

# Indian Diaspora through the Lens of Socio-Cultural Constructs

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*“The formation of a diaspora could be articulated as the quintessential journey into becoming; a process marked by incessant regroupings, recreations, and reiteration. Together these stressed actions strive to open up new spaces of discursive and performative postcolonial consciousness.”*

–Okwui Enwezor

(A Nigerian curator, art critic and writer)

Postcolonial literature; a whole body of literature that emerged both as a ‘resistance and reform’ of ideologies, identities and experiences has garnered significant fresh concepts about race, colonialism, gender, culture, borders, politics and language. Diaspora being one of the most widely acclaimed key concepts of postcolonial literature has a lot in its arena to explore and understand about the constantly evolving impacts of colonial rule and the aftermath. The writers of diaspora not only aim to create a new genre of literature but also a literature that lays its roots in the past experiences, takes the nourishment from them and grows its branches in the present scenario that will bear the fruits of future. Indian diasporic movement/literature has produced works of wide social-cultural constructs in the wake of settlements beyond the national boundaries. The impact on plots and characters through the years is a subject of intrigue. In the age of globalization, the literature of diaspora is a platform to multiple voices that were silenced by dominant forces. The present paper is a modest attempt to delineate how alienation, displacement, rootlessness, nostalgia, gender and race form the centre to the periphery of the Quest for Identity. It also aims at exploring the disintegration of cultures, identity crises

and hybridity in the shadow of borders and spaces. An effort to comprehend these concepts will be made with references to some women writers from Indian Diaspora.

The process of globalization and the inevitable expansion of “markets, transportation, communication, capital and skills have challenged the geographic hegemony of national governments” and their borders (Centre for Development Enterprise, 1997: 17). Globalization transcends territory, location, distance or borders, and has been accompanied by rapid migration of people across borders, and has raised questions about identity, citizenship and nationality. (Sahoo and Maharaj 1)

The massive movement of people across national borders around the globe due to globalization has led to the blurring of the definite borders between cultures and societies, creating newer cultural concepts. Postcolonial literature stands at the outset of the beginning of the age of globalization post 1950’s and has produced works about race, colonialism, gender, politics, language and identity crises. These literary creations are crucial in forging new cultural identities and **diaspora** is one of the single most influential concepts that build the background to these cultural and social constructs.

A diaspora is a social construct founded on feeling, consciousness, memory, mythology, history, meaningful narratives, group identity, longings, dreams, allegorical and virtual elements all of which play an important role in establishing a diaspora reality. At a given moment in time, the sense of connection to a homeland must be strong enough to resist forgetting, assimilating or distancing (Shuval 43). Diasporic communities thus have a stronger emotional expression towards the ideas of identity, alienation, reformation and merger. However, scattered apart these diasporas may be, a common ethnic identity and relation to native homeland binds them together.

Diasporas are positioned somewhere between the nation-states and “travelling cultures” in that they involve dwelling in a nation state in a physical sense, but travelling in an astral or spiritual sense that falls outside the nation-states space/time zone. (Cohen 135-6). Diaspora is referred to a movement of population from its original homelands (Webster 22) thus signifies scattering, migration and dispersion of people. These migrated people, whatever their

reason for migration be, financial, social, political, no matter whether they migrated for trade and commerce, as religious preachers, as laborers, convicts, soldiers, as expatriates or refugees, exiles (forced or voluntary), or as guest workers in search of better life have shared some common things as well as differences. It is observed regarding this migrated population;

A majority of them are international migrants who are potential immigrants in countries of their destination and who often converge into diasporic communities. These international migrants not only take their skills and expertise but also their culture and lifestyles with them. (Sahoo and Maharaj 3). This displacement and settlement procure deep socio-cultural experiences which can be understood under the umbrella of “diaspora” that has undergone a significant and diverse evolution in the field of social sciences. Associated displacement, dispersal and migrancy the term ‘diaspora’ has outgrown its key concepts beyond human migration and mobility in the recent decades.

