CHAPTER-2

Avtar Brah says in *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities:*

> Diaspora space is the intersectionality of diaspora, border, and dislocation as a point of confluence of economic, political, cultural and psychic processes. It addresses the global condition of culture, economics and politics as a site of 'migrancy' and 'travel' which seriously problematizes the subject position of the 'native'…..
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> The concept of diaspora space is the one where multiple subject positions are juxtaposed, contested, proclaimed or disavowed; where the accepted and the prohibited perpetually interrogate; and where the accepted and the transgressive imperceptibly mingle even while these syncretic forms may be disclaimed in the name of purity and tradition. The concept of diaspora space references the global condition of 'culture as a site of travel' (J.Clifford) which seriously problematizes the subject position of the 'native'? Diaspora space is the point at which boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and otherness, of 'us' and 'them' are contested. My argument is that diaspora space as a conceptual category is 'inhabited', not only by those who have migrated and their descendants, but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous. In other words the concept of diaspora space includes the entanglement, the intertwining of the genealogies of dispersion with those of 'staying put'. (181-208)

Presently the term ‘diaspora’ is usually applied to what A.L.Mcleod calls, “a number of ethnic and racial groups” (9) living in alien lands. All those who shifted to foreign lands for temporary or permanent settlement felt, at one stage or the other, a sense of up rootedness, homelessness and alienation.

Diasporic people face alien lands and cherish fond memories of their homelands and are lost in nostalgia and sense of rootlessness. Their sense of rootlessness and alienation is caused by an awkward situation in which they are placed by their “transplantation”. Usha Bande says, “Transplantation connotes relocation and in its turn relocation presupposes the existence of a location, and dislocation there form” (4). Transplantation, thus looks back at location (the homeland), passes through relocation (the alien land), and results in dislocation (a condition of mental and physical imbalance). Robin Cohen also links the idea of diaspora with “border theory” and “politics of location” and “location” is ever connected with “dislocation’’. Diasporic writings, being born and bred out of an over powering sense of isolation and alienation, usually carry with them an imprint of migration.

The decision of an individual or a family to leave India and go to foreign land in the first instance, and then to settle down there, is influenced by many push and pull factors. An analysis of these factors is important as they determine whether a given stream of emigration was voluntary or involuntary. In modern times, migration and dislocation has become indispensable so as multiculturalism. Dislocation is inevitable. Canada, Australia, New Zealand, USA, UK, European

nations all have a mixed population where various races, cultures, languages, religions intermingle. Human race, developed from a nomadic one, in the wake of new capitalistic powers, has again taken up the way of migrations, journeys and dislocations. The process of relocation can be varied for people. They might respond through assimilation/submission, through withdrawal or involvement, or through snapshots of memory or continuing nostalgic fever.

Dislocation can be of various kinds and multi-level as well, physical, geographical, social, and psychological. A detachment from familiar environment of homeland can cause alienation/self alienation. A separation from homeland, family, kinship can happen due to political upheaval, mass migration, natural disaster or personal crisis. It can be individual or collective. There can be dislocation 'within the homeland' also. In the present globalization, economic factors have unsettled a huge mass of population even within the homelands. Migration from one state to other, one part of homeland to another equally unsettles people as 'crossing the borders'. But dislocation is never permanent as there is always a looking back in some or the other way. As Jasbir Jain says in the "Introduction" of her book *Dislocations and Multicultiuralisms*, "Cultural memories have a tendency to surface again and again and establish a connection with future; they do not allow the individual to snap ties with the past. Histories govern power relations and intervene with the construction of the present" (xii).

Diaspora theorist Vijay Mishra has pointed out two kinds of historical migrations taking place in terms of Indian diaspora. While the first group of Indian emigrants − what Mishra characterizes as the "old diaspora" − migrated in search of

labour, in part because of "British imperial movement of labour in the colonies," there was also a movement of peoples in the mid to late twentieth century, which Mishra terms as the "new diaspora". (421). Present thesis is concerned with this "new diaspora". According to Mishra, new diasporas keep their connection with the homeland "intact" through "family networks" (422). They do not form an exclusive community in isolation, new diasporas maintain these connections with family back in the homeland, through visits, communication and so on. Mishra also refers to "marriage" between individuals from the homeland as one of the ways of maintaining these connections with the homeland while living in the diaspora (422). He notes that peoples of the new diaspora are also "visible presences" in the "Western democracies" (422). In other words, the new diaspora becomes visible to the new nation state to which Indians have immigrated because of their interaction with the new country of residence. Even though diasporic spaces are seen as a place of displacement by many diaspora theorists, including Mishra (423), here the term "new homeland" is used in this work to signify that the diaspora acts as a second homeland, or a "new homeland". Here a distinction is also made between the "new homeland" and the "old homeland," where the "old homeland" refers to the assumed place of origin. Mishra uses the term "diasporic imaginary" (423) to refer back to the "old homeland". Mishra argues that the diasporic subject creates an imaginary homeland (here, the "old homeland"), where the imaginary homeland becomes a "fantasy structure… through which society perceives itself as a homogenous entity" (423). Therefore, the migrant in the diaspora views the old homeland through a lens of fantasy, where the old homeland functions as an ideal homeland, a homeland where the migrant can "feel" comfortable. Therefore, the need to feel good in an imaginary homeland points to the

idea that the migrant does not feel good in the diaspora. Mishra refers to a dichotomy between the diasporic space ("new homeland") and the assumed place of origin ("old homeland") as the people in the diaspora view themselves through the lens of the imaginary (old) (423). Mishra theorizes about a "feeling of loss" and maintains that "imaginary homelands are constructed from a space of distance" (423-424) that "preserve that feeling of loss" (423).

In the diaspora then, women may experience a "double loss," which in the context of communal violence would entail the loss of an imagined old homeland and loss (physical, psychological, familial, material, and so on) due to communal violence. But Sara Ahmed refers to a feeling of alienation due to racism in the diaspora, which is different from alienation due to communal violence within one's homeland. Ahmed echoes Mishra's "feeling" of affect component that exists within the diasporic migrant.

