intellectual and social movements is associated with the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s which included Black Power, *La Raza*, the American Indian Movement, and the Women’s Liberation Movement which challenged the norms and effects of educational policy. The Civil Rights and the countercultural movements of the 1960s signalled a shift from the prevailing assimilative standard to the new kind of ‘integration’. This new model of integration became the centre where every race establishes control of their private autonomous and cultural expression and at the same time maintains a separate set of common values.

Multiculturalism is related to global shifts of power, population and culture in the era of post-colonialism. The end of the Second World War changed the perception of the West toward the East and Africa. Search of the ways for economic stability, labour force and rise of the philosophy of liberalism completely changed the perception of the West. During the last two decades or so this demographic and cultural diversity among the post-colonial immigrants has become possible for the immigrants from Mexico, Latin America and Asia due to the liberalization of immigrant law. Hence America’s traditional conception of multiculturalism is a ‘melting pot’ ideology of diverse people joining in a common New World culture. But this traditional conception has been challenged by some multiculturalists who consider the ‘melting pot’ metaphor a cover for oppressive assimilation. For the multiculturalists, the only way to melt in the pot is by assimilating or becoming similar to ‘hegemonic’ white culture.

Multiculturalism becomes a movement that insists American society to be multiracial and diverse. This movement seeks to preserve distinctly different ethnic, racial, or cultural communities together without melting them into a common culture.
American multiculturalism connotes “either some mode of traditional interrelationship between the cultures of two or more countries, or...in a more circumscribed manner the broader dimension of multiple cultural identities within the boundaries of a single nation” (Standley 353) that interrogates the notions of an indispensable and dominant cultural tradition in any society. It implies the creation of “a social situation in which members of different ethnic communities are able to retain their ethnic identities and yet participate to the full in national life” (Begum 57).

Each culture is homogenous and imposes a single identity. Internally every culture is plural and differentiated. Plurality suggests the presence of many but it does not define clearly about the nature of many. From the idea of plurality one visualizes how the multiple forms are structured from a single whole and how they relate to each other. But these are the basic concepts on which the idea of plurality is silent. For many it denotes the manifold representation of one and as such in many times the many may be hierarchically arranged. So, all these possibilities can be envisaged within the concept of plurality.

All cultures born out of interaction with other cultures and absorb the influences of others shaped by wider economic, political or other forces that undercuts the very basis of all kinds of centrism including Afrocentrism, Eurocentrism, Indocentricism, Sinocentrism etc. All these centrisms credit their achievements to its own genius because all of them isolate the history of culture concerned from that of others. But in multiculturalist’s perspective it is not a political doctrine or ideology or any type of ism whether it be liberalism, conservatism, socialism or nationalism that can represent the full truth of human life. Political doctrines are related to the ways of structuring political life and do not offer any comprehensive philosophy of life.
Multiculturalists view that a good society cherishes the cultural diversity and has a positive relation with different cultures and their moral visions. Such type of society always respects its members’ right to their culture and increases their range of choices by cultivating their powers of self-criticism, self-determination, intellectual and moral sympathy and contribution to their development and well-being.

Multicultural society is a plural society where different races are related to each other conceptually or contextually. So, plurality symbolizes the presence of more than one—i.e. many. The existence of many becomes a sign of democracy in the twenty first century because the presence of one ideology, one political party, and one electoral candidate is regarded to be a sign of state coercion. Hence, the presence of many was seen as a minimum condition of freedom and is a precondition for the recognition of difference. But within the context of many the concept of plurality and diversity is totally different. Plurality merely suggests the presence of many, but diversity points to the existence of many that is not collapsible into one. In this context, the many are discrete and separate entities that are different from one another.

