Indian Diaspora

Indian Diaspora:

Immigrants' Experiences in Literature

By

Pravin Bhagwan Bhaskar

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FOREWORD

On the large canvas of literature, diasporic voices resonate with a unique resonance, webbing tales of displacement, longing, resilience and belonging. Diasporic literature echoes the unsung voices of displaced communities and it serves as a bridge between cultures, offering readers a glimpse into the rich complexities of diasporic experiences. It exhibits the prolonged journey of their homeland ties and fractured identity. These narratives transcend continents and generations. Within the pages of diasporic literature, one encounters the profound journeys of individuals, navigating the labyrinth of identity, grappling with the tension between heritage and assimilation, and confronting the legacy of history and the dynamics of belonging. From the bustling streets of Calcutta and Mumbai to the multicultural streets of New York, London and beyond, these narratives offer readers a kaleidoscopic view of the diasporic experience, its joys, sorrows, triumphs and challenges. The Indian diaspora has reached every corner of the world. It is a celebration of culture, tradition and homeland identity. Indian diasporic literature is an embodiment of the voices of Indian migrants. Among Indian women writers, Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni are some of the most celebrated writers to focus on the life and experiences of Indian migrants in the West.

The present book, *Indian Diaspora*: *Immigrants' Experiences in Literature*, written by Dr. Pravin Bhagwan Bhaskar, offers a detailed study of works by Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. It aims at analyzing the stories of migration, the language and the techniques used by the three Indian diasporic writers. Dr. Bhaskar discusses the exilic journey and diasporic issues faced by Indian migrants, the humiliation of immigrants and their hardships for assimilation as portrayed by these writers.

The book is divided into six chapters. The first chapter offers a full-length introduction to diaspora in general and a historical survey of Indian diasporic literature in particular. The second, third, fourth and fifth chapters critically examine the works of Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni respectively. In the sixth chapter, Dr. Bhaskar offers conclusions, his observations and arguments about the immigrants' experiences as reflected in the works selected for the study. Certainly, this

book is one of the best additions in the field of Indian women's diasporic writing. I am sure it will be of a great help to researchers, scholars and especially to all those who wish to work on Indian women writers of the Indian diaspora.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Origin of Diaspora

It is widely seen that people are moving to different territories on a large scale. This has changed the domain of migration. Majorly, the migrations of Indians to the west have directed the world's attention towards the problems produced by cultural encounters and identity crises. The term 'diaspora' has been used in different ways, indicating settlement issues in a host country and cultural assimilation, generational differences and transformation of identities, and longing for the homeland. Diasporic literature raises the identity of those migrants who are dislocated and assimilated either voluntarily or involuntarily. It exposes the voices of homeless immigrants who suffer a sense of loneliness and disintegration in a foreign country. It is the journey of the immigrants and their varied experiences in an alien land. It captures every moment for the immigrants, who face different challenges on account of cultural differences. An effort is made here to highlight the different connotations connected with diaspora and contextualize historical ideas of diaspora to better comprehend and cope with this kind of writing. 'Diaspora' is a notion that dates back to the dawn of human life on our planet. The term 'diaspora' does not mean merely dispersion of a group of people from a geographical location of origin and relocation in another new territory, but finding roots through routes. The term 'diaspora' began with the scattering of Jews from Babylon to Israel. The displacement from Babylon seems to be a key cause of the suffering of the Jewish community. As migrants, they feel unaccustomed to the alien land. The Jewish community looks dislocated, nervous, and isolated. Generally, the umbrella of the diaspora entails issues related to a sense of nostalgia, cultural identity, cultural differences, hybrid culture, homeland memory and multiculturalism (S. J. D. Cohen).

The term 'diaspora' is used to describe a collection of individuals from various national, religious, and political backgrounds. It is derived from the Greek verb *diaspeirein* (to disperse), which may be translated as 'to spread the seeds widely,' and has since been linked with the Jewish communities

that were forcibly driven from their sacred land in 586 BC, resulting in a great deal of misery. The Greek word *diaspora* means "to scatter, disseminate, disperse, and be divided." Indeed, the idea of a trip is at the core of the diaspora concept. These travels are basically about settling down and establishing roots 'elsewhere.' Examining a diaspora also means looking at the socioeconomic, political, and cultural factors that shape these trips' paths. The term was first used by the ancient Greeks to depict the dispersal of inhabitants of a great city to conquered lands with the express goal of colonization and, as noted, was used to describe the dispersal of Jewish communities across the eastern Mediterranean. It also had a special philosophical, theological, and political meaning for the Jewish communities because they saw a spiritual connection between the land of Israel and the Jewish communities themselves. Discrimination against diasporic groups by the host in the settlement site seems to be one of the most noticeable features of the diaspora. This emotion will probably pass in time, even though it does not diminish the essential element of diaspora, which is the desire to return to one's country. The following quote from Paul Tiyambe Zeleza is worth highlighting: "Diasporas arise out of processes involving spatiality, migration from a 'here' to a 'there,' from a homeland, real or imagined, to a host country, loved or hated." (5)

Diaspora is nothing but a reflection of a homeland, whether real or imagined, in the heart of an alien country. It also denotes the affection of a diasporic community towards their country of origin. The nature of diasporic community is, as with the "narrative of displacement, that it gives rise so profoundly to a certain imaginary plenitude, recreating the endless desire to return to 'lost origins', to be one again with the mother, to go back to the beginning" (Hall 236).

