

To provide a probable definition of diaspora and its concerning issues, a brief and sketchy survey has been attempted here. Needless to say, diaspora's concerning areas include mobilization from one territory to another, deterritorialization, identity de/reconstruction, collision of cultures, nostalgia and remembrance, dream and longing etc. Unearthing of the past interlinked with present and future is focused to embrace the diasporic situation beyond the temporal and spatial territories. But these aforementioned issues are not sufficient to capture its vast range. Several views and opinions elucidated by the critics and academicians in the 'Introduction' have been challenged by the other critics and scholars. By highlighting all the observations that have been critically investigated by a host of critics and theorists namely William Safran, Robin Cohen, Benedict Anderson, Avtar Brah, Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, Homi K Bhabha and Iain Chambers in chapter one, it can be stated that diaspora works as a seamless network, a socio-politico-cultural-psychological phenomenon, to capture the alienated condition of the immigrants, exiles and expatriates who may get solace from their reproduction of the homeland culture beyond time/space boundary.

My dissertation holds a view that the study of diaspora is not merely restricted within local space, but spans over the global space also. Instead of indulging in the creed of nationalism, it tries to grasp the thread of internationalism and transnationalism. Thus, the discourse of diaspora aims to bring closer the different communities from the different countries under one umbrella with an intention to provide space to the immigrant communities for the sustenance of their ethnic cultures liberally.

Chapter One 'Introduction' has focused on the recent trend of rapid increasing of the Indian immigrant women writers in America rather any other developed country. To

find out a satisfactory answer I have highlighted Immigration Act of 1965, Push/Pull theory, ‘Brain drain or Gain’ stratagem, etc in this chapter. Though these policies have become effective for the Indian immigrants to enjoy liberty in America, still the racist attitude of the whites towards Indians is not totally erased to make the immigrant men or women feel at home in this alien land. Hence, discrimination in race may hinder their sense of liberty in public space. Apart from this negative aspect, the Indian women diasporic writers emerged successfully to create a platform for themselves, which might be a positive scenario for the other women writers to move abroad.

Regarding the future of the Indian diasporic literature by the women writers, it can be stated that the presentation of the immigrant women characters in their literary works have made the readers feel identified with that of the characters. Recent arrival of many Indian women diasporic writers with their works in this field embodies their occupying a remarkable place against the male diasporic writers. Writers such as Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai, Anita Rao Badami, Amulya Malladi etc have shown their potential in this concerning area in the present century.

But there is also a doubt over the liberty that the women writers enjoy. Hence, a number of questions are raised as to what does it signify? What does it aim? Is there any further prospect for Indian diasporic literature? Is it easy for the Indian diasporic women writers in America to secure their places in the literary domain?

Chapter Two entitled as ‘Poetics of Hybridity and Identity’ centres on the politics of hybridity and identity in the present era of immigration and globalization. In the present era of immigration and globalization, identity is no more categorized as ‘pure’ and ‘stable’. Politics of identity signifies plural cultural position instead of single. For

example, the Indian immigrants' 'in-between' position in neither America nor stresses their Indian belonging nor their American, but it denotes their hyphenated position within Indian-American. Their 'in-between' position observed by Bhabha not only creates a new space, but to him, hybridization phenomenon defies the hegemony of mainstream culture.

In the second chapter, several concepts pertaining to diaspora have been highlighted. To theorize hybridity, Mikhail Bakhtin's 'heteroglossia' or 'polyphonic voices', Homi K. Bhabha's 'Third Space', Arjun Appadurai's 'scapes', Stuart Hall's 'cultural identity' etc are analyzed. And the second section maps out the resuscitation of cultural identities in the diasporic realm in respect of racial, national, hyphenated, gastronomic identities, and musical and media culture.

For example, in Bharati Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters* (2002) and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2003), racial identity has contributed to the fragmentation of Taralata and Ashima's identities respectively. Taralata's isolation is reflected repeatedly in the novel as immigrant Taralata is racially different from the American women. Racial difference based on the colour has made her realize to consider herself as an outsider.

