"We, the migratory birds...
are here this session thinking we will fly back to our home
for sure.
Does anyone know which invisible cage imprisons us?
And the flight begins to die slowly in our wings.
Some of us are drawn with the chain...some leg in the
swamp.
No sun ...no earth...
Where to look? What to look for?
The next session is never our own and every session
makes mouth at us..."
CHAPTER-II

DIASPORA: HISTORY AND CONTEMPORARY MILIEU

DIASPORA is relatively a new term used in the 21st century in connection with the study of those writers who went abroad either forcibly or willingly and produced a great deal of literature having specific sensibilities like nostalgia, alienation, troubles and travails, rootlessness, abolition of imperialism, concept of nation state, multiculturalism, reappraisal of the British Literature in new perspective, new global village etc. It is a multi-disciplinary area which covers literature, sociology, history, geography, culture and so on. ‘Diaspora’ is gaining popularity at present which is the movement of people from any nation or a group of people away from their own country. They migrate from their own country for seeking opportunities “for work, research and freedom” from a colonial state to a free country which necessarily make them “an ambassador and a refugee”1 in the alien land. It creates a way of thinking about ‘cultural identity’ which means as “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.”2 Their cultural identities reflect “the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us as “one people” 3 or the sense of “oneness”, as observed by Stuart Hall in his Cultural Identity and Diaspora. These migrants project a world of geographical and cultural dislocation and creates the poetics of exile, displacement, rootlessness, homelessness, nostalgia, past and memory which cultivates a conflict of culture – biculturalism and multiculturalism. They become as ‘the marginalized people’ in the alien land and build the Third World or ‘the otherness’ which is a result of
‘Diasporic Consciousness’. Salman Rushdie, in an essay in 1983, thus, wrote about expatriates:

Exiles or emigrants are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge – which gives rise to profound uncertainties – that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of mind.4

Diaspora writers have created ‘a minority community’ and in the context of India, as a minority community of ‘little India’ in the foreign land who, according to William Saffron, share the following characteristics:

1) they or their ancestors have been dispersed from a specific original “center” to two or more “peripheral” of foreign regions; 2) they retain a collective memory, vision or myth about their original homeland – its physical location, history and achievements; 3) they believe they are not – and perhaps cannot be – fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it; 4) they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should eventually return – when conditions are appropriate; 5) they believe they should collectively be committed to the
maintenance or restoration of their homeland and its safety and prosperity; and 6) they continue to relate personality or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another and their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship.  

These diaspora writers are constantly in search of their ground, identity and adjustment between ‘home’ - the culture of origin and ‘world’ - the culture of adoption. Expatriates and immigrants seek a location, a physical movement and forward-looking attitude and live in a state of exile which provides them a compulsory isolation and a nostalgic anchoring of past. The migration from Asia, Africa and the Middle East to the West has put them in a state of cultural encounter which takes place in a diasporic writing as a bicultural pulls and finally a new culture emerges. The diasporic writers cope with feelings of marginality, the otherness, the third world who seek their centre and are set in the process of decentring. They remember their past through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth and their search for ‘cultural identity’ make them as “individuals without an anchor, without horizon, colourless, stateless, rootless – a race of angels.” They are put in a state of ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ and they think of the difference between ‘what we really are’ and that of ‘what we have become’ as ‘the lost origins’ in a foreign land. As a result, a new person is born as a diasporic person of the ‘New World’ that Stuart Hall in *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* considers as “the beginning of Diaspora, of diversity, of hybridity and difference” of Afro-Caribbean people as a diaspora of America. He calls it as “the old, the imperializing, the hegemonising form of ‘ethnicity’.” Diaspora identities are creating “the aesthetics of the ‘cross-overs’ and of ‘cut-and-
mix’ which make them “anew, through transformation and difference”. Therefore, Frantz Fanton in ‘On National Culture’ in The Wretched of the Earth feels:

A national culture is not like a folk-lore, nor can an abstract populism that believes it discover a people’s true culture. A national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which that people has created itself in existence.

They have the endless desire to return to their roots as ‘the lost origins’ which had the overwhelming nostalgia for ‘times past’. Such return to the discovery cultivates the sense of ‘cultural identity’ in the diasporic writers. In the post-colonial world, we find the arrival of the Third World Intellectuals in First World Academe. Edward Said who was a Palestinian, born in Jerusalem and self-exiled to U.S.A., called the expatriates as ‘Intellectual Exile’ as their journey of exile begins from ‘homeland’ to the globe which, in the beginning, becomes ‘tender’, then strong and finally turns perfect. Said’s exile appears to be moving from hybridity to heteroglossia of the world. Such people build a new world of universalism which is a kind of meta-centre – centre which heightens the identity of diasporic world. In Naipaul’s A Way in the World, he encounters with India and many other lands which is a kind of homecoming. As a result Naipaul “can only find a house, not a home.” Therefore, the diasporic people always search their ‘homeland’, displacement, centre and representation which make them ‘unique’ and difference as a symbol of ‘cultural identity’ that Stuart Hall considers as “one of 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.” Their cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes of ‘one people’. This ‘oneness’ is a point of difference which is the essence of diaspora.

Indian Diaspora represents “half a dozen religions…seven different regions of India…nearly a dozen castes” (Parikh, 105) and is “like a banyan tree, the traditional symbol of the Indian way of life” and it spreads out its “roots in several soils, drawing nourishment from one when the rest dry up.” (Parikh, 106) Homi Bhabha treats the journey from ‘home’ to ‘world’ as a process of cultural conflict and he calls the diasporic scatterings as a “gatherings of exiles and emigrants and refugees; gathering on the edge of foreign cultures; gatherings at the frontiers; gathering in the ghettos or cafes of city centres. (pp. 139-140)

But the expatriates and immigrants are set in “the process of decentring” and their search of centre is affected by a diasporic space which is not the centre but the land of margins which have pushed their home cultures to outer space i.e. the west which still continues to be the place of recognition and judgment. It is noteworthy to record the comments of the Special Fiction Issue of The New Yorker (June 23 and 30, 1997) which has questioned the identity of stay-at-home writers not as NRI (Non Resident Indian) but as NEI (Non Expatriate Indian) or RI (Resident Indian). Bill Buford, in his editorial, thus comments: “What does it mean to be an Indian – to be a citizen of a country that for thousands of years was no country, that has not one language but at least eighteen, and that no single race or religion or culture but many races many religions, many cultures.” (The New Yorker, pp.7-8)

But Salman Rushdie in his “Introduction” to Viking edition with a title “Damme, This Is the Oriental Scene for You” and G.V. Desani in
“India for the Plain Hell of It” had represented India. In the Special
Granta issue, the foreign correspondents and journalists have focused on
Indian with other contributors like Nirad C. Chaudhuri, Ved Mehta, Amit
Chaudhuri, Suketu Mehta and V. S. Naipaul from the West and those of
writers in India like R.K. Narayana, Urbashi Butalia and Mark Tully.
They have contributed significantly which emerges as somewhat more
representative voice of India. Amitav Ghosh, in an assay in 1989, wrote:

The modern Indian Diaspora ... represents an important
force in world culture. The culture of diaspora is also
increasingly a factor within the culture of the Indian
subcontinent. This is self-evidently true of its material
culture which now sets the standard for all that is desirable in
the metropolitan cities.13

The Indian diaspora has also proved some of the finest writers in
English language like V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, A.K. Ramanujan,
Bharati Mukherjee and Amitav Ghosh. As a diaspora writer, Salman
Rushdie mythologises history; Naipaul transfers it to perpetual
homelessness while Bissoondath rejects homogenization of ‘ethnicity’
and treats immigration as “essentially about renewal”. ‘Post-colonialism’
is often referred to the “theory” of migrancy. But it is different from the
diasporic writing for aesthetic evaluation as negotiation with cultural
constructs. Secondly, post-colonialism is variously defined through
political and historical conditions and aesthetics. But it requires a careful
scrutiny. Critics have located its beginnings in Fanon’s The Wretched of
the Earth (1961), its theorizing in Edward Said’s Orientalism (1978) and
critical assessment in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin’s The Epire Writes
Back (1989). Meenakshi Mukherjee views it as “an emancipatory
concept”. Arif Dirlik treats post-colonialism as a child of post-
modernism and marks the arrival of the Third World Intellectuals in First World Academe (p.329). The transition is viewed from ‘colony’ to the Third World ‘to post colonial’ societies. Jasbir Jain rightly perceives that “the point of origin is not power, but the collapse of Empires, not the West but Asia and Africa.” Diaspora writers, therefore, emerge as ‘a fractured self’ and sometimes appear as ‘strangers’ to themselves which expresses the Diasporic Consciousness and which make them writers of ‘Third World’, ‘the other’, ‘the marginalized people’, ‘New World’ set in a process of change with a face of newness.