In his work, *Global Diaspora: An Introduction*, Robin Cohen delineates diaspora as "referring to different communities of people living together in a new country by often attaching with the place of origin" (Preface xv). Obviously, diaspora is the result of either forced or voluntary migration. Migration is the act of moving, but it has been happening for centuries. In the past, much migration was brought about by slavery or the forcible displacement of a community; however, later on, migration became more entwined with the hopes of a better life, embracing new opportunities and pursuing economic stability. The term 'diaspora' has since defined migration and its effects on the lives of migrants. "A migration can be defined as a 'diaspora' if four conditions are met: firstly, an ethnic consciousness; secondly, an active associative life; thirdly, contacts with the land of origin in various forms, real or imaginary; fourthly, there should be

relations with other groups of the same ethnic origin spread all over the world", as Ajaya Kumar Sahoo and Brij Maharaj correctly note (5).

Diaspora, then, establishes a connection with one's ancestral homeland, real or imagined. The fact that migrants who leave appear to have diasporic awareness is heavily emphasized. For diasporic communities, living in a foreign culture is extremely challenging and distressing, and they yearn to return to their homeland. Without a doubt, the emotional ties that diasporic communities had to their mother land were severely damaged. A sense of loss is conveyed by the term "diaspora": a loss of ancestors' memories, their native culture, their ancestral native lands. 'Diaspora' is a manifestation of one's own culture and place of origin, whereas migration is the act of severing one's close cultural ties. The diaspora may be largely attributed to the agonising recollections of the lost homeland and the need to return, which inevitably accompany the sensation of alienation and melancholy that comes with residing close to a strange land. Very rightly Femke Stock describes diaspora very accurately as "the image of a remembered home that stands at a distance both temporally and spatially" (24). Immigrants' mental images of their home countries are evoked by the diaspora. They may be anxious because they feel estranged, which according to Avtar Brah results from focus on a sustained "ideology of return" (80).

The original homeland is resonated by the 'layeredness' of memories. The concept 'diaspora' reflects on the psychological condition and sentimentality of scattered communities. Naturally, the question of whether 'diaspora' refers to a location or state of dispersed communities emerges. Is it the two? It suggests the nostalgia of the displaced community in addition to a host location. A person's connection to their former home and the culture they left behind is related to their sense of diaspora. According to William Safran, the following are the features to which the concept of 'diaspora' is applied:

1. Dispersed from an initial 'centre' to two or more distant areas, the idea of the motherland was maintained, and a collective memory was preserved.
2. A feeling of loneliness (alienation) in their home country or isolation in the host culture.
3. They have a strong sense that their ancestral country is their natural, ideal home and will return there.
4. Duty for the upkeep or repair of the motherland, and
5. A self-aware description of one's ethnicity in terms of this homeland's existence. (83–84)

In general, the term diaspora describes a group of people or their ancestors who have been/were uprooted, displaced from their native country and lived on host land while maintaining a strong sense of identity with their motherland, whether actual or imagined. The term 'diaspora' refers to the existing state of groups that have been from social historical categories like country, race, ethnicity, culture, language, and so forth. Doing this, one becomes a different place, with of all the characteristics, ramifications, and construction of the subject individual or group. Identity issues, as well as problems with connection and alienation from both the old and new cultures and homelands, are brought on by living in a diaspora.

Cohen disputes William Safran's six characteristics of diaspora, proposing nine instead, which are briefly listed as follows:

- Dispersal from one's native country to two or more other places, typically in a painful manner.
- Alternatively, the movement away from one's country in search of a job, commerce, or to advance colonial aspirations.
- A myth and communal memory of the culture, history, geography and much more of the homeland.
- An attachment, idealization and dedication to the ancestral house and the things related to it.
- The widespread acceptance of a return movement.
- The feeling of alienation and attachment with the ethnic group or groups.
- A tumultuous connection with host communities, implying a lack of acceptability or, at the very least, the risk of another disaster befalling the group.
- Empathy and solidarity with members of the same ethnic group in other settlement nations.
- The opportunity to live a unique, creative, and rewarding life in host nations that value plurality. (17)

Cohen claims that just a few of the nine characteristics will be of importance. The status of the exile or immigrant, as articulated by Salman Rushdie in *Imaginary Homelands* (1992), is one of the fundamental challenges. "The diasporic person is at home neither in the west nor in India", claims Nilfuer Bharucha (2003, 12). Only displacement seems to be keeping migrants stuck in the West and in India. The diasporic population neither entirely reconstructs the image nor lives in safety in an alien land. Rushdie and Bharucha therefore perfectly capture the state of migrants or

exiles as people who live in between two different boundaries. It implies homelessness is likely among migrants.

As defined by Britannica Concise Encyclopedia, diaspora referred originally to the dispersion of Jews among the Gentiles following the Babylonian Exile, or the aggregate of Jews or Jewish communities distributed "in exile" beyond Palestine or present-day Israel. The term has eschatological, intellectual, political, and religious undertones in addition to referring to Israel and individuals. According to Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, "the voluntary or forceful transfer of peoples from their homelands into other territories, is a key historical reality of colonization" (69). The authors make reference to colonialism in western or European countries when they utilize this statement. This viewpoint seems to have changed in the colonial and post-colonial contexts.

