Chapter I

Immigrant Literature in Postcolonialism and Globalization

Human migration is as old as human history. It is a ubiquitous demographic phenomenon, which results in population redistribution. The massive waves of population movement across the world have immense social, economic, political, demographic, and literary implications in the context of postcolonialism and globalization. Immigrants face considerable hardship, isolation, alienation, and frustration as they try to find a niche in their newfound world. They are entrapped in a dilemma of tensions between a new alien culture and a traditional constraint surrounding them. They have a postcolonial sensibility to be assertive and an oriental need to be submissive. There is no distinct resolution emerging from the subversion exercised by values and the ideas of freedom and individuality identified with the new world. Recent global moves from colonial to postcolonial stage coupled with global/transnational mass population movement have led to both an escalation in the politicization of identity claims and proliferation of diaspora communities. These identity claims take on new meanings as they are being reconfigured in the discourse of biculturalism/multiculturalism and nationalism/globalization. Questions of gender identity and postcolonial struggles
in terms of differences and commonalities remain critical for diasporic collectivities.

Raymond F Betts comments that the end of colonialism marked the beginning of major demographical shifts and these movements are staggering. There are as many as over 16 million people within the colonial world who shifted their residence in three decades out of despair as well as with hope. (78) This resulted in the formation of severe urban patterns, aggravation of racism, and ultimately enrichment of culture. As a result cosmopolitanism grew in Europe, in Australia, and in the United States. There are many factors resulting in migration such as, unemployment, population growth, political oppression, new culture generation, and racism. Urban development, industrialization, advanced communication, and health services are the powerful factors behind massive migrations today. As migration in its early days was not on a large scale, migrants received warm reception in the host countries. Immigrants in colonial times were treated either indifferently or considerately. But, once immigrants began to arrive in large numbers they were treated with disdain and contempt.

By the 1980s, the second phase of immigration started. Migrants from former colonies arrived in large numbers with their families. Constrained by low wages and racial segregations, their condition has been described as people living in shelters, within distinctive ethnic enclaves, and cultural divisiveness. V. S. Naipal describes this situation in his novel, *The Mimic Men*, “Victorian working
class tenements whose gardens long abandoned, had for stretches turned into Caribbean backyards” (Qtd. in Betts 83). There are debates centred on the issue of plurality in nations. Questions like “Could a new multiethnic society function harmoniously?” were raised in Britain in a report on education. (Betts 85) There is confusion and chaos among these new settlers over the issue of their new transnational, cross-cultural, multicultural, ethnic identities, and existence. Betts has cited Jamaican novelist Zadie Smith’s debut novel *White Teeth* (2000) to illustrate the chaotic lives of postcolonial immigrants. She brings together three London families from Jamaica, Bangladesh, and Britain.

Smith as narrator finds that the lives of the immigrants are like reruns of British television sitcoms going around ‘in one tedious, eternal loop. Because immigrants are always prone to repetition – it’s something to do with that experience of moving from West to East or East to West from island to island. Even when you arrive you’re still going back and forth; your children are going round and round’. These words offer the element explanation of the cultural confusions and even animosity that confront the new hyphenated and hybridized people from the former colonial possessions whose souls, hearts, and, yes, daily lives remain unsettled in the former imperial metropolis in which they have migrated. Now, however, the analysis of the situation is made not by the European observer,
but by the very persons affected by it, and often with warm humour, as well as seething anger as Zadie Smith informs her readers.

(86-87)

Migrancy can be called the reigning trope of the twentieth century. Writers like Samuel Beckett, James Joyce, and Salman Rushdie have made it a determining feature of counter hegemonic literature and politics. Rushdie is not alone in being fascinated by the literary and metaphysical connotations that attach themselves to the concept. Migration refers not only to the displacement of people in history but to a state of displacement that befalls human kind in general. In his essay on Gunter Grass, Rushdie states, “We all cross frontiers, in the sense, we are all migrant peoples” (279). Rushdie states that while that may be true on some abstract level still we all cross differently and thus we are not all migrants in the same way. The experiences of migration differ, and this is one of the crucial distinctions to be made in any discussion of the subject. (280-81)

Experiences of migration differ depending on individuals, situations, and places of migration. A common yardstick may not be applicable in the evaluation and discussion of migrations to generate common theories and principles of migration. There are a host of definitions of the term migration. Dictionaries generally refer to migration as a change of residence from one place to another. *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* (2000) defines it as “the movement of large number of people, birds or animals from one place to another” (806-807).
According to A.A. Weinberg, “human migration is the changing of the place of abode permanently or, when temporarily for an appreciable duration e.g. in the case of seasonal workers. It is used symbolically in the transitions from one surrounding to another in the course of human life” (3). According to Theodore Caplow, “migration is a change of residence and need not necessarily involve any change of occupation but it is closely associated with occupational shifts of one kind or another” (11).

There are different kinds of migrations and theories of migration as cited by Francis Cherunilam in his book. There are internal migrations within nations, external migrations or international migrations, inmigration and outmigration related to internal and external migration within a country, immigration and emigration related to international migration into a country and out of a country, voluntary migration, sequential migration – which refers to migration due to some element of customary obligation e.g., migration following marriage and family union – forced migration, political migration, and illegal migration. (3-5)

According to the United Nations’ observations, many migration streams reflect proximity to historical, cultural, and linguistic bonds. The UN studies have discovered that Algerians prefer to go to France, Austrians to Germany, and Swiss and Finns to Sweden exclusively. (United Nations 142) Similarly, Spanish and Portuguese emigrants prefer Latin America whereas the Irish the United States because of the similarity in language and traditions. (237)
There are several factors that play a major role in migration. Social scientists have classified them as economic, demographic, socio-cultural, psychological, political, and several other miscellaneous factors. Of these, the economic factor remains a major reason for migration. All studies in this respect confirm that most migrations have taken place in search of better economic prospects. Helen I Safa in her study states:

Migration is normally viewed as an economic phenomenon, though noneconomic factors obviously have some bearing. Most studies concur that migrants leave their area of origin primarily because of lack of economic opportunities in hopes of finding better opportunities elsewhere. (1)

The major economic factors that motivate migration may be classified as the “push-factors” and “pull-factors”. The push-factors may be defined as the poor economic conditions and the consequential economic misery arising from lack of opportunity for advancement that push people out of the nation. The population explosion in many third world countries has drastically reduced the availability of cultivable land, and has increased unemployment significantly. Better employment opportunities, modern facilities and amenities, and the income differential between sending and receiving countries continue to constitute the pull-factors for migrants. The modern facilities and the glamour of city life, which lure migrants, are termed as “city lights” (Cherunilam 20-22). Elaborate
and efficient network of modern transportation and communication systems has facilitated massive waves of migration.