Ahmed theorizes about the formulation and consolidation of an affective community in the diaspora, where the affect lies in the sharing of "grief" and in mourning the loss of an old homeland (141). She argues that the diasporic subject or migrant is unable to name the loss, despite feeling that something has been lost (140). This goes back to Mishra's postulation that the subject is unable to name the absence, where a feeling of loss lies around an unnamed trauma (423). Ahmed terms the mourning subject as melancholic, as the subject desires for the loss of the desired, where the nature of the desired is imagined (140).

In this struggle to name the loss, an imagined homeland is created to substitute for the loss of an actual homeland. Ahmed believes that it is possible to

mourn for what is lost without knowing what has been lost, since the lost object is an “abstract idea” (140). Therefore, the loss is not an actual loss, but an imagined loss. According to Ahmed, due to this imagined loss, the melancholic subject is unable to form new attachments in the new homeland, which then prevents the subject from moving on (141). The melancholic migrant, in their attachment to an imagined loss, refuses to participate in the national ideal of the new homeland, as that will interfere with their attachment to their old homeland (142). Migrants use “racism” to explain their failure to live up to the national ideal of their adopted country (142). Racism, in this case, is not an invention by the migrant, but a rationale that explains one’s failure to integrate into the adopted country. Ahmed believes that racism preserves an attachment to suffering, where repetition of a “narrative of injury” causes further injury to the melancholic migrant (143). Ahmed adds that the need to create an imaginary homeland rises out of the migrant’s feeling of alienation that rises from their refusal to form new attachments in the new homeland (141).

Ahmed postulates specifically about first generation migrant women in fictional narratives, whose refusal to form new attachments in the new homeland contrasts sharply with their second generation daughters, as their daughters want to integrate into the national ideal of their new homeland by going against the ideal of refusal set by their first generation parents (143). Therefore, the feeling of alienation for diasporic women rises not out of being in an alien land, but for refusing to integrate oneself into the national ideal of the alien land.

Brian Keith Axel agrees with this idea of diasporic imaginary created out of

a feeling of alienation in the new homeland, where his postulation of diasporic imaginary is similar to Mishra's. Axel opposes the assumption that "diaspora has a place of origin" (411). Like Ahmed and Mishra, he proposes that the diaspora creates an imaginary/idealized "lost" homeland, not vice versa (426).

In other words, diaspora creates an imaginary homeland (here, the diasporic imaginary) in order to alleviate feelings of alienation within the diaspora, where homeland in the diasporic imaginary is an "originary moment" and not an "originary place" (424). However, while Ahmed and Mishra refer to the imaginary homeland as a recreation of the old homeland, Axel refers to the idea of yet another homeland, a *third* homeland. Using the example of Sikhs, he calls their desire for Khalistan as "the diasporic imaginary" (442). The Sikh diaspora dreams of an imaginary homeland that only exists in their imagination, and has no basis in reality, argues Axel, unlike Mishra's and Ahmed's imaginary homelands. While Mishra's and Ahmed's conceptualization of imaginary homelands have a reference point to the actual old homeland, Axel's imaginary homeland refers to a homeland that has no reference point in history, and exists as a future utopia for Sikhs. In the case of Sikhs, Axel refers to a history of violence and martyrdom where through symbols of martyrdom posted over the Internet, diasporic Sikh communities are able to recreate the imaginary Khalistan through the moment of viewing (425). The images of the tortured male bodies act as symbols of martyrdom (422) and through these images, the desire of and justification for carving out a new imaginary homeland or Khalistan is consolidated. Here, a male martyr's body stands in for both men *and* women as the moment of creation of an imaginary homeland. Evidently, the bodies of women are unable to act as the moments of creation of an imaginary national

ideal; their bodies can only function as objects of appropriation during communal violence (Das 68) that serve to feminize the Sikh community through the violation of their Sikh women.

The feelings of alienation as a result of the violence committed against Sikhs by the Indian state (please see next section) is further exacerbated in the diaspora. Edward Said's theory of metaphorical exile can help to explain the feeling of alienation as observed by Mishra, Ahmed and Axel. According to Edward Said, exile is defined as "a median state where one is neither completely at one with the new setting nor fully disencumbered of the old" (49). Therefore, the exilic state points to a suspended position, a "no-man's land", where the individual is unable to belong either to the new or the old. A "metaphorical exile" then refers to a state of mind where the subject construes oneself as an outsider within his homeland, real or adopted (52). A person can be in a metaphorical exilic state of mind both in the homeland (whether, India), and in the diaspora. Ahmed, Axel and Mishra point to the migrant feeling alienation, or feeling like an "outsider" within the new adopted homeland, in addition to being in an actual physical exile. Being in two different exiles (metaphorical and physical) refers to the idea of double displacement.

Gayatri Gopinath and other feminist critics explain how these diaspora theories relate to the experience of woman, both in the old homeland and the new homeland, through a feeling of double displacement. In Gopinath's opinion, this exilic state of mind is prevalent among women at home, due to their idealized images where the female gender is expected to emulate traditional gender roles established in the past.

This is a cause for anxiety in women, as their inability to meet gender

expectations can result in discrimination within the homeland due to patriarchal attitudes. The family, which is an important social institution for understanding gender roles and patterns also functions as a site of oppression for women in India. Indian society, which is patriarchal in nature, has two kinds of family systems: joint and nuclear.

Unlike the West, the prevalent form of family in India has been the joint family, which has generally been viewed as more oppressive to women than the nuclear family (Schlesinger 171). Since the joint family comprises of living with one's husband's family as well, Schlesinger believes that women have to cater to the needs and desires of other family members, instead of just her husband and her children. In the diaspora, however, there is evidence of added burdens on the female immigrant, despite being in a nuclear family.