It propagates a number of movements that are guised as colonialism, such as the temporary or permanent emigration of Europeans to other parts of the world, which serves to broaden the definition of colonialism. Because of this, the inhabited region's future economic exploitation required a large number of labourers, which the local population was unable to supply. The diaspora was brought about by the enslavement of Africans and their subsequent migration to places such as the British colonies. Indentured servitude resulted from the strong need for labour following the abolition of slavery. Consequently, a sizeable population of impoverished individuals from parts of India, China and elsewhere flocked to the West Indies, Eastern and Southern Asia, Southern Africa, and some other destinations.

Stuart Hall makes an excellent point regarding diasporic identity and experiences. "The Diaspora experience is defined not by essence or purity, but by acknowledgment of a necessary heterogeneity and variety, by a definition of 'identity' that lives with and through differences, not despite them; by hybridity" (235).

V. T. Girdhari comments on diaspora saying, "It is a general category of wanderers, citizens of the world, voyagers of the self-destined quest for material progress; many of these are refugees, exiled or isolated individuals, forcefully colonized slaves or servants, misguided businessmen, jobseekers" (28).

The research paper 'Diaspora, Border, and Transnational Identities' by Avtar Brah vacillates between four concepts, the first two of which focus on the terms diaspora and border in order to emphasise the problem of

location. This is because the demand for labourers remained high even after slavery was abolished. Brah, claims that the current migratory movement manifests as new dispersions and displacements. It's because new meanings are attached to the terms "diaspora" and "boundary". Brah contends, in his explanation of the term (183), that the word "diaspora" is based on the concept of "many travels." Because the word "Diaspora" conjures up images of a trip, it is more closely associated with "settling down, planting roots abroad." When one gets tired of pursuing solutions to questions like "when, how, and under what conditions?" the answer to the diaspora may be disseminated (182). In the same spirit, the process of entering a new culture and creating a new one can be thought about. It is challenging to elevate the diasporic experiences of the whole diasporic community because every diaspora has a distinct history. Examining the various connotations of the term "native," Brah explains that, in the colonies, the term "native" refers to the "colonial Native" (a subservient position), while in the United Kingdom, it refers to the "metropolitan Native" (referring to a superior position). The phrase has different meanings depending on the context in which it is used, and people's idea of what "home" is are different depending on enslaved they are. Brah claims that each member of the diasporic group has experienced the diaspora in a different way, as such there are differences in the concepts of 'home' among them. In his essay "From Sugar to Masala: Writings by the Indian Diaspora", Sudesh Mishra explores the concepts of Sugar Diaspora and Masala Diaspora. According to him "Whereas for the Sugar Diaspora, 'home' means an end to nomadic travelling, in laying down roots, for the Masala Diaspora, 'home' is connected to the purposeful espousal of rootlessness, to the continuous mantling and deconstruction of the self in a temporary landscape" (294).

From the above definitions, it is clear that a 'diaspora' is a minority group, expatriates, exiled or isolated individuals who encounter foreign cultures, struggle with issues of identity and belonging, and manage to maintain ties to their native country. The process of being diasporic begins with the dispersion of a minority group that has been banished or forced to flee to a foreign country. It next involves the growth of a diasporic awareness, the creation of transnational networks, and the development of collective memories of the home country.

Characteristics of Diaspora

There are four main components said to comprise diaspora. Dispersion is the first, followed by orientation to a homeland, boundary maintenance, and finally identity.

Dispersion

This is the diaspora trait that is most widely acknowledged. It could be described as a group of people being forcibly relocated or as a painful dispersion. This refers to any kind of dispersion that crosses state boundaries, and that this kind of dispersion is made up of "ethnic groups separated by state frontiers," or a specific group of people who live beyond the motherland. This enables even highly populated communities to recognize themselves as diasporas when a portion of the population lives outside of their country of origin.

Homeland Orientation

Orientation to a real or imagined homeland as a source of memory, identity, loyalty and cultural value is the second essential component of diaspora. There are several different accounts that confuse or link home with house, family, heaven, self, gender and journeying. It denotes closeness to our ancestors or homeland, love, affection, safety, warm memories. The relationship between 'homeland ties' and successful homemaking in the 'new home' is a question that the concept of homeland addresses. A. Fortier denotes "Homeland as the object of longing . . . and host land as the object of efforts to belong" (136). It is abundantly evident that the layer of homeland orientation can be attained by physically maintaining boundaries and reproducing the past in terms of the present and future expectations. Both can contribute to the layer of homeland orientation.

Avtar Brah correctly proposes the notion of homeland. "Home is also the lived experience of locality. Its sounds and smells, its heat and dust, balmy summer evening or the excitement of the first snowfall, shivering winter evenings, sombre grey skies in the middle of the day… All this as meditated by the historically specific every day of the social relations" (192). She makes it very evident why 'home is where the heart is', and clarifies the relationship that migrants have with their homeland.

Boundary Maintenance

The third key aspect of the diaspora is continuous boundary maintenance. For millennia, these scattered populations have been treated as distinct civilizations or quasi-communities. Boundaries are maintained by self-segregation as a kind of resistance to assimilation. Boundary preservation has become an indivisible criterion of the diaspora in many situations of migration. Communities that come together under the common banner of active solidarity and robust social ties are known as the diaspora. The diaspora values preserve boundaries highly.