If we look into the deep background of diasporic history, we find that 'Diaspora' is a complex phenomenon of the Third World Literature and that of the Post-Colonial Literature. The word is extracted from the Greek word 'dias' (through), 'speiren' (to scatter) which means the dispersal of masses collectively and is used for the dispersed Jews after the Babylonian captivity, and also in the apostolic age for the Jews living outside of Palestine. 'Diaspora' has a rich and long history which took place every time and everywhere in the world and it brings a sort of separation, displacement, dislocation, re-location, exile and alienation. If we look into literatures of East and West, we can find the images of diasporic journey and exile. In East, the great epics of India like *The Mahabharata* and *The Ramayana* provide us the fine examples of exile and the quest for homeland. In *The Mahabharata*, there is a canto ‘Vana Parva’ which is a story of exile and homelessness and the Pandavas lived in *Agyatvas* (the hidden and unknown place) till their return to power in their homeland which is full of poetics of displacement, exile and memory. In *The Ramayana*, Rama and Sita, after leaving Ayodhya for a banishment of fourteen years, build a new home in the forest where Sita was eloped and thus separated from Rama while living in the Kingdom of
Ravana. She remained there as a captive which provides us the image of a diasporean who is away from her ‘homeland’ to ‘alien land’. Sita, thus, becomes the image of ‘the other’ of the Third World Literature. But Sita is a myth of Goddess and Rama as a God who is born to establish the kingdom of ‘good’ by killing Ravana, the image of ‘evil’ on the earth. But Sita’s suffering, pains, miseries of isolation and dislocation are similar to those of diasporeans.

In the West, *The Odyssey* and *The Aeneid* are based on the journey and separation motifs. John Milton in *Paradise Lost*, like the parallel of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ of Ravana and Rama, cultivates the similar journey of Satan from the space of Garden to Hell and Satan always craves and explores in protest and antagonism for space which exists in his ‘within’ with a sense of ‘home’ and ‘otherness’. He could not escape the category of ‘space’ and wherever and whichever he flies, he finds only the way to Hell. The journey from Paradise to Earth for Adam and Eve is identified as The Fall of Man which is a signified ‘separation’ in ‘the journey’ from Paradise: “They hand in hand with wandering steps and slow/Through Eden took their solitary way.” (*Paradise Lost*, xii: 658-49)

‘Diaspora’ began mainly in the 1980s with increased globalization where the borders of nations began to be more fluid and people moved across nations. It raised the questions of identity as well as the questions of culture of power, multiculturalism and transnationalism. The diasporic identity is always fractured or fragmented in the diasporic communities as it is related to the dispersal from one’s homeland to the search of another ‘homeland’ in ‘the alien land’ where a diasporean feels himself a displaced, uprooted and dislocated creature. ‘Dislocation’ of one is also a dislocation of one’s culture, nation and homeland. It involves ‘migrancy’ and ‘migrant’, according to Oxford English Dictionary (2001), is one who
leaves one place or country for another, while ‘expatriate’ is defined as one who lives outside his/her own native country or in the earlier usage, who has been banished or who has exiled himself/herself. Europeans in Asia and Asians in Europe come in the category of ‘expatriates’ or ‘migrants’ but their problems and purpose were different. Europeans searched for a colony to rule while Asians migrated to Europe for future, freedom and security to flourish. Such migrants are labeled as PIO (People of Indian Origin) and NRI (Non-Resident Indian) whose economic, intellectual and political expertise had been globally experienced. They build the Third World of Intellectual Academe in the world.

The concept of home is a big question of one’s sense of space in the world where one belongs. It is an idea which stands for shelter, stability, security and comfort. To be home is to occupy one’s location where one is welcomed with one’s people. Rushdie’s *Midnight Children* is to restore his childhood memory of home which builds his ‘mental construct’ and that he could not revive and return to home through his writing. To him, mind is unreliable and memory is partial and fragmentary. Migrants, thus, can envision their home in fragments and pieces and they always live in a state of displacement and dislocation. After staying a long time in England, when Rushdie visited his Bombay house, he experienced that he could not evade his feelings of displacement. Migrancy is not only physical but it also matters in one’s beliefs, traditions, customs, behaviours and values. Migrants do not feel at home on their arrival, they do not belong to new land and their home exists elsewhere. It often happens with protagonists of Bharati Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri in their novels and short stories. Hanif Kureishi is a child of hybrid parentage with a Pakistani father and English mother who is always in
search for home. Like his parents, he encounters the predicament of displacement and homelessness. On his visit to Karachi, he finds it difficult to think of his ‘home’ there and he face “a little identity crisis” where he could not feel comfortable.

‘Diaspora’ is also a child of Post-colonialism which highlights the global mixing of cultures and identities and interactions between the colonizer and the colonized, the master and the slave, the white and the black, the orient and the non-orient, the Westerner and the non-Westerner. The issues of colonialism, anti-colonialism and post-colonialism also come in the category of comprehension and deliberation. The terms like ‘hybridity’ and ‘diaspora’ stand out for their versatility and resilience. ‘Diaspora’ means any ‘de-territorialised’ population that is seeking to be ‘re-territorialized’ and ‘hybridized’.

Colonialism is defended as a white man’s burden to civilize the whole world that is under-developed and under-privileged. It is directly related to ‘the colonizer master’ and ‘the colonized people’. It is pertinent to discuss the Prospero (Coloniser) and Caliban (colonized and uncivilized) paradigm which comes in the category of anti-colonial resistance. In Shakespeare’s *Tempest*, Miranda, the daughter of Prospero, criticizes the Caliban’s ingratitude: “When you didst not, savage, know thine own meaning but would gabble like a thing most brutish.” (Act I, II, 355-8) Caliban answers in the language of ‘protest’ and tells: “I know how to curse.” (Act I, II, 363) Caliban reminds Prospero: “he showed the latter all qualities of the isle.” (Act I, II) Caliban’s ‘protesting’ is symbolic which illustrates the logic of anti-colonialism and that of anti-cultural vocabulary of colonialism. It develops the privilege of ‘appropriation’ over ‘abrogation’ and he tries to unlearn the master’s English and projects his own learning how to curse and abuse in the
master’s tongue. Ironically, Caliban is euphoric at his ability of using Prospero’s language for cursing him. Unfortunately, while learning his master’s tongue, he has forgotten his own tongue and he is de-tongued. He is not free from being colonized and he remains colonized in mind and spirit. If we may apply it in the diasporic Indian context, the post-colonial writers in diaspora and their receivers in the new land especially Salman Rushdie and Rohinton Mistry of Indian origin play like the mediators between the land of their origin and that of the former colonizers and they have forgotten their own tongue in the Calibanesque manner.

Anti-colonial resistance is another major issue of post-colonialism which involves the diasporic experience as a continuing process. It constructs a challenge against colonialism at political, intellectual and emotional levels. Nationalism has lost its identity but it has become a powerful vehicle for generating the anti-colonial energies at all these fronts. The emergence of anti-colonial and independent nation-states has cultivated the mind set of forgetting the painful experience of slavery. Anti-colonial nationalism requires the undying spirit of struggle to fight for a cause of the oppressed and the colonized people the world over. Such anti-colonialists believe in the oppositional nationalism which generates a transitional and transitory moment in the decolonizing process. Gandhi and Fanon emerged as the two historical figures who represent a style of ‘total resistance’ to the political and cultural offensive of the colonial civilizing mission. Franz Fanon in The Wretched of the Earth talks about “the total liberation” of the colonized in order to ignore the authority of the colonial master and the colonized has the power to resist the cultural supremacy of Europe. He accentualises “Total liberation” which “concerns all sectors of the personality.”

Gandhi,
another anti-colonialist historical figure, was wonderstruck to see the Indians’ attraction towards the glamorous superficiality of the West. In his periodical, *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi remarks, “we want the English rule without the English men.” Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* discusses about Hegel’s paradigm of the slave who must turn away from the master in order to forge a new meaning in context of labour. The slave experiences envy and desire in respect of the master. The Negro “wants to be like the master” as Fanon argues.