In the mid eighteenth century, the German historians developed this notion of difference and diversity. Theorists on Enlightenment in England and France have noted the existence of plural cultures in a civilization. In their view, the history of mankind represents progress from the dark ages to the civilised enlightened present. The German historians from Herder to Ranke used the idea of cultural diversity to question this judgement of the enlightenment and argue that human history is constituted by discrete and heterogeneous cultures, but each culture has its own values, moral and aesthetic norms, and political and economic structure. Thus each culture is “in itself a whole” (Herder 188). But subsequent historians and philosophers
accommodate diversity only historically and maintain that history is defined by a succession of diverse cultures or values, but each culture manifests a single idea.

A multicultural society cherishes cultural plurality and hence can not be stable and last long without developing a common sense of belonging among its citizens. But this sense of belonging can not be ethnic because this type of society is too culturally diverse for shared cultural, ethnic and other characteristics. A multicultural society is based on a shared community for their mediating within the ethnic group and its members who do not directly belong to each other but they belong to membership, mutual commitment, and common sense of shared commitment to the political community. It has been seen that in a multicultural society there is a common sense of shared commitment to the political community. They are bonded together by the ties of common interest and attachment. Their mutual commitment and concern as members of a shared community remain unaffected. This involves commitment to its continuing existence and well-being. Further it implies that each one cares enough for it without doing harm to its interest and integrity. But a citizen can not be committed to his or her political community unless it is committed to her. Therefore, it must value and cherish them all equally by granting them equal rights of citizenship, freedom to live a standard life peacefully, and opportunity to develop themselves from all sides.

Getting citizenship means fostering a common sense of belonging but it is not enough because citizenship means status and rights, as belonging means acceptance, or a sense of identification. In such cases, the postcolonial immigrants from non-western European nations to the United States enjoy all the rights of citizenship but feel as if they do not belong basically to the community, and hence is a relative outsider. Members of these groups are free to participate in their public life
but they often stay away from the mainstream society for fear of rejection and ridicule or out of a deep sense of alienation. Thus they consciously or unconsciously internalize the negative self-image, lack of self esteem and feel alienated from the mainstream society. In this kind of multicultural society one finds ways of reconciling the legitimate demands of unity and diversity, of achieving political unity without cultural uniformity, and cultivating among its citizen both a common sense of belonging, and willingness to respect and cherish deep cultural differences.

The concept of multiculturalism endorses the idea of difference and heterogeneity. Generally, diverse cultural communities are categorized and designated as minorities. Within the irreconcilable differences between the majority and minority cultures, in modern democratic state multiculturalism locates incommensurable differences within the boundaries of the state. Within a state, diverse communities co-exist together or simultaneously raise the issue of their equality. It asks whether within the polity, or in the constitution of that particular state, different communities are granted an equal status or not.

However, the mid eighteenth century German historians and philosophers spoke in favour of cultural diversity and conveniently pushed differences outside the boundary of state. On the other hand many multiculturalists place diversity within the borders of the nation state. Today most countries are multiethnic and have multinational identities. Keeping this in view the multiculturalists examine whether these diverse communities constitutionally receive equal and fair treatment in the public and political arena. Practically they analyze the ideology of liberalism and if any type of discrimination has been done or not against the minorities on account of their difference.
In the multi-racial and multi-ethnic society the fundamental concern for equality lies in the non-discrimination of minority communities. This feature gives chance to the growth of multiculturalism and success of democracy because non-discrimination is the single most important value of democracy. Since a democratic country experiences the socio-cultural frictions due to caste, class, gender, race and religious differences, philosophers of democracy argue that community differences and membership must be disregarded in political arena and preferred individuality or citizenship with equal rights and entitlements must be chosen. Contributing the agenda of democratization and non-discrimination, multiculturalism first locates cultural identity as a source of discrimination in society. While earlier theories focus on discrimination in a society on account of one’s religion, race and gender, multiculturalism points discrimination of minority cultures within the state. Cultural theorists argue that equality for diverse cultures requires a “system of special group differentiated rights” (Young 261). The liberals defend universal citizenship and equal rights to every individual because they think that these are the most suitable instruments for countering community based discriminations. But the multiculturalists support special group rights for vulnerable minorities. It has been found that plurality represents the existence of many, i.e. more than one culture in a state. Multiculturalism refers to the existence of many that are equal in the public arena.

