CHAPTER SIX: FROM PHILOSOPHY TO DIASPORIC THEORY

In the philosophical realm of thought identity, especially personal identity, is a construct in abstraction and therefore of debatable nature. Identity has been often understood as matter of degree of sameness but strictly speaking identity is a one to one relationship that anything has only with itself. This paradoxical axiom has kept many a philosopher's midnight oil burning. But a sort of amicability has been reached as per David Lewis: “Identity certainly cannot be a matter of degree . . . [but] personal identity may be a matter of degree because personhood is a matter of degree, even though identity is not” (Quoted in Lyon 458-9). A rough analogy may be provided by the fact that life and / or death cannot be a matter of degree, but consciousness perhaps can. Philosophical theories of personal identity have found various proponents. A. J. Lyon, in his essay “Problems of Personal Identity”, raises the central question of how people remain the same through change. This in turn implies that there is something that does not change and “that that is what a person essentially is” (Lyon 441). The something that does not change is itself an entity whose existence is disputable and over time has been variously identified as “form” (Aristotle), “soul” (Descartes), “memory” (Locke), “relationship” (Hume) and “continuity” (Parfit). When the identity of the identifier itself is disputed it becomes preposterous to assume that any one of them is the determinant of “what a person essentially is”.xii It becomes a problem of plenty where there are too many ways by which persons can identify themselves. This does not lead into a blind alley but rather give a premise for logical arguments to continue into open-ended conclusions providing opportunity for a variety of interpretations and widening the area of research.
The widening area of research has seen the rise of interdisciplinarity that has facilitated the seamless flow of the question of identity from the domain of philosophy into literature and various other streams of humanities. Literature is a very potent instrument to test philosophical theories of identity. In fact literature has the power to show the subtle changes in the identity of a person even when the character is passive. In Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the Ancient Mariner detains a man to tell him his story. The man is first identified as "next of kin" of the bridegroom and is a reluctant listener to the Mariner's tale. As he listens, the Wedding-Guest's identity becomes that of a spellbound listener; when initially he reacts he is an active listener and as the Mariner's tale progresses, the Wedding Guest becomes a passive listener. When the poem ends he is "a sadder and wiser man". The listener of the Mariner's tale, unlike the Mariner himself, is a passive character, yet the very act of listening itself subtly changes his identity.

This is nothing new for there are many characters in literature who have fashioned themselves by telling and listening to stories. Cervantes' Don Quixote is a prime example in this regard. According to Kathleen Wheeler "the telling of stories is the defining characteristic of human identity" (Wheeler 15).

Writers demonstrate [...] that story-telling, whether spoken or thought in our daily lives or written down in literature, is the constitutive force in all identity creation. [...] we create our selves out of the stories we tell ourselves and each other, and the stories told by our parents, teachers, and friends. (Wheeler 18)

Since Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* first appeared writers have explicitly taken up the topic of construction of identity for exploration. Be it Kafka's "K"
or Camus’s “Outsider”, for writers the realm of “identity creation” has become de rigueur. In *The Location of Culture* Homi K. Bhabha identifies the different traditions in the discourse of identity:

the philosophical tradition of identity as the process of self-reflection in the mirror of (human) nature; and the anthropological view of the difference of human identity as located in the division of Nature / Culture. In the postcolonial text the problem of identity returns as a persistent questioning of the frame, the space of representation, where the image [. . .] is confronted with its difference, its Other. (46)

Bhabha goes on further to write: “Shifting the frame of identity from the field of vision to the space of writing interrogates the third dimension [depth of perspective] that gives profundity to the representation of Self and Other” (Bhabha, *Culture* 48). Cultural theorists have identified this agency of depth as the consciousness of the past, echoing, as Bhabha points out, John Locke’s view on identity.

Locke’s criterion of identity is that a person is the same person over a period of time if the person possesses a “continuity of consciousness”. In Sunetra Gupta’s novel *Memories of Rain* the diasporic Indian character Moni’s mind is constantly flooded with “gray-feathered memories” (Gupta, *Memories* 128) of her native land, India. Although, Moni is inflicted with the pain of having an unfaithful husband, who is quite indifferent to her feelings, her grief gets resonated in her mind through Tagorean lyrics of nostalgia, remembrances, and a “song of rain” (Gupta, *Memories* 7).

in the dense obsession of this deep dark rain

you tread secret, silent, like the night, past all eyes.
the heavy eyelids of dawn are lowered to the futile wail of the winds
clotted clouds shroud the impenitent sky
birdless fields
barred doors upon your desolate path.

oh beloved wanderer, I have flung open my doors to the storm
do not pass me by like the shadow of a dream. (Gupta, Memories 10)

Moni’s recollection of that day in “the flood of ’78” when Anthony had first come to their Ballygunge home in Calcutta initiates the process of recalling the past. Moni’s sense of identity is Lockean because it is a construct based on memory. The metaphor of rain becomes a Lockean substratum (of memories) for Moni.