Mimicry is a weapon of anti-colonial civility and is also a new slogan of post-colonial literary analysis. Homi Bhabha in *the Location of Culture* describes “mimicry” as one “of the most effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge” and British wanted to create a class of Indians who adopted English opinions and morals. According to Bhabha, such ‘mimic men’ are “to be Anglicized” which is “emphatically not to be English.” But such mimic men are not slaves but they have power to endanger their colonial masters. They are “almost the same but not quite” and Bhabha treats them as a source of anti-colonial resistance. Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* is designed on the European mode of novel but it is moulded to Indian realities and it can be treated as a classic example of radical mimicry. Raja Rao adopts the English language in a local or desi style of India and appropriates hybridity and syncretics as a part of post colonial literary criticism.

The idea of ‘hybridity’ is derived from the colonial oppression which acts like a catalyst for transforming the colonial societies. The process of decolonization disrupts the old established patterns and values. Fanon in *A Dying Colonialism* considers that the old habits are re-shaped and transformed to “new attitudes, to new modes of action, to new ways.” Post-colonial studies have germinated the issues of diasporas,
hybridity, realization, in-betweenness and liminality and that of crossovers of ideas and identities which are fathered by colonialism. Robert Young in *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* treats a ‘hybrid’ as a cross-fertilization between two different species. It is based on the botanical theory of grafting of two inter-species and Robert Young finds “the vocabulary of the Victorian extreme right which regarded different races as different species.” Pedro Fermin de Vargas advocated a policy of inter-breeding between whites and Indians in order to ‘Hispanicize’ and finally extinguish Indians. Macaulay also wanted to cultivate the Europeanised Indians who were “a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect.” The purpose behind the idea is to cultivate half-Indian and half-British natives who can only mimic but cannot reproduce English values. Unfortunately, we are not still decolonized and retain the tissues of Englishness.

The idea of colonial hybridity subsists on cultural purity and the anti-colonial movements mixed up and hybridized what they have borrowed with indigenous ideas. Gandhi’s notion of non-violence and dignity of labour was forged by Emerson, Thoreau and Tolstoy. His vision of *Ram Rajya* is an ideal society of Hindu *El Dorado*. The theory of ‘Negritude’ was also derived from French intellectual traditions. Paul Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic* finds a new dimension of colonial hybridities of intellectual and political cross-fertilizations which was born out of migrancy of Black people from Africa to Europe and America. Such movements created ‘a Black Atlantic’ in generating “intercultural and transnational formation” which examines “the problems of nationality, location, ideality and historical memory.” According to
Gilroy, African, American, British, Caribbean diasporic cultures mould each other as well as the metropolitan cultures.

Homi Bhabha’s concept of hybridity is both influential as well as controversial. Bhabha goes back to Fanon who displays the psychological and traumatic experience of the colonized subject who feels that he cannot attain ‘whiteness’ for which he craves nor can he shed off his ‘blackness’ that he devalues and condemns. Bhabha finds the colonial identities as a matter of flux and agony and it is related “to the place of the others that colonial desire is articulated.”

But colonialism has changed the social consciousness which moves beyond the boundaries of nationalism. Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* argues that ‘nativism’ is not only alternative and we require “the possibility of a more generous and pluralistic vision of the world.” The conflict between anti-colonial nationalism and colonial encounter generates a tired impasse and a reciprocal antagonism between repression and retaliation and post-colonialism does not acknowledge the collapse of colonialism and anti-colonialism. The encounter still continues and post-colonialism seeks to bridge the old divide between the westerner and the native. It is concerned with the fulfillment of two objectives -- the transformation of the colonizer and the colonized; secondly, it constructs an inter-civilisational alliance against institutionalized suffering and oppression. Harish Trivedi in *Colonial Transactions: English Literature and India* considers it as “an interactive dialogue, two-way process- a process involving complex negotiation and exchange.”

The diasporic writings are also a two-way process of negotiation and exchange where “narratives of belonging” like “the narratives of nationalism, ethnicity or race” are not much suited in the present day
world scenario where legacy of migration has created a position of “in-betweenness”. Uma Parameshwaran has called it Trishanku, a mythical king, who is a symbol of diasporic location. Trishanku moves between heaven and earth, looking at two worlds and belonging nowhere. It reveals the diasporic journey of a migrant from ‘homeland’ to ‘alien land’ which is symbolic of poetics of diasporic existence. Paul Gilroy used ‘the image of ship’ for diasporic existence which is symbolic of ‘a living micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion which is a witness to the history of black oppression.”27 Simultaneously, it is suggestive of the mobility of ideas and cultures across different places.

Homi K. Bhabha who was born in India, migrated to Britain and living at present in America, in his The Location of Culture examines the predicaments and problems of people who live ‘border lives’ and ‘borders’ are important thresholds of diasporic homes which are full of contradiction and ambivalence. Bhabha defines ‘beyond’ which is neither ‘a new horizon’ nor ‘of leaving behind the past’. ‘Border’ decides space and time in the complex figures of difference and identity where “past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion” mingle and crossing the border is not only physical but it is also the imaginative border-crossing. Borders are only crossed at special occasions and ‘cultural diversity’, ‘pluralism’ and ‘multiculturalism’ are frequently used to depict the western nations as a location of culture and tolerance where cultural practices are well-accommodated. David Dabydeen, the British-based Guanese writer, finds ‘cultural diversity’ as a cosy term and while talking about the cultural diversity in a city like London, he was the image of a ‘beehive’ where a number of cultural groups live at one place with a little communication between them. Such cultural diversity masks
the continuing separation of cultures in the West and it discourages border-crossings and builds a new kind of relationship.

We can find that the writers of diaspora construct such ‘divided self’, ‘fractured identity’ and ‘fluid identity’ in their works and Amitav Ghosh, Hanif Kureishi, Bharati Mukherjee, Meena Alexander, Uma Parameshwaran, Jhumpa Lahiri are very popular in the western literary criticism. Homi Bhabha, Avtar Brah, Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall are notable critics who have explored the problems and possibilities of diasporic experiences of migrancy, cross-bordering as well as cultural conflict.

If we look into the history of Indian diaspora, we can find that India has received migrants from various parts of the world and has absorbed them with their culture, language, economic and social status. Indians have a peculiar consciousness of adaptability and they are scattered across the globe in a hundred and ten countries and have maintained their commitment to Bharatiyata or Indianness. The story of evolution of Indian diaspora begins with the nineteenth century during the Colonial Empire, when the indentured labourers were forcibly sent to South-African countries for sugarcane plantations because of the enormous demand for cheap labour there and labourers were seeking their livelihood in distant lands of different ‘origins’. The sufferings and pains of being the indentured labour as the girmitias (the permit/girimit/holders), working in East and West India are beautifully constructed by Vijay Mishra (a Fijian descent of the girmitias) in his article ‘Diasporas and the Art of Impossible Mourning’ who wrote that there is a “necessity of understanding the agony, trauma, their pain of adjustment with reference to the other pasts, other narratives.”
The British abolished slavery in 1833-34 and there was a huge demand of indentured system which can be considered as a byproduct of colonialism and the abolition of slavery. These *girmitias* were sent to Mauritius, Caribbean countries like Trinidad, Tobago, and Guyana, Fiji and South Africa. French and Dutch also followed the same path and as a result, a migration of Indian plantation labourers took place in their territories like Reunion Island, Guadeloupe, Martinique and Surinam. There were primarily two reasons behind migration of *girmitias* under the Colonial Rule. First and foremost reason was the poverty which spoilt the Indian village and cottage industry and they became the victim of poverty and unemployment. Secondly, the West was growing affluent because of industrial development and the colonial masters found Indians skillful, hard-working and useful and the British, the French and the Dutch and the Portuguese utilized the labour and talent of these indentured labourers in building their agricultural and industrial economies. In the Caribbean, the indentured labourers included people from Indian origin from U.P. Bihar and Bengal. In South Africa, Mahatma Gandhi with a majority of Gujaratis, these indentured labourers worked as slaves to Dutch and were deployed in railways, dockyards, coal mines, municipal services and other trades till a second lot of traders and shop owners came as free passengers. They sailed in the ship and reached the land (alien) after three months with their pots and pans, a few pieces of clothing and perhaps a blanket yet they maintained the identity of their land of origin to their children and grand-children. They formed a new form of socialization which went in name of *jahajibhai* (ship brotherhood) or *ham watani* (fellow countrymen). Vijay Mishra calls them as “people of old diaspora”. They carried with them ‘A *Ganapati icon*, a dog-eared copy of the Gita or the Quaran, an old sari, or other deshi outfit, a photograph of a pilgrimage or in modern times, a video-cassette of the latest hit from the
Their Hindu kits like *Ganga Water, Hanuman Chalisa, Tulsi Plant, Satyanarayana Katha* also worked in maintaining the cultural identity. Language is also an affinity of their homeland memory and *Bhojpuri* (a dialect of Hindi) was their popular language. Among the people of other countries, they have a reactionary streak in their hearts and the idea of homeland (desh) in Hindi where all other lands are foreign (videsh) or non-desh. The quest and cry for their homeland builds the diasporic consciousness in their minds where they feel as people away from their native land. V.S. Naipaul, Vijay Mishra and Sayendra Nandan belong to such heritage of ‘old diaspora’. Professor O. P. Juneja, President of Indian Association of Canadian Studies, calls them as “The First Wave” of Indian Diaspora.