In the initial phases mostly, the migrants suffer from the pain of being far off from their homes, the memories of their motherland, the anguish of leaving behind everything familiar agonizes the minds of migrants. Settlement in foreign land makes them experience dislocation which in turn results into a break with the old identity. They experience the sense of loneliness in an alien land feel as they face non-acceptance by the host society and also experience ethnic discrimination. The immigrants attempt to assimilate, adapt and amalgamate with the society of their host country. Their attempts of adaptation and adjustment are not without their concern to maintain their original culture and identity. It is an attempt of the marginal groups to protect themselves against the dominant host group. The most prominent means used for insulation is the continuation of the cultural practices and social traditions.

It is also observed that, going back to the original land/motherland is a natural desire of many diasporans, and this natural desire may well become a perpetual and utopian longing. On the other hand, strict alliance with co-ethnic members in the hostland may lead these people to turn their backs on the reality of the country in which they are now living. Contradictory feelings such as loss and gratitude, frustration and hope or joy and sorrow lie at

the core of the diasporic position. To make matters even more complicated, the members of a specific diasporic community may greatly differ in terms of gender, race, class or ethnicity (Sahoo and Maharaj 7)

This ethnicity forms the cultural identity of diasporic communities and is based on a constant struggle within the community with other ethnic communities and with the state, thus it is an ever-changing and ever-reforming complex process.

The literature created around past one century is largely dominated by diasporic writings as it has witnessed the end of colonial empire and the dawn of globalization thus creating a platform to reform, research and revive the lost identities and wake up to the new independent existence on the global scenario. In the words of Peter Barry, *'the three stages (Adopt, Adapt and Adept) provide a way of seeing postcolonial literature'* (Barry 190). Wherein the first phase implies an acceptance of the colonial authority and is observed as the **'Adopt'** phase; the subsequent phase of **'Adapt'** focusses on adapting the colonial forms into native subject matters, thus allowing a partial intervention and *finally* **'the 'Adept' phase, since its characteristic is the assumption that the colonial writer is an independent 'adept' in the form, not a humble apprentice, as in the first phase, or a mere licensee, as in the second.'** (189) There is a declaration of cultural independence in the final phase.

Originally used for Jewish dispersion from their homeland, the term 'diaspora' is now applied as a 'metaphoric designation' for immigrants, exiles and refugees who have shuttled due to multiple reasons across the globe. Africa, the Middle East, and the Indian subcontinent form the breeding grounds for diasporic literatures and thus provide the most extensive works that create and explore the key concepts of postcolonial studies. South Asia which reflects the nations of Indian subcontinent, however the concept of South Asia has been a subject of confusion in regard to its sociological identity, since 'It encompasses distinctly different categories of people who trace their origins either directly to the Indian subcontinent (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh), or else indirectly through their ancestors who migrated to East and the South Africa, Fiji, East and South-East Asia, the Caribbean and

elsewhere. Being South Asian refers not so much to individual personal qualities as to social characteristics that have been constructed and reconstructed in historical and ongoing social relations in specific social, economic and political contexts (Sahoo and Maharaj 13).

As mentioned earlier migration is a subject to various reasons, but Diaspora migration differs from other types of migration in that in many cases it is based on claims to a “natural right” to return to an historic homeland. In this type of migration an ascriptive, ethnic or religious criterion is used to claim the right to return and entitlement to specific benefits... It is incorrectly assumed that diasporas are always a result of exile. Indeed, they are often initiated by processes of uprooting, pogroms, political, religious or racial oppression... In many- perhaps most cases migrants seek to become parts of the host society and culture and many relegate their previous cultural baggage to their past (33). Wherein such diasporic movements are not that make them different from migrations based on other grounds but it is observed that the continuous and re-awakened attachment and loyalty to their earlier culture of the native land they left. The sense of diaspora is associated with its three appropriate referents: the diasporic group itself, the host society and the homeland.