Moni’s dominating memories of India pronounces her Indian identity and helps her to decide to leave Anthony and come back to India. Similar is the case of Adit in Anita Desai’s novel Bye-Bye Blackbird. Adit’s decision to return to India is guided as much by circumstances as by long term memory of Bengali folk music and Bengali feast prepared by his mother. When Dev gazing at the shops on Portobello Road filled with antiques wonders at “the young English people’s obsession with the past” (Desai, Blackbird 70) it becomes clear that the past plays a vital role in the creation of identity. Dennis Walder points out that “the past figures importantly in people’s self-representations in general, because it is through memories of the past that we represent ourselves to ourselves” (Walder 12-13). Such is the obsession with the past that often people employ techniques to assist them to remember their past or aid in their memory.
Mrs. Sen in Jhumpa Lahiri’s short story “Mrs. Sen’s” lives in Boston and has the voices of her family members recorded in an audio cassette to keep refreshing her memory of her family in Calcutta. By refreshing her memory Mrs. Sen keeps her Indian identity intact. Mrs. Sen has it recorded in her cassette the “things that happened the day I [Mrs Sen] left India” (Lahiri, _Interpreter_ 128). It is as if the day Mrs. Sen left India is to always remain in the near past — just yesterday — and when she returns back to India the memory of the years spent in Boston will only be a transient presence in her mind. Thereby she is to have a continuity of consciousness of being in India and, in Lockean sense, an Indian identity. Even the activities that keep her involved in Boston, like dicing vegetables, cooking a whole fish, and so on, are reminiscent of her life in Calcutta. When she tries her hand in learning to drive a car, an activity that is not reminiscent of her life in India, she utterly fails because at this point her American identity becomes discontinuous with her Indian one.

Ashima Ganguly from Jhumpa Lahiri’s novel _The Namesake_ is not as obsessed with her past as Mrs. Sen is, perhaps, because she has been in the US over a longer period of time than Mrs. Sen. But Ashima also keeps refreshing her memory constantly:

She has saved her dead parents’ letters on the top shelf of her closet, in a large white purse she used to carry in the seventies until the strap broke. Once a year she dumps the letters onto her bed she goes through them, devoting an entire day to her parents’ words, allowing herself a good cry. She revisits their affection and concern, conveyed weekly, faithfully, across continents — all the bits of news that had had nothing to do with her life in Cambridge but which had sustained her in those days nevertheless. (Lahiri, _Namesake_ 160-61)
Ashima Ganguly revisits the memories in her mental landscape. Ashima is not the same person who came to the US years ago after being married to Ashoke and yet because she possesses a continuity of consciousness she is the same person.

On the other hand, Tara Chatterjee in Bharati Mukherjee’s novel *Desirable Daughters* has fashioned herself as a Westerner in the US and yet she wants to tell the story of her namesake Tara Lata Gangooly, who lived in India a century before she was born. It is because she wants to identify herself with her ancestor for, according to Lockean dictum, as far as consciousness can be extended backwards “so far reaches the identity of the person” (Bhabha *Culture* 48). Identity becomes somewhat synonymous with identification. Individuals residing in a diaspora are seen as to be forever tantalized between the homeland and the hostland – “living without belonging in one, belonging without living in the other” (Mishra, *Diaspora* 16). The early diaspora theorists like William Safran, Gabriel Sheffer, Walker Conner, Robin Cohen, and others dealt with diaspora as one of the poles of the bipolar (and sometimes triadic to include the hostland) formation homeland / diaspora. This scene of theorizing is aptly termed by Sudesh Mishra in *Diaspora Criticism* as the “scene of dual territoriality” (16). Moreover, this generates “a particular kind of awareness” (Vertovec 146), known as diaspora consciousness, which is “an intellectualization of an existential condition” (Mishra, *Diaspora* 40). Identification with a historical heritage fuels this consciousness. In such a situation the “constitutive role played by memory in identity formations” (Mishra, *Diaspora* 16) is self-evident.

But the idea of search for lost roots is often questioned by some postcolonial literary critics like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: “If there’s one thing I distrust, in fact more than
distrust, despise and have contempt for, it is people looking for roots" (Smith 249). The distrust is often not without reason. Tara’s sister Padma’s husband, Harish Mehta, finds his identification in the nostalgia of Tara and Padma, which is akin to a false memory claim. It is thereby purporting inauthenticity. Harish’s “family, part of the great Punjabi uprooting of 1947, never reestablished itself successfully in India. […] He was a man rooted in nostalgia, with no place to put it” (Mukherjee, Daughters 181). Thus migrancy exposes all apparent fixity and questions the formations of identity based on “ancestry, passport or geography” (Smith 249).

Arjun Appadurai and Carol Breckenridge write that “diasporas always leave a trail of collective memory about another place and time and create new maps of desire and of attachment” (Quoted in Vertovec 148) yet there is not necessarily a consolidation of identity:

More and more diasporic groups have memories whose archaeology is fractured. These collective recollections, often built on the harsh play of memory and desire over time, have many trajectories and fissures which sometimes correspond to generational politics. Even for apparently well-settled diasporic groups, the macro-politics of reproduction translates into micro-politics of memory, among friends, relatives and generations. (Quoted in Vertovec 148)

Thus Steven Vertovec writes that “compounded by the awareness of multi-locality, the ‘fractured memories’ of diaspora consciousness produce a multiplicity of histories, ‘communities’, and selves” (Vertovec 148). This scene has been described by Sudesh Mishra as “the scene of situational laterality” (16) and it has been exemplified by theorists like Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, James Clifford, Avtar Brah, and others. They see
diasporas “in terms of lateral, peripatetic and multipolar (as distinct from linear, fixed and bipolar) positionalities” (Mishra, *Diaspora* 17). Here “homogenised, circumscribed and nationalised territories no longer function as privileged referents for identity formation” (Mishra, *Diaspora* 17).