While integrating into a host society, a specific person maintains a close link with their country through correspondence, periodic visits, and resurrecting old memories, while simultaneously preserving their identity. The routes of hybridity, fluidity, creolization, and syncretism are emphasized through boundary maintenance. "The diasporic experience is defined not by essence or purity, but by acknowledgment of a necessary heterogeneity or variety; by a vision of identity that lives with and through difference, not despite it; by hybridity," Hall said (401–402). Post-nationalism, trans-nationalism, globalization, deterritorialization, post-colonialism, trans–culturalism, multiculturalism, and post-modernity are some of the words that have evolved as a result of modernization. They represent a paradigm shift in how we think about the term 'diaspora'. The globe has swiftly transitioned from the age of the nation-state to the age of the diaspora. Prasanna Kumari cites Anthony Giddens, who describes "diaspora" as "equivalent to globalization" since it is as broadly dispersed as globalization. "Homelessness is coming to be the destiny of the world," writes Martin Heidegger in his "Letter on Humanism" (quoted by Kumari 56). "Diaspora is a significant notion because it offers an alternative to the metaphysics of 'race' and nationalism, and the limited culture inscribed into the body," writes Paul Gilroy (15). He emphasizes indeterminacy, contingency, and conflict. All of Brubaker's criteria for diaspora are entirely related to the interaction between immigrants and their home countries.

Identity

It is an essential ingredient of diaspora. According to Chris Barker, "identity is an essence that can be signified through signs of taste, beliefs, attitudes and lifestyles" (220). Identity is a subtext of diaspora and one that comprehends the ties and loyalty of migrants to their place of origin. Cultural practices, eating habits, and faiths all influence one's identity. Everyone is, in reality, proud of their nationality, religion and cultural

identity. In today's globalized world, refugees, migrants and exiles maintain their identities despite battling an unfamiliar culture.

The immigrant must consider his or her identity in new surroundings, and when they find themselves on the border of the two cultures, that dilemma becomes more pressing, immigrants are promoted to reconsider their original origins, nationality, and cultural legacy when faced with identity questions.

The aforementioned traits of diaspora help us comprehend the nature of diaspora throughout history.

Types of Diaspora

Robin Cohen's latest *Global Diasporas* project has a wealth of ideas for reconsidering the topic of population migrations and new forms of ethnic organization. He strongly recommends that ethnic and national borders be treated with respect to define geographical and political boundaries. His interests are in migration and settlement patterns, as well as the reconfiguration of ethnic solidarity. Diasporas are groups of people who move across borders for a variety of reasons. The dispersal of individuals from their native homeland is the most important factor here. Cohen uses the term "homeland" in a metaphysical rather than a geographical way. It is not necessary for the group to be recognized by a nation-state, but it must establish itself as a demographic category, generally a nation or ethnic group. The essential concept underlying "diaspora," according to Cohen, is the forceful dispersal of people as described in the Book of Deuteronomy. The Jewish dispersion to Babylon has been the subject of subsequent definitions.

The Jewish Diaspora

The Jewish diaspora is one of the oldest and most traditional diasporas on the planet. It started in 586 BCE, when a mass migration was held forcefully from Babylon. The Jewish dispersed in the wake of the destruction of Jerusalem. The period brought the experience of enslavement, exile and a sense of displacement for Jews. The diaspora is deemed by Cohen as a "victim diaspora". Jews have not forgotten memories of the destruction of Jerusalem's temples and the folk memories of their homeland. The Jewish diaspora keeps oral traditions, historical experiences and records as victims of displacement. With this displacement, Jews felt very tragic and miserable

for a long time and lived in exile. They were on the edge, where they did not receive happiness and tranquility.

Arnold Ages rightly writes about the nature of the Jewish diaspora by noting that:

> Babylon subsequently became a code-word among Jews for the afflictions, isolation, and insecurity of a living in a foreign place, set adrift cut off from their roots and their sense of identity, oppressed by an alien ruling class, since the Babylonian exile, homeliness of Jews has been a leitmotif in Jewish literature, art, culture and of course, prayer. (10)

The Jewish diaspora rests on homeland memories, alienation, the outburst of sadness and discrimination. It raises the question of separation from homeland and humanity. The Jewish diaspora asserts the trial of exile and its unbreakable homeland roots. The Jews render their lost homeland and live with their Babylonian names and customs, religious exercises, language and diverse rich culture. For them, the lost homeland is an epitome of oppression as well as harmony. For Jews, the apocalyptic world is deserted and plunges into the world of diaspora. Slowly, they expand their wings and settle on other continents.

The African Diaspora

The African diaspora is well known for its slavery experiences. The horrors and sufferings experienced by the Africans began with their capture and detainment on tightly packed slave ships. The African diaspora has a long history; it began with the slave trade system brought by Americans and other white nations. Talking about the African diaspora, Patrick Manning asserts:

> People of sub-Saharan Africa have migrated, in waves to other regions of the world. The initial movements—beginning seventy thousand years ago—involved settlement of Old World tropics; this was followed by the occupation of Eurasia, Oceania and the Americas and from the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries, most African migrants beyond the continent were forced to travel and to serve as slaves. (1)

The transatlantic trade pushed Africans in the Caribbean, Mexico and Brazil to work on tropical plantations. They were imported as labourers, and then after Africans had suffered a lot from Europeans and Americans, they were victimized as slave labour. The Africans shared their plights through arts, literature, music, dance and religious activity. The desire to retain their identity is at the heart of African experience.