Research shows that "within immigrant communities, traditional gender-role behaviours are often demanded from women immigrants" (Grewal 54) and patriarchal power remains even after migration (53). Anannya Bhattacharjee points to "the tendency of diasporic Indians to formulate a model of Indian womanhood as representative of 'tradition', 'culture' and 'nation'" (41). The female gender role in a diasporic setting is even more restrictive than its Indian counterpart as new burdens are added when Indian women arrive in the diaspora. These new burdens can be explained through the "pervasive fear of diasporic Indians, of total assimilation into an alien culture" (Ramanujam 147). This fear creates an added pressure to maintain the traditional Indian gender roles in a foreign country in an attempt to hold onto cultural values that can be passed onto the future generations. In other words,

diasporic Indians alienate themselves from the host culture through their fear of assimilating into an "alien" culture, where "alien-ness" is attributed to the culture of the "new homeland". Feminist critics have found that "within a patriarchal diasporic logic," women can only exist within the traditional household (Gopinath 265). In the theories of Gopinath, Mandeep Grewal and Bhattacharjee, there is an assumption that a sense of displacement replaces a sense of belonging within women, as there is a dichotomy between personal desires and the need to conform to gender roles that will allow women to be accepted within the society.

These theorists assume that women are unhappy within patriarchal familial settings; an assumption that is at odds with the depiction of Leela and Nimmo in Badami's *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call*? While Leela lives in both a joint family in India and a nuclear family in the diaspora, Nimmo lives in a nuclear family in India. Both women profess joy at being able to carry out their patriarchal gender roles. Moreover, these theorists assume that all women are similarly oppressed regardless of caste, class, age, religion and so on. The assumptions of these feminist theorists fail to take into account possibilities of happiness for a woman within a patriarchal logic, whether in India or in the diaspora.

These theorists also do not address the ways in which the diaspora can act as a site of "becoming" for the migrant (Hall 394). Stuart Hall asserts that even in this construction of an imagined homeland due to the alienation experienced out of racism, diaspora is not just a site of "being" but also a site of "becoming" (394). He believes that while there is a need to reconstruct the past through "memory, fantasy, narrative and myth", the "present" of the cultural identities in the diaspora is

"unstable" and is constantly changing (395). Hall asserts that diasporic cultural identities cannot exist on a "shared" similarity of "history" and "ancestry" alone (393), but there is a need to recognize that being in the diaspora, or the "new homeland," also affects how the diasporic cultural identities change (394). In this change, Hall believes, lies the reason as to why the "old homeland" is recreated. Since the diasporic subject has changed while being in the diaspora, the "old homeland" in their imagination has also changed, and thus, it has to be "reconstructed" (395). Hence, while diasporic subjects have the need to create an old homeland (395), they are also in constant transformation themselves (in the new homeland) (394). The female migrant, for instance, not only transforms in the new homeland, but through her transformation, she also transforms the new space that she occupies in the diaspora. Leela in Badami's novel, for example, opens herself to new opportunities in the diaspora, where she forms friendships with women of other racial and religious backgrounds as well as takes up employment. Contrary to the feminist critics discussed above, Hall's positing of the diaspora as a place that allows for the transformation of the self as well as the transformation of the occupied space in the diaspora is particularly pertinent to my discussion of the novels. How women's national and religious identities in the diaspora are also subject to transformation.

Without going much into the terminological conundrum here, it can hardly be denied that human migration is more than a mere physical movement of people: As all migrants, Indians in Canada too have carried with them a socio-cultural baggage which, varying as it may be, among other things consists of (a) a pre-defined social identity, (b) a set of religious beliefs and practices, (c) a framework of

norms and values governing family and kinship organization, and food habits, and (d) language. More important, these immigrants are not inevitably irrevocably cut off completely from India. They retain in varying degrees physical and mental contact with their homeland. Their significant others, their folk back in India as well as sections of the population in Canada, identify them as originating from and/or belonging to India. All this has important implications for the formation of ethnicity among the people of Indian origin in Canada and for their relationship with other ethnic groups.

The reason for confining this study to women writers is that, in general, women living in the diaspora did not publicly express their feelings of dislocation caused by immigration. So, it is difficult to have access to knowledge about them and their lives. The women writers and activists, on the other hand, vocalized their inner feelings and also wrote on issues that concerned them. Being cosmopolitan and having had direct experience, these women expressed their thoughts and subjective reflections during interviews and more so, in their writings. They explored several ideas and questioned many an accepted norm. In the process, they have helped to contextualize their past into the reality of the present and have created a unique space for themselves in their adopted land, thus making a positive contribution to its plural culture.

Recent theorizations about diaspora as a form of embodied subjectivity have led to considerations of how “lower order” senses influence diasporic experiences. Critics suggest that diasporic dislocation is shaped by the sensory dimensions of everyday life’s contingent material conditions. A number of studies have recently

explored the importance of food tastes and smells for diasporic subjects, as these sensations have the ability to evoke memories of past "homelands". Smells mark bodies differently than tastes, as diasporic subjects are often constructed as carrying the olfactory traces of past homelands on their bodies. Smell, with its diffuse material processes and metaphorical dimensions, offers a framework for articulating a range of experiences connected to past and present places of habitation. Diasporic subjectivity is shaped by memories of past homelands that emerge through evocative aromas and inflect diasporic life in the present. It is also shaped by olfactory experiences in present living places- including encounters with smell-based discrimination-that may complicate relationships to past homelands. As a form of subjectivity, diaspora encompasses "the subjective conditions of demography and longings connected to geographical displacement", "the deeply subjective processes of racial memory", and the feelings connected to "homeland, memory, and loss". By considering how the contingent material conditions of everyday life shape diasporic subjects in a particular time, place, and body, my theorization seeks to negotiate a balance between the shared experiences of diasporic communities and the specific experiences of particular diasporic subjects. Studies of diasporic subjectivity that focus primarily on the psychic and somatic dynamics of longing for home may risk essentializing a "diasporic psyche" preoccupied with loss and nostalgia. Avtar Brah accounts that home is also the "lived experience of a locality ", including "its sounds and smells".