According to Avtar Brah “the concept of diaspora signals processes of multi-locality across geographical, cultural and psychic boundaries” (Mishra, *Diaspora* 84). Tara’s identifies with many locales – Mishtigunj in Bangladesh, Calcutta in India, and San Francisco in the US. Padma too has multi-locale identification – Calcutta, London, and New York. Such is also true for Jhumpa Lahiri’s characters like Moushumi, who identifies with Calcutta, Paris, and Boston. The narrator of the story “The Third and Final Continent” and even little Lilia in the story “When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine” face similar predicaments. Identifications with these locales are some at the geographical level, some at the cultural level, some at the psychic level, and often many at multiple levels. That is why theorists lay “emphasis on the being and becoming of deracinated subjects in specific situational contexts” (Mishra, *Diaspora* 174), whereby individuals are not identified by any single identifier. Race, gender, class, geographical location, nationality, sexual orientation, political affiliation, religion, ethnicity, and other singularities are not given primacy but rather are seen as categories where individuals are positioned according to situational requirements, much as every human being is, as Amartya Sen argues in *Identity and Violence*. Through multi affiliations even power relations get appropriated as Avtar Brah says in *Cartographies of Diaspora*: “A multi-axial performative conception of power highlights the ways in which a group constituted as a ‘minority’ along one dimension of differentiation may be constructed as a ‘majority’
235

along another” (Mishra, Diaspora 81). Both Ashoke Ganguli in Massachusetts and
Bishwapiya Chatterjee in San Francisco are minority Indians in the US but Ashoke
Ganguli also belongs to the majority population of educated professionals and
Bishwapiya Chatterjee finds himself in the majority of rich entrepreneurs. In fact,
Bishwapiya Chatterjee is taken as so much part of the majority that he becomes the
target of the terrorist Abbas Sattar Hai, who belongs to a different sort of minority.

Terrorists like Abbas Sattar Hai or Sukkhi follow ideologies that are misleading in the
sense that they propagate apparently originary singular identity categories – be it religion,
race, class, or any other such conceptual differentiation. Homi K. Bhabha says that, “what
is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives
of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are
produced in the articulation of cultural differences” (Culture 1). But often the idea of
cultural differences is misinterpreted and so Bhabha puts forward the caveat:

The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of pre-
given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social
articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going
negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of
historical transformation. (Bhabha, Culture 2)

When difference is sought it is done so as to encourage cultural hybridity – not only side-
by-side residing of cultures, as a sort of cultural plurality without any interaction. The
crossing-over of cultures is what is desired so that through inter-cultural interactions the
participants are constantly enriched. Thereby vestigial customs, rituals, and other time-
arrested identifiers will be easier to dispense with. There can be no identification with the
past if it is not appropriated with the present as much as there can be no identification with the present if past is not acknowledged alongside. Bhabha writes that:

The recognition that tradition bestows is a partial kind of identification. In restaging the past it introduces other, incommensurable cultural temporalities into the invention of tradition. This process estranges any immediate access to an originary identity or a 'received' tradition. (Culture 2)

One has to understand this process of estrangement and not take a narrow-minded view in giving primacy to any partial identification. Gogol, Moushumi, Tara, Padma, and eventually Ashima and Arun understand that their identification with the country India or Hindu culture is only partial.

In the US Jasmine, an Indian, is a minority but so is Du, a Vietnamese, as are the Kanjobal women who are sheltered by Lillian Gordon, and the Hmongs for whom Mother Ripplemeyer works. Jasmine’s present identification with fellow minorities estranges her from her ethnic past and this is a change that is a natural process of life and survival. Jasmine is influenced by Du and equally she influences him. Avtar Brah writes,

Border crossings do not occur only across the dominant / dominated dichotomy, but ... equally, there is a traffic within cultural formations of the subordinated groups, and ... these journeys are not always mediated through the dominant culture(s). (Mishra, Diaspora 77)

Inter-community interaction is one type of mediation towards hybridity. This cutting across ethnicity is as much a border crossing as is the actual migration from one geographical locale to another. Boundaries exist physically only in maps otherwise they have just notional presence in the form of barbed wire on land or in the form of
perception in the mind. Thus to cross such notional markings is to see the demarcations not as impediments but as gateways. That is why Bhabha reiterates that boundary is a “place from which something begins its presencing in a movement not dissimilar to the ambulant, ambivalent articulation of the beyond” (Culture 5).

When Ashoke Ganguli decides to go to USA he sees beyond the boundary at a place to start a new life. When Gogol looks at India he does not look back but he looks beyond his American identity. Moushumi looks beyond her American life when she decides to go to Paris. Ashima Ganguli, when she decides to live life alternately six months in India and six months in the US, articulates the movement of the beyond. It is not far fetched when Bhabha says: “It is the trope of our times to locate the question of culture in the realm of the beyond [...] For there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the ‘beyond’: an exploratory, restless movement” (Culture 1). It is this exploring the beyond that compels Ashoke to go to Ohio, where he ultimately meets his death; Gogol to go to New York, where he experiences the American life; Moushumi to go to Paris, where she starts to live an uninhibited life; Tara to go to New Jersey, where she comes to know about her sister Padma’s past; Jasmine to go to Iowa, where she meets Bud; Niharika to go to Oxford, where she elopes with Daniel Faraday. Life in the beyond marks the space that is dynamic, pregnant, and progressive.