For multiculturalism the presence of many different communities within the border of a state is not enough. The important thing is to observe whether they are treated as equal by the state. Multiculturalism advocates how in multiethnic and multinational societies minority cultures and communities are always disadvantaged and has been discriminated in the public arena through the cultural orientation and practices of the nation state. In such country the policies of the state contain a
majoritarian cultural bias often disfavouring the minorities to be the marginals. In a multicultural state law protects and defends the minority communities who face difficulty to compete in the public arena, and in the discrimination. Diversity in multiculturalism implies equal space and equal opportunity to the people who practice different cultures to sustain themselves. By protesting against systematic discrimination, theorists of multiculturalism support positive value to cultural diversity. They believe that the presence of diverse cultures enriches social life. Their theories impress with the view that cultural diversity is valued good because it exposes the individuals to alternative ways of life and encourages self-criticism. Encountering with other cultures improves the ways of organizing society which the sociologists prefer to make an effort to preserve cultural diversity.

Since culture travels with one’s migration each individual becomes a culture bearer. With the trading and grading of cultures in the globalised world humanity needs the preservation of diverse cultures. At present in western democratic countries political rights have been extended to almost all classes and groups of people. In such a situation the multiculturalists question the attempt that has been taken by the state to assimilate the diverse populations. They defend group rights primarily for the purpose of resisting forced assimilation. This conception emerges at a time when it becomes evident in immigrant policies to assimilate into a new world both politically and culturally.

Multicultural theorists plead for the diverse needs of both the immigrant and indigenous people. They believe that only in democratic societies people can accommodate themselves in multicultural ambience due to their rights and privilege for developing a sense of belonging and commitment to the members of other communities. As such this would reduce ethnic conflicts and develop a sense of
loyalty towards the state to which they immigrate. Although the immigrants are included in the polity of the state by special group rights, the analysts of multiculturalism make a distinction between their inclusion and assimilation. Uniform citizenship seeks to assimilate diverse people by prescribing uniform rules. It may be a non-homogenizing and non-assimilative mode of inclusion for some communities, but it gives rise to the conflation and preservation of cultures. Theorists often talk about the problems faced by these immigrant communities and recommend special rights for the justification and preservation of their cultures.

Multiculturalism, like postmodernism is reductive, and in many ways it belies the plurality of disciplines, practices, themes, debates and approaches. Conservatives like Allan Bloom opt for a cultural hegemony held together by the western canon. Pluralists like Henry Louis Gates and Edward Said embrace the idea of modernity in which culture is hybrid and interactive and travels between groups, multiplying and continually mutating without containing in the form of ethnic groups. Peter McLaren views multiculturalism from the position of critical pedagogy, and identifies four major political positions of multiculturalism: “conservative multiculturalism, liberal multiculturalism, left-liberal multiculturalism and critical and resistant multiculturalism” (Kerr 383) for its better understanding.

The first form is defined by McLaren as conservative multiculturalism. It indicates that the white groups do not consider their whiteness as an ethnic category. They consider and posit other minority groups and ethnicities on the lower ladder of civilization. According to Peter McLaren it is an assimilationist model of cultural diversity in which white is posited as an “invisible norm by which other ethnicities are judged” (McLaren 49). While analysing the individual groups it is perceived that conservative multiculturalism promotes the idea of integration. This type of
multiculturalism gathers strength with Enlightenment philosophy and nineteenth century biologism. It holds the assumption which “is not a form of ethnicity but the norm and standard against which all other forms of ethnicity must be measured” (Kerr 383). In this kind of multiculturalism “equal opportunity and economic benefits are made available to all” (ibid). This type of multiculturalism implies how the integration of different groups takes place at the expense of their specificity. The dominant hegemonic group forwards a common culture to be integrated with them where the colonialist and the imperialist ideology still dominate. Thus the various ethnic groups are added on to the dominant white culture. Conservative multiculturalism “can be seen as a direct result of the legacy of doctrines of white supremacy which biologised Africans as ‘creatures’ by equating them with the earliest stages of human development” (McLaren 47).