The Second Wave of Diaspora belongs to migrants who ventured out into the neighboring Countries in 1960s as professionals, artisans, traders and factory workers in search of opportunities and trades. In 1970s, there was a great outflow of semi-skilled and skilled labour in the wake of oil boom in West Asia and Gulf countries and some of the entrepreneurs, storeowners, professionals, self-employed businessmen went to the First World countries like USA, UK and Australia. Organised commerce was introduced in Africa and traders and businessmen on the basis of their hard work and business acumen changed the face of adversity into opportunity. They have contributed to development of economy, industry and cultural diversity of these countries. They emerged as a champion in fighting against racism, violence, discrimination and many other difficulties. Vijay Mishra calls them as “modern diaspora” and Professor A. K. Singh in his article, ‘*From Gunny Sack to Ruck Sack: Proposals Pertaining to Indian English Diasporic Discourses*’, categorizes them as “colonial” or “ruck sack” diaspora who
feels no “persecution and seek foreign land for better opportunity. Diaspora is their desired agent.” They have not left their land under any compulsion like their forefathers but they have opted their ‘sojourn’ out of their choice and freedom and they love to live in the foreign land for their academic record and that of opportunities of their engagement. Salman Rushdie, Bharati Mukherjee, Vikram Seth, Rohinton Mistry, Farooq Dhondhy and Anurag Mathur fall in the category of second generation of ‘ruck sack’ authors.

The Third Wave of Diaspora which started in the mid-nineteenth century in India belongs to the migration from ‘homeland’ to industrialized and economically advanced countries like USA, Canada, UK and Australia and it draws “the success story” of Indian diaspora which comprises professionals and the educated elite of India. It is a period of time when India has become a global player in building “the model minority” or an image of South Asians as “good immigrants” in the world. They are doctors, engineers, software engineers, management consultants, financial experts, media people, professors and writers who enjoy the distinction of being a proud Indian community. In September 2000 under the chairmanship of Dr. L. M. Singhvi, the Member of Parliament, a comprehensive report on the Indian Diaspora was prepared for sensitizing the problems and expectations of their mother country between the Indian diaspora and India. It was meant for cultivating the conducive environment in India to utilize their human resources. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas was celebrated in India consecutively for fourth year by granting them dual citizenship to the People of Indian Origin. Their “departure” (expatriation) to “arrival” (immigration) has moved on in a process without Naipaulian Middle Passage and the third wave of diaspora has no ‘middle passage’ but they have become “Glocal” which
means “global in outlook” and “local in food, culture, religion and traditions” which builds their distinct identity. Now they are not Macaulayean Indian of colonized mind like ‘Indian in blood and English in morals’ but now they are de-colonised and are ‘Indian in blood’ wherever they reside. They are now ‘global Indians’ in spirit and soul.

The late-modern or ‘postmodern’ or ‘post-colonial’ authors come into the category of ‘Third Wave Diaspora’. Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Ramchandra Adiga and others are included in this category. There are some migrants who have left India at the stage of second or first generation and their grand-children are building the image of India in their memory on the basis of their grandmothers or grandfathers’ narratives about India. They are immigrants and connect to their ‘homelands’ occasionally. But writers of this stage have forgotten and are assimilised into the country where they live.

The heroes of Indian diaspora of late twentieth century “success story” are Sam Pitroda, Chairman and CEO of World Tel, Amar Bose of Bose Corporation, Vinod Khosla of the Venture Capital King, Sabeer Bhatia of Hotmail.com fame, Vinod Dham, the Father of Pentium Chip who figured in the most prestigious professional magazines like Siliconindia, Forbes and periodicals like Business Week, News Week, India Abroad, Business Times in USA. Laxmi Chand Mittal became the Third richest man in the world in the list of Fortune 500 recently. So many people of Indian Diaspora have reserved their places in USA, Canada, UK and Australia in different disciplines of life like politics, medicine, technology and creative writing and they build a rich and significant space in the world of diaspora.
In his keynote address on *Theorizing Diaspora and the Indian Experience*, Professor Kapil Kapoor of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi at the International Seminar held at North Gujarat University, Patana, Gujarat, had discussed about “the Phenomenon of Diaspora” and emphasized on two types of diaspora—diaspora into the country and diaspora out of country. According to him, out-of-India diaspora has a rich and long history and he calls India as “a diaspora laboratory” where there was in-flow and out-flow of migrants into and out of India. India provides models of nativisation, acceptance and assimilation. Assimilation was both dislocation and re-location. Assimilation is a great diasporic history that we will discuss in the coming pages.

The diaspora out of India dates back after the Mahabharata War when people who worshipped the gods like Mitra and Varuna left India and appeared in the Middle East as a conquering people after the war. Apart from it, there are references in texts to people that Indians went to Asia, South Asia, and Rome where they established an Indian colony at the turn of Christian era. Buddhist monks traveled all over Asia and Sri Lanka for spreading Buddhism. At present, we can find indentured labour and Cyber labour who went to their dreamland in USA and Europe in search of gold and opportunity out of India.

The history of into-India-diaspora is much more complex. During the 4th Century B.C., Greeks came to India and the great Greek King, Meander, settled in the city of Sialkot and founded the Great City. Some communities also scattered in Kangra of Himachal Pradesh and the descendants of Greeks stayed behind them there. In the second century A.D., the Jewish migrants settled on the southern West Coast of India and lived there for two thousand years peacefully uninterfered with. According to the Old Testament of the Bible, they are cursed people:
“you shall be thrown out of all (places).” The second migration of Parsis who came to Gujarat in the 8th century and the king of Gujarat told them “to live either like lemon in milk or like sugar in milk.” It is interesting to record that the Parsis “have lived like sugar in milk, speaking the language of people, eating their food, yet retaining their identity and living uninterfered with.” Professor Kapoor considers it as the great “matrix culture”. The Sakas and the Huns adopted the Indian culture voluntarily. The Turks, Afghans and Mughals came to India as a conqueror and they endangered the bond of cultural assimilation. The Britishers were “the permanent aliens” who could never feel at home in India. In the sixties of the last century, the Tibetan into-India-diaspora happened and settled in India for a revival of Buddhism in India. The transfer of population in 1947 from Pakistan is a true case of ‘exodus’ that could not yet be assimilated. The Hindu-Muslim unity is still unassimilated and community is still a big issue in India and Pakistan.

By using the word ‘diaspora’ for all kinds of “exiles, migrants, immigrants, colonialists, missionaries, anthropologists, soldiers and castaways” according to Kapil Kapoor is to “negate the original diasporic experience.” He further adds that there is “no experience in human history like the Jewish experience of perpetual homelessness, of perpetual persecution.”

There is no migratory and diasporic experience in agricultural laborers and nomads of India who migrate from one place to the other.

While brooding over words like diaspora, immigration and migration, Kapil Kapoor finds “no diaspora in voluntary migration or the immigrant who stood in queue before the Canadian Embassy for three years and finally migrated.” He further condemns, “You first seek to leave your homeland and then you talk of having lost your homeland.”
It is no diaspora but it is an act of selfish migration for sake of money and future. Such diasporic consciousness according to Kapoor is “of three kinds- enunciatory, renunciatory and denunciatory.” There are people who enunciate their own country and they have clear notion or idea about their homeland, it is enunciatory; those who renounce their homeland and compose romantic dreams of home, they come back, encounter slums, poverty and violence and take U-turn to their host country, it is a renunciatory diasporic experience. The last is a denunciatory concept which projects a bad image of India by highlighting it as a land of slums, cheats, dusts, and poverty-oriented people. It is a denunciatory diaspora of writings.