Demographic factors that have played a role in massive migration are the differences in the rates of population in countries across the world, the reduction in mortality rates and concomitant high rates of population growth, and the inadequacy of native labour supply in a number of developed countries like Australia, the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Europe, and the oil rich gulf countries. Socio-cultural and psychological factors have been also responsible for massive immigration recently. The quest for freedom, the desire to break away from traditional constraints of social organization, the exclusion from communities, and the feeling of being isolated may cause migration.

Psychological factors identified with migration are great vitality, self-assertion, positivism, and individualistic attitude developed by immigrants. Political factors such as war, exile, refuge, famine, climatic factors, distance, and topographical features may also be held responsible for migratory movement across the world.

There has been a massive growth in Asian migration since the 1970s due to development of economic and political relationships with the industrialized countries in the postcolonial era. Western colonization, trade, aid, and investment created the material means and the cultural capital necessary for migration. According to a survey conducted by Martin et al. by the mid 1990s, there were estimated to be about 3 million Asians employed outside their own countries
within the Asia region and another 5 million employed in other continents. In addition, there were millions of refugees and illegal migrants. (163) Francesco Cordasco observes:

The designation ‘Asian Indian’ was used officially for the first time on a special minority category in the 1980 census to take account of the rapidly increasing population of immigrants with a heritage in India prior to the 1980 census. Immigrants from India were classified as Caucasian; now they are classified as an ethnic minority within the ‘Asian or Pacific Islander’ general classification. (45)

According to Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Group published by Harvard University Press in 1980, there are as many as 100 ethnic groups that make up the population of the United States. Thus varied and multiracial is the current culture and tradition of the United States. These varied peoples practice their ethnic culture; give vent to their feelings, aspirations, joys, sorrows, nostalgia, and angst, in what is called the contemporary immigrant/diaspora literature. The relatively new school of literature in English that emerged from this class of writing is currently known as the contemporary diaspora literature.

The event of migration involves many elements that provide excellent material for diaspora writing. At the outset, these might include hardships in the home country’s political or cultural milieu, the often hard journey involved in
escaping from them, the initial contact with the alternative world and the cultural
conflicts that emerge during the acquisition of new languages and manners, the
fading out of the original culture by the second generations, and the
intergenerational conflict. In addition, from the point of view of a member of a
minority group, immigrant literature puts the spotlight on the particular tendencies
toward social diversity of the society out of which it evolves. The common themes
in immigrant literature are invariably failed quests and thwarted dreams, nostalgia
for a home that exists only in memory, conditions of dislocation and isolation, a
loss of identity, frustration, embarrassment, and humiliation at the hands of hosts,
parents’ attempts to preserve common cultural practices and assumptions, and the
children’s attempts for independence to find new identities. Another major
difficulty is the experience of racism with its accompanying sense of rejection and
humiliation and attempts to invoke through memory and story the sustaining
myths and symbols of the past life. Immigrants also experience a sense of loss on
a more personal level once they have started living in another country. They will
never again be the same person they were before. The experiences and stories in
immigrant literature are tapestry both familiar and far away. To be an immigrant
offers a unique position to frame and tell stories. Like the great Greek epic
the *Odyssey* or the Indian epic the *Ramayana* the immigrant’s story is that of a
traveller, a man of dreams. It is his dreams that take him to a promised land, and
there he is confronted by adversity both mental and physical.
The diversity and pluralism of the country of origin exert great influence on the diaspora/immigrant writers. Their novels are impelled by an excited sense of the immensity of their subject matter. Richard Cronin has written about the Anglo-Indian writers Allan Sealy and Salman Rushdie,

Sealy like Rushdie has lived much of his life outside India. He is an Indian writer, but also in Rushdie’s sense of the term, an immigrant writer, whose experience has thrust modernism on him by confronting him with a world that cannot be comprehended by any unitary notion of reality. But the culture of India itself is bewilderingly pluralistic which may explain why its readers have found it easier these writers of different origin to make use of immigrant experience. (218)

In diaspora writings, one can find new areas of exploration of the human minds and experiences quite unprecedented in the history of literature. “Fiction is all about journeys of imagination into lives of others”, says the Johannesburg writer Beverley Naidoo (Paromita. *Hindu*). Immigrant literature is not only journeys of imagination into the lives of others but also journeys into unknown geographical territories, cultures, languages, traditions, and manners. In that sense it is the most challenging genre of literature in the current scenario of technology, postcolonialism, postnationalism, and globalization. The immigrant experience is widespread, and it requires understanding as people struggle to
maintain their sense of themselves and their values while adapting to new cultural environments. “The history of immigration”, writes Oscar Handlin, “is the history of alienation and its consequences… For every freedom won, a tradition lost. For every second generation assimilated, a first generation in one way or another spurned. For gains of goods and services, an identity lost and uncertainty found” (Qtd. in Wheeler 15).

In The Empire Writes Back Bill Ashcroft et al. have used the term postcolonial “to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupation throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression”(2). They state that the semantic basis for the postcolonial seems to suggest the national culture after the departure of the imperial power. Postcolonialism has been used to distinguish works between the periods before and after independence. The development of new elites, new colonial institutions, and racial discriminations testify that postcolonialism is a continuing process of resistance and reconstruction. The postcolonial theories discuss experiences of various kinds: migrations, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place, and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy, linguistics, and the fundamental experience of speaking and writing by which all these come into being. None of
these is essentially postcolonial, but together they form the complex fabric of the field.