Liberal multiculturalism is related to the eighteenth century liberalism. It defends the natural equality existing among whites and other communities like “African-Americans, Latinos, Asians, and other racial populations” (ibid 51). This type of multiculturalism is argued for sameness among the races on their rationality through the reform of legislation that permits them to compete equally in a capitalist society. McLaren explains the social and educational opportunities necessary to compete in a capitalist society is not the same. This type of multiculturalism, therefore, erodes into an “ethnocentric and oppressively universalistic humanism in which the legitimating norms which govern the substance of citizenship are identified most strongly with Anglo-American cultural-political communities” (ibid).

The Left-liberal multiculturalism emphasizes cultural differences and suggests that the stress on the equality of races only erases the cultural differences between races that are responsible for different behaviours, values, attitudes, cognitive
styles, and social practices. The Left-liberal multiculturalism addresses the “ideological blindness of the liberal position by emphasizing differences between communities, connected with social values, attitudes, styles and practices related to race, ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality” (Kerr 383). It gives importance on the confirming of “the authentic experience of different communities, and their justified use of lived, personal experiences as the ground for political activity” (ibid). The approach of this type of multiculturalism is exoticization of ‘otherness’ and a nativist tend to locate differences in a primeval past of cultural authenticity. This tendency to essentialize difference by ignoring the historical and cultural situatedness of difference runs the risk of requiring a definite identity.

McLaren’s fourth form is critical or resistant multiculturalism which entails a radical understanding of the concept of difference. It is considered as a transformative view of multiculturalism by the postmodernists. With critical or resistant multiculturalism the central task of multiculturalism is to transform the social, cultural and institutional relations among different identities. If conservative and liberal multiculturalism stress ‘sameness’, and the left-liberals stress difference, they create a false opposition because both perspectives are based on an essentialist logic. In both cases identity is presumed to be autonomous and self-contained. Critical multiculturalism starts from the notion of difference as constructed between and among the groups. It interrogates the construction of difference and identity in relation to a radical politics. Literature of this society presents multiculturalism, “the site of struggle is sexuality: representation of race and ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality are part of larger ideological struggles that are subject to displacement and embedded in a transformative agenda”(ibid). These versions of multiculturalism continually refuse essentialism, universalism, organism “in relation to all cultural
positions whether those of race, ethnicity, nation, gender, sexuality, class or religion in the recognition that these positions are most often multiple, creolized, mobile, and/or luminal” (ibid) in its features.

In a globalizing world ethnoscapes change perpetually due to migration. Migration is an instrument in reconstructing the world into a large number of intertwined cultural zones. Deconstructing the monocultural concept Shabo Xie remarks, “culture is no longer a clearly bordered mosaic, but an overlapping of boundaries instead, which constantly calls forth the struggle between the dominant and the emerging” (Xie 158). Writing on the cross-cultural hybrids in a nation and national boundaries Edward W. Said states that it is “because of empire, all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, and all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic” (xxix).