According to Professor Kapoor, the diasporic writing is an industry in the West. It is written, read and appreciated by the diaspora and published by such diasporic-conscious publishers for running a mint house. It is a sort “of group activity, a self-serving group activity” which is centered around denouncing their ‘homeland’ and making the money and earning popularity. He feels that scholars, visionaries and colonialists were never homesick. Buddhist monks migrated for promoting Buddhism and they have no autobiographical suffering and they left their centre of philosophy at Bodh Gaya or Sarnath behind. I-Tsing, Megasthenese, Bernier and Huen Tsang have never discussed about their suffering but have shared the pains of others who “lived, felt and suffered.” The exile literature is related to the nostalgia of home country and the host country is unwelcome and negative. Rohinton Mistry is “a double diaspora” writer who loves his “home country” as well as “a host country” simultaneously. Bharati Mukherjee is “one time diasporic” or “a perfect immigrant” and she is “transforming her ‘self’. But the immigrant has a positive viewpoint to the host country but he is
ambivalent in attitude and live like ‘a divided self’ or ‘a vikhandita chitta’. He is a vichhimna or ‘a fragmented self and vikshipta becomes a diasporic self. Chittabhumi is a constructed self and its domain in rasa theory is karuna rasa which requires to study the diasporic literature as a literature of separation and suffering where ‘self’ is de-stabilized and dislocated.

Makarand Paranjape in his Valedictory Address ‘Interrogating Diasporic Creativity: Patan Initiative’ discusses about “Diasporas and Homelands” and cites from his book In-Diaspora: Theories, Histories and Texts and theorizes that it is “not just the homeland that creates diasporas but that diasporas also create the homeland.” Diasporas and homelands are related to each other, but the question of identity and representation continues who is creating whom? Anita Rao Badami in The Toronto Globe and Mail says “one Foot in India and one Foot in Canada” which describes about a migrant traveling between two countries with a divided mind and a fragmented self. Paranjape tries to seek “a diasporic text” in writings of diasporic writers. He exemplifies the film of Director Mira Nair, Monsoon Wedding and questions that it is set in India. It is about an Indian family by a British writer. How do you read it for the people of India? Vikram Seth’s An Equal Music is a novel set in London and Italy, written by an Indian author who lives abroad. His another novel in verse The Golden Gate is characterized by the experience of dislocation of a homosexual who moves from India to USA but finds no ground under his feet. Paranjape problematises the diasporic text. Vijay Mishra theorizes the alien location and discusses about the melancholy of diaspora in the Freudian context which is like a wound which is never healed. He argues that diaspora is like being ejected out of a mother’s womb where you cannot return again. Therefore, diaspora is a
perpetual moving without any arrival. There are also two types of Diaspora, one is “Doubly Privileged” and other is “Doubly under-privileged.” The Indentured labourers of first generation were doubly under-privileged but the late modern diasporas of skilled and intellectual class were “doubly privileged” but not “doubly displaced.”

Paranjape cites Kapil Kapoor’s concept of diasporeans as “permanent aliens” like Raja Rao who lived abroad for fifty and sixty years but never became the part of alien culture and was more Indian than Indians. To him, ‘India was idea, a metaphysic’ that Raja Rao talks in The Serpent and the Rope and says, “I carry India with me wherever I go.” Another category is of “a divided settler” of Uma Parameshwaran’s metaphor of Trishanku of neither here nor there mindset. The third is category of immigrant and Bharati Mukherjee belongs to this category, but “the perfect immigrant” is also “the imperfect immigrant” and her pro-American narratives express the various discounts of immigrant experiences. Professor Avadesh Kumar Singh in his essay From Gunny Sack to Ruck Sack: Proposals Pertaining to Indian English Diasporean Discourse discusses about the categories of diaspora as “pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial.” He categorises pre-colonial as a classical diaspora i.e. of the Jewish diaspora. The colonial diaspora belongs to Girmitias of 18th and 19th century to which the forefathers of V.S. Naipaul belong. But the post-colonial diaspora of sort of ‘ruck sack’ diaspora belongs to the present generation of Indians who stand in queue before the foreign embassies for visas till they reach their dreamland or green pastures. They don’t feel the sense of dislocation or de-territorization or homelessness. To them, “Janani Janmabhumischa swargadapi gariyasi” (the mother and motherland are greater than heaven) is a meaningless idea and a de-contextualized concept. The greater mission ahead them is
“Janani janmabhoomischa Americadapina gariyasi” (the mother and the motherland are not greater than America). A.K. Singh advises to include such post colonial/modern diaspora in “the category of immigrant literature;” or “rucksack discourse.”

The ‘gunny sack’ is a traditional colonial diaspora and people are compelled to travel to the distant land which is ‘new land’ to them “with memorabilia like a fistful soil of their homeland, their religious texts like the Ramacharitamanas or Hanumanchalisa as a mirror.” Those girmitias maintained the memory of their homeland and compared their exile with Rama’s exile for fourteen years. But Rama came back to Ayodhya after the period of exile but their exile is endless, crucial, experiential and existential.

Professor Singh finds no diasporic exile in the travel of Sri Adi Shankaracharya and Swami Vivekananda. Adi Shankaracharya’s self-willed journey from one corner of India to the other on foot for establishing his peeth in the different corners of the country while talking, interacting and communicating to the people was a vigorous, thought-provoking journey where there was no remorse and no repentance for his location. Swami Vivekananda’s journey from India to America on foot, cart, ship provided him enough time to understand and interact with other dharmas like Islam and Christianity which contributed to his better understanding of universal religion of man. But the people of the modern ‘ruck sack’ sort of diaspora with less time and more speed reach America and Eurpore with no human connectivity and they cultivate a kind of “tourist literature”. Such ‘tourist literature’ regarding diaspora provides no sense of ‘dislocation’ which can be a part of diasporic text.
V. S. NAIPaul (1932- )
SALMAN RUSHDIE (1947- )
R. K. RAMANUJAN (1929-1993)

HANIF KUREISHI (1954- )
AMITAV GHOSH (1956- )

UMA PARAMESWARAN (1938- )
JHUMPA LAHIRI (1967- )
MEENA ALEXANDER (1951- )

Writers of the Indian Diaspora
Writers of the Indian Diaspora

Diaspora raises the complex question of ethnicity, race, identity, migration and culture. Amitav Ghosh, himself a diaspora writer, wrote in an essay in 1989 about *The Modern Indian Diaspora* which is “the huge migration from the subcontinent that began in the mid-nineteenth century” now “represents an important force in world culture”. Some of the important and finer writers, writing in English language today, according to Ghosh, are “V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie and A.K. Ramanujan.” The diasporic experience and consciousness is the integral part of Naipaul’s Post-Colonial discourse which is marked by “the negotiation of necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of ‘identity’ which lives with and through, not despite, difference, by hybridity.” Stuart Hall in his essay *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* considers the World of Diaspora as “The New World” presence in America and Australia which is “the beginning of diaspora, of diversity, of hybridity and difference” which makes “Afro-Caribbean people already people of a diaspora.” Edward Said in *The Last Sky* treats diaspora as an event of continuity of lives and explores that our “reality is expressed in the way we cross over from one place to another, we are migrants and perhaps hybrids, but not in any situation in which we find ourselves. This is the deepest continuity for our lives …….”

The diasporic identities are set in a process of producing and reproducing a new face of identity through transformation and difference. It germinates the cut and mix of diasporic culture and the dialogic creativity, a narrative of displacement, dismemberment and imaginary plenitude. The past plays a vital role in building the symbolic mode of representation which is the renewable source of desire, memory, myth, search and discovery and it is a reservoir of our creative narratives of
past. But past is always and everywhere impossible because history is a story of loss that we can trace in Naipaul’s *The Loss of El Dorado* which incorporates the loss of hundreds of years of solitude or indenture, centuries of servitude. It carves out a new point of recognition ‘within’ representation and links the chain of being and becoming in Naipaul’s *A way in The World*.