Postcolonial concepts such as mimicry, hybridity, the other, ambivalence, centre, margin, creole, diaspora, ethnicity, liminality, mestizo, metonymic gap, rhizome, syncretism, and identity are all relevant to immigrant experience. Notions more specific to immigrant experience are assimilation or acculturation, transnationlism, fitting in, cultural or imaginative schizophrenia, in this sense, a state of divided identity divided by culture, history, and circumstance. These recurring themes are used at random by immigrant Asian writers to voice their identity crisis, intergenerational conflicts, and nostalgia to counterbalance their memories of “past” and “present” and of “here” and “there”.

Postcolonial literatures emerged through several stages asserting both national and regional consciousness and asserted difference from the imperial centre. (Ashcroft 4-5) During the imperial period, elite writers whose primary identification was with the colonizing power produced a cultural enterprise through literature. Contemporary immigrant writers, like postcolonial writers, assert and represent national and regional consciousness and strike their difference from the centre (formerly imperial centre) through literature. Sometimes, like the imperial writer (colonized writer) who, despite his detailed reportage of landscape, custom and language, privileged the centre, and emphasized the home over the native, the metropolitan over the provincial or colonial and so on.
The immigrant writers do the same and emphasize their native land over the new home, provincial over the metropolitan and so on which implies that the postcolonial experience is literally same as the immigrant experience.

In colonial times, those on the periphery and margins threatened the exclusive claims of the centre and they were at once absorbed. This, according to Edward Said, is a process of conscious affiliation proceeding under the guise of filiations that is mimicry of the centre proceeding from a desire not only to be accepted but also to be adopted and absorbed. Said observes in *The World, the Text and the Critic*:

> [H]ow affiliation sometimes reproduces filiation, sometimes makes its own forms,... the contemporary critical consciousness stands between the temptations represented by two formidable and related powers engaging critical attentions. One is the culture to which critics are bound filiatively (by birth, nationality, profession); the other is a method or system acquired affiliatively (by social and political conviction, economic and historical circumstances, voluntary effort and willed deliberation). Both of these powers exert pressures that have been building toward the contemporary situation for long periods of time. (24-25)

The immigrants are filiatively bound by their home culture by birth and nationality, and in diaspora they acquire a new culture through a method or
system acquired affiliatively by social and political convictions and voluntary efforts. The act of mimicry leads those on the periphery to immerse in the [foreign] culture denying their origins in an attempt to become more "native than the natives". This was the situation of early immigrants. In the postcolonial phase, natives proceeded with the act of mimicry, denied their origin, and immersed themselves in an imported culture and made all attempts to become "more English than the English" (Ashcroft 4). During the early days of international immigration and postnationalism, which is very much a postcolonial phenomenon, immigrants made all efforts at mimicking the centre with a view to be accepted and absorbed.

The immigrants and the colonized are almost in a similar situation as their counterparts in colonial times. The colonized themselves immersed in a foreign culture denying their origins and traditions in an attempt to be absorbed and accommodated. This was the situation of early immigrants around the world. Immigrant literature discusses the plight of these postcolonial sojourners in alien lands and circumstances in a kind of animated suspension.

Postcolonial theorists including Ashcroft hold that by opting to write in a dominant language the English-educated upper class seemed to belong to a privileged class with their superior language, education, and elitism. (5) Early immigrant writers across the world, by writing in foreign languages, about his experiences, especially in English, abandoned his potential for subverting the
colonist’s themes of cultural superiority. The early immigrant writers dealt with such powerful materials as the brutality of racism, discrimination and otherness, denigration of their native cultures, and the existence of a rich cultural heritage older and more extensive than their counterparts in metropolises. They were socially and mentally forbidden from fully exploring them. Texts of this kind crop up within the constraints of such a discourse and the patronage system, which censor the assertions of a different perspective. The development of independent literatures depends on the abrogation of this restrictive power and the appropriation of languages for new and strange usages. It is such an appropriation that is very distinct in postcolonial literature and later in immigrant literature. Immigrant writers have freed themselves from the linguistic shackles like early postcolonial writers in imperial power. They have now extensively appropriated their language and materials for new and strange distinctive usages. They have substituted *English* for English.

The cultural hegemony of the West and the weight of antiquity seem to dominate literary productions in the postcolonial period to a great extent. Assumptions of literary canons and attitudes identify them as isolated national offshoots of imperial or colonial literature and therefore relegate them to a subordinate or marginal position. It is also true of immigrant literary productions. Literary canons of metropolis assert and exercise dominance over their marginal existence compelling them to be absorbed into the mainstream. They have been
identified as marginal and subordinate until recently, but their assertion as an independent genre has been so undeniable that they are now identified as independent writers like those in the mainstream. The postcolonial immigrant writers and their characters have been represented as being dislocated resulting from migration. A supposedly superior racial or cultural model has destroyed their indigenous personality. It leads them to a state of trauma, angst, and psychological disorder. Place and displacement are regular features in all postcolonial societies; home and host are regular and repetitive features in all immigrant societies. They will not come out of this condition of alienation until they abrogate themselves of the mental and physical shackles, and appropriate a medium to give vent to their original feelings and ideas.

According to Ashcroft et al., the imperial expansion had a radical destabilizing effect on its own preoccupations of power. (12) The imperialists’ primary concern was political and cultural supremacy, and they invariably abstained from cultural integration and social assimilation. It pushed the colonial world to the margins of experience. In other words it had an alienating experience on the colonized and relegated the postcolonial world to the margins or in the words of Ashcroft

into a position from which all experience could be viewed as uncentred, pluralistic and multifarious. Marginality thus became an unprecedented source of creative energy. The impetus towards
decentring and pluralism has always been present in the history of European thought and has reached its latest development in poststructuralism. (12)

The condition of being positioned in marginality and sideline gave the immigrants immense creative energy. The marginal found the latest expression in the subaltern existence of immigrants. Imperialism, in course of its history, marginalized the colonized, and from that marginal existence emerged immense potential and subverted itself into arrays of postcolonial literature with its newfound expression of liberation and coexistence. Immigrants’ use of the marginalized potential/energy has come with new subversions/themes that call for the attention of readers in the West and the East.