Bhabha in Location of Culture explains the concept of beyond both in terms of an opportunity as well as a challenge:

‘Beyond’ signifies spatial distance, marks progress, promises the future; but our intimations of exceeding the barrier or boundary – the very act of going beyond – are unknowable, unrepresentable, without a return to the ‘present’ which, in the
process of repetition, becomes disjunct and displaced. The imaginary of spatial
distance – to live somehow beyond the border of our times – throws into relief the
temporal, social differences that interrupt our collusive sense of cultural
contemporaneity. The present can no longer be simply envisaged as a break or a
bonding with the past and the future. (Bhabha, Culture 4)

That the present is not just a bonding between the past and the future is very crucial
because it brings into prominence its own vitality. Being the product of the past and the
producer of the future, it is the present that becomes the liminal space of movement,
action, and appropriation. Thereby it also becomes the ground, the cause, and the
justification for hybridity. Bhabha gives the example of the stairwell to explain the idea
of hybridity thus:

The stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes
the process of symbolic interaction, [. . .] This interstitial passage between fixed
identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains
difference without an or imposed hierarchy. (Culture 4)

The space between two fixed identifications is the place of negotiation that has the
possibility of hybridity. It is the place of hyphen for Gogol, Moushumi, Tara, and
Jasmine, in being Indo-American, and perhaps even for Debendranath, Niharika, Adit,
and Dev in being Indo-Anglian. The hyphen is the symbol of differentiation as well as the
symbol of join and yet it has a meaning in itself. That meaning is hybridity.

It is perhaps for this reason that Avtar Brah sees the hyphen, the border space, as the
space of the diaspora. For Brah it is a “paradoxical non-space” and for Bhabha it is a
“spectral third space” (Mishra, Diaspora 83). Sudesh Mishra says thus:
In marking the joint / rupture between one space and another (or several others), the border is clearly devoid of its own space and yet indispensable to spatial categories. It is the function of the border / hyphen to break up structured unities and pre-given stabilities while positing them on every side. (Diaspora 83)

He further explains thus:

From the vantage point of the hyphen / border, one is never solely one thing or another, but altogether something else – a veritable third. This third may be a void as well as a surplus or overdetermination. It is a void in that the border eviscerates all defined spaces (nationalist, cultural, class, gender or otherwise) and a surplus because all spaces jostle for definition at the border. It is because of the capacity of the border to hold such contradictory aspects in tension, yet always deferring them at the point of epiphany, that diasporists have found it, together with the hyphen, a handy metaphor for their theoretical excursions. (Diaspora 83-84)

The symbolic space of the border is the only place from where one can have perspectives on all sides. When Arun takes up the American preoccupation of jogging “like Rod, like all those others” (Desai, Fasting 200), he joins in the struggle to find “through endeavour most primitive, through strain and suffering, that open space, that unfettered vacuum where the undiscovered America still lies” (Desai, Fasting 200). Arun gains this point of view by residing at the border. But the epiphany is that this “open space,” the “unfettered vacuum,” is the border itself. Just as the sight of the border marks the physical discovery of the land, the vantage of the border marks the metaphorical discovery of the open space. America is discovered at its borders – at the intersections of ethnicity, religion, class, gender, and so on.
That is why the diasporas are no longer seen as “suspended between geopolitical ends and origins or between imagined communities of here and there” (Mishra, *Diaspora* 174). Instead, in the rhetoric of postmodernism, diasporas “by differing from other social entities and deferring their claims to territorial identification, they take on the characteristics of the detouring supplements” (Mishra, *Diaspora* 174). This postponement of territorial identification is due to the undecidability of the situation of being one and not the other that life in the borderland invests on the individual. The hovering due to such ambivalence is the exilic movement that “occupies the borderland between the domestication of human consciousness and the estrangement of the unconscious (Bhabha, “Arrivals” xi). The deferment becomes in Bhabha’s terms a kind of amnesia in diasporic life – a kind of transcendentalism. It offers both an explanation and an abstraction. But the prefix “trans” has somehow been rediscovered in the concrete aspect of “transnationalism” whereby “‘diaspora’ is described as involving the *production and reproduction of transnational social and cultural phenomena*” (Vertovec 153). In Aihwa Ong’s words:

*Trans* denotes both moving through space or across lines, as well as changing the nature of something. Besides suggesting new relations between nation-states and capital, transnationality also alludes to the transversal, the translational, and the transgressive aspects of contemporary behaviour and imagination that are incited, enabled, and regulated by the changing logics of state and capitalism.

(Mishra, *Diaspora* 18-19)

Movement and change become the keywords allying displacement with self-fashioning. Sudesh Mishra gives greater currency to the phenomenon by proclaiming about the
migrants: "Engaged in 'border' practices, they flout bounded forms, structures and affects. They are migrants yet exist 'beyond' and 'outside of' the usual definition of the term: hence 'transmigrants'" (Diaspora 174). Transmigrants are not migrants from only one place and transnationals are not nationals of only one nation. They are global citizens.