Naipaul’s writings explore the exilic explorations through his fictions, travelogues and essays. In *A Way in the World*, he displays his obsessive preoccupation and sharpened memory in encountering with India and many other lands which become “a kind of homecoming.” Satendra Nandan, therefore, experiences that a writer like Naipaul “can only find a house, not a home.” In the Naipaulian imagination, the memory of home becomes paramount in narratives where home is but a replay of memory. Alienation is also a sense of writer’s being which is a vision of artist’s reality as well as his new identity. Therefore, Naipaul is “traveling everywhere, belonging nowhere.” We can trace that there is a hidden affinity and identity between the personal destiny of author and that of the wider destiny of his generation. Therefore, his novel, *A House for Mr. Biswas*, becomes a story of the betrayal of history that Satendra Nandan calls “From Biswas to Biswasghat.” It is a story of writer’s home even after his exilic explorations in history, literature and politics which is related to the old and new realities of our existence. The novel also travels through the colonial and post-colonial imagination of the novelist and his diasporic conscience contributes to a reality of ‘a new world’ of literature.

In *The Middle Passage*, Naipaul deals with the predicament of indentured labourers as the descendents of slaves who were labeled as “the unanchored slaves” by the novelist, created a history of exploitation,
torture, displacement and alienation. After the discovery of the New World by Columbus, European settlers arrived at the Caribbean land with a desire to rule and exploit the resources of the land. They exterminated aboriginal Arwaks and decimated the gentle Caribs. The islands were deprived of the inner landscape of Post-colonial African, Asian or Pacific writers which shattered the original and indigenous cultures of the lands. Caribbean writers, therefore, lack a tradition of continuity and a sense of wholeness of existence. When the potential of sugarcane labourers was realized, slaves from Africa made the middle passage. Unlike the slave states of America, the Caribbean plantocracy never looked to the West Indies as its home. The great mass of the West Indian society inherited the slaves dynasty which brought the deep psychic wounds on the community. The uprooted and transplanted slave’s new world was fragmented and separated from his tribe, lost his landscape, his tongue and the meaningful mode of existence that he might have brought from his homeland. He was truly damned and became the wretched of the earth in Frantz-Fanon’s true words.

When the slavery was abolished in 1833, the sugar barons looked for ‘new slaves’ from elsewhere and India and China were obviously the cheaper sources of labour. But India was both because it was cheaper on the one hand and, on the other, it was under the British colony. But unlike the slaves, the East Indian was neither customarily nor culturally deprived of nor was he severely dislocated. There was little doubt if he was ‘the new slave’. For Naipaul, the East Indian of the West Indies became the metaphor of our modernist fate and like its predecessors; the community too is a destitute society. The middle passage for the slaves is a way out of their slavery, torture and predicament. It is an historical trope of experience which leads to the portrayal of failure, futility, isolation,
dispossession and rootlessness. Naipaul in *The Middle Passage* has pathetically drawn the picture of Trinidad Indian society where indentured labourers are the living slaves but they are:

A peasant-minded, money-minded community, spiritually cut off from its roots, its religion reduced to rites without philosophy set in a materialistic colonial society: a combination of historical accidents and national temperaments has turned the Trinidad Indian into a complete colonial, even more Philistine than the white.\(^{50}\)

Naipaul’s middle passage leads to the image of diasporic journey of in-betweenness of characters which makes their life fragmented, divided and frustrated. They always crave and cry for their roots, culture and identity.

*A House for Mr. Biswas*, according to George Lamming, a well-known Caribbean novelist, who in an essay published in 1989 in *Indenture and Exile: The Indo-Caribbean Experience*, thus commented that it is “only through this novel that many areas of non-Indian Caribbean, including Trinidad, got some glimpse of the movement and the substance of life within that Indian world.”\(^{51}\) Naipaul in ‘Foreword’ to his father’s collection of stories titles *The Adventures of Gurudeva* wrote, “one day in 1934, when he was 28 … my father looked in the mirror and thought he couldn’t see himself.”\(^{52}\) V.S. Naipaul as a writer was obsessed with the creation and identity of that ‘lost face’ and was always searching that face in the mirror.

*A House for Mr. Biswas* is based on the theme and idea of slavery which is the essence of historical experience. It explores the attitudes, sensibilities and convictions of the slaves as ‘the unnecessary men’ on the
earth. The theme is centralized in organization of the Tulsi family with a multitude of ideas and images which build a microcosm of a slave society. Hanuman House is carefully chosen name for writer’s ironic and metaphorical purposes. It has a mythical meaning as Hanuman is the committed servant of Lord Rama in the Ramayana. Mr. Biswas wants to escape from the colonial confinement of suffocating ‘alien fortress’ and suffering of slaves and coolies who encounter inhuman bondage and chains of slavery, caste and injustice. Hanuman House is symbolic of the slave world and Mrs. Tulsi needs workers to build her empire. She exploits the homeless and deprived fellow Hindus. She has captured the psychology of slaves and Tulsidom is constructed by a number of desperate families and to get Hanuman house is a symbol of relief from slavery. Mrs. Tulsi is the shrewd colonizer who justified the exploitation of slaves in defense of her humanist face for them. It is a sort of Biswasghat against fellow Hindus by Mrs. Tulsi which encompasses a whole culture and a people’s whole history. Mr. Biswas fights his own battle and his struggles are heroic in a world where there are no heroes. It is a battle of identity and non-identity.

Hanuman House is significant in a sense that in the world of homelessness, ‘house’ is ‘a stupendous achievement’ as Mr. Biswas moves from one strange house to another whether it is his father’s hut or the ‘alien fortress’ called Hanuman House. It even provided the children ‘an ordered world’ that even Mr. Biswas missed in his childhood. The house becomes the creative and positive side of his rebellion as we are “stiffening in rented mansions” and are “dying in mortgaged houses.” The novel envisions the quest for home which has become an imaginary homeland for the expatriates and the quest for home continues till the last breath of man. Story becomes history and history records the meaningful
growth of mankind. V.S. Naipaul in his fictions has revealed the hidden face of colonized people who want to build their home everywhere but find it nowhere. It is a strange journey of writer like V.S. Naipaul who only explores and knits the story of diasporic world which is a possession of his imaginary homeland.

Salman Rushdie, another finer diasporic writer, deals with Indian diaspora as a mark of freedom and post-coloniality. In Imaginary Homelands, he begins with L.P. Harley’s novel, the Go-Between, with its opening sentence: “the past is a foreign country.” Rushdie inverts the idea and writes, “it’s my present that is foreign, and the past is home, albeit a lost home in a lost city in the mists of lost time.” Bombay was his “lost city” and his “far away life wave illusions, and that this continuity was the reality.” (p.213) In Midnight’s Children, he explains about the limits of power of memory which cannot fully capture past, the sense of loss, pastiche, history and displacement. The self of writer is full of “profound uncertainties” in the physical alienation of emigrants, exiles or expatriates from India who “will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost” and they will instead “create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but the invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind.” (p.214) But Rushdie feels that Midnight’s Children is “a novel of memory and about memory” (p.214) which is novelist’s “my India” and Saleem Sinai, the protagonist of the novel commits “the mistakes of fallible memory compounded by quirks of character and of circumstance” which makes “his vision fragmentary.”(p.214) Rushdie, therefore, accentuates that “the Indian writer who writes from outside India tries to reflect that world” which is like “broken mirrors, some of whose fragments have been irretrievably lost.”(p.214) This broken glass is a mirror of writer’s nostalgia, the sense of experiencing the value of loss
and the power of past. He further argues that “the past is a country from which we have all migrated” and “its loss is a part of our community.”(p.216) He places the problems and definitions of being ‘Indian’ outside India who are even “out-of-country and out-of-language” may experience this loss and the physical fact of discontinuity where “his present being in a different place from his past, of his being ‘elsewhere’. ”(p.216) He is against to be a writer of ‘ghetto’ mentality where writers confine themselves to the cultural frontiers which in South Africa called ‘the homeland’ and they face a sort of internal exile. He advocates for the international writers who cultivate a free country of free people and America is a dreamland and “a nation of immigrants” which has “created great literature out of the phenomenon of cultural transplantation, out of examining the ways in which people cope with a new world.”(p.223) Rushdie, as a diaspora writer, has explained the problems of writers outside India and has raised the questions of geographical and cultural dislocations, displacement, nationality and alienation with a solution to be the writer of “a world beyond the community to which we belong.”(p.222) It shows that he belongs to the whole humanity instead of the limited diasporic community of Indian identity.