There have been theories from postcolonial critics like Homi K. Bhabha, Wilson Harris and Edward Brathwaite about the nature of postcolonial societies and the hybridizations these cultures have produced. Ashcroft et al. observe: “In much European thinking, history, ancestry, and the past form a powerful reference point for epistemology” (34). The West Indian poet and historian Brathwaite stresses the multicultural, hybrid and syncretic nature of postcolonial reality, which is true of all immigrant communities (168). According to Guyanese novelist and critic Harris, cultures must be liberated from the destructive didactic of history and imagination is the key to this. Harris sees imaginative escape as the ancient and only refuge of oppressed peoples, but the imagination also offers
possibilities of escape from the politics of dominance and subservience (8).

Immigrant writers escape the cultural and social hegemony of the West through imaginative and subverted writing.

Hybridity, an often repeated term by Bhabha and Harris, is the struggle by postcolonialists and immigrants to free themselves from the overemphasized European colonial notion of ancestry and history which valued the pure over its binary composite. It is the validation of their hybridity that all immigrants and immigrant writers are striving to achieve. It leads to a cultural nationalism or emotional nationhood as against the historical/geographical nationalism of imperialism.

Once the immigrants come out of the overemphasized European notion of ancestry and history, oppression and racism, Leela Ghandi observes: “[They will] finally speak within the jealous pages of elitist historiography and, in so doing, to speak for, or to sound the muted voices of, the truly oppressed” (2). Immigrant writers have now gathered strength and insight to speak for themselves and their community from across the world. Their passions of angst, nostalgia, oppression, racism, cultural ostracism, personal sufferings, social taboos, job insecurities, social stigmas, divided personalities, dual existences, and identity crisis are all getting reflected in their works. Gandhi observes: “Thus, while Spivak concluded her provocative essay by categorically insisting that ‘the subaltern cannot speak’
post colonial studies [immigrant studies] has come to represent a confusing, and often unpleasant babel of subaltern voices” (3).

All the above statements pertaining to postcolonial societies are true of immigrant societies as well. Immigrants on their run to free themselves from the shackles of Western dominance and hegemony strive after a new genre and a new way of seeing the world. This perspective invariably rejects the binaries of existence namely host and guest and the destructive energies of metropolitan culture. Today, immigrants try to build a society in view of globalization wherein there are no national boundaries, racial differences, and denigration of cultures, divisions, and categorizations.

According to Arif Dirlik, postcolonialism is first practised by a select few Third World intellectuals in the First World who are empowered by their command of the cosmopolitan languages of transnational academic theory. (345) It is not only intellectuals but the presence of Third World immigrant writers in the First World that actuates this transformation in attitude, approach, and the concept of a new world order without boundaries, differences, and political and economic imbalances. Gandhi observes:

[T]he post colonial desire for extra or postnational solidarities, and consideration of concepts and terms such as ‘hybridity’ and ‘diaspora’, which have come to characterize mixed or globalized cultures… After colonialism, it is imperative to imagine a new
transformation of social consciousness, which exceeds the reified identities and rigid boundaries invoked by national consciousness. Postcolonialism, in other words, ought to facilitate the emergence of what we might, after Said, call an enlightened ‘postnationalism’.

(123-24)

Bhabha in his book *The Location of Culture* refers to the emergence of an enlightened postnationlism when he points out that the wider significance of the post modern condition lies in the awareness that the epistemological ‘limits’ of those ethnocentric ideas are also the enunciative boundaries of a range of other dissonant, even dissident histories and voices – women, the colonized, minority groups, the bearers of policed sexualities.(4-5)

It is these dissonant, and dissident voices that one can hear in the literary demography of immigrant works. One can read stories of the politically oppressed, racially discriminated, neocolonial colonized, and the sexually harassed in this new literary demography. Bhabha continues: “For the demography of the new internationalism is the history of postcolonial migration, the narratives of cultural and political diaspora” (5).

The imperial and historical concepts of homogenous national cultures, the transmission of age old traditions, and the monolithic national communities stand in need of being redefined in the postcolonial internationalism and hybridity.
Earlier the transmission of national tradition was the major theme of world literature, but today the transnational histories of migrants, their border and frontier conditions have become the major themes. Internationalism has become the venue/interface of the First World capital/culture and the Third World/labour/ethnic culture. This is the new formula or equation for the postcolonial immigrant literature. Bhabha has endorsed this in his book, *Location*: “To revise the problem of global space from the post colonial perspective is to move the location of cultural difference away from the space of demographic *plurality* to the borderline negotiations of cultural translations” (223). While living in migrancy encountering new national frontiers of space and locations the concept of nation for these migrants becomes a metaphor. Bhabha observes in his essay “Narrating the Nation”,

> Nations, like narratives, lose their origin in the myth of time and fully realize their horizons in the mind’s eye. Such an image of the nation – or narration – might seem impossibly romantic and excessively metaphorical, but it is from those traditions of political thought and literary language that the nation emerges as a powerful historical idea in the west (1).

Nation, for immigrants, becomes largely liminal and ambivalent to use the postcolonial terms to describe it. Liminality may be used to describe the
in-between status, where cultural changes take place. As Arjun Appadurai has put it,

Generally speaking there seems to be three conditions, which have prepared contemporary postcolonial thought for this discursive turn toward postnationalism. First, a growing body of academic work on globalization insists that in the face of the economic and electronic homogenization of the globe, national boundaries are redundant or at least no longer sustainable in the contemporary world.... The random flow of global capital is accompanied by an unprecedented movement of peoples, technologies and information across previously imperishable borders from one location to another. (17)

Boundaries are redundant and crossing of cultures and migration of peoples have become the fashion of the day giving ample scope for international and cosmopolitan communities. Literature of these communities incorporating their passions and feelings, aspirations, and ambitions is emerging quickly.