Multiculturalism is antithetical to universalism because universalism ‘conjures’ up a unitary and homogenous human nature, which excludes and marginalizes the postcolonial societies with all their distinctive cultural forms. Since postcolonial societies are a kaleidoscope of diverse cultural entities and the study of cultural and linguistic interfaces between the colonizer and the colonized, the assimilated terms like ‘hybridity’ (Homi Bhaba’s) and ‘syncretism’ (Jan Mohammed’s) have been popularly used in the literature in recent years. Writing about multiculturalism means “the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization”(Ashcroft....). It results in the “survival of the distinct elements of the cultures of the colonized or oppressed in diverse cross-cultural formation”(Chandramohan 81). Hybridization of cultures is a tendency in pluralistic society which encourages the individuals for their freedom as well as psychological adjustment.
In multicultural society or in diaspora writing ‘hybridity’ is focussed for understanding the specificities of particular cultural situations. In the fundamental belief and constructedness of theory multiculturalism deals with the belief in the universality of social constructedness. If in postcolonialism multiculturalism is socially and linguistically constructed, in the post postcolonial academic involvement it is socially and linguistically constructed promoting further to understand the nature and problem of it in the culturally determined societies. Multicultural society not only deals with different cultures and issues of the social and linguistic constructedness of reality but also generates confusions due to the politics of some cultures and hierarchy of patriarchal cultures for their wisdom of the ages. Although it results inequalities and injustices in the anthropomorphic study of a society it reopens the areas of wilderness, scenic sublime, countryside and domestic picturesque in its rhetorical assertion, commodification, consumption and production. In the post- postcolonial literature, multicultural aspects establish a new kind of cultural ecology for its romanticising the recurrent ideas of social and other crucial matters. In the present context of developed and developing nations, multiculturalism has its easy affiliation to the society and government for celebrating cultural materialism and historicism emphasising ‘ancestry’, language and culture in apology for literature.

Multiculturalism is not meant for the annihilation of any culture but for the anointation of any culture merged in its confluence. In order to popularise it in literary canon theorists philosophise it people-centric and transnational in contemporary literary tradition. In postcolonial and transnational contexts it is a popular tendency of a society, community and nation to be multicultural by which they heal their historical traumas while expressing identity, tradition and consciousness in the celebration of their psyche. Interpreting multiculturalism always in postmodernism and
psychoanalysis is a kind of asserting the ideological positions of the cultures with an intertextual collage in literature but in the politics of theory it becomes a faulty perspective in textual conditions and novelistic discourse. In multicultural society each culture becomes a ‘telling medium’ outside the focalisation of the viewpoint that introduces ‘power of social and ideological structures’. As a result of popularisation of multiculturalism or hybridization of cultures, the destructive cultural encounters have given way to an acceptance of diversity and difference on equal terms. By keeping this in view that all cultures merit equal respect and scholarly interest, it incorporates the cultures of a variety of people, living in different parts of the world.

Multiculturalism is a demographic fact. In case of the Western democratic nations especially in the United States and in the United Kingdom continuous mass immigration is one of the main features of the societies of these nations since the first half of the nineteenth century. The USA and the UK have a mixed population where different languages, nationalities and races intermingle. America has a long history of welcoming and absorbing immigrants. The population of the United States with more recent influx of immigrants is in the vast diversity of its origins perhaps the most multicultural in the world. It has a remarkable diversity. As a result of inflows, the vast majority of American people have a close immigrant connection.

The society of America is calm, where all groups able to co-exist and interact freely on a level field without having to give up their cultural identities. It is a country where many pride themselves on having the freedom to be who they are without persecution. It has always been a multicultural society where people from many distinct ethnic backgrounds have come together and form the society as a whole. They do not believe they should have to fully assimilate, or giving up their
traditional culture or heritage from where their ancestors originated, just in order to become ‘American’.

Multiculturalism at the initial stage started as a way of expressing dissatisfaction with the long-held traditional ‘melting-pot’ view of Americans as people of diverse cultural backgrounds merging into a single harmonious culture. Through the melting-pot metaphor, distinct habits, customs and traditions associated with each and every immigrant have disappeared as people assimilate into the larger society of the United States of America. The term multiculturalism was first used in America during the Civil Rights Movements of the 1960s to bring attention to the repression of American black culture by prejudice and discrimination. Evidences of street riots of the 1960s informed White America about the inequalities of the African Americans for which the Black Americans serve notice that they would no longer be denied their own cultural history. Thus in its initial phase multiculturalism was a ‘wake-up’ call to black militancy to seek inclusion of black voices in all the spheres of American society.