Africans have migrated everywhere now, but they involuntarily left their homelands and became slaves in America. The transatlantic slave trade began in the early sixteenth century and its repercussions continue today. Paul Gilroy's focus within *Black Atlantic* was "to explore the stereophonic, bilingual or bifocal culture forms originated by, but no longer the exclusive property of blacks dispersed within the structures of feeling, producing, communicating, and remembering" (27). While crossing the Atlantic Ocean, Africans felt dehumanized and traumatized. It is a journey narrated rightly by Smallwood as "an almost wholly dehumanized experience, in which traumatized captives were force-marched to the sea, packed sardine-like on board-ship and bought like animals" (Smallwood 2007).

Africans have moved to various continents, and their settlement with the rest of the world has led to different types of connections. They somehow make good connections and share cultural traditions with the rest of world. One connection among Africans themselves is based on "interactions among black communities at home and abroad". It is about the survival and development of African culture in the Americas. A second phase of their connection is associated with "their relations with hegemonic powers" (Manning 4). Africans have come under the influence of imperial power and have struggled against dominant cultures. Gradually, with the effects of these hegemonic powers, they have understood oppression, racism, inequality, sexual harassment, and they have mustered all their courage to fight against such pain and suffering. A third area of connection is about relations with non-African communities. The African diaspora has historically interacted with people of Arab, Iranian, Turkish and Indian birth, and with those brought as slaves from the Black Sea region, among others. They have met with other migrants from different parts of the world and interacted with them. This interaction has helped them to understand the cultures of other countries besides America. This leads us to a final connection: the mixing of black and other communities. Overall, the dispersion of Africans for time immemorial entails issues of African heritage, racial differences, social struggle, and ties of affection to their homeland.

British Diaspora

Unlike many other diasporas, the bulk of British emigrants have not departed due to poverty, starvation or war, but for the purpose of opportunities and in pursuit of trade in bigger measure than available on the British Isles. Britain's migration began in the seventeenth century and has continued in large quantities. As a result the British diaspora has "the longest

duration in the world" (Robin Cohen 69). During the Battle of Waterloo (1815), another 17 million British people left the country; of these 80 percent moved to North America, which led to as a result the British population being referred as "the colonies of settlement" (Robin Cohen 70). As a result of this migration, the population of the United Kingdom collapsed. They also migrated as settlers in small numbers to New Zealand, Canada, Australia, Rhodesia and South Africa. The intriguing tale of British people's dispersal from their country of origin actually begins with Francis Bacon who proposed an emigration plan in 1606 when James I succeeded to the English crown. Bacon reasoned that England would benefit from having a double commodity: people to avoid here and people use to there. The British Diaspora gained impetus from this novel concept and subsequently began to progressively extend its reach by establishing colonies across the globe. Emigration has been defined in this instance as "the primary means affecting the peculiarly English movement of unparalleled expansion", for British citizens (Seeley 357). Britain conquered over half of the world and gained influence in most major nations. India and other countries were placed under the British Empire's dominion. "Imperialist adventures were relatively easy to overcome throughout much of Asia and Africa," as Cohen notes (Cohen 68). At this point, the British diaspora attained a new pinnacle.

In 1846, Britain welcomed foreign food and initiated a policy of importing cheap food. However, this had a detrimental effect on the country's rural economy, leading to unemployment among the populace. As a result, emigration from Britain began to decline. British people saw migration as: "a medicine that may do a great deal of good, and which, at the same time must be with as much caution as any drug which poisons by gradually debilitating" (Shepperson 67). According to Robin Cohen, the migration was primarily self-supported, followed by charity supported, destination country supported and trade union supported movement (72).

Between 1899 and 1911, British citizens fled to Australia in huge leaps and bounds, with 1,258,606 women migrating there against the backdrop of empire and colonization. Many of them were unmarried, and an unexpected proportion of middle-class workers—including clerks, teachers and professionals—departed Britain in search of new opportunities; this in turn had an impact on the abhorrent and questionable moral practices of colonists. With the imposition of the nation's imperial authority, the British diaspora expanded considerably from the British Isles to the Asian continent. The British diaspora is well known for and nationalism and imperialism. It has influenced many countries with its culture. Similar to the

British diaspora, the Indian diaspora is widespread and common on all continents.

History of the Indian Diaspora

It is evident that the Indian diaspora is inextricably linked to the aforementioned forms of diaspora. Since 1960, there has unquestionably been a noticeable growth in foreign migration. From 75 million to 120 million in 1990, the statistics are clear. Nearly half of the population growth in the developed countries, and especially in Europe and USA, can be attributed to migration from abroad. International migration has significantly expanded in the aftermath of globalization, and many workers from Asia, Africa and the Caribbean have relocated to the developed countries like Europe, the United States of America and Australia.

Since the British Empire instituted its indentured servitude, Indians have migrated to different places for a variety of reasons. Indentured labour history dates back to the time when the British spread its influence across the globe and occupied seven continents. From the 1830s until around 1920 the British exported Indian labourers to work on their tropical plantations. The Indian diaspora eventually became an indentured diaspora after migrating to Britain in search of employment. The Indian diaspora spans the years from 1830 through to the present. After the British and the Chinese, the Indian diaspora is the third largest, and its tentacles have not stopped growing.