Commenting on postcolonialism Gandhi observes: “[It] is just another name for the globalization of cultures and histories”(126). It seems it is the political and cultural justification for the emergence of the fast developing branch of immigrant literature. People look forward curiously to learning and observing their brothers and sisters, who tackle their challenges of life in strange and alien lands. They no longer are confined to events within their national boundaries; they now think of a
borderless world where there is an easy flow of peoples and cultures. Man thinks not locally these days but globally and internationally. With the advancement of science and technology, transport and satellite, and visual media this has become easy and inevitable. Man’s proclivity these days is to look for what happens in other parts of the world and arrange and plan his life accordingly.

In this sense, in the postnationalization of postcolonial existence across the world there emerges the identitarian politics and the problem of identity. It is very much present in all immigrant communities. Othering, ethnicity, multiculturalism, hybridity, according to Stuart Hall, confirm the hegemonic nature of westernness. In his essay “New Ethnicities” Hall observes: “In these circumstances, ethnicity is always already named as marginal or peripheral to the mainstream. By contrast, Englishness, or Americanness is, of course, never represented as ethnicity”(227). Immigrants are branded as being ethnic, not pure, hybrid, and subsequently being marginal and peripheral and are always different from the mainstream. This marginalisation has been the colonial experience, the postcolonial experience and the immigrant experience as well. According to Bhabha, the grim polarities of the colonial encounter are necessarily bridged by a third space of communication, negotiation, and by implication translation. It is this indeterminate zone, or place of hybridity, where anticolonial politics first begins to articulate its agenda and wherein “the construction of a political object that is new, neither the one nor the other, properly alienates on political
expectations, and changes, as it must, the very forms of recognition of the moment of politics” (Location 25).

This is exactly the same as the intellectual situation of immigrant creative writers. In the process of self invention and reinvention amidst the grim polarities of colonial and postcolonial encounters, they have to invent a third space of communication an indeterminate zone, a place of hybridity and multiculturalism wherein they articulate with a new found energy and a sense of liberation leading to the constructions of a political and social object which is neither the old one nor the new one. In other words, they are creating and responding to the hybridity and in-betweenness typifying diasporic existence. Diaspora evokes the specific traumas of human dislocation/displacement whether it is the biblical exodus of the Jews or the slavery of Africans. Diaspora in postcolonialism is generally concerned with the idea of cultural dislocation. In immigrant literature diaspora is used with physical migration, ethnicity, identity, and cultural nationalism. This sense of dislocation/displacement is inherent in colonialism and according to Bhabha, colonialism is said to engender “the unhomeliness – that is the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiation” (9). The immigrants across the world face the unhomeliness – the condition of extraterritorial and cross-cultural situation. Ghandi observes: “[Contemporary] diaspora thought finds its apotheosis in the ambivalent, transitory, culturally contaminated and borderline figure of the exile caught in a historical limbo between home and the world” (132).
According to Gandhi, a systematic study of the colonial encounter will establish that it ends up with the new migrant literature. The counter textual mood of the anticolonial or nationalist writing finds its apotheosis in the cosmopolitan restlessness of writers like Salman Rushdie, Ben Okri, Michael Ondaatje, and Bharati Mukherjee. Postcolonial literary theory privileges “appropriation” over “abrogation”, “multicultural syncretism” over “cultural essentialism”. Gandhi states: “While anticolonial novel is shown to betray these symptoms despite itself, the ‘migrant novel’ is entirely explicit in its commitment to hybridity. Positioned on the margins or interstices of two antagonistic national cultures, it claims to open up an in-between space of cultural ambivalence” (153).

Said praises the nomadic energies of writers whom he sees as transgressing the confinement of both imperial and provincial orthodoxies. According to him, its transcultural narrative is postulated as a serious challenge to the cultural stability of the metropolitan centre. He observes in *Culture and Imperialism*: “The authoritative, compelling image of empire … finds its opposite in the renewable, almost sporty discontinuities of intellectual and secular impurities – mixed genres, unexpected combinations of tradition and novelty…” (406). The fiction of nationalism, very evident during imperial and colonial times is replaced by a fiction sans nationalism and boundaries. The culture postulated in this is cross cultural, hybridized formation of humans and their behaviours.
The yardsticks, which are used to assess postcolonial literature, are applicable to immigrant literature. "All postcolonial literatures are cross-cultural" (39).

"Postcolonial text is always a complex and hybridized formation" (110). "Hybridity is the primary characteristic of all postcolonial societies" (Ashcroft. Empire 185). "The evacuated and fictional space of nationalism is now animated by the new fiction of exile and migrancy" (Gandhi 164).

Globalization or transnationlism has greatly influenced immigrant writers particularly their construction of new immigrant identities. Immigrant writers invent/construct new international/hybrid identities. Immigrant characters in the literary works of the 1980s and 1990s are characterized by heterogeneity, hybridity, diversity, flexibility, and adaptability to invent/reinvent themselves. They express their sensibilities in manifold ways. They are proud of their newfound identity, at the same time they want to cherish their ethnic connections. Some participate in and merge into the society to achieve their full potential that the new country promises. Some assert their masculine or feminine characteristics as important components of their new identities; some demonstrate a continually shifting identity in the constant migration from one place to another. They take on new looks in every aspect of their lives. So immigrants in contemporary literary works are inventing and reinventing their identity to accommodate an open, diverse, ever changing, multicultural, and transnational world.
Identity in globalization, transculturalism and immigration is defined in many ways. *Penguin Dictionary of Psychology* (2001) defines identity as “a person’s essential continuous self, the internal subjective concept of oneself as an individual” (338). The *Encyclopedia of Psychology* (2000) defines identity as “a feature of the individual reflecting on the internal process of self-definition. On the other hand, identity engages in a social context and is shaped by the immediate circumstances as well as broader culture. Furthermore, identity can be conceptualized as a process occurring and changing over time” (225).