Later on, due to post 1970s immigration pattern, when other American racial or ethnic groups appeared in greater numbers, voices which were previously silent, became more vocal about their rights which expanded the scope of multiculturalism. During the last quarter of the twentieth century, US immigration by Latinos and Asians surged, swelling their proportions of the total US population. Issues related to the rights of the women, the disabled and the ‘gay pride movement’ gained public attention and permeated the surface of American consciousness. As a result of increased awareness and debate, multiculturalism made its way into the academic and popular literature.
Multiculturalism has been embraced by many Americans and it has been promoted formally by academic institutions and popular literature. America’s multicultural strategy offers boundless and equal opportunities to every immigrant to achieve their goals through hard work and self-sacrifice. Racial and ethnic groups maintain many of their basic traits and cultural attributes, while at the same time their orientations change through marriage and interactions with other groups in society. The American Studies Curriculum serves to illustrate this shift in attitude. The curriculum, which had for decades relied upon the ‘melting pot’ metaphor as an organising framework, began to employ the alternative notion of the ‘American mosaic’. Multiculturalism, in the context of the ‘American mosaic’ celebrates the unique cultural heritage of racial and ethnic groups, although some of them seek to preserve their native languages and lifestyles. In a sense, individuals can be Americans and at the same time claim other identities, including those based on racial and ethnic heritage, gender and sexual preference.

The core principles of multiculturalism include human rights, to speak one’s own language, practice one’s culture and religion and for these, practices are to be acknowledged and promoted in society. In a multicultural society like the United States and the United Kingdom, providing multicultural activities is a right of each and every immigrant. These countries are made up of people from diverse cultures and backgrounds and it is each person’s right to have their culture respected, accepted and celebrated in the way that they choose subject to laws and rules. Multiculturalism has been used to create a sense of the equal importance of all cultures, and therefore the equality of all people, it does not matter what their cultural origins. It promotes a pluralistic approach and presents the feasibility of cultures maintaining distinct identities. In it “the individual maintains a positive identity as a member of his/her
Multicultural states like the United States and the United Kingdom point towards the presence of different culturally defined groups within its territory. In America each individual immigrant and each group of immigrants assimilate into American society at their own pace. The idea of the ‘melting pot’ gives opportunities to all the immigrant cultures to mix and amalgamate without state intervention. Hatred and intolerance have no place there. The society of whether America or Great Britain is calm, where all groups able to co-exist and interact freely on a level field without having to give up their cultural identities. It is a country where many pride themselves on having the freedom to be who they are without persecution. It has always been a multicultural society where people from many distinct ethnic backgrounds have come together and form a society as a whole. Ideologies of America, including democracy, individual rights, freedom and the accompanying realities of a society permit class mobility which gives new ideas of nationality to all the immigrants-- of Americanness and Indianness. They do not believe they should have to fully assimilate, or giving up their traditional culture or heritage from where their ancestors originated, just in order to become ‘American’.

Multiculturalism is about learning how to tolerate difference, ambiguity and ambivalence. A multicultural society learns how to cope with diversity rather than how to get rid of it. In the United States and in the United Kingdom different cultural groups are respected and provisions are made for the reproduction of their respective cultures. Even social diversity is celebrated as a value. Academic moves have been made to celebrate and accommodate diversity, and to provide space for it. Elementary
and secondary schools have adopted curricula to foster understanding of cultural diversity by exposing students to the customs and traditions of racial and ethnic groups. In the United States the Government agencies advocate tolerance for diversity by sponsoring Hispanic and Asian American /Pacific Islander heritage weeks. The United States post office has introduced stamps depicting prominent Americans from diverse backgrounds. The officialdom and social service agencies actively promote events to foster ethnic pride and glorify the city’s multi-ethnic character and multi-ethnic history. Every group has its own festival or parade. The largest is West Indian American Day Parade on every Labour Day. Apart from this, Asian Lunar New Year, Purim and Passover, the Feast of the Assumption, the Mudim Holiday of Id-Al-Adha and the Hindu festival Diwali is celebrated widely in the United States. Cinco de Mayo and St. Patrick’s Day is celebrated by all Americans in schools, office etc. They are not restricted to any particular community.