Diasporic writings unfold these experiences of unsettlement and dislocation, at some or the other level. The social function of diaspora is specifically to maintain a sense of community and belonging to a more warm, rewarding and welcoming social entity amidst the context of exclusion, limited opportunities and social-political discriminations in the host countries. Hence, a diasporic text can be observed in the light of location, dislocation and relocation. The intense feelings about changing designation of home and accompanying nervousness about homelessness and unfeasibility of going back are certain and most relevant in diasporic literature. The close connection of the diaspora writings with such socio-cultural constructs often poses a need to understand culture with its characteristics, history and influences on civilizations. Though not similar to diasporic culture but a parallel subject of culture studies has also developed in past two decades, Stuart Hall pioneered the subject in his various lectures.

Cultural studies emerged as an interdisciplinary field of research that explores the ways in which “culture” creates and transforms individual experiences, everyday life, social relations and power. After the Second World War, England was no longer the centre of Western industrial society. America, became the harbinger for what was to come due to the rise of media and free markets. In a land where rags-to-riches mobility is—or so we tend to imagine—just one hit away, culture is about what you want to project into the world, whether you are fronting as a member of the élite or as an everyman.

Combining the strengths of the social sciences and the humanities, cultural studies draws on methods and theories from literary studies, sociology, communications studies, history, cultural anthropology, and economics. By working across the boundaries among these fields, cultural studies exposes new questions and problems of today’s world. Rather than seeking answers that will hold for all time, cultural studies develops flexible tools that adapt to this rapidly changing world. **Stuart Hall** a British Sociologist propounded culture studies as a separate discipline in the year 1983 and ‘Culture, he argued, does not consist of what the educated élites happen to fancy, such as classical music or the fine arts. It is, simply, “experience lived, experience interpreted, experience defined.” And it can tell us things about the world, he believed, that more traditional studies of politics or economics alone could not.’

Cultural life is not only concerned with symbolic communication, it is also the domain in which we set collective tasks for ourselves and begin to grapple with them as changing communities. Cultural studies is devoted to understanding the processes through which societies and the diverse groups within them come to terms with history, community life, and the challenges of the future. Cultural themes, expressions and constructs also remain integral to diasporic literature and have been widely explored in the context of Indian diaspora. There is so much of cultural mixing in the postcolonial era that it has given birth to ‘hybrid culture’. Graham Huggan asserts that the present era is the era of hybridization. Culture is a derivative of past and present, individual and collective, regional and alien experiences that influence and formulate the identity of a society. Culture is both individual and

social construct; “Culture as social, as a way of life whereby it expresses the structure of feeling of social group... meaning and values of ordinary behaviour and social institution as well as in terms of their place in art and learning” (Smith 23).

India is a country with unmatched variation and abundance in regard to cultures, religions, folklore, languages, regions, societies, arts, casts, food and such socio-cultural elements that form the extensive and intricate cultural and social fabric of India. And acknowledging this fact it is quite acceptable to find vast networks based on language and region, religion and caste among the Indian diaspora. Research has been carried out in the recent years to study this versatility in Indian diaspora; they include the production of diasporic identities in Mauritius, Tamil Hindus in Malaysia and the ethnicity over the generations of Indian Jains in the United States etc.

The modern Indian Diaspora is one of the most demographic dislocations emerged with the “multiplicity of histories, variety of culture, tradition and a deep instinct of survival” (Baubock and Faist 9). This includes the different phases of evolution in diaspora that are migrance, hybridity and quest for identity. Thus, a contemporary writer whether in India or abroad, writes from different perspectives. Regarding this Salman Rushdie one of the most prominent creators of Indian Diaspora Writing has rightly observed in one of his articles, “We are Hindus who have crossed black water, we are Muslims who eat pork... as my use of the Christian notion of the Fall indicates... we are now partly of the West. Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times that we fall between two stools... (The Indian Writer in England 11)”. The postcolonial condition entails this experience of loss and the ability to inhabit multiple spaces simultaneously. Edward Said also observed identity in the light of mixed notions of belonging and longing as he goes on to write in his *Culture and Imperialism*, “between domains, between forms, between homes and between language (65).”