Brah accounts for the contingent material conditions of daily life by suggesting that these lived sensory experiences are "mediated by the historically specific everyday of social relations", including "the varying experience of the pains

and pleasures, the terrors and contentment, or the highs and humdrum of everyday lived culture" (189). According to Sara Ahmad, "the immersion of a self in a locality involves that locality intruding into the senses: "It defines what one smells, hears, touches, feels, and remembers". Scents are thus an integral part of the lived experience of being at-home. This embodied experience "involves the enveloping of subjects in a space which is not simply outside them…the subject and space leak into each other, inhabit each other" (121). While Ahmad goes on to consider the unfamiliar sensory experiences involved in migrating to a new, unhomely location, other critics explore how diasporic subjects reconnect with feelings of "being at – home through familiar sensory experiences when they migrate to a new location. Studies that explore scent and diasporic subjectivity tend to focus on how the tastes and smells of foods evoke feelings and memories of "being at – home for diasporic subjects, while also situating them within diasporic communities. As Wenying Xu argues, "A community's cuisine is a daily and visceral experience through which people imagine themselves as belonging to a unified and homogenous community, be it a nation, village, ethnicity, class or religion". A number of critics, including C.Nadia Seremetakis, Lily Cho and Anita Mannur, provide valuable studies of the role of taste and smell in evoking feelings and memories of past homelands and situating subjects within diasporic communities.

Jasbir Jain states in "Identity, Home and Culture through Dislocations", "History is transmuted through the remembrance of selected events. The past impacts through this remembrance of selected events. The past impacts the 'self' through this remembrance which exists in a rootless present and which is isolated

and distanced from the culture or origin both through acts willed of otherwise".(237)

Working through familial frameworks, and parodies of the past, the writers create a new self based on intertextualities. As successive generations interact with inherited frameworks, the moulds either change or crack. Jain says that belonging is a mysterious process in itself where traces of the past linger in the subconscious and have a tendency to surface either through recognition or memory or collectivity and holding on to the self becomes important in an alien environment, preventing natural growth identification and constructive relationships. Jasbir Jain also focuses on the crucial role played by 'imagination' in the whole process of creating a 'self'. She says, "There is the overt story which relates outwards, reflects a worldly 'making of the self' as it confronts or adapts itself to the contingent forces, as it yields to the seductions of success and recognition in its search for both identity and opportunity" (238).

The second narrative is the covert one which hides in crevices and surfaces every now and then through conscious or unconscious memory. Religion or language or both may have a great deal to do with its construction. There is also, at times a third story, the absent story which does not connect either with memory or reality but hovers between the two as a lost possibility. Diasporic writers have worked variously with their material. Ondaatje has moved from culture to culture, absorbing and adopting different cultural myths, several others have accepted the Janus-faced hyphenated self, choosing to located themselves in the hyphen, yet others like Bharati Mukherjee have shed their pasts, if not as material, at least as professions about it. And there are others like Rohinton Mistry who, like the Jews,

wishes to locate the 'self' in a sense of community. Even as he writes about India, his cultural projection is of the Parsi life right from *Such a Long Journey* to *Family Matters*. Mistry's writing draws attention to an important facet of the diasporic self- the need to relate to a community. Jasbir Jain continues:

> Culture, history and memory interact anew for every generation. With second and third generation immigrants appearing on the literary scene, the need to explore the multiple dimensions of location and dislocation as they contribute to the making of the 'self' has become important. Even as the immigrant's narrative is linear, his relationship to the past is not in one straight line. It has many breaks, twists and paths. There can be no clean break with the past but the relationship of the 'self' towards a 'sense of belonging' can be differently governed. The 'self' may remain in constant need of an 'other' and thus adopt a resistant attitude, or it may progress from a resistant to a dialogic self, willing to give and belong, willing to transcend the ego. (238-239)

The 'self' and the 'other' in cultural terms (and not merely seen at an individual level) need to be seen as opposites in order to be visible, while merger requires surrender, change and self-annihilation. The opposition is characterized by difference in terms of appearance, race, faith, ritualistic practices, language, and political power amongst a host of other elements. Thus belonging is a multifaceted process. Uma Parmeswaran believes that belonging is transplantation and one need to nurture the feeling-home is where heart is. Bissoondath seeks to define a 'Canadian-ness' and focuses attention on "acceptance" rather than on belonging. This whole process of belonging finally culminates in the fact of acceptance, but due

to the gender and racial discrimination, separateness is thrust on the subject. The facts that one looks different and one's ancestors hailed from somewhere else become the basis of difference, separation and non-acceptance.

There are a few problems into this way like ethnicity might be a trap and a hindrance to the act of belonging but the abandonment of ethnicity may erode the basis of identity and can endanger your 'self'. And as Jain again very sharply comments, "If one seeks one's self-definition on the basis of 'homeland' rather than of ancestral origins, the category homeland also becomes problematic especially in times of hostilities" (240).

There is another aspect to this whole issue which surfaces when surfaces when the diaspora begins to practice, what Benedict Anderson has described as 'long-distance nationalism' (Ravindra Jain 34). And this is exactly what the Sikhs in Canada did during the period of Sikh militancy and the Hindus in US are doing to fund and fan Hindu Fundamentalism. These factors placed together imply that 'belonging' includes (i) recognition and acceptance, and a place in the community and culture to which one wishes to belong, (ii) that on part of a newcomer/outsider it also implies a change, a transformation, or surrender of some part of the self; (iii) the change called for affects a total reconfiguration of memory, history and cultural values even it does not call for a total abandonment. Identity- how one imagines oneself and constitutes the idea of 'self'; territoriality- place of residence and the 'homeland' in the distance – and memory- personal, childhood memory shared struggles and history-are all equally necessary for the act of belonging.