Similarly Lahiri has sketched out immigrant Ashima's fragmented self in her country of settlement. Apart from this, the writer has positively responded to the inter-racial marriage of second generation Indo-American Sonia with Ben half-Jewish and half-Chinese grown up in America. This inter-racial marriage as highlighted by Lahiri certainly shows the shattering down of the white cultural hegemony. Many other inter-racial love relationships namely Gogol-Ruth, Gogol-Maxine and Moushumi-Demitri have indulged in the internationalism.

Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) also outlines 'colour' issue which has affected different races in the USA. Here Biju's contemptible attitude to the blacks in the USA is unearthed by the author. Here in the novel it is observed that people of the First World countries and immigrants from the Third World countries equally indulge in color discrimination. Not only the people of First World countries but immigrants like Biju from Third World country hardly get rid of the clutch of 'race' or colour discrimination.

This chapter has also problematized the national identity of diasporic communities. The problem arises when diasporic community no longer belongs to a geographical territory of single nation-state. Hence, their dual identities are formed as they are considered as the citizens of both the country of origin and country of settlement. It means that neither they belong to their indigenous land, nor do they belong to the foreign land. Their divided identities give them a sense of impermanence and aloofness.

Furthermore, diasporic phenomenon has turned up side down the idea of unified and coherent nation and the undivided dominance of the state over its people. Hence, divided nationality has created divided selves in the psyche of the diasporic communities.

In *Leave It to Me*(1997) and *Desirable Daughters* (2002), Bharati Mukherjee has focused on the dual national identities of several characters like Taralata, Rabi and Debby Dee which indicates their and the tumultuous situation is formed out of Taralata's continuous struggling against the dual identities of being Indian or American has made her fragmented. Even Rabi, who represents second generation immigrant, does not deny the Indian national identity. What Rabi claims is dual citizenship of both countries.

Similarly Debby Dee's identity in *Leave It to Me* is bifurcated by 'both'/ 'or' and 'neither'/ 'nor'.

Similarly, Lahiri's projection of some second generation immigrant characters like Gogol, Moushumi wavering between dual or multiple identities, possess the American and Indian citizenship at the same time. Dual citizenship of the second generation immigrants has seldom made them sustain their ethnicity by performing ethnic activities. The female protagonist Ashima in this novel claims for the Indian and American citizenship. Regarding national identity of Moushumi Mazoomdar, it has already been explored that she is on continuous shift from one region to another. Her moving from England to New York to Paris indicates not only her possessing dual citizenship, but her hyphenated identity generated by her constant mobilization. Moushumi's duality in claiming citizenship makes her move to construct, deconstruct and reconstruct her identity.

Chapter Two has made critical observation on the gastronomical factor which is considered as a key issue in the formation of diasporic identity. Different cuisine practices epitomize different ethnic identities along with inclusion and exclusion of the diaporic community. What emerges here is that diasporic communities come in close contact with each other's cultural identity. The culinary items not only serve on the local level, but it solidifies the relation between the global and the local.

Based on the critical analysis of gastronomic factor, chapter two has projected the intertwinement between the global and local cuisines which promote diaspora identities. In the present chapter an interconnection between the global and local cuisines in the construction of the ethnic and diasporic identities has dexterously been exposed by the

diasporic authors like Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri and Kiran Desai. The emergence of cross-cultural confrontation through the illustration of local food in the global territory or vice-versa has undoubtedly broken the narrow boundary of nationalism. In Lahiri's fictions, the availability of the several restaurants along with the ethnic cuisines highlights the interconnection between the global and local foods. In *The Namesake*, the prevalence of the Greek and the Mexican restaurants in the American territory epitomizes availability of local cuisines in global territory beyond the narrow boundary of food consumption within the restricted zones. Simultaneously diaspora community gourmandizes their native dishes to sustain their ethnic root. In the same fiction Lahiri has focused on the popular 'McDonald' culture which is a part of globalization of culinary culture. This McDonaldization emerges as Americanization of food culture in the present era. This monopoly in food culture impairs the spirit of internationalism among the diaspora communities. In *The Namesake*, Moushumi's negation of the McDonald culture denotes her moving away from the mainstream culture.