There are millions of Indians spread throughout numerous nations worldwide. Laxmi N. Kadekar and others quote from the Ministry of Affairs (200: xvii–xx) and state that, "the people of Indian origin in Guyana (51.93%), Fiji (41.34%), Trinidad and Tobago (38.63%), Surinam (36.04%), The United Arab Emirates (32%), Reunion (30.51%) and Nepal (27.12%) form a substantial proportion [those countries'] population[s]. They have a large presence in Qatar (24%), Bahrain (20%) Oman (15%), Kuwait (13%), Malaysia (7.20%), Saudi Arabia (7%), Sri Lanka (6.28%), Singapore (5.40%) and Myanmar (5.26%)" (3). The Indian diaspora is divided into two broad sections—the old and the new. Sudesh Mishra rightly discusses the phase of Indian migration thus:

> The distinction is between, on the one hand, the semi-voluntary flight of indentured peasants to non-metropolitan peasant colonies such as Fiji, Trinidad, Mauritius, South Africa, Malysia, Surinam and Guyana roughly between the years 1830 and 1917; and the other the late capital or postmodern

> dispersal of new migrants of all classes to thriving metropolitan centres such as Australia, the United States, Canada and Britain. (276)

In quest of bread and butter during the pre-colonial era, The Indian populace dispersed as indentured labourers to urban colonies around the world. They primarily found refuge in Fiji, Trinidad, Mauritius, South Africa, Malaysia, Surinam and Guyana. Following colonization, the ancient Indian diaspora grew with the majority of Indians employed as labourers on plantations. Indians have thus relocated abroad for a while. The first known Indian migration over the ocean was from the Arab world to Europe.

The phenomenon known as the Maritime Diaspora began approximately 4000 years ago. According to Nilfuer Bharucha, "This migration connected Indians to Europe and the world of the Gulf. It was quite for the sake of trading." This connected the country with Europe, Iran and Afghanistan through seaways and India started trading "from the ports on the Bay of Bengal with the countries of South-East Asia" (2003, x).

Indians first settled in neighbouring countries like Thailand and Cambodia during previous eras. Throughout South and Southeast Asia, there were traces of Hindu and Buddhist religions, customs and temples; meanwhile the French were shipping labour from India and the British were importing Indians as contract labourers for their tropical plantations from the early 1800s.

This wave of Indian emigration filled the hole left by the emancipation of African slaves on tropical plantations after slavery was abolished, bringing mostly indentured labour to the British colonies. Instead of being a replacement for slavery, indenture labour was a novel form of servitude. Five or seven years tended to be the duration of the indenture, and the labourer was not permitted to leave without a pass, had to work limitless hours, may be sacked at any moment, and could face both financial and physical punishment for any wrongdoing. Hugh Tinker correctly describes the indentured system as a new kind of slavery. The system was directly thriving economically from such labour. "Indian labour was also used to construct railways and roads in Africa and to work in the rubber and tea plantations" (Bharucha, 2003, 5). Indians were used as "labourers not only by Britain but also by many countries in the world". It began in earnest "in 1834 when Indian labour migrated to Mauritius, Guyana and then moved to Trinidad (1845), Grenada (1856), St. Lucia (1858), South Africa (1860) and St. Vincent (1861), later on emigrating to Suriname (1873), Fiji (1879), Kenya and Uganda (1895)" (Kadekar 4). After arriving in the colonies,

Indians were normally assigned to bond for five years and worked long hours on tropical plantations. They might choose to work anywhere in the colony or rein denture once five years had passed. Depending on the terms of the contract, they could also be entitled to a portion of crown land in lieu of the fare, or a free or partially funded return trip to India after 10 years. Over 2 million people moved as a result of the indentured system.

Today, over ten million Indians have moved to most areas of the world, making up the Indian diaspora. It was seen as necessary to provide inexpensively acquired indentured labour from the colonies, who were released at the conclusion of contract. Slavery is embodied in indentured labour. Such workers were treated like African slaves. Indians were excluded and exploited under the guise of the indentured labour system because of Malaya's rubber and Sri Lanka 's tea plantations. The Kangani Technique was another widely used method for hiring contract labour, with "the term 'Kangani' refer[ring] to a supervisor or foreman. Plantation owners employed Indians known as Kanganis to locate laborers in India. Kanganis were wealthy men who loaned money to aspiring coolies to help them travel and settle down on a plantation" (Jain 199). This system was quite far from the indentured system in the terms of contract or freedom of labourers. Indians dispersed to many parts of the world in the name of indentured or Kangani systems.

An extraordinary migration of Indians to developed countries has occurred during the post-colonial era. It is a result of the era following World War II. It began to take shape in the 1940s when large numbers of skilled and semi-skilled labourers migrated to Britain to work on the National Health Service, an ambitious project. It changed course when a sizeable number of Indian students left to American universities and established new lives there. Rapid changes in communication and transportation caused this type of migration, too. It was a new phase of migration, with migrants leaving to find work and Indians, who were primarily unemployed, traveling to developed countries to meet their basic requirements. Numerous causes contributed to the increase in the number of Indian migrants to the developed areas like North America, Europe, West Asia, Australia and New Zealand. Immigration bans were lifted in the 1960s allowing citizens of Asian nations to immigrate. This naturally encouraged Indian migration to the developed nations. Another effect of WWII was the migration of people form devolving to developed countries. With regard to Indian migration to industrialized nations, according to Deepak Nayar:

a. Insofar as the fraction of emigrants who return to India after a finite period is very tiny, such labour outflows are almost exclusively made up of permanent migration.
b. A substantial number of migrants are people with professional experience, technical credentials, or other talents that are feared or required in labor-importing nations, and who would already be at the top of the income scale in India before migrating.
c. Because of shared links with the English language, the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom are the most popular destinations for these migrants. (6)