Belonging does not only have an individual or a collective dimension but also a generational one: there are people who are born in the country which their parents had adopted or been brought to when they were young, what is it that interferes with their act of belonging? The act of belonging has to be a willed one, not a forced one-even when it requires a partial loss of identity.

It is an act of balance between outward and inward movements-an overcoming of loneliness and marginality to accept the challenge of conflict. The narrative of belonging is also a narrative of mourning and existential loneliness for the writer and writers have, in different ways, found their own ways of handling this. The immigrant writer 'writes' his sense of belonging and this is worked out through retelling of the past in various different ways; it is like using the same events but each time arranging them differently in order to read them differently and to exorcise their hold-thus the preoccupation with the past, the lost homeland and the lost identity. It is through these retellings that inner conflicts are worked out and resolved, a renegotiation takes place with the self and a voice is found for self-assertion. If this memory is a mourning as Vijay Mishra has observed, an "impossible mourning", then this interiozation of memory has to be externalized: "without memory, without a sense of loss, without a certain will to mythologize life for many displaced peoples will become intolerable and diaspora theory would lose its ethical edge" (Mishra 46). This memory has to move from recollection to imagination, hence recourse to magic realism, fable or allegory as in the works of Salman Rushdie and Suniti Namjoshi; or myth as in the work of Uma Parmeswaran.

When writers frame their realities and look for parallels elsewhere, the connections are being made between the remembered, the experienced and the desired, and between the desired and the possible. The 'diasporic narrative' is a literary form that has been used by contemporary writers to construct the canvas of the experiences of diaspora. The narrative account of these experiences challenge the static images of immigration associated with previous historical eras. The diaspora narrative can be defined as a literary mechanism to construct the plight of exercises of immigrants struggling under the dilemma of two cultures.

In *The Invention of Canada: Literary Text and the Immigrant Imaginary*, Arnold Itwaru writes, "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 eruption of words, images, metaphors, and one who is familiar with some of the inner as well as the outer workings of these particular contexts" (Itwaru 25).

The cultural conflicts and the cultural specifics expressed in diasporic writings share autobiographical traces. Geography and cultural environment closely correspond with the creative sensibility and mental set up of the writer. Most of the diasporic writers exhibit their deep concern for geographical locations and it works as the prime locale for constructing the experiences within the text. Henry B.Wonham has pointed out that literary creativity depends on the "Unconscious Accumulation of Local Knowledge" (Wonham 9). Lopez Berry commenting upon "A Literature of Place" observes, "I want to talk about geography as a shaping force, not a subject. A specific and particular setting for human experience and endeavor is, indeed central to the work of many mature writers; I would say a sense of place is

also so critical to the development of a sense of morality and of human identity (Lopez 7).

The whole canvas of scattered geography possesses the consciousness of the creative writer. In wake of migration, the feeling of alienation and multiple dislocations enhance this longing for all sorts of affiliation to the homeland. And the writer writes 'to connect'. He/she gives expression to the feeling of dislocation and recreates, rewrites the past, present of the homeland. Human identity is constructed through multiple specifies-languages, myth, history, psychology, gender and race. It also includes subject's self-image and the unconsciously inherited positioning.

Diaspora gives that extra edge to its people where they become more close to their homeland and its historical, political, socio- cultural aspects than the native dwellers and with this longing they try to understand their own past and also a historical invention in the master narrative of the imperial race. Edward Soja accepts that without the realization of the past, it is difficult to do justice with the present. He comments, "The historical imagination is never completely space less and critical. Social historians have written and continue to write, some of the best geographies of the past" (Soja 14).

Geography and the sense of location have become a major component in the writings related with the experiences of diaspora. With the shift of geographical spaces, there are also shifts of "self-images" and cultural paradigms. Jasbir Jain in her "Poetics of Exile and Dislocation" categorically accepts genres and literary activities as culture specific. She admits, "Genres are also often culture specific, some forms flourish better in certain cultures, the 'romance' as novels, as the tale of

an individual, has flourished in the west while the novel as epic, as community dominant, has flourished in the East" (Jain 18).

In the process of existentiality of migrants, the writers have given the importance to the question of "identity" and "self-belongingness". Edward Said in his discourse on "exile" and "immigration" accepts the issue of identity crisis in diasporic literature. In one of his interviews, he has categorically stated, "The whole notion of crossing over or moving from one identity to another is extremely important to me, being as I am-as we all are, and sort of hybrid" (Said 122). The idea of "crossing over" and problematic issue of exile in fact denotes the idea of resistance to the colonial centers that marginalize the immigrants crossing the boundaries. For Said exile is "disagreeable" or "dyspeptic". It generates the psyche of aloofness, dislocation, estrangement, frustration and even rebellion.

He accepts exile as a precondition of the process of assimilation. The elimination of fear and prejudice paves a way for cultural assimilation. Exposing the conflict of diasporans in new cultural surroundings, he states, "The person, who finds his homeland sweet, is still a tender beginner, he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong, but he is perfect to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong, but he is perfect to whom the entire world is a foreign place" (Said 407).

Homi Bhabha in context of the experiences of immigrants enunciates the theory of "disjunctive temporality" that "creates a signifying time for the inscription of cultural incommensurability where differences cannot be subsumed or totalized because they somehow occupy the same space" (Bhabha 177) Bhabha's idea of

"disjunctive temporality" refers to the idea of "fractured images" or "broken mirror" that is the reality of the life of immigrants. Regarding the divided consciousness of immigrants, Salman Rushdie mentions, "But human beings do not perceive things whole. We are not gods but wounded creatures, cracked lenses, capable of fractured perceptions" (Rushdie 12). The consciousness of two cultures expressed in the life of immigrants represents "the twilight existence of the aesthetic image" (Bhabha 15).