Desai's fiction has also mapped out the availability of the local cuisines across all over countries. In *The Inheritance of Loss*, Desai's mentioning of the Gandhi Café in New York is suggestive of the availability of the Indian culinary items. Hence, gastronomic factor as projected by Desai contributes in the construction of diasporic identity.

Like culinary factor, costume emerges as a dominating aspect in the retention of the root culture in the diaspora as mapped out by the diasporic writers. In *The Desirable Daughters*, the element of costume as a mark of cultural identity has served in the formation of diasporic identity as depicted by Bharati Mukherjee. Bengali immigrant like

Padma Bhattacharya emerges as a character to sustain her indigenous culture through maintaining ethnic tradition of wearing saree and jewelry. The novel on the one hand, has highlighted Padma's adherence to the home culture and on the other, it has focused on immigrant Taralata's seemingly moving away from the root culture. The formation of cultural identity in the diaspora is embedded by fostering their ethnic tradition. The female Indian immigrant Padma Mehta in New Jersey in stead of being terminated by impact of Western dresses has revived the Indian culture through ethnic sari and ethnic jewelry which underpins cultural identity formation of the Indian diasporic communities.

Apart from the ethnic costumes, internet, an epitome of virtual space has connected the Indian diaspora communities in the foreign land with the native land. Beyond the national territory, the immigrants or the diaspora communities fasten to the homeland through the medium of cyber network.

An analysis of the agencies of cultural identity has attempted to underpin the cross-cultural conflict in the formation of identities in diaspora. This conflict may have positive connotation in some occasions, but mainstream culture sometimes emerge more prominent to subsume the other minority culture. The concept of hybridity on the one hand, has attempted to hide the cultural superiority of mainstream culture among the diasporic communities; on the other, it raises questions over the purity of culture or identity. Immigrants or the diaspora community under the influence of hybridization appear as community outside their ethnic territory.

Chapter Three 'Nostalgia and Memory: Driving Forces in Diaspora' has analytically and theoretically observed the impact of nostalgia and memory on diaspora community to make them relieved in the alien atmosphere. In the present chapter it has

already been highlighted that nostalgia and memory serve the purpose of providing psychological satisfaction to diasporic lives in the recreation of ‘home’ in the foreign atmosphere. The tropes of nostalgia and memory beyond time and space impel the immigrant or the diasporic community to create the ‘fragmented’ image of homeland instead of producing the actual image. The chapter has also critically studied the fragmented identities of the diaspora community in the fragmented culture of postmodernism. In the present era of postmodernism marked by fragmentation and fissures of identity, the tropes of nostalgia and memory emblemize as psychological empowerment for the diasporic communities to catch the glimpses of their native land. The inauthenticity of postmodern culture is reflected in the recreation of the original homeland as produced by nostalgia and memory in the diaspora.

The present chapter deals with the issues of nostalgia and memory in diaspora in highlighting the cultural objects like culinary practices, music, language etc. How these cultural practices of native land produced by exploration of nostalgia have become conducive in the formation of cultural identity in diaspora. The indulgence of ethnic cuisines beyond physical territory through exploration of nostalgia epitomizes the reproduction of national culture which denotes their attempt to grasp the root culture instead of erasing the root culture. The revival of the Indian cuisines in America like lamb curry, dal, vegetable pilau and kheer has recreated the gastronomic scenario of India as depicted by Desai in *The Inheritance of Loss*. Similarly, in Bharati Mukherjee’s *Desirable Daughters* (2002), Indian culinary items like shrimp in coconut milk, turmeric-rubbed and deep fried eggplant slices, small, puffy luchi, flaky parathas and steamed basmati rice with hot ghee have been highlighted.