*Midnight’s Children* begins with a multi-layered observations and narratives. As a narration, it is a fairy tale (“once upon a time”), as an autobiography (“I was born in Doctor Narlikar’s Nursing Home”) and as history (“India’s arrival at independence”). It is a comic, historic and mythic experience for Meenakshi Mukherjee and she considers how “epic, fable, national events, fairy saga, advertisements, films, popular songs, newspaper clipping, parody, pastiche and gossip could all be gathered up in one comprehensive sweep that is comic, historic and
mythic at the same time.”55 Salman Rushdie’s history is not national but cosmopolitan. If we may compare the sense of writing and making history of Jawaharlal Nehru’s *Autobiography* and Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight Children*, we will find that Nehru seeks the ‘self’ as a part of creation of history of India while Rushdie problematises ‘self’ with Indian history. Nehru’s *Autobiography* is both personal as well as national history and he achieves his identity between his self and the greater self that is India where the Mahatma and the masses appear as symbols. Its unity and continuity are maintained as the conception of history which can be read as an autobiographical as well as national history. But Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight Children* is a fragment history in relation to a story of a fragment Indian whose tryst with destiny seems to be almost a parody of Nehru’s making of history on Independence Day. For Rushdie, his protagonist is “mysteriously handcuffed to history” and he is “a child of time” who is fathered “by history.” (p.137) For Aruna Srivastava, “Saleem is India: he is All-India Radio, a map of India” and all major events of Indian history like Jallianwallah Bagh massacre, Independence Day, Indira Gandhi’s rise to power, her Emergency Rule and her trial correspond to his life history, his body and family as a part of his trials and tribulations. Rushdie, therefore, problematises both the self as well as the nation, its continuity of history as well as unity which makes *Midnight Children* as a post-modern text of self as the larger fiction of the nation and it also contains “pickles of history” which is energized with “the authentic taste of truth”.

The story of Saleem Sinai, the protagonist in the novel, becomes the cosmopolitan history of self of the Indian background. It exposes the false consciousness of nationalism and critics like Homi Bhabha and Gyan Prakash consider it the transcendence of the nation-state. David Birch
reads the novel as “the unstable post-modern allegory” and “a denial of the very possibility of meaning.” In a way, it becomes a diasporic text which is told on the basis of the memory of protagonist which encounters a kind of physical ‘absence’ from India and which cultivates a creative ‘presence’ in alien land. Rushdie’s ‘self’ or ‘I’ is more problematised than we find in his novel, *Midnight Children*. It is history, personal story, parody, allegory, magic, fantasy all in one which makes it a superb post-modern diasporic text of a universal significance.

Salman Rushdie is a remarkable novelist who mixes history with gossip and fantasy but the memory is fragmentary which is the power of mind. He manages his protagonists of *Midnight’s Children*, *Shame*, *Satanic Verses* and *the Moor’s Last Sigh* to be fantastic. He feels that ‘a great historical idea’ is interesting but ‘the historical record’ is fragmented. His mixture of gossip motif with history is based on the crisis of belief as Rushdie in *Bandung File Interview* emphasizes “Everything we know is pervaded by doubt and not by certainty. And that is the basis of the great artistic movement known as Modernism.” In *Shame*, he writes, “Gossip is like water.”(p.48) Therefore, in *The Satanic Verses*, the Imam speaks through his muezzin, Bilal:

> We will make a revolution …that is a revolt not only against a tyrant but against history …We will unmake the veil of history, and when it is unraveled, we will see Paradise standing there, in all its glory and light.\(^{56}\)

The heroes of Rushdie’s novels Saleem Sinai, Omar Khayyam Saladin/Gibreel and the Moor represent his ‘alien’ system of values. Rushdie has confessed that somewhere in the process of ‘westernization’, he had lost his faith, “when I was young, I was religious in quite
unthinking way. Now I’m not, but I am conscious of a space where God once was.” The loss of faith is not a fun for one’s self and Rushdie repaired it in *The Satanic Verses* by a reworking of history of Islam from a liberal perspective. If fundamentalism of Islam is horrible in *The Satanic Verses*, the torture and reign of terror in the Emergency of India is not less appalling in *Midnight’s Children*. The medieval configurations of power in Pakistan is equally criticized and satirized in *Shame* and chauvinism and censorship revealed such loss of faith in *The Moor’s Last Sigh*. Rushdie projects the problematised ‘self’ and ‘history’ in the fabulous way in his novels. If the memory of past in search for identity plays a vital role in projecting the complex identity of self of the author, it can certainly be equated with ‘the divided self’ of the diasporic texts of expatriate writers who share the same consciousness and stand as ‘a split-personality’.

Apart from Salman Rushdie, another finer diasporic poet is A.K. Ramanujan who is a first generation immigrant or a diaspora poet who like Raja Rao, always carried his ‘Indianness’ with him and created space for it in the world of his adoption. He is different from other diasporic writers in a sense that his memories and recollections are not nostalgic. He feels that Indian culture is a live culture and his childhood memories and kinship patterns are also alive and these are never out of context and out of place in the new surroundings of relationships. He is an Indian American poet or better to call him as an Indian Tamil and American poet who treats so many inheritances, pasts and traditions that no monologic frame can accommodate his such heterogeneity of experience. It is too difficult to label him either as a nativist or a diasporic poet or a nationalist or an internationalist poet. If we look at the cultural dynamics of his poetic discourse, we can trace the constructs of ‘nation’, ‘race’, ‘dharma’,
and ‘time’. He has inherited the culture of the canonical Sanskrit tradition (marga) and that of local vernacular traditions (desi). His foregrounding in the native folklore also provides an exceptional dimension to his poetic strength. But we can’t call him a folk Indian poet writing in English.

If we concentrate on the full spectrum of cultural compulsions on his poetic self, we can find that it is predominantly a product of three cultural forces-desi, marga and videshi. Marga is one dimension of culture which is a product of the counter-hegemonic desi perspective and that of the post-modernist one. Makarand Paranjape in his “Preface” to Nativism: Essays in Criticism published by Sahitya Akademi in 1997 employs these terms to explain the cultural dynamics of Indian critical scenario. He explains that “the desi can hardly be separated from marga or videshi. All three are closely intertwined in contemporary Indian society. Their inter-communications are so deep that it is impossible to determine what is native and what non-native.”

A.K. Ramanujan, born in Mysore in 1929, got his formal education at Belgaum, Dharwar and Baroda before moving to US as a professor of Dravidian Languages in early 1960s at the University of Chicago. His early collection of poems were published in Kannada (Proverbs 1955, Hokkulalli Huvilla, 1963). He published his first collection of poems in English The Striders in 1966 and Relations in 1971. Selected Poems was published by OUP, Delhi in 1976 and his Collected Poems after two years of his death in 1995 published by Oxford University Press, New Delhi in 1997 which includes his unpublished collection titled The Black Hen. He also translated U.R. Anantha Murthy’s Sanskara which provided it canonical status in Indian literature because of its excellent translation. Dilip Chitre in his article ‘Namdeo Dhasal: Poet of the Underworld’ informs that Ramanujan also translated a couple of Marathi dalit poems
which was published in the American journal. His translations made him a poet translator and it showed his love for cultural Indian background.

A.K. Ramanujan, like R. Parthasarathy, Dom Moraes and Meena Alexander is considered as a non-resident Indian. R.Parthasarathy discovered in Ramanujan’s work “the first indisputable evidence of the validity of Indian English verse” which is well-foregrounded in “a tradition very much of this subcontinent, the deposits of which are in Kannada and Tamil.” Arvind Krishna Mehrotra in his article ‘The Emperor Has No Clothes’ hails the poet for looking “outside the obvious signs” (Mehrotra, 470) and appreciates his inlaid multilinguism of poetry. Rajeev S. Patke in his well-structured essay “The Ambivalence of Poetic Self-Exile: The Case of A.K. Ramanujan” (Jouvert, 5:2) tries to establish the relationship between his poetry and that of translations of his native texts in terms of declaring him as a poet of diaspora.

Ramanujan’s poetry is neither Indian nor American but it incorporates a large space of diversity which is not horizontal but vertical. The space of Indian poetry is full of paradoxes and predicaments as it has to face the conflicting claims and counter-claims of cultural representation and authenticity where it becomes a power play of colonial versus colonized, native versus alien, east versus west, modern versus traditional and which makes the post-colonial discourse unstable and inconclusive. The exploration of ‘inter-textuality’ gathers a critical significant of poet’s multiple spatio-temporal locations which comprise his geographical as well as cultural locations. He like Rushdie establishes the emergence of a shared poetics in the post-national, post-colonial cultural space.
It is quite interesting to look into his family relations as a part of his literary landscape. He inherits from his father a mixed past which is at once modern and traditional, scientific as well as superstitious. His ‘three-storey’ house at Mysore provides a significant cultural make-up where his father occupied the second floor and mothers, the ground. His mother was an orthodox Brahman woman of her time, limited by custom in the scope of her movement and control and a typical housewife. Whenever he went upstairs to meet his father, he spoke in English, downstairs in the kitchen, he would talk in local Tamil with her mother and on streets, he communicated in Kannada. He was, thus, a multilingual in the multicultural space which contributed to his literary landscape.