“— one physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of redeeming precisely the thing that was lost, that will, in short, create fictions not actual cities or villages,

but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indians of mind.” (Salman Rushdie)

The literature of the Indian diaspora constitutes an important part of the burgeoning field of anglophone postcolonial literature. Some of the better-known authors in this archive include V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, Bharati Mukherjee, Amitav Ghosh, Jhumpa Lahiri, Anita Desai, M.G. Vassanji, Shyam Selvadurai, and Kiran Desai. While the first-generation immigrants from India constantly nurse their grievances against the homeland, the second and third generations look at India without prejudices and take pride in India’s accomplishments. For them, India is a brand name, which they can use for their own advancement and they become true assets for the country. This feeling of elation at India’s exalted status is present in the writings of young people.

Generally, diasporic literature deals with alienation, displacement, existential rootlessness, nostalgia, quest of identity. It also focusses on the issues related to amalgamation or disintegration of cultures. It reflects the immigrant experience that comes out of the immigrant settlement. Indian diaspora remains a major platform to these continuously evolving themes in the age of globalization. Uma Parameswaran has defined it in a series of phases;

The first is one of nostalgia for the homeland left behind mingled with fear in a strange land. The second is a phase in which one is busy adjusting to the new environment that there is little creative output. The third phase is the shaping of diaspora existence by involving themselves ethnocultural issues. The fourth is when they have ‘arrived’ 42 and start participating in the larger world of politics and national issues. (Parmeswaran, 165)

As the expatriate writer experiences cultural, geographical and emotional displacement, there emerges a diasporic sensibility that mirrors the plural identity of the writer. Their writing is characterized by a pluralistic vision. There is a constant shifting between two worlds, voyaging back and forth between two locales. Expatriate writing is the outcome of the existential, political and metaphysical unsettlement. The safety of the members often



provides an illusion of homes and shelter from an alien and hostile society. Caught within the system of binary oppositions that label them as an outsider and the others, they tend to highlight differences and assume a particularization that negates the universalizing principals within western discourse. Arnold Harrichand Itwaru in *The Invention of Canada: Literary Text and the immigrant imaginary*, stated;

“The immigrant writer is not merely the author who speaks about the immigrant experience, but one who has lived it, one whose response is an irruption of words, images, metaphors, one who is familiar with some of the inner as well as the outer workings of these particular contexts.” (245)

The expatriate novelist’s works investigate the cultural displacement and its impact. The uprooted immigrants face varied situations, problems of rejection and acceptance. If accepted, the problem would be an adjustment, coping with the anxiety, monotony, disappointment, isolation and finally they face failure and rejection. Rejection: The works of expatriate writers depict the effect of cultural uprootedness and the never-ending experiences of which social rejection is central. Social rejection is when a group of people decides, to reject one or more persons from participation in their group.

Class and gender also play an important role in the shaping of not just the diaspora but also diaspora’s interface with cultures. A major theme in diasporic writing is their occupation of liminal space. This writing remains an outsider looking in at the new culture, but it is also an outsider to the homeland, looking in at a past of space that has altered in their absence. Another significant theme is dual identity, the conflict between a person’s ethnic inheritance and individual identity. This issue develops the tension between a desire for assimilation and the need for ethnic identity. This is at the base of the conflict between generations, between mothers and fathers who wish to preserve cultural ethnicity, and children want liberty to maintain their individuality. As Esman relates in the study of *Diasporas*,