Apart from the gastronomic factor, recreation of ‘home’ in the foreign environment through nostalgic exploration of music and songs is the embodiment of preserving national identity of diaspora community. Desai in *The Inheritance of Loss* has mentioned of the Indian song like “Merajoota hai japani” sung by Zanzibar immigrant Saeed, in the host environment, which moves Biju to feel at home in New York. In the alien atmosphere, nurturing of desi (Indian) song makes him imbued with sense of satisfaction and solitariness as well. The nostalgic exploration through songs and music has produced a sense of ‘Indianness’ in Biju.

The recreation of ‘home’ through nostalgic exploration in alien land reflects their sustenance of ethnic culture, but it only gives a sense of fragmentation. Their retention of ethnicity underpins their sense of nationality instead of sense of internationalism. Their attempt to preserve the national identity through nostalgia hardly makes them assimilate with other cultures of other nation-states. Hence, in the broader sense, nostalgia and reminiscence are supposed to beget nationalism.

The notion of identity is interrelated with the concept of ‘home’. In diaspora through nostalgia and memory ‘home’ may be reconstructed psychologically, but the image of ‘home’ merely stands as fragmented in the imagination of the diaspora communities. Hence, their recovery of ‘home’ as a whole is lost in the ‘lost time’ where the immigrants or diasporic community have lost their true identity. The evocation of nostalgia and the recollection over past objects bring the partial image of ‘home’ where they hardly seem to return. In *The Inheritance of Loss*, Biju, an illegal immigrant in New York attempts to recreate his ‘home’ through nostalgic evocation or by preserving ‘photo’. His attempt to preserve the past through print culture instead of cyber culture

hardly makes him recreate ‘home’ which is lost in the lost time. So in the present circumstances, nostalgia and memory emerge as tools to release their painful craving to come back to their homeland.

Chapter Four ‘Intersection of Private Sphere and Public Sphere in Diaspora’ has highlighted the concept of ‘space’ which has gained a new momentum in the electro-cyber technology of postmodern era. It has observed how emergence of cyber technology has impelled diaspora communities to participate in cultural, political and economical spheres. The fourth chapter not only unveils space as a physical concept, but ‘space’ denotes the virtual space which drives diaspora community to reinvent identities through sharing similar cultural, psychological and sociological strata across the corporal territory.

In the present chapter ‘space’ or ‘sphere’ has been explored as a zone of empowerment for diasporic women who are physically detached from their homeland. I have analysed the notion of ‘space’ in context of diasporic women’s partaking in economic, cultural and cyber spheres as well as their contribution in the private or psychological sphere. The chapter has more studied on how diasporic public sphere turns into space of articulation for immigrant women and minority irrespective of ethnicity, class, race, and sexuality. In this chapter I have discussed the private sphere in the broader sense to focus its concern basically on the psychological elevation of the diasporic women in the private sphere. In the chapter, the private sphere or ‘home’ blurs into the public sphere as home denotes mobility rather than stability.

Indian diasporic women writers like Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri and Kiran Desai respectively in *Desirable Daughters* (2002), *The Namesake* (2003) and *The*

*Inheritance of Loss* (2006) have attempted to project immigrant women's articulation in social-cultural-political and economical spaces along with their inward journey in the private sphere.

To elaborate my analysis I have focused on how public sphere emerges as a zone of articulation for the diasporic women in the diverse forms of 'cyber space', 'cultural space' and 'economic space'. Cyber space emblematises as a site of facilitating networks with country of origin along with the communities of adopted country. Hence, diasporic community is transnationally interlocked with others bridging time-space distance.

In Bharati Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters*, cyber space is occupied by the Indian immigrants like Taralata and others who represent middle class or upper class immigrants. In the novel cyber space appears as a medium of revealing incident like the death of Indian Christian Ronald Dey by a car accident. Hence, internet media makes Indian immigrant section in New Jersey aware of the accident across the other nation-state. Though cyber space appears as a site which connects the people across the physical boundary, but it hardly reaches to the door of the marginalized or labour section of society. In Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, illegal immigrant like Biju in New York becomes unaware of internet media to communicate with the people of India. Hence, it seems that except the upper class or the elite class, the subordinate section seldom articulates their voices in the cyber space.