Identity is not single or isolated within the inner power of the individual but an interaction between the individual and the social context he/she lives in. Many forces such as race, class, politics, religion, language, gender, and sexuality influence identity. There are constant struggles or conflicts among them, never stable or fixed, but changing, fluid, flexible, heterogeneous, and hybrid. Immigrant identity is more complicated than the above definitions because in addition to the features mentioned above, immigrants are people who often have to cross over political, economic, cultural, and linguistic boundaries between or among nations. Immigrant identities change as historical relation between the host and guest countries changes.

The word transnational, quite often a common word in globalization, is used in modern times as the short term for a transnational corporation, a large business organization operating across national borders. However, transnational
is not limited to economic activities. *The Dictionary of 20th Century World Politics* (1993) expands its range to include “an enterprise, entity, idea, movement, or religion that crosses national boundaries and provides some kind of linkage between individuals, groups, or organizations in one state and individuals, groups, or organization in another”(667). It not only refers to the geographical and economic movements of products and immigrants across borders but also to the international or transnational consciousness, or experience that enables immigrants or citizens to cross borders in terms of race, ethnicity, culture, and nationalities. It is in the breaking down of ideological borders and barriers that the immigrants achieve their new identities in literary representations. Under globalization/transnationalism the control from nation state is greatly weakened; the essentializing notions about cultural nationalism and national loyalty fall apart and in their places develop the notions of multiple loyalty, hybridity or creolization, complexity, and uncertainty of identities.

Paul Gilroy’s concept of the Black Atlantic may be brought in to read the heterogeneous, hybrid, and constantly changing immigrants of the 1980s and 1990s. In Gilroy’s book *The Black Atlantic*, he first critiques both the essentialist notions of cultural nationalism and ethnic absolutism in black studies before he elaborates on his definition of the Black Atlantic. He argues that it is neither right to exclude black construction of the modern British nation, nor is it right to trace black identities to their ethnic roots in Africa. He writes that the danger of
excluding blacks from the modern British State is to invoke Britain as a pure and
exclusively white society, thus erasing blacks from its history; he also argues that
black essentialism that claims a unique black culture also elides the hybrid black
identities that emerge from cultural encounters with the British. Blackness is not a
natural static cultural condition but a lived experience in history. In other words,
there is nothing essential or natural about blackness; it is a product of negotiations
between blacks and whites in British history. Black identity can never be
separated from the historical conditions the blacks lived in. He further elaborates
on how black identity is formed and transformed in history through their being
transported across the Atlantic. He concludes that a broad and transnational
perspective must be employed to read the black presence in Britain. Though
Gilroy’s theory of the Black Atlantic mainly focuses on the formation of African
diaspora identities in history, it can be appropriated to explain the formation of
other diaspora identities in the 1980s and 1990s. Like the African British, other
diaspora identities are also formed in their encounters with different cultures.
What they acquire in their identities in the transnational age is similar in essence
to what the Africans went through in their contact with modernism in the past few
centuries. Ethnic identities do not form from inheriting the cultures where they
originate. They form because they interact with other cultures, and in this
process, both their identities and the identities of the people they have contact
with are changed. The significance of Gilroy’s theory of Black Atlantic lies in this
interaction of different forces. Gilroy’s theory of the Black Atlantic provides an important and appropriate way to look at the many factors that go into the formation of diaspora identities.

Gilroy’s emphasis is on the relation between identity formation and historical contexts. Stuart Hall maps out his argument on how cultural identity is formed not through any essentialist inheritance but through transformation in emigration. In his essay, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”, Hall argues that there are two ways to understand cultural identity. The first position defines cultural identity in terms of one shared culture, a sort of collective “one true self” hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed “selves”, which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. (394) The other position defines cultural identity in terms of change that responds to specific historical contexts. He says, “Cultural identity … is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as ‘being’. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history, and culture” (394). He reads cultural identity not as fixed or accomplished product, but a production “which is never complete always in process, and always constituted within, not outside representation”(392). Hall goes a step further in arbitrating the divide when he suggests that cultural identity is not a fixed essence at all but a matter of positioning. He says, “Hence, there is always a politics of identity, a
politics of position, which has no absolute guarantee in an unproblematic, transcendent ‘law of origin’” (398).

Hall’s notion of cultural identity formation through transformation works well with explaining the new immigrant identity. It emphasizes the role of migration and historical contexts in transforming identities. Immigrants’ cultural, political, and economic contexts were different in the 1980s and 1990s, and they exhibited new and different identities. Their literary representation is much more open-minded, complex, adaptable, and transnational than they were before. Hence Hall’s emphasis on identity formation and contextual change will be an important tool to look at immigrant identities.

Gloria Anzaldúa’s argument on the formation of mestiza/mestizo can also be used to read the formation of immigrant identities in the transnational/global age. People who live in contact zones of different cultures form their cultural identities. She argues that these people have to negotiate their identities daily among the different cultures, languages, and philosophies. They often face challenges, even displacement, and violence, but they also gain from the constant crossing of linguistic, cultural, and political boundaries. She calls these people border-crossers. According to her, border-crossing “provides a hybrid progeny, a mutable, more malleable species with a rich gene pool. From this racial, ideological, cultural, and biological cross pollinization, an ‘alien’ consciousness is presently in the making” (99). She continues:
The future will belong to the *mestiza*. Because the future depends on the breaking down of paradigms, it depends on the straddling of two or more cultures. By creating a new mythos— that is, a change in the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves and the ways we behave … *la mestiza* creates new consciousness. (102)

Anzaldua’s *mestiza* is the transnational/global consciousness of immigrants because they are daily crossing all kinds of barriers, whether in language, customs, or values. It is no exaggeration to say that an immigrant’s embracing of *the mestiza* gives him the power to fight racism and exclusion to succeed in a multicultural society. A transnational immigrant is an immigrant who has a *mestiza*.