Ashoke, Ashima, Gogol, Moushumi, Tara, Bishwapriya, and Niharika are more or less global citizens. They cannot have a definite belonging to only one place. Movement characterizes them. Moreover they all live somewhat displaced lives – of the borderland experience. And they constitute a part of the Indian diaspora. In this sense diaspora becomes a collating term for all Indians living outside India for whatever reasons that might be. Current definitions of diaspora reflect these modifications.

'Diaspora' is the term often used today to describe practically any population which is considered 'deterritorialized' or 'transnational' – that is, whose cultural origins are said to have arisen in a land other than that in which they currently reside, and whose social, economic and political networks cross the borders of nation-states or, indeed, span the globe. (Vertovec 141)

Arun, the student in the US, and Jasmine, the illegal immigrant in the US, both belong to the network whether they want or not. "Among academics, transnational intellectuals and 'community leaders' alike, 'diaspora' has become a loose reference conflating categories such as immigrants, guest-workers, ethnic and 'racial' minorities, refugees, expatriates and travellers" (Vertovec 141). Such is the integration implied by the term diaspora.

According to Avtar Brah "diasporic identities are at once local and global. They are networks of transnational identifications encompassing 'imagined' and 'encountered'
communities” (Mishra, *Diaspora* 84). But there is an apparent dichotomy. If there are networks of transnational identifications then there will definitely be one branch of the network that will reach the homeland. That is why Brah says that “the concept of diaspora places the discourse of ‘home’ and ‘dispersion’ in creative tension, inscribing a homing desire while simultaneously critiquing discourses of fixed origins” (Mishra, *Diaspora* 84). Moreover, the ease of travel and communication increasingly keep one attached to one’s homeland even in the transnational context. But this attachment is very different from the attachment of the colonial diaspora or pre-globalization diaspora. It is as Bhabha says:

> The borderline work of culture demands an encounter with ‘newness’ that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation. [...] The ‘past-present’ becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living. (*Culture* 7)

It is seeing one’s homeland and origins as matters of “necessity” and not with a sense of nostalgia that living in borderland teaches. This attachment is not what Adit feels for India, rather, it is what Gogol feels for India. Ashima presents a perfect picture of how India gets transformed for her from the land of her nostalgic past to the land of her shifting present. Ashima does not have to store letters or record voices of her loved ones in audio cassettes anymore because in the modern or rather the postmodern world all destinations are always close by at the turnpikes. It is this facility, brought about by cheaper cost of travel and electronic propinquity, especially through the Internet and the other media, which has aided the borderland experience. According to Robin Cohen, “in the age of cyberspace, a diaspora can, to some degree, be held together or re-created
through the mind, through cultural artefacts and through a shared imagination” (Quoted in Vertovec 147). But there is again a caveat raised by Homi K. Bhabha: “There is a danger that the ‘presentism’ and simultaneity celebrated on the Net, however seductive, may drain everyday life of its historical memory” (“Arrivals” viii). That is why “the term ‘diaspora’ has been critiqued as being theoretically celebrated, while methodologically indistinct and ahistorical” (Braziel 6). Although the “presentism” may negate nostalgic memory it should not wipe out the historical archives.

The recent scene in diaspora theory, dubbed by Mishra as “the scene of archival specificity” (18), has seen the recasting of the memory criterion in archive-based diasporic histories. “Instead of drawing on an assortment of diasporic clusters to frame a general theory of diasporas, the third scene perform an archaeology of specific diasporas” (Mishra, Diaspora 18). This is in response to the “worrying elision of historical differences within particular ethno-diasporas as well as between comparable ethno-diasporas” (Mishra, Diaspora 174). Theorists like Martin Manalansan, Donna Gabaccia, Brent Hayes Edwards, Martin Baumann, and others have shown the “fractures within a given ethnonym, so that one may no longer speak coherently and holistically of a single Chinese or Indian or African diaspora” (Mishra, Diaspora 174). The “specific diachronic character” is due to the “special weight given to the socio-economic context in which diasporas come into being” (Mishra, Diaspora 174). That is why though the second scene participants have worked with “the key concepts of hybridity, double consciousness, transnationalism, liminal zone, third time-space, multilocality and hyphenated subjectivity” (Mishra, Diaspora 174), there is something amiss. The something that is missing is the socio-economic criterion. Mishra goes on to say that “the category of
transnational capital instigates the mirror category of transmigrants who, in turn, engage in transnational or hybrid cultural, ideological and aesthetic practices" (*Diaspora* 174). Thereby, he links capital — the economic criterion — with the diasporic theory and acknowledges that "the critical genre stands to benefit from more rigorous encounter with the economic part of the scheme" (*Mishra, Diaspora* 175). So this is where the latest phase of diasporic theory is headed towards — seeing the diaspora in the context of both culture and economy, and importantly without neglecting the historical archives.