In diasporic narrative, beneath the surface of divided consciousness, the idea of "home", "nationality", "nostalgia", and "the sense of loss" dominates. Geographical, cultural and political map of India grips the consciousness of immigrants. They view their host country and its acceptable traditions from the glasses of their ethnic identity. Uma Parmeswaran in her narratives, records inherent intention of immigrants. The foods, language, patterns of behavior, the responses of personal experiences haunt the memory of home land.

It is rightly said, "When one arrives in a new land, one has a sense of wonder and adventure at the sight and feel of a landscape so different from one what has been accustomed to; there is also a sense of isolation and fear, and intense nostalgia is a buffer to which many retreat" (Parmeswaran 31). In diasporic narratives, there is not only an emphasis on the remaking of the socio-cultural reality of adopted land but also there is an emphasis on the reconstruction and the reaffirmation of the images of the homeland. Salman Rushdie in his discourse on the aesthetics of displacement accepts, "writers in my position, exiles or immigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt" (Rushdie 10).

Anita Rau Badami's third novel *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?,* published in 2006, tells the intertwined stories of three women right from the time of Partition of India and Pakistan to the 1984 anti-Sikh riots in Delhi and the devastating Air India flight 182 crash, off the coast of Ireland in 1985.Badami made her debut with *Tamarind Mem* – a sensitive portrayal of the changing face of mother-daughter relationship with all its attendant inter-generational conflicts in a modernizing world. Her second novel, *The Hero's Walk* (2000) has won a slew of awards including the Regional Commonwealth Writers Prize; Italy's Premio Berto and was also named a Washington Post Best Book of 2001.

This is a book about three women and the effect of the politics of Punjab on their lives. Politics crosses over from one continent to another, mainly from India to Canada. The two women are based in Vancouver in Canada. One of them lives in Delhi. This novel starts with Nimmo, the one who lives in Delhi. Badami says that her third novel has been gestating in her imagination since that fateful day when she saw up close a Sikh man being burnt alive in Delhi in the rush of communal bloodbath following the assassination of the then Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1984. "This forced me to think why people resort to such violence – what is it that can drive people over the edge to the point where he or she can burn alive another person," says the author in an interview to Peter Maarse:

> I was in Delhi soon after Indira Gandhi was assassinated. But I saw in the newspapers several weeks later all these photographs of women who were left alive while their men have been killed or brutalized. I saw these pictures of women – totally shattered and completely

> baffled about why this horrible tragedy should have happened to them – and I carried these pictures into my memory. They will always be there. I wanted to write about one of those women, what happens to these people who suddenly feel disenfranchised and would they in the end feel so angry that they in turn might resort to violence or instigate violence in their own children as an act of revenge.

So it all becomes a circle of violence, in a manner of speaking. That is what she wanted to explore in her novel. But Badami adds a number of diverse perspectives to the dilemma of dislocation in her novel. Leela is another one of those displaced, one who doesn't belong because of racial or religious differences. "She had once been Leela Shastri, the pale-eyed, thin daughter of Hari Shastri and Rosa Schweers, a half and half Indian-German hovering on the outskirts of their family's circle of love" (85). Through marriage, she finds a sense of belonging and asserts her social standing as a member of an important Brahmin family, only to relinquish that comfort when her husband moves them to Canada. There she is determined to "cut this New World into the shape she wished it to be----she would redraw maps and mythologies like the settlers who came before her---Like them, she would make this corner of the world her own until it was time to return home" (310).

For Leela, being somebody is everything. Many peripheral characters stream in and out of the novel, providing a broad picture of people in transition, adjusting to change. In Canada they are Leela's family, as well as the Indian immigrants who frequent Bibi ji and Pa-ji's restaurant, 'The Delhi Junction' and live in the weigh

station of the couple's large Vancouver house. In India, they are Nimmo's husband and children, including her sulky son Jasbeer, who is 'stolen' by his childless Aunty Bibi-ji, who offers to provide him with a Canadian education. The book deals with the struggles of various characters for identity and sense of belonging, and with the inevitable shove and tug between those who are content with their lot and those who desire more. Even between family members there are reminders of the tenuous nature of all human relationships.

Anita Rau Badami in this novel presents the idea of dislocation contextualizing it in the predicament of the Sikh community in India and the Sikh Diaspora in Canada, all connected through a single chain of events. In the spirit of diasporic fiction, the novel *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* begins with the reflection of memories of Bibi-Ji who left Panjaur at the age of six. As a child, she nourished the dream of the world of opulence. She admits, "Sharanjeet Kaur had been greedy for something much larger than the world she inhabited" (7). Her father inculcated the dream of a fanciful life with all modern amenities beyond the doom of poverty. She was taught by her father, "If they had allowed me to get off the "Komagata Maru", you and your mother and your sister would now be living like Queens" (11). Sharan's family was inflicted by the insecurity of poverty and lack of resources. There was no doubt that foreign land caused magic to occur, "illiterate men came back not only with money but with the other more powerful things knowledge" (15). Sharan since her childhood had been conscious of her accomplishment as the "Queen of Beauties".

Such a fanciful realization of the conditions of life like Jyoti, the protagonist of Bharati Mukherjee's novel, *Wife* makes her aware of her own dreams and she becomes so greedy even to steal the fortune of her sister who was simple looking. Always she used to ask about her sister's prospective groom, "Is he good looking! Is he rich"? (17) Sharan used to dream of Canada, "With its lavender soap and chocolate, was her fate". She was the one who longed for Abroad" (17). With the proposal of migration Sharan was excited. She was determined to become a modern woman with "two tongues" in her head. She modifies herself both in tradition and manners to seek space in the new land. Badami mentions, "Sharan caught a bus from Amritsar to New Delhi, a train to Calcutta and from there a ship that sailed via Hong Kong to Vancouver" (35).With her footprints on the land of Canada, like most of the immigrants from third world countries, she had a realization of the happiness in which there were no shadows of gloom and anguish. She felt as if she had overcome "space and time" and her life she "thought buoyantly, was complete" (36). It was a partial fantasy that most of the immigrants feel after their arrival.