Like the United States, the Great Britain has a multi-ethnic and multicultural society. The popularity of multiculturalism in Britain is seen on its ongoing ethnic and cultural transformation. According to the New York Times, by the end of this decade, “Leicester may become the first British city with a non-white majority” (Sommer 149). In such multicultural and democratic society no one is deprived of fundamental rights such as freedom of opinion, freedom of speech and religion, nor of their right to their cultural tradition. The Great Britain demands that all citizens are treated as equals:

What is to be avoided at all costs is the existence of ‘first-class’ and ‘second-class’ citizens. The adherence to the “ideal of authenticity” (938) and society’s duty to avoid ‘other-induced distortions’ (37) form the basic rules of a multicultural society, which is required not only to
give status to “something that is not universally shared” (39) but also to acknowledge the “equal value of different cultures” (64) (qtd. in Sommer 152).

The British left-wing intellectuals view the mixture of different cultures in Great Britain as an enrichment of society.

Nature, culture and society exert tremendous influence on each of our lives, structuring our values, engineering our view of the world, and patterning our responses to experience. Human beings can not hold themselves apart from some form of cultural influence. No one is culture free. Socially and psychologically every person is a product of the interweaving of cultures in the twentieth century. Multiculturalism suggests a human being whose identifications and loyalties transcend the boundaries of nationalism and whose commitments are pinned to a larger vision of the global community. For example we are reminded daily of this phenomenon. A Canadian family, meanwhile, decorates their home with sculptures and paintings imported from Pakistan, India or Ceylon. Around the world the stream of the world’s cultures merge together to form new currents of human interaction which is a symbol of the mingling and melding of human cultures i.e. multiculture.

A person, either born or brought up in such a multicultural country/society embodies a core process of self-verification that is grounded in both the universality of the human condition and the diversity of cultural forms. Individual is emotionally and intellectually committed to the basic unity of all human beings while at the same time recognizing, legitimizing, accepting and appreciating the differences that exist between people of different cultures. Such a multicultural person can not be defined by the languages he speaks, the number of countries he/she has visited, nor is defined
by his profession, place of residence. Instead individual is recognized by a configuration of outlooks and world view, by the way the interconnectedness of life is reflected in thought and action and by the way he or she remains open to the imminence of experience. Such a person does not at all eliminate cultural differences. Rather the person seeks to preserve whatever is most valid, significant and valuable in each culture as a way of enriching and helping to form the whole. As a result it affects his/her identity. Identity is not in the past to be found but in the future to be constructed.

The identity of a multicultural person is more fluid and mobile, more susceptible to change, more open to variation. It is an identity based not on a ‘belongingness’ which implies either owing or being owned by culture, but on a style of self-consciousness that is capable of negotiating ever new formations of reality. A person is neither totally a part of nor totally apart from his or her culture, instead he/she lives on the boundary. In the words of Salman Rushdie:

To migrate is certainly to lose language and home, to be defined by others. To become invisible or, even worse, a target...But the migrant is not simply transformed by his act; he also transforms his new world. Migrants may well become mutants, but it is out of such hybridization that newness can emerge (Rushdie 210).

Women are the bearers of cultures. Cultures travel, take root or get dislocated and individual while flying from one country to another carry their culture within them. When confronted with another culture, apart from keeping their own culture, individuals try to merge and cope with the other culture. Individuals who live at the juncture between two or more than two cultures claim to belonging to both cultures
because human beings are not free from any cultures. Such person born into one culture and live on the other.