In the 1980s, a large number of Indians emigrated to western countries like the USA, especially software developers. They had received their education at some of the best universities (such as IITs and IIMs) and were regraded as the cream of India's industry. They were "highly mobile and ke[pt] very close contact with India in terms of socio-economic interests" (Bhat 21–27). This is a distinct type of diaspora from the previous one, characterized now by self-imposed exile. It represents those diasporic groups that made up their minds to abandon their homeland and were prepared to make some money abroad. When Indian migrants mobilized into North America, Canada, United Kingdom, and Australia with the onset of post-colonialism, they were still able to connect to India, made frequent trips, read Indian newspapers, and watched films. These facilities have strengthened their ties to their country of origin. According to the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, the Indian Diaspora abroad constitutes "the second largest migrant community in the world ... [with] over 25 million people in 189 countries around the world" (http://moia.gov.in)

Indian Diasporic Literature

The diasporic journeys are thoroughly documented in diasporic writing. Numerous literary luminaries form the diaspora have drawn our attention to themes related to migration, cultural dipartites, and immigrant identity crises. In general, writing by immigrants or expatriates can be referred to as diasporic writing. For the past years, Indian diasporic writing has captivated renders worldwide. "The writers of Indian origin are now scattered throughout the world, and are found in such diverse places as Fiji, Trinidad and Guyana, and in Malaysia, Mauritius and East Africa, and in western countries like Britain, America, Canada and Australia" (Dwivedi 2). Indian diaspora writers have conveyed their exile and articulated the challenges faced by migrants, bringing with them a wealth of traditions and ideals.

M. G. Vassanji, V. S. Naipaul, Rohinton Mistry, Vikram Chandra, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Salman Rushdie, Kamala Markandaya, Amitav Ghosh, Manju Kapoor, Vikram Seth, Sujata Bhatt, Uma Parameswaran, Bapsi Sidhwa and Iqbal Ramoowalia are among the prominent members of the Indian diaspora. These diasporic crusaders offer a vivid view of Indian culture and the connections that migrants have to their own country. Indian diasporic writers use their own flora and fauna to highlight the predicament of immigrants living abroad: "Writing from diaspora is permeated with identarian consciousness and the ongoing challenges of being in foreign cultures" (Bharucha, *Indian Diasporic*…151). In a broad sense, the goal of Indian diasporic writing is to learn about cultural values as well as to investigate the consciousness of immigrants. This collection of writing explores memory, immigrants' assimilation, and the cultural rift between two (or more) nations. Diasporic writers narrate the voices of immigrants in their works. It is the most prevalent factor in their writings. Their diverse experiences while in a foreign country are essentially what gave rise to the diasporic text.

V. S. Naipaul excavated his past memories through his writing and is perhaps unparalleled amid diasporic novelists. Naipaul was born in 1932 in the British colony of Trinidad. His ancestors hailed from India and they were imported as labourers to work on a sugar plantation following the abolition of slavery. In search of bread and butter, his grandparents moved to Trinidad. Naipaul left for Britain to pursue his colonial education. After leaving Trinidad in 1950, he had thus become a victim of double diaspora. He had a rich Indian heritage, and his writing really glorifies Indian culture, while looking minutely at culturally displaced migrants. He also closely peers into migrants' lives and feels their diasporic sensibility. His texts majorly centre on homeland: he finds the unhomed and displaced immigrants; his characters long for past memories and to connect with their homeland culture. His writing is concerned with the bitter condition of migrants, too. He wrote notable works including *The Mystic Masseur* (1957), *The Suffrage of Elvira* (1958), *A House for Mr Biswas* (1961), *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion* (1963), *The Mimic Men* (1967) *Guerrillas* (1975), and *A Bend in the River* (1979).

Naipaul draws out issues of identity, loss of homeland culture and migrants' connection with homeland in light of his character's migration. His *Mimic Men*, known as his famous memoir, seeks out the identity of an individual, and their place on the globe. The protagonist of *The Mimic Men* is Ralph Singh, who represents his Caribbean community from the beginning to the end of the novel, and he also exposes his painful memories in an alien

country. He shares the bitter "experiences of people in the Caribbean who have gone through [...] a history of their persecution, oppression, extermination, enslavement, uprooting, dehumanization, humiliation, degrading and discrimination by the European colonial powers" (Culhaoglu 91).

The narrator attempts to create a new identity while denying his origins in London, and he is hounded by his parents, place of birth, and time of birth. A mimic man cannot succeed in the shadow of uncertainty. He becomes agitated and restless, and eventually loses it all. He always felt abandoned by Isabella; in fact he felt much more abandoned there. Eventually, he makes up with Isabella and finally connects with his ancestral roots.

One of the best books ever written is *A House for Mr Biswas* (1961). It is set in Trinidad. In this novel, he depicts his experience growing up in exile. This is the story of Mr. Biswas, who finds himself between in three cultures: Trinidad, where he was born; the one his ancestors came from in India; and the one that gave him his colonial education, Britian. Shama marries Mr. Mohun Biswas. His wife is a member of the Tulsi family. The Tulsi family, who reside at Hanuman House, is a symbol of traditional Hindu culture that is gradually absorbing western culture. The chief protagonist in the book, Mr. Biswas, finds himself "torn between two cultures" after his grandfather emigrates to Trinidad (Dwivedi 6). He begins his life in Trinidad and, even though it was his grandparents that crossed the Black Sea from India, he still experiences the cultural shift in the colonized Trinidad. Despite his Indian ancestry, he creates a world that is idealized. In *The Enigma of Arrival* Naipaul introduces a person who is uprooted and travelling the world; the narrator describes himself as "always a stranger, a foreigner" (Naipaul, *The Enigma of Arrival* 55). This partially autobiographical novel tells the story of the narrator's trip from Trinidad, the place of his birth, to England. It establishes a new area and demonstrates his self-discovery.