Later as time passes, Sharanjeet Kaur, wife of Sardar ji becomes the owner of East India Foods and Groceries at Main Street. She transforms into a nicely assimilated immigrant but in spite of that she was not able to get rid of the guilt that she had taken the fortune of her sister Kanwar. She attained financial security but with the passage of time there was a radical transformation in her position. She has a realization "What s transformation she had undergone-from a girl named Sharanjeet who had nothing to a woman of substance named Bibi-Ji" (39). In spite of her contentment, she redefines the conditions of her life and identity. In her establishment, she makes provisions for all those who travel from India. It signifies

that she sustains her position and retains her affinity with her homeland. As soon as she gets a letter from her sister, tears start floating from her eyes.

She becomes impatient to see her niece Nimmo and makes desperate effort to reclaim her lost relationship. In spite of her persistent nostalgia, Bibi-Ji reconsiders her life in context of her possibilities of assimilation and therefore, she develops her talent of accounting.

Further, in order to avoid the anguish of separation from her sister and her own barrenness, she concentrates on her shop. Both Paji and Bibi-Ji retain their uncompromising human sensibility. They have a positive acceptance both of a Canadian nationality and Indian mode of thinking. Paji has a realization, "people helped me when I came here, and this is my way of paying back" (47). Sharanjeet has a more dynamic vision of life and gathers her confidence to change her business even in alien land. It is evident that Bibi-Ji in her recollections was not confident to get rid of the trauma of partition. The realization of the insecurity born out of partition makes her insecure in Canada. Badami in *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* weaves the idea of dislocation and relocation in the background of the horrors of Partition and Emergency. In such conditions of homeland, the migrants from the minority community feel more uncertain of themselves and anxious for the well being of their loved ones, left back. During such hostile times, no place is left for them 'to belong'. They feel an eternal dislocation. Where to go when nowhere is left to belong? Sitting at Canada, Bibi-Ji had a different picture of India, but the fact was entirely different, "Bibi-Ji found it hard to believe that people who had lived as neighbors and friends for so many years could suddenly become enemies. Just

because of a line drawn on a paper map…" (51). For her the only anxiety was regarding the well being of her sister and to call her to Vancouver.

Living in Vancouver, Paji and Bibi-Ji opened Delhi Junction Café and it was another mode of Bibi-Ji's ambition to keep her Indian sensibility alive. For her the "crowded tables" and "waiters running in and out" was a matter of great contentment.

They maintained one of the attendants named Lalloo, who in spite of Paji's objections had cut his long hair. Paji prefers to call the place 'Apna, a Punjabi word meaning 'ours'. Describing the nature and possibilities of Delhi Junction, It has been stated, "The Delhi Junction had become a ritual, a necessity, a habit for many of the city's growing population of disease who stopped for a quick meal or afternoon tea" (59). Bibi-Ji also recollects the names of her customers and their villages along with several other details. It was their own affinity with native dwellers that they were glad to see new immigrants. It was her Indian way of hospitality to please regular customers. The personal house Paji built for Bibi-Ji, he named it 'Taj-Mahal', and declared, "These gates will always remain open, for all those who need a space to stay" (63). For Paji and Bibi-Ji each tongue, occasion and person related with their home town was a matter of glory and romantic fascination and their mechanism to hold on their 'identity', amid alien environment. However in the subsequent chain of events, Anita Rau Badami tries to tear the veil of this illusion of immigrants. Like most of the writers of diaspora, she accepts that immigrants romanticize their homeland. It can be said that a taut rope tie all the diasporics to 'home' whether India or Pakistan. They see their distant homes as if through a telescope, every small

wound or scar or flare back there exaggerated, exciting their imaginations and their and their emotions, bringing tears to their eyes. They are like obsessed strangers, whose distance from the thing they observed made it all the brighter, all the more important."

Leela's arrival at Vancouver as a tenant of Bibi-Ji, in the company of her husband Balu and her children Preeti and Arjun adds another dimension to her consciousness. Leela had her own past in which she saw the crisis of inter-racial marriage. She had witnessed the irony of life because her mother was European and her father was an Indian. She watched her mother dying amid all odds and worries.

She interrogates, "Was it Leela's fault that she was the product of that union" and she was found herself like a "Trishanku" ever residing in India. She was brought up by Venki. Perhaps he did this to spite Akka, who refused to touch the child even while making a great show of cuddling the children. Leela used to recall the words of Akka, "Half breed, worse than untouchable. At least a toilet cleaner has caste" (82). With the echo of these contemptuous remarks she constitutes a psyche, "I was half-and-half, like Trishanku" (85).

Leela inherited the physique and personality of her father. She embraced the erratic Gods one side and rationalism on the other. Half of this and half of that, finally she was married to Balchandra Bhat who was known as Balu. He determines to leave India but he finds it difficult to pull up his roots "those deep and tangled roots that reached at least two hundred years into the soil here" (96). Finally they were determined to shift to Canada in spite of certain bitter experiences; it was a burden to Leela to shift to Canada. She also used to consider, "What a blessing it is

to die in your own bed, under your own roof, with your family surrounding you, full of the knowledge that you have lived as thoroughly as you wanted to" (101). But she had to uproot everything from this soil which she planted hard. It was during their visit to Airport that the driver of the auto gave an address to them in the scope of the meeting of the aunt of his wife, Nimmo. They were separated during partition. After her arrival to Vancouver, Leela feels an unconscious and unexpressed resentment. She finds herself disgusted to find a telephone directory that possessed not even one name. At Delhi Junction, Bibi-Ji welcomes her with all warmth and love of an Indian woman, "I am Bibi-Ji-your land lady" (116). Bibi –Ji too in her first meeting confesses her own emotional crisis and with a heavy heart, "My home is here now. My village disappeared during that time. It was right on the new border… but god knows where its people are now" (119).

She exhibits all her love and warmth beyond all formal exchange of views, "If we Desis do not help each other, who will?" (120). Bibi-Ji seeks mutual generous relationships as a method to belong in Canada.