Like many immigrant writers from third world countries in America Jhumpa Lahiri is an Indian American and a second generation Indian immigrant. She was born in London of Bengali parents and grew up in the United States and is now a resident of United States. She married a Guatemalan Greek Journalist. Likewise, another diasporic writer Sunetra Gupta is a first generation Indian immigrant but her link of being a multicultural person is different. She was born in Calcutta but spent her childhood in countries like Ethiopia, Zambia and Liberia and now lives in England. She has married to an Irish gentleman. Although she is a first generation Indian immigrant, her experience of life and through the cultures of each and every country where she has visited is like that of a second generation Indian immigrant who lives on two or more than two cultures. Therefore, her worldview and perceptions is very different from the first generation Indian immigrants.

Both these diasporic writers have the imaginative perspectives on the mixed cultures in their writings. They are diasporas as a matter of their personal choice. Their experiences in more than three continents have left an indelible impression on their lives, attitudes and works. Women diasporic writers do not publicly express their feelings of dislocations caused by immigration. They choose multiculturalism as an adaptation in their creative strategy. The women writers vocalise their inner feelings and write on issues that concerned them. Being cosmopolitan and having direct experience of two or more than two cultures, these women writers express their thoughts through their writings. Their experiences of having diverse cultures fuel their desire to write fictions or short stories which can be termed as literature belonging to multicultural society. Their positive attitude of adoption seems comfortable with the
concept of multiculturalism. Their perspectives are changing and being changed. Both these writers have expressed sincere efforts to create a cultural space through their writings which helps them to stand tall. In this process they have created a unique space for themselves in the adopted land. Their efforts at a personal level and their perceptions as seen through their fictional characters in the short stories and novels provide a key to unravel different society and culture. Each one of these writers, a second generation woman writer of Indian origin and an Indian writer in a white society, is a story by itself.

Jhumpa Lahiri and Sunetra Gupta add shades to the spectrum of multicultural literature. As immigrants their identity operates through narratives which can best be performed through literature. “Literature”, wrote Anton Chekhov “is called an art because it depicts life as it is. It’s object is unconditional and honest truth” (qtd. in Ramanathan 196). Multicultural literature translates the self for a wider public. Literature is the product of the act of writing which is a definition of the self. Multicultural literature fulfils the “productive task of reconceptualising the central components for social, political, and ethical theory” (Sommer, 157). Therefore the themes, characters and the stories are thus a true reflection of the reality of life of every age. Diasporic writers exercise a great impact on the culture, society and history of their adopted country. At the same time, they nostalgically recall their motherland--its customs, culture, language, peoples and imaginatively use these things in their writings. They have produced a rich harvest of multicultural literature.

Diasporic writers like Lahiri and Gupta take the reality of the diasporic life of the people as the basic theme of their literary work to embellish it by their imagination. In their personal lives, they have had to make innumerable adjustments in terms of alienation, racism and changing value system. Being intellectuals, both of
them have put to use their direct experiences of living in the diaspora and being women, they have done this with great sensitivity to express through their writing the various nuances in the life of immigrants of all ages, sexes and generations. Their characters are transnational migrants travelling from their home in India to the United States or to England. Belongingness to ‘home’ in the sense of their ‘roots’, ‘nativity’ and memory of the past frequently haunt their mind. The agonies of their existential struggle in America’s civilizational process and the anxieties for the past dominate the theme of their novels. Their characters are also diasporas who struggle for the creation of new identities, new spaces for growth, new culture to adopt, either composite or multi-culture. Their narratives of physical and psychic dislocations and the fluidity of new concept add new aesthetics to their writings. Lahiri and Gupta provide a diasporic experience as well as to the notion of hybrid identities in their novels.

The writings of Lahiri and Gupta are a product of self-explorations. Both these writers like Bharati Mukherjee, reflect the spirit of immigrant writings by keeping themselves open to new experiences. As immigrants, they belong to the country of adoption but their view points to the society and its culture is multicultural. Both of them have remarkable contributions to diasporic literature which add richness and diversity.

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