Gilroy’s, Hall’s, and Anzaldua’s theories point out that identity is not an individual or internal matter but a social product that is produced by many factors under specific conditions. These theories serve as an important framework to read the formation of contemporary immigrant identities. As a people who are formed through the constant negotiation of multiple cultures and who cross political and linguistic boundaries in their daily lives, their identities have been invariably marked by both native and foreign histories and they change over time. Immigrant identities take new contents in the global/transnational age.

Benzi Zhang argues that transnationlism sees the multiple and simultaneous forces going into the formations of immigrant identities.
Immigrants traverse boundaries of space, time, race, culture, language, and history; these different forces merge into a poetics of cultural transnationalism. He contends that when immigrants move to new places, they have to redraw or renegotiate their identities in relation to new circumstances. Zhang’s theory of transrelations which emphasizes the interaction of the multiple forces in the forming of immigrant identities echoes and goes beyond Anzaldua’s theory of mestiza in that it emphasizes the coexistence of the diverse identities which do not necessarily form into easy combinations of classifiable elements. Such a view of identity formation challenges “the locality of a singular cultural dominance by relocating the site of identity formation in a collective of plural interrelationships” (125). The messiness, uncertainty, and indefinability are what Zhang emphasizes here. He suggests that many immigrant writers have to constantly negotiate conflicting or uncompromising forces in their lives. David Henry Hwang, an Asian American playwright argues that the key to the everchanging identity is not to stay in one place but to always change in light of new circumstances. He writes,

    I do not believe that I will become ‘a fully actualized’ Asian American. Indeed such a state would be death, creatively and politically. The only constant in our lives is change, and as we approach the new challenges of the 1990s we must reevaluate and question old assumptions to progressively harness such change. (X)
Hwang's views reflect the sensitivity of writers to the newly emerging immigrant sensibilities. Immigrant writers have expressed similar sensibilities of complex and diverse identities in their literary works.

Globalization/transnationalism impacts not only how immigrant writers construct their new characters, but also the literary devices through which they are to represent their characters. Many of the literary devices they use are unconventional and they challenge the traditional ways to depict characters. These writers invent/reinvent new identities in their works – whether it is description of national or ethnic pride, or of the weakening of racial purity and of interracial and intraethnic marriages. Immigrant characters and their writers have crossed boundaries, and their fiction reveal the vitality of their identities. They are the transnational in modern times, overturning their stereotypes and rewriting their new histories and sensibilities.

Globalization or transnationalism provides an effective perspective to deconstruct and critique both nationalism and ethnocentrism. Steven Vertovec argues: "Transnationalism presents possibilities of unfixing identities particularly nation derived ones – and arriving at new cosmopolitan perspectives on culture and belonging" (580). It is to be understood that identity is often employed by nation states to control their borders. It is an invented social construct that exerts power over those who can become citizens. In this perspective, people could launch a critique against the essentialist and exclusive nature of the nation-state
and the absolute view of ethnic uniqueness, and can argue in favour of immigrant, cosmopolitan communities. A global/transnational consciousness, and a relationship between transnationalism and immigrant identity would help people better understand immigrants and their literature today. While acknowledging that globalization/transnationalism has helped to form an open, heterogeneous hybrid, and flexible immigrant identity, it often brings up problems such as homogenization, fragmentation, dislocation, self-division, instability, alienation, and marginalisation.

Among Asian groups, South Asian writers, especially, fiction writers have made their presence felt in the international literary scene on a grand scale. Salman Rushdie, Anita Desai, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Chandra, Bharati Mukherjee, Michael Ondaatje, Bapsi Sidhwa, Rohinton Mistry, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni are some of the leading writers from South Asia having a successful literary career across the world. These novelists claim to have their birthplace in South Asia namely India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, or Sri Lanka. Jaina C Sanga observes:

These novelists insist on their own perspectives, providing largely alternative views of the South Asian sentiment to those that fuelled the imagination through nostalgic, idealized imagery… They show us a vibrant, exotic, chaotic world where people seem more robust and spirited than in most other contemporary fiction; where
exuberance and compromise infuse daily life; where religion and politics matter profoundly; where follies and foibles of humanity are showcased with precise satire; and where ancient traditions are brought face to face with the conventions of modern living. (XII)

By being able to write in a dominant language like English, these writers have been able to be located as writers coming from this region, and address common problems faced by local and immigrant peoples, and give voices to the sentiments of the displaced people of this region. These writers use the English language to express/reinvent their experiences in alien lands. Sanga continues:

The new generation South Asian novelists... have to be overtly concerned with and develop responses to the competing trajectories of colonialism, nationalism, modernity, and globalization. Hence, their fiction proves, among other things, new ways to imagine the nation. Issues of diaspora and national identity figure prominently in some of their novels. (XIV)

South Asian novelists and their publication have witnessed a prospective flourish over the years, and many of them are promoted by western literary figures. Publishers are offering huge sums of money, and the distinct competition in the offing shows evidence of the importance and authority of South Asian fiction today. Literary world has seen merit and originality in these writers, and their popularity is on account of the political and historical legacies of colonialism, post
colonialism, and globalization leading to transnationalism. It has attracted a remarkable body of criticism as well.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s works centre on the lives of immigrants, especially immigrant women. Much of Divakaruni’s work is partially autobiographical. Her stories dealing with the immigrant experience are set in the Bay Area of California. She says, “Women in particular respond to my work because I am writing about them, women in love, in difficulties, women in relationships. I want people to relate to my characters, to feel their joy, and pain, because it will be harder to be prejudiced when they meet them in real life” (chitradivakaruni.com). Her interest in women began after she left India at which point she came to reevaluate the treatment of women there.