These peoples all of whom share the same homeland, in order to preserve their customs and culture and to

recreate the familiar sort of surrounds much associated with their idea of their homeland formed communities through to which they can hold on to their roots. Such diasporas then extend and expand including not only the original immigrants... but also their posterity, the second generation “as long as they choose to or are forced to remain a separate community. It is possible though, that in the next generations to come and through the continuous process of assimilation, some diasporas melt into the mainstream culture and gradually disappear as a distinct community through time. thus process however, is a very long-lasting and slow-moving one and the first and even the second generation of immigrants, those who around Lahiri’s fiction in general, often have to face up to problems and to be afflicted with scars and traumas to their national, ethnic, culture and gender Identities. What needs to be taken into account here is that the notion of identity in general and diasporic identity in particular is not a set, fixed and essential whole but is rather “constructed, fluid and multiple” (Brubaker, 1)

Stuart Hall, also in his essay “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” indicates that we conceive the identity “as a production”, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (222). In the diasporic experience then, “boundaries of the self” are as fluid as ever and this is when the postcolonial concepts of hybridity and liminality come to the foreground. On the other hand, Homi K. Bhabha in his *The Location of Culture* (1994) sabotages the long held binary way of thinking about cultural identity in terms of the yawning gaps between Self / Other. He presents an inter-crossed version of identity according to which the *self* is present in the *other* and vice-versa. The literature of the Indian diaspora constitutes an important part of the burgeoning field of anglophone postcolonial literature. Some of the better-known authors in this archive include V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, Bharati Mukherjee, Amitav Ghosh, Jhumpa Lahiri, Anita Desai, M.G. Vassanji, Shyam Selvadurai, and

Kiran Desai.

Lot of people now a days talk of Transnationalism as synonym to Diaspora. There is a difference. Increasingly, migrants are shuttling between countries and home, rather than settling in one state. Such migrants are referred to as transnational's who create and maintain multiple ties across several national boundaries at their free will Transnationalism has been defined as a "social process whereby migrants operate in social fields, that transgress, geographic, political and cultural boundaries (Grick-Schelles, etal; 1992:9).

Lenitt (2001:14) has argued that the "impact of transnational migration differs from, but must be understood within the context of the heightened globalization in which it is embedded. Changes prompted by migration and globalization mutually reinforce one another."

Transnational migrants have been delineated into categories depending on the intentions and paths traversed by them. Grant (1981) utilized the terms "Shuttle migrants" or cultural commuters" to refer to migrants that travel to and fro with no intention of staying anywhere permanently.

A study in 2002 that in 1990s, a majority of them are international migrants who are potential immigrants in countries of their destination and who often converge into diasporic communities. These international migrants not only take their skills and expertise but also their culture and life styles with them. The affordable communication facilities help them maintain strong, relationship with their homeland.

Transnationalism creates a greater degree of connection between individuals, communities and societies across borders, bringing about changes in the social, cultural, economic and political landscapes of societies or origin and destination. It is comprehended as connectedness across borders, the formality/informality of frequent cross-border activities and practices, and the high intensity and degree of cross-border exchanges are the main characteristics of a transnationalism. The three Dimensions of Transnationalism are Socio-political, Economic and Re-Migration.

Transnationalism is an analytic lens used to understand immigrant and minority populations as a meeting of multiple

simultaneous histories. It has significant implications for the way we conceptualize immigration. The diversity created by migrants can enhance many aspects of the society and culture of the receiving country. For example, areas such as the arts and entertainment, education, research, tourism, and alternative medicine can be enhanced by transnationalism. In short, transnationalism act as bridge between nations.

If we try to comprehend impressions such as hybridity, migration and identity are explored extensively in select works of prominent women writers of Indian diaspora — Bharti Mukherjee’s ‘Wife’ Jhumpa Lahiri’s “The Namesake” and Kiran Desai’s *Inheritance of Loss*.