After moving to England, the narrator leaves behind his Trinidadian culture and begins to experience a new one and adopts a global citizen's view point. Naipaul's important diasporic text, *An Area of Darkness* (1964) explores Naipaul's journey to India. It also discusses Naipaul's early origins and his desire to settle down in Trinidad. However, given current circumstances, he gives up all hopes of settling down in his home country and instead sets out to leave it and integrate in England. Naipaul describes his diasporic experiences in the novel.

Naipaul's second travelogue, *India: A Wounded Civilization* was published in 1977. In this book, he presents a picture of India. He arrived in India in 1975, the most polarising period in the post-colonial era following Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's declaration of the Emergency. It was a turbulent time of fear, dismay, social unrest, political turmoil, and instability. India was attempting to accelerate its industrial and agricultural expansion during this time. In this story, Native Americans feel a strong emotional connection to their past. They still live in the splendour of ancient India. "Even amid the emergency, India remained constant; returning to India was to return to knowledge of the world's underlying order, everything established, sanctified, and guarded" (Naipaul, *India: A Wounded Civilization* 36).

Salman Rushdie nurtures the Indian diaspora greatly. He is a key literary figure in the Indian diaspora. He is recognized as an immigrant's voice. As stated by D. C. R. A. Goonetilleke, "Rushdie is the kind of cloven writer produced by migration, inhabiting and addressing worlds, the east and the west, the world of his mother country and that of his adopted country, belonging wholly to neither one nor the other" (6).

Like other diasporic writers such as Bharti Mukherjee, Uma Parmeswaran and Rohinton Mistry, among others, Rushdie is an expatriate. His creations extract the past memories of immigrants. Rushdie portrays his characters' struggle and his inability to let go of to his native county, India. There is a hint of post-colonization in his writing. A portion of his writings are autobiographical. *Grimus* (1975), *The Satanic Verses* (1981), *Midnight's Children* (1988), *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995) and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999) are only a few of the great works of fiction he has authored. His writings frequently take place in Bombay, New York and London. Similar to *Buddha of Suburbia* written by Hanif Kureshi, his characters are hybridized. His second novel *Midnight's Children* (1981) made him a prominent writer of diasporic literature. The primary focus of the book is migration from East to West. The story deals with the narrator Saleem and his identity; he reveals that he adheres to his homeland roots and practices Hinduism. Saleem Sinai was born on 15th August, 1947 at exactly midnight, when India embarked on a 'tryst with destiny'. He was born in between the period of darkness and the coming of a new dawn. Rushdie uses Saleem to reveal his past throughout the book. While Kiran Desai provides a glimpse of post-colonial India, Rushdie exhibits the history of post-colonial India. The narrative describes Indian–Muslim culture and England's imperial power. The centre of this book is Indian myth. Similar to Salman Rushdie, the protagonist, Saleem Sinai passes through India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, and is completely unable to locate a safe heaven. Because he

left his birthplace, he has no roots. Similarly to Saleem, the other characters Shiva, Padma and Parvati also struggle with issues of cultural displacement and identity. The identity dilemma haunts the protagonist. He is extremely anxious after migrating and turns into a dog. He stands for the midnight children, those who become diasporic after being split apart physically.

India is in his blood so he explores the idea of loss in his enchanted work *Shalimar the Clown*: the losing of one's mother, losing a motherland, losing childhood, losing innocence, and losing paradise. This piece, which was published in 2005, highlights broader travel experiences. In particular, Rushdie presents the idea of migration in the context of globalization and cultural plurality. The sad love story of the Muslim Kashmiri lover Noman, also known as Shalimar the Clown, and the Hindu Brahmin girl Boonyani is the central theme of this Indian-set novel. The protagonist of the story looks for his birthplace. He dedicates the book to his grandparents. Throughout the novel, he shares memories from his early years, and Rushdie describes the roots of diaspora.

The Ground Beneath Her Feet by Rushdie tells the diasporic story of Ormus Cama, Vina Apsra, and Rai. Even though they are living overseas, migrants hold onto their diasporic roots. The diasporic lives of the three major characters are studies in this image. Despite leaving their home nation, they remain rooted in their heritage. When Rai first arrives in America, he discusses his opinions with some photographers. However, after a while, he realizes that he is being stifled, experiences nostalgia and believes that he has been removed not just physically but also culturally.

Similar to Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh introduced Indian diasporas on a worldwide scale in a relevant manner. His brief observation on the labour diaspora stems from his research on Indian migration and the range of experiences that accompany it. In his writings, he has examined the indentured labour system and raised concerns about the sexual exploitation of Indian women by the recruiters or employers in foreign lands. He strongly conveys the diasporic voices of Indian immigrants in his capacity as a diasporic writer and many of his protagonists are impoverished. Although Amitav Ghosh currently lives in New York, he is well travelled in Iran and Egypt. His writing also genuinely represents the influence of alien culture. His debut novel, *The Circle of Reason* (1986), blends the past, present and future. The author tells a different story of migration in this book. The story of Alu's emigration from Lalpukar in India, via Al-Ghazirain, Egypt, to a small town on the north eastern edge of the Algerian Sahara begins the novel. Alu finds himself alienated in a foreign country. There is also the tale