One of the earliest theorists, who dealt with the economic aspect of diaspora, is Arjun Appadurai in his influential essay "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." Anita Mannur and Jana Evans Braziel in introducing the essay write: "Building on Benedict Anderson's work on the role of print capitalism and imagination in creating imagined national communities, this essay explores how new imagined worlds have become a vital part of the global economy" (25). Sudesh Mishra sees Appadurai as "one of the few analysts to have engaged with the socio-economic aspects of globalization in a profoundly complex and original fashion" (*Diaspora* 162). Appadurai describes five disjunctured zones that comprise the global cultural economy: ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, and ideoscapes. He defines each of them as:

By *ethnoscape* I mean the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and persons constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to effect the politics of (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree. [. . .] By *technoscape* I mean the global configuration, also ever fluid, of technology, and of the fact that technology, both high and low, both mechanical
and informational, now moves at high speeds across various kinds of previously impervious boundaries. [. . .] it is useful to speak as well of finanscapes, since the disposition of global capital is now a more mysterious, rapid, and difficult landscape to follow than ever before, as currency markets, national stock exchanges, and commodity speculations move mega-monies through national turnstiles at blinding speed, and vast absolute implications for small differences in percentage points and time units. [. . .] Mediascapes refer to the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations, and film production studios), which are now available to a growing number of private and public interests throughout the world, and to the images of the world created by these media. [. . .] Ideoscapes are also concatenations of images, but they are often directly political and frequently have to do with the ideologies of state and the counter-ideologies of movements explicitly oriented to capturing state power or a piece of it. (Appadurai 32-34)

Just as Stuart Hall says, following Benedict Anderson's argument in Imagined Communities, that communities "are to be distinguished, not by their falsity / genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (245), the same argument may hold for Appadurai's imagined landscape too. But the crucial point that Appadurai makes in relation to the five "scapes" that he has coined is that there are "growing disjunctures" among them. "After identifying the bundle of traits that define each of his segmented flows, Appadurai observes that the segments relate to one another in profoundly disjunctive and fortuitous ways" (Mishra, Diaspora 157). Each of Appadurai's imagined landscape as a "fluid segment forms a terminally autonomous category locked in a
disjunction yet dynamic loop with the others. [...] This is the way of the rhizome as imagined by Deleuze and Guattari" (Mishra, *Diaspora* 159).

Sudesh Mishra further explains that Appadurai's approach "does away with the effectivity that allows one segment (human migration) to become fundamentally inflected by another (economics) without the displacing interference of a third factor (media images) or a fourth (political ideas) or a fifth (multinational technoscapes)" (*Diaspora* 159). So, ethnoscape, which is the main concern of diaspora study, is found to be in a complex relationship of "disjunctive flow" with all other landscapes of Appadurai's *imagined worlds*. Mishra explains this with the example of the Indian diaspora in the US:

[...] the nationalist ideoscapes of certain transnational formations (such as the Indian diaspora in the United States) may be fundamentally out of joint with its complicity in global finanscapes that act to weaken the sovereignty of nation-states. (*Diaspora* 157)

The diasporic Indian may be a nationalist and swear allegiance to the country of origin but, by being a willing participant to the transnationalist flow of human capital in the economy-driven globalized world, that very allegiance is weakened. Here lies the disjoint or disjunction where the ideoscape and the finanscape coexist in a complex relationship with each other. And this is not exactly peculiar of the age because even in the pre-globalized world the act of migration of the Indian indentured labourers was is disjoint with their fierce adherence to ethnic customs. In the post-world war world, when the West was in rapid transition, there was also this disjoint. In Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, when Dev argues with Adit that he would not like to stay in a racist England he also acknowledges that he would go back to India as an "England-returned" teacher
(17). The disjuncture is quite apparent. This disjuncture in the postmodern world takes an even more manifest form. Ashoke and Ashima from The Namesake; Tara from Desirable Daughters; Mrs. Sen from the short story "Mrs. Sen's", and perhaps even Mrs. Das from the short story "Interpreter of Maladies" all patently display this disjoint. They seem to have nationalist allegiance to India and yet as transnationals they rupture their allegiance.

Benedict Anderson's nation-state as an imagined political community is seen in the transnational context as challenged. Mishra, referring to Kachig Tololyan, writes about the weakening of the nation-state due to the border-crossing transnationalist flow:

Tololyan observes that although cross-border networks and population dispersion are as old as the hills, the modern nation-state is essentially a product of the Enlightenment era. [. . .]

[But the] current trans-border transmissions in finance, goods, services, peoples, cultures, allegiances and media effects are at odds with nation-oriented and nationally organized practices associated with classical forms of surplus accumulation. (Diaspora 132-34)

The classical forms of surplus accumulation (mercantile, plantation, industrial) gave the nation-state a privileged position as is evidenced in the archaeology of capital accumulation in the modern age, which is basically the post-Industrial Revolution age. But academicians are of the "opinion that since about 1945 the processes of capital accumulation have become gradually delinked from core industrial systems overseen by bourgeois nation-states" (Mishra, Diaspora 135). In such a context Appadurai's opinion fits in when he says that the "deterritorialized populations have turned the hyphen that
connects the nation to state into a sign of rupture rather than a figure of continuity" (Mishra, *Diaspora* 134).