Before she began her career in writing fiction, Divakaruni was an acclaimed poet. She writes poems encompassing a wide variety of themes and directs much focus on the immigrant experience and on South Asian women. She shows the experiences and struggles involved in women trying to find their own identities. Her poetic collection *Leaving Yuba City* (1997) won a Pushcart Prize, an Allen Ginberg Prize, and Gerbode Foundation Award. Her first three books of poetry *Dark Like the River* (1987), *Reason for Nasturtiums* (1990), and *Black Candle* (1991) reflect South Asian women’s intense emotional experiences of troubled marriages, domestic violence, and concerns resulting from immigration.
Chitra Banerjee was born in Calcutta in 1956. She left Calcutta for the US in 1976. She had her master’s degree from Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio and a PhD from the University of California, Berkley. She took odd jobs like baby sitting, selling merchandise at an Indian boutique, slicing bread in a bakery, and washing instruments in a science lab. At Berkley she lived in an International House, worked in the dining hall slicing Jell-O, and removed dishes from the dishwasher. She underwent and suffered all the initial difficulties and hardships of an immigrant in an alien land. All these bitter and hard early experiences shaped and sharpened her sensibilities.

Currently, she lives in Sunnydale with her husband and two children. Divakaruni teaches creative writing at Foothill College in Los Altos Hills, California. She is also a committed social worker involved in women’s social service organization, and is the cofounder and president of MAITRI, a help line providing support and counselling for abused South Asian women in San Francisco. Divakaruni is also the editor of *Multitudes* an anthology she uses in her own classroom. It includes stories about communication styles across cultures, expectations of friendships, the Los Angeles riots, and prejudice against gay people. Divakaruni has dealt with a variety of issues in her novels and short stories, which range from racism, interracial relationships, economic disparities, abortion and divorce, social evils to and early hardships of immigrants inspired by
her imagination, and the experiences of others. Her works have been translated into 11 languages.

Divakaruni's first novel *The Mistress of Spices* (1997), according to Lavina Dhingra Shankar,

is an experiment in magical realism and combines Hindu myths, fables, and superstitions with contemporary American social problem including interracial tension, ethnic identity immigrant assimilation, spiritual emptiness in the lives of 'rich Indians', teenage rebellion and angst, forbidden inter racial romances, and abusive and broken marriages. (65)

These are issues dealt with in the postcolonial, transnational space by a fluid community that is trying to invent/reinvent its identity by its socio-cultural encounter with new places, people, and cultures. The story is all about an ageless mystical woman Tilottama, known as Tilo who provides spices not only for cooking but also for the homesickness and alienation that the Indian immigrants visiting her shop experience. She does this by destroying stereotypes and myths. As she breaks down these barriers, she dissolves boundaries between people of different backgrounds, communities, age, and different worlds.

Divakaruni's *Sister of My Heart* (1999) is about the lives of two women and how they are changed by marriage as one woman comes to California, and the other stays behind in India. Using a powerful, lush and rich language that is
particular to Indo-English authors, Divakaruni immerses her readers into the minds of the characters who play various roles in her novels. She creates a new collection of moving stories about family, culture, and the seduction of memory. With rich prose and keen insight that made *The Mistress of Spices* and *Sister of My Heart*, tales of journeys and returns, of error, of loss, and of recovery, all resound with her unique understanding of human spirit. Whether writing about the adjustments of immigrants to a foreign land or accommodations families make to the disruptive differences between generations, Divakaruni poignantly portrays the eternal struggle to find a balance between the pull of home and the allure of change. Ultimately, *Sister of My Heart* is about transformation and growth. It is about expectation vs. reality. It teaches a lot about the Indian culture, as well as what it is like to be immersed in a completely foreign culture. Sudha experiences a lot of transformation as she realizes the freedoms that come with a culture so different from her own.

In *The Vine of Desire* (2002), Divakarunni uses several creative writing techniques that were not present in *Sister of My Heart*. They help to understand the inner conflicts of the characters. In addition to the alternating chapters, which show the point of view of Sudha and Anju, there are first person accounts of several male characters in the book. There are also letters back and forth between Sudha and the mothers in India, between her and the people in America, as well as her suitors. *Sister of My Heart* focuses a lot on their past family history and
Indian culture and folklore. *The Vine of Desire* centres more on the present and the relationship of the two sisters which is put into a precarious state by a third person, Anju’s husband, Sunil. The unlikely relationship Sudha and Anju form with men and women in the world outside the immigrant Indian community as well as with their families in India profoundly transform them and force them to question the central assumptions of their lives.

*Queen of Dreams* (2004) is a novel where the narratives alternate between the understood and the mystical. The first part of the novel concentrates on the lives and histories of the characters and Ms. Gupta, the Queen of Dreams, interpreting the dreams of local people and its effects on their lives. In the second half of the novel, reality, dreams, and nightmares begin to intertwine and blur. The novel is also divided between India and the US. To the U.S. born Indians, India is symbolic of the mystical and the longed for – a land of dreams. India becomes little more than a myth in the shocked aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and also the key to their past and present lives. The conscious and unconscious bonds between Gupta and her daughter Rakhi are explored, and it forms the central part of the novel. The reality of the world today breaks in as a bit of shock in the novel.

Divakarunni’s works also include two short story collections. Her association with MAITRI led her to write *Arranged Marriage* (1995). These are stories about the liberation, abuse, and courage of immigrant women. In *The

Immigrant literature has several purposes. It helps immigrants to remember their past and culture. It also serves the purpose of giving voice to hitherto silent people with an ignored and hence unknown history and to correct stereotypes of an exotic or foreign experience. It also establishes the identity of the thousands of immigrants whose Asian faces frequently deny them a legitimate place in their country of residence. Immigrant population today is not a monolithic society; it contains peoples of varied nationalities, languages, religions, and a multitude of races. This new literary demography will project a vivid picture of the sufferings, angst, joys, and least of all the cultural/political encounter of these people in strange and alien lands. Immigration in the post war and global period has introduced substantial dissonance into the old idea of nation-state society as the founding unit of Western European society and politics. The more realistic, pragmatic acceptance of immigration by the mainstream has itself come with the realization that a new and cohesive national discourse would be needed to patch up these concerns to deny the decline of the nation-state that immigration and globalization appear to bring on.