A.K. Ramanujan equates ‘mother tongue’ with motherland and ‘foreign tongue’ as a father-land. ‘Father’ stands for him as ‘the nationalist construction of patriarchy’ and is a symbol of outer material world, colonial influences, scientific western education and authority. Despite all his disagreements with the image of tyranny of fatherhood/colonialism, he describes it in “A Wobbly Top” as two “perfect concentric circles” (CP,60) and appreciates father for providing the suitable occasion to prosper and grow but, at the same time, it also generates a tool for necessary disagreement. In “Obituary”, his father dies in the most unceremonious manner: “Father when he passed on/left dust/on a table full of papers/ left debts and daughters.”(CP,111) which is symbolic of demise of colonialism in India and Britishers left India in a state of being impoverished and debt-ridden. In “annual ritual”, his father left us “a changed mother/and more than/ one annual ritual” which is symbolic of Independence Day celebrations and which is celebrated every year as a mark of freedom.
According to Hindu ideal, marriage is a union of two souls and he feels that wife and husband should grow since childhood and even before births. ‘Wife’ for the poet faces the pains of expatriation and keeps the poet persona away from the mother’s pull. The poet distrusts his wife who remains “an innocent/ date with a nice Muslim friend/ who only hinted at touches”, and grows ‘old’ at remembering how she was “belted by father/standing on a door step/with a long ship of cowhide/ and the family idiom/ the day he caught her/in the hotel lobby” (CP, 93-94). In his exclusive family, wife is more a rival to the mother and the daughter than a positive relationship. In “Love Poem for a Wife and Her Trees” (CP 180-83), he compares wife’s love with mother’s warmth and calls: “You are not Mother/ certified dead but living on / you remind of the difference.” Both ‘dead’ mother and ‘unborn’ daughter outlive the ‘live’ wife in terms of consciousness of poet’s persona. Wife is “mama/sob-sister” and “the sexpot next door” who lives as an “Another, the faraway/stranger who’s nearby.” ‘Another’ is a self of wife which is signifier of ‘Alien-nation’. His wife faces the predicament of an expatriate in her family as an alien location which is her temporary abode. Like his wife’s persona, Ramanujan in America lives “an exile” in himself and his ‘mother’ and ‘motherland’ provides him emotional comforts that he left behind in India years ago that America, Videsh, could not provide him. Such conflicts and contradictions of cultural make-up builds the personality of a diaspora poet like A.K. Ramanujan who has occupied the literary space in Indian as well as world literature. He remains Indian as well American simultaneously and his poetry is full of multicultural diversity and postcolonial multiplicity.

Apart from the poetic self that he foregrounded in his family relationship and that of his ‘homeland’, ‘home’ becomes a trope of
belonging and identity and ‘home’ here becomes the allegory of national
on the one hand and the poet’s ‘self’ on the other which brings the three-
home, nation and self- into an unmistakable homological relationship.
Poet’s affiliation to space and time, dharma, nation and genetic
inheritance build the predicaments of his post-colonial self. His
problematic self deters us to call him purely a poet of diaspora or a poet
of chaste native sensibility or he creates a third space/ time for his ‘self’.
In short, his poetic self is enlarged by such unified sensibility that makes
him a universal poet.

Amitav Ghosh is well known diasporic writer who received great
critical applause and several awards and major nominations. Born of
1956 in Calcutta, Amitav, as an NRI writer, has brought to light feelings
of displacement, loss of homeland and rootlessness which were clearly
understandable and warmly felt in his novels. His first novel *The Circle
of Reason* (1986) is basically divided into three parts: a first part deal
with story of Balaram who is rationalist and has no involvement with
people and is equally cynical. Alu (Nachiketa) is Balaram’s nephew. He
is only one who survives in family. The second part tells story of zestful
trader who tries to bring together the communities of India and Middle
East with unrealistic efforts. The third part is the story of Mrs. Verma
who outrightly rejects the rational thinking. At the end of the novel, all
three are in search of newer horizon, unformed hopes and ideas.
Containing the elements of migration, this novel presents Ghosh’s
thinking about mass Indian Migration to West. The people of Lalpukur
have been seen “vomited out of their native soil” 59 in the massacre
connected with partition of India.
The Glass Palace (2000) is another novel by Amitav where he manages to box in the past and what it must have meant to move to abroad settled down there and then be thrown out of there by war.

His other novel Sea of Poppies (2008) belongs to labour diaspora along with mercantile background. The novel presents diasporic consciousness, opened out of workers and they are addressed as ‘girmitias’ noticeably. The novel for its matchless script was awarded the Grossword Book Prize and the Indian Plaza Golden Quill Award. The novel highlights the elucidation of what it is to have a history, crafting the space of diaspora as a third space, neither a homeland nor metropole but a place where history of its own is unfolding.

Meena Alexander (1951), the so called ‘Daughter of Diaspora’, with an excellent global identity reveals her own lived diasporic experiences of uprooting and exile, separation and loneliness, migrant memories and trauma- all the way from India to Sudan and America. Her poetry and fiction mirrors her multicultural life experiences among various ethnic and religious communities on four continents. Her penmanship mostly explores the different elements of her heritage and cultural displacement, focusing on her status as an educated woman of the South Asian Diaspora, living and writing in the West. Almost her contribution to the Anglophone Post colonial Literature invited a critical confabulation but scholars have responded to her feminist standpoint on literary and cultural issues. Alexander aptly remarks:

While I don’t think I consciously write as a woman, I have little doubt that some of my deepest emotions and insights spring from having been born into a female body, learning to grow up as a woman in both a traditional Indian culture-
South Indian, Syrian Christian, Malayalam speaking as a part of the complex, shifting South Asian Diaspora.60

Her semi-autobiographical first novel *Nampally Road* (1991) brings the readers an honest mixture of the feelings, the author experiences upon her return to her native land with her optimism being dashed by a sense of dismay and disgust.

Her autobiography *Fault Lines* (1993), indicating her sense of displacement or dislocation is such a solid sentiment perhaps due to the physical trajectory of her life that she seems to writhe with lines, boundaries and environment in her work and self. Here, she says herself, “I m a woman, cracked by multiple migration. Uprooted so many times, she can connect nothing with nothing.” (*Fault Lines*)

Apart from these major diasporic authors like V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, A.K. Ramanujan, Amitav Ghosh and Meena Alexander, we have other writers who have treated the diasporic sensibility in their works. Uma Parameswaran’s *Trishanku* (1987), Anita Desai’s *Baumgartner’s Bombay*, Kamala Markandeya’s *The Nowhere Man*, Rohinton Mistry’s *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance*, Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines*, M.G. Vassanji’s *The Gunny Sack*, No New Land, Gita Mehta’s *Karma Cola*, Sasthi Brata’s *My God Died Young*, N.C. Chaudhuri’s *A Passage to England* and *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, Arvind Rajan’s *The Dark Dancer*, Allan Sealy’s *The Trotter-Nama*, Vikram Seth’s *The Golden Gate*, Shashi Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel*, Jhumpal Lahiri’s *Namesake*, and Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss* deal with the diasporic consciousness, the question of identity, dislocation and exile. The search for identity continues in some or other ways in these works which build the ‘divided self’ or ‘split-
personality of the protagonists and who are soaked into the diasporic ocean of ideas and identities which is a part of diaspora literature.
References


3. Ibid., p.111.


5. Ibid. , p.53.


7. Ibid. , p.120.

8. Ibid., p.120.

9. Ibid. , p.120.


19. Ibid., p.89.


27. Homi Bhabha, op. cit., p.1.


30. Ibid., p.30.

31. Ibid., p.31.

32. Ibid., p.34.

33. Ibid., p.34.

34. Ibid., p.35.

35. Ibid., p.35.

36. Ibid., p.35.

37. Ibid., p.39.

38. Ibid., p.40.

39. Ibid., p.40.


42. Ibid., p.226.

43. Ibid., p.226.

44. Amitav Ghosh, op. cit., p.53.

45. Ibid., p.53.


47. Ibid., p.54.

48. Ibid., p.55.

49. Ibid., p.55.


52. Cited V.S. Naipaul, p.60.

53. Ibid., p.63.