Apart from cyber space, I have also discussed the economic sphere where the diasporic women explore themselves through the participation in commercial activity. In Bharati Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters*, 'Jackson Heights' stands as a economic sphere where Indian diasporic community in America hankers for ethnic commodity

consumption like Indian sarees and Indian jewelries, Indian food and restaurants in the USA. Hence, Jackson Heights emerges as a zone to form collective identities for middle class Indian immigrants in sharing ethnic commodities with other ethnic Indians in this foreign land.

The same chapter highlights the private sphere which not only indicates women's constriction within household or domestic works. But the immigrant characters' sense of security and solace is centred on the private realm as projected by Bharati Mukherjee in *Desirable Daughters*. 'Home' a part of private zone provides security to the characters like Taralata and Padma. Though public sphere appears as a realm of exploration of women, sense of safety provided by private sphere makes the immigrant free from outside atrocity of masculine power. Hence, for Taralata, private realm appears as more secure than the public arena which makes her feel sense of confinement as she has been projected as a 'public commodity' by the diasporic male folk at Baskin Ridge party in New Jersey.

It has already been studied that though most of the immigrant female characters explores themselves in the diverse public spheres, but their inward journey speaks for their psychological elevation. In Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters*, immigrant Taralata's private world epitomizes her quest for root i. e. her belonging in East Bengal.

To elaborate my view over private sphere, I have dealt with the inward journey of immigrant Ashima in the private sphere in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*. Ashima's projection as a concerned mother regarding raising her son in an alien environment unravels her intense bond with home. Ashima's psychological journey is associated with

'home' which explores Ashima to embark on inward journey or self-evolvement through participation in the zone of domesticity (child-rearing).

My elucidation over the public and private sphere has projected the immigrant women's outer and inward journey of the immigrant women in both the spheres. The analysis has not only concentrated on the 'public sphere' as a zone of articulation for the diasporic women, but private sphere also emerges as a significant realm for them to reinvent themselves in the state of their rootless predicament in the alien land. It seems that diasporic women feel empowered with their participation in the public sphere, but their active involvement in private sphere underpins their psychological evolvement through which they reconstruct their identities.

Chapter Five 'Articulating Voices: Literary Representation of Diasporic Women' has highlighted 'literary space' to project the diasporic women from the standpoint of diasporic women writers. 'Literary Space' emerges as a platform for the women diasporic writers to ventilate their voices through the women characters in diaspora. The women writers have solidified their position by entering into the 'literary space' so long occupied by the male diasporic writers. The women writers articulate not only for empowerment, but to be recognized in the realm of writing. They intend not to raise their voices against male diasporic writers but to unearth the unhidden or mute voices of the immigrant, expatriate or diasporic women to the surface level by pinpointing women's circumstances on the basis of race, gender, sex, class, nationality, and ethnicity. In this chapter the key argument revolves round the excavation of the psychic regions of the immigrant women who oscillate between the native land and the foreign country. In the present chapter, I have discussed some of the fictions by Bharati Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri to explore

the seemingly actual experiences of the immigrant women who waver between their utopian thoughts over materialization and partial fulfillment of long cherished aspirations.

In the present chapter I have focused on the to unravel the ‘motherhood’ issue through the voice of immigrant characters like Taralata, Ashima, and Ruma as portrayed in *Desirable Daughters*, *The Namesake* and *Unaccustomed Earth*. Writing emerges as a literary realm of reflecting the characters’ inward journey which can be identified with the diasporic women who constantly struggle to reconstruct their identities. Lahiri’s projection of mother Ashima and her solitude over raising her son in the foreign country harmonizes with the immigrant Taralata as portrayed by Bharati Mukherjee. These diasporic writers have shown their subtlety in the use of language to present such tender issues like ‘motherhood’. Hence, writing emerges as a medium of expression for the women diasporic writers to make them ventilate to the readers.

Thus it can be opined that the purview of diaspora has expanded into a widespread circle to encapsulate new aspects that provide a new dimension in the field of diasporic study. The chapter divisions in my thesis have attempted to explore some issues which create new possibilities for the further research in the field of diasporic fiction.