The deterritorialized populations in a multicultural society strive to preserve their distinct ethnicity and this attempt runs counter to the homogenizing influence of the nation-state. The nation-state by the instrument of citizenship or nationality keeps a disparate population together. But as Robin Cohen states:

Unlike ethnicity, religion or diaspora, the nation-state is often too large and too amorphous an entity to be the object of intimate affection. Bonds of language, religion, culture and a sense of common history, and perhaps a common fate, impregnate a transnational relationship and give it an affective, intimate quality that formal citizenship or even long citizenship frequently lack. (Sharma 104)

Kavita A. Sharma makes it clear that the various commitments of a citizen at different levels of society – family, religion, ethnicity, profession, residence – sometimes overlap and sometimes act in conflict with each other thus deterritorializing one's identity. Quoting Robin Cohen, she writes:

National identities are challenged because "the world is being organized vertically by nation states and regions but horizontally by an overlapping, permeable, multiple system of interactions. This system creates communities not of place but of interest, based on shared opinions and beliefs, ethnicities, religions, cuisine, the consumption of medicines, lifestyles, fashion, music etc." (Sharma 100)

Moreover, and perhaps that is why so, there is a growing demand for dual citizenship. The second generation diasporic Indians like Gogol, Moushumi, Sonia, and Rabi are born in the West and hence they have Western citizenships by birth. They think of India only
as the place of their ancestral origin. But the first generation migrants have to choose between the citi-zenships of their place of origin and their place of residence. This is often a dilemmatic position. That is why "even dual citizenship has been argued as a human right. [. . .] The question raised in this concept is why should an individual lose a nationality when he would not otherwise do so if he were a national of only one state" (Sharma 101). Peter Kivisto writes that:

[. . .] about half the nations of the world today permit dual citizenship or nationality -- and pressure is being placed on other states to follow suit. [. . .] The United States, for example, does not recognize dual citizenship [. . .] On the other hand, dual citizenship is increasingly tolerated insofar as in recent years the government has not taken action to prosecute individuals holding dual citizenships.

(Kivisto 39)

It seems that the diaspora populations destabilize the nation by bringing the national identity into question. Every nation has an identity of its own. Kavita A. Sharma writes that "national identity, as Bhikhu Parekh points out, is the identity of a political community, its values and commitments, its characteristics ways of talking about itself and conducting its political affairs, its organizing principles and many such factors" (Sharma 103). But national identity is not a fixed entity. It is constantly changing because it is the population that makes the nation and not essentially the other way round. So when a deterritorialized population enters a nation-state they are to acculturate but acculturation also implies "a reciprocal or dialectical process wherein not only are the newcomers transformed, but so is the host society as a consequence of their presence" (Kivisto 29). Peter Kivisto, quoting Bhikhu Parekh, further writes:
Parekh has succinctly described this project: "Like any other society, a multicultural society needs a broadly shared culture to sustain it. Since it involves several cultures, the shared culture can only grow out of their interaction and should both respect and nurture their diversity and unite them around a common way of life." (Kivisto 36)

Multiculturalism, in this sense, is not exactly "plural monoculturalism" of maintaining distinct group boundaries as Amartya Sen has critiqued in *Identity and Violence*. It is in David Hollinger's terms a "cosmopolitanism" and "such a perspective sees a value in maintaining ethnic diversity, but at the same time contends that individuals ought to be in a position to pick and choose from those multiple cultures" (Kivisto 37). Somehow Bhikhu Parekh's political theories on national identities in multicultural societies of the West seem to echo diaspora theorists' views on hybridity. That is why the preferred terminology in diaspora study is transcultural rather than multicultural.

The concept of cosmopolitan citizenship is a product of globalization because the world is seen as a global village. Niharika, Moushumi, and Padma circumvent the world without necessarily feeling exilic. Bishwapiya and Rabi holiday in Australia, live in the United States, and are natives of India. "Cosmopolitan citizenship does not define rights merely in terms of an individual's obligations to a particular state. It implies a pluralist approach in which the cultural communities are seen as simultaneously different and equal" (Sharma 112). That is why Mishra says that "by virtue of his flexibility in matters of business, family and citizenship, the ideal representative of the late modern subject is the elite businessman of the diaspora" (*Diaspora* 146). The diasporic businessmen Bishwapiya Chatterjee and Chet Yee, the owners of "CHATTY the operating system for
the world" (Mukherjee, *Daughters* 280), are the ones who rule the Silicon Valley and they are also soft targets of terrorists like Abbas Sattar Hai. The developed world provides them both security and the ease of travel. After the San Francisco bombing "CHATTY's stock value plunged thirty percent on the rumours: $8 billion was lost on a day when Bish was still fighting for his life in an oxygen tent on a sterile ward. As if one bomb could upset the world economy!" (Mukherjee, *Daughters* 275). That is the fickle nature of world "finanscape" as has been earlier defined by Appadurai.

But not all migrants are as successful as Bishwapriya Chatterjee. For every Bishwapriya Chatterjee there are a number of "small entrepreneurs, who are linked to enclave economies and to the homeland. Examples include Cuban entrepreneurs in Miami, Dominican businesspersons in New York City and Bengali merchants in London's Brick Lane" (Kivisto 38). These small businesspersons are perhaps of greater antiquity than the big businesspersons of the diaspora because the latter are mainly the product of globalization whereas the former existed even before globalization. In the 1965 London Dev meets Mr. Krishnaswamy Krishnamurthy who wants to start the business of exporting sardines to the British Isles because he thinks there is "no better market in the world" (Desai, *Blackbird* 113). In the 1980s New York Dave Vadhera, the "Professorji", who shelters Jasmine in the ethnic enclave at Flushing, runs the business of "importer and sorter of human hair" (Mukherjee, *Jasmine* 151) and sells the hair of Indian village women to wigmakers, instrument makers, and to the U.S. Defense Department according to the quality of the strands.