**Bharti Mukherjee**’s second novel *Wife* (1975) is a story about the predicament of cross-cultural dichotomy and its negative effect on the self of Dimple, the protagonist which leaves her undecided knowing how to react. The story builds up on how being caught between the two cultures of the east and the west, the past and the present, the life in America with its immigrant problems create chaos and disorder in the relationship between a husband and wife. The novel also exposes how a woman’s immigrant experiences and her encounter with new culture are bound to be different from that of a man; a woman needs love, care and time from her husband and the lack of this compels a woman to think herself doubly marginalized: as a woman and as an immigrant.

Mukherjee’s works reveal her movement from Canada to U.S.A. and the consequent aloofness of expatriation to the exuberance of immigration. Her beginning works can be classified under the stage of expatriation revealing her dark days of alienation, love and betrayal and racial discrimination she suffered in Canada and portrayed through her protagonists. *The Tiger’s Daughters* (1971), *Wife* (1975) and *The Canadian Stories of Darkness* (1985). Abha Panday in *Indian Diasporic Literature* writes,

“Bharti Mukherjee has shown dual cultural shock. This migration or cultural transplant lends to a crisis of identity and final reconciliation to the problem of a displaced person in America as well as India... In all fiction of Bharti Mukherjee covering many moods of expatriations, nostalgia and frustration. (Pandey

125) and to quote Mukherjee herself admits, “The finding of a new identity... the painful or exhilarating process of pulling yourself out of the culture that you were born... then replanting yourself in another culture.”

Concerning the themes of cultural displacement and search for identity, Bharati Mukherjee’s *Wife* (1975) explores the challenges of the protagonist Dimple who is a traditionally raised Indian woman who finds herself sinking into cross-cultural conflicts in New York City. Dimple is aware about her marginal position in the conventional society which has little regard for women. To make the matters worse her marriage to Amit Basu who himself struggles for a decent living in America, further brings psychological conflicts of selfhood, love and emotions in Dimple’s life. As an Indian, Dimple never wants to be a part of American society and feels a constant nostalgia about her candid life in Calcutta. She tries to settle in the American culture but fails to assimilate into it. To quote from the text;

“she is scared of self-service elevators of policemen, of gadgets and appliances. She does not want to lose her identity, but feels isolated, trapped, alienated, marginalized” (*Wife* 112). It seems utterly difficult for her to settle amongst the people who know nothing about Durga pooja. “how could she live in a country... where every other woman was a stranger, where she felt different, ignored, exposed to ridicule in the elevator” (112). She accepts her inconvenience and emotions as she says, “I am sorry, Dimple whispered. There are some things I can’t do. Wearing pants is one of them... I just don’t want to start all this. If I wear pants to eat pizza in the winter, who knows what I’ll be wearing to eat at the Dairy Queen next summer” (154). Mukherjee succeeds in displaying the sole shattering identity crises faced by her protagonist amidst the culture divide.

Yet another celebrated women diaspora writer is the Pulitzer Prize-winning author Jhumpa Lahiri who is known for her depiction of immigrant and Indian-American life, the universal themes of longing, loneliness, the lost-self and barriers of

communication also remain at the centre of her stories. A common thread running through Lahiri's writings is the experience of being "foreign". The *Namesake* (2003), Lahiri's first novel, was wisely received for her deft portrayal of the immigrant experience and her characters again deal with complex issues of cultural and generational gaps. The story travels between Calcutta, Boston and New York city, examining the nuances involved with being caught between two conflicting cultures with their highly distinct religious, social and ideological differences. The story builds around the struggle of Ashok and Ashima a Bengali couple, who leave Calcutta and settle in Central square, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Gogol Ganguli, the novel's protagonist, son of Ashok and Ashima is a young man negotiating the divide between his parents' traditional Indian roots and his own American identity. Thus, setting the socio-cultural construct between generations, identity and boundaries. To quote from the text;

"Without a single grandparent or parent or uncle or aunt at her side, the baby's birth, like most everything else in America, feels somehow haphazard, only half true. As she strokes and suckles and studies her son, she can't help but pity him. She has never known of a person entering the world so alone, so deprived."  
(Lahiri, 24)