There is still another category, and perhaps the most populated category in comparison, which is the global working class. This category has seen a relatively rapid
increase in population due to economic transnationalism. So previously if there was one Dev who worked as a telecaller for Fleur Cosmetics, now there are many. This category consists of both legal as well as illegal migrants. Mishra says that often "illegality is a tactic used by the nation-state in complicity with itinerant capital to beget a docile, non-unionized labour force that may be exploited through renewed threats of deportation" (Diaspora 153). The "undocumented" (Mukherjee, Jasmine 136) harboured by Lillian Gordon always face the threat of being busted. When Dave Vadhera's father has an accident Jasmine could not decide whether to rush him by taxi to a hospital or call the emergency squad" (Mukherjee, Jasmine 151) because she did not know the old man's immigration status. She ultimately contacts Dave's wife, Nirmala, who finds an address where Dave can be found. The illegal labour force is often used without having to provide adequate amenities for them and this is especially characteristic of the unskilled migrant workers. In this context Mishra quotes Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak to make a valid point: "Spivak draws an important distinction between the widespread effects of economic transnationality and population dispersions, noting that 'large groups . . . [especially subaltern women] subsist in transnationality without escaping into diaspora'"(Diaspora 147). Bhabha also refers to the subaltern migrant groups to show how states promote selective cosmopolitanism thus:

States that participate in such multicultural multinationalism affirm their commitment to 'diversity', at home and abroad, so long as the demography of diversity consists largely of educated economic migrants – computer engineers, medical technicians, and entrepreneurs, rather than refugees, political exiles, or the poor. (Bhabha, Culture xiv)
Not all migrants to the Western world enjoy economic success. But the peculiar point to note is that the examination of economic success or failure is made by theorists on the basis of ethnic factors.

[Kamala] Visweswaran remarks that popular diasporists explain "the economic failures of inner-city blacks" [in the US] as opposed to "the success of particular Asian immigrant groups not by accounting for how Asians organize capital, but by positing the existence of essential cultural traits which blacks are seen to lack." This practice of "ethnicizing . . . capital", she argues, conceals the fact that "the globalization of the bourgeoisie is increasingly being understood in cultural, racial, or ethnic, rather than class terms." (Mishra, Diaspora 143)

Karl Marx had predicted that one of the results of capitalist economy would be the erosion of ethnicity brought about by the historically inevitable revolution of the bourgeois class to create new social relations. But Kivisto writes:

Perhaps the greatest irony surrounding contemporary Marxist theorizing about ethnicity is that, rather than expecting, as Marx did, that ethnicity would ultimately "melt into air" as a consequence of the modernizing thrust of capitalism, it seeks to account for the persistence of the ethnic factor. (Kivisto 26)

Mishra makes the point that in contradiction to Marx-Engel's prediction "socio-economic and territorial disparities will persist simply because they are intrinsic to the system of capital accumulation" (Diaspora 148). And since the migrants bring into the host society financial, social, cultural, and ethnic capitals, all such factors have to be taken into consideration in any examination of the migrant community.
Diaspora theorists, on the other hand, promote a hybridization of all bounded categories including ethnicity. According to Gina Wisker hybridity refers to "the creation of new transcultural rather than multicultural (crossing and fertilizing rather than fragmented) forms within the space produced by colonization where people, indigenous, immigrated, settled, colonizing and colonized, live and move" (189). Therefore, there is an intrinsic link between hybridity and diaspora. Elleke Boehmer stresses the point about this link:

If the postcolonial text generally is, to borrow from Homi Bhabha's well-tried terminology, a hybrid object, then the migrant text is that hybridity writ large and in colour. It is a hybridity, too, which is form-giving and diagnostic, lending meaning to the bewildering array of cultural translations which the writers of diasporas both established and emergent must make. (Boehmer 227)

That is why Mannur and Braziel writes that "diasporic subjects are marked by hybridity and heterogeneity — cultural, linguistic, ethnic, national — and these subjects are defined by a traversal of the boundaries demarcating nation and the diaspora" (Braziel 5). And Kachig Tololyan writes: "Diasporas are emblems of transnationalism, because they embody the question of borders" (Mishra, Diaspora 132). It anticipates "a future characterized by increasing evidence of transcultural syncretism or hybridization" (Kivisto 40). Adit and Sarah, Deben and Jennifer, Jasmine and Taylor, Niharika and Daniel, Tara and Andy, Sonia and Ben, and even Dev and Miss Moffit, Mrs. Sen and Eliot, and Arun and Mrs. Patton are examples of that phenomenon that constitute the transition of the diasporas including the Indian diaspora.
Notes:

1 The idea of exile literature has been elaborated in an essay in the journal *Rupkatha*. See Bibliography (Saha, “Exile Literature and the Diasporic Indian Writer”).


iii Although the title of “Mahatma” was given to M. K. Gandhi by Rabindranath Tagore for his “Satyagraha” movement in India.


v A condensed version of this section appears in the journal *Cerebration*. See Bibliography (Saha, “Loneliness in Diasporic Life as Depicted by Anita Desai”).

vi A condensed version of this section appears in the journal *Families*. See Bibliography (Saha, “Parent-Child Relationship in Diasporic Life”).

vii Leon Trotsky was born Lev Davidovich Bronstein.


xii An elaborate discussion on the philosophy of identity appears in an essay in the journal *Humanicus*. See Bibliography (Saha, “The Problem of Personal Identity”).