A portrayal of nostalgia, loss and misery in these thoughts of Ashima are weaved with extraordinary sensitivity :

"In so many ways, his family's life feels like a string of accidents, unforeseen, unintended, one incident begetting another...They were things for which it was impossible to prepare but which one spent a lifetime looking back at, trying to accept, interpret, comprehend. Things that should never have happened, that seemed out of place and wrong, these were what prevailed, what endured, in the end."  
(286)

Saloni Prasad while praising Lahiri opines rightly about Gogol's separation from his parents and his cultural displacement: *Lahiri, as a second generation immigrant seems to have a delicate understanding and empathy of her characters. Gogol,*

*moving away from his parents, in seeking a life separate from theirs might be interpreted as an exercise in cultural displacement [...] She shows great skill in her exploration of human psyche, their inner turmoil and growth, the reaction of changes in culture and the powerful effect that our heritage can have on us.* The search for identity with culture in the background is dealt prolifically by Lahiri and everything including gender, homeland, geography, occupation and role within the community can be a decisive factor in the growth of her characters.

**Kiran Desai's** Booker winning novel *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) stands as one of the finest works of Indian Diaspora Literature staging multiple diasporic inner experiences of the people away from their motherland. Set in the New York city and in Kalimpong a small town in India in the North-eastern Himalayas of 1980's, it is the story of Sai who lives in Kalimpong and Biju an illegal immigrant in New York. Sai is the orphaned grand-daughter of an old retired judge, Jemubhai Patel who lives with his cook and dog, Mutt, Sai joins the judge in the decrepit mansion. The three lead a tightly knit solitary life with occasional distractions from Sai's Anglophile sisters down the road and Gyan – the tutor. Sai's arrival reminds the judge of his journey to England as a young lad, he recalls; *“He envied the English. He loathed Indians. He worked at being English with the passion of hatred and for what he would become, he would be despised by absolutely everyone, English and Indians, both,”* Desai writes. Nevertheless he strikes up a tentative attachment to his grand-daughter perhaps because she is a lot like him, a westernized Indian, an *“estranged Indian living in India”*

Arguably the most charming portions of the novel are the nuggets Desai paints of the cook's son Bijju who shuttles between jobs struggling with low wages. Describing one of the Indian restaurants Bijju works in Desai writes, *“In the Gandhi café, the lights were kept low, the better to hide the stains. It was a long journey from here to the fusion trend, the goat cheese and basil samosa, the mango margarita. This was the real thing, generic Indian, and it could be ordered complete one stop on the subway line or even on the phone: gilt and rad chairs, plastic roses on the table with synthetic dewdrops.”* The imagery and observation of

the surroundings makes the story lifelike.

Immigration has been viewed from different angles and Desai in this work proposes it as a act of cowardice, “He knew what his father thought: that immigration, so often presented as a heroic act, could just as easily be the opposite; that it was cowardice that led many to America; fear marked the journey, not bravery; a cockroachy desire to scuttle to where you never saw poverty, not really, never had to suffer a tug to your conscience; where you never heard the demands of servants, beggars, bankrupt relatives, and where your generosity would never be openly claimed; where by merely looking after your wife-child-dog-yard you could feel virtuous. Experience the relief of being an unknown transplant to the locals and hide the perspective granted by journey.” (Desai 329) The diasporic cultural conflict that poses the concepts of sub-nationalism, identity crises and subaltern experiences have been extensively weaved in this masterpiece by Kiran Desai.

Thus, it can be opiniated that multiculturalism is that parcel of civilization which has continued to ignite varied human emotions, creativity and societies reforming and resisting the orders of life. Diaspora is all about the creation of new identities, spaces for growth, boundaries to limit and explore, resolution of conflicts and a new culture, either composite or plural. That is to say, Diasporic writings are constructed not on the principles of harmony but on the principles of simultaneity. Mahatma Gandhi said in *Young India*;

“I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any”

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