In Vancouver, Leela and Bibi-Ji take shelter in hybrid cultural sensibility. Paji declares, "Well colonel, this is a country of immigrants" (124). Bibi- Ji with all love offers South Indian food to Leela. Bibi-Ji's hospitality brings great pleasure and excitement in Leela's life. She realizes, "The Singhs were hosting all these people at their own expense?" (134). Bibi-Ji fulfills her own dreams inside her Taj Mahal full of Sikhs chattering in Punjabi. Bibi-Ji points out, "But this is Punjab inside my home it will always be Punjab" (135). In order to forget the trauma of partition, she advises Leela to forget Nehru. She further exhorts, "A bad memory was necessary

for a person wishing to settle in, to become one of the crowds, to become an invisible minority" (137). She has a positive vision about her conditions of life and wants to assimilate into Canadian society but balancing both cultures simultaneously, "The minority Boat, a leaky thing-could go down any minute if you don't watch out" (137). Badami affirms that immigrants in order to escape the horrors of minority existence must join a cosmopolitan community in the multicultural culture of Canada. In contrast to emotional crisis of immigrants, Anita Rao Badami tries to record the crisis of Sikh Community who survives on the fringes of marginality in their homeland also. Nimmo along with her husband and three children faces acute financial crisis. For Nimmo the only hope was the survival of her sister Sharanjeet Kaur. It suggests that longing is not only for those who are outside the country. Hostile times can make anyone an alien anywhere, home or outside, does not matter. Bibi-Ji with the revelation of new affinity finds herself impatient to come back to India. Bibi-Ji's arrival to her homeland was a method to redefine her lost identity.

The entire scene of Bibi-Ji's arrival, her dispersion of gifts, impatience to give gifts to Jasbeer and Pappu is a manifestation of that deep longing, existing in the mind of immigrants. She even does not take pain to get the detailed information into the formal acquaintances. For Bibi-Ji, it was not only her "homecoming" but also an unconscious compensation for the loss and quilt committed by her twenty years back. Badami accepts that geographical shift of location no longer modifies the pattern of personal relationships that are rooted in the blood of Indians. Bibi-Ji holds Nimmo's soft hands and makes a sympathetic confession, "I am the one who came looking for you. You did not come to me. But I see my sister, I look at you. I

am sure. I have no family other than my husband. I have lived in quilt for twenty years. I left the village. I did not help my sister. Now I am sure. This is right" (172).

She exhibits her excessive curiosity to know the details of the family of Nimmo. Satpal's reactions were a bit different. He wanted to use his kinship with Bibi-Ji as a mode of liberation of the poverty. In contrast to unbridled humanitarian passion with Bibi-Ji, Satpal had a repulsive obsession of his poverty. Bibi-Ji provides financial help to Satpal's family to make a compensation of her own loss. Like Bharati Mukherjee and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, in dealing with the issue of diasporic conditions, Anita Rau Badami tries to synthesize cultural and gender issues. For Bibi-Ji, the space in Nimmo's family was an unconscious effort to realize her lost motherhood, "Opper-Wallah has not seen fit to fill my lap with children. I feel an emptiness inside…All I want is to help my family. For you are the only family I have" (182).

Bibi-Ji proposes to take Jasbeer to promote him for higher studies. However, Jasbeer's frustration in other social dimensions contributes to explore another problem of immigrants.

For him it was not a willing decision but a forced one. Bibi-Ji's idea of cutting his hair is her unconscious surrender of Sikh identity or the voice of the marginalized community. Jasbeer caught in the dilemma of here and there, was not in a position to adjust with the school atmosphere.

Anit Rau Badami in *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* ventures to deal the problem of dislocation and belonging with a different perspective. She tries to

establish that the community is 'homeless' both inside the home and outside home. Nimmo remains in panic because of the partition of the country as well as because of the partition of property. The emotional bonds with the homeland make them weak and nervous. While as Nimmo and Satpal have to face the need of the horrors of Pakistan, "What if the Kashmiris voted to go to Pakistan? What then, Majumdar Saheb. Would you be happy to see the crown of our country chopped off? A headless India? "(250). On the other hand, a group of Sikhs demanded a land of their own, "We might be in the minority in India, but we have the strength and valor of a majority sized army" (253). Dr.Randhawa speaks like a fanatic and defends for his country. However Bibi-Ji in her new identity as a Canadian develops a new vision of life beyond the complex of minority identity. She declares, "We are Canadians now. Also I don't like the idea of more partition and separation, more finding with borders" (257). Badami accepts the hybrid cultural surrounding and it helps to shatter the barriers of minorities. Leela is confident of her mission and has no dilemma of fluid identities. She declares, "A Bhat will always be an Indian. And we aren't staying have those long anyway. We will be going soon" (262). Jasbeer in spite of the best efforts of Bibi-Ji fails to get his roots in Canada. He confesses, "I want to live in the village".

Paji ever since his immigration conceives the dream of undivided India and does not favor the idea of an independent Sikhland, "An independent Punjab was a ridiculous idea" (279). However Jasbeer's sensibility was different from Paji. Paji's Indian sensibility suffers a terrible loss in which it was different to draw conclusions. Paji declares, "Not a question of my wishing. What I am not wishing to

do is interfere in the business of another country. I am Canadian, why I should pay for more partition in India" (82).

For Paji it was a double loss-first the loss of their nation and secondly the loss of their identity and culture. In contrast of Paji's sentimental quest, she survives in a state of perpetual agony and "homelessness" even inside the home. The news of emergence, riots, carnival made her to realize that she seemed to belong to a country she didn't know at all, "Even the pictures of men and women in the advertisements astonished Leela- it was was as if these people's bone structure had fallen" (308). Both Leela and Bibi-Ji are apprehensive about the involvement of new generation in terrorists' activities. Leela pathetically confesses, "God willing, and if our finances allow it, next summer we'll go home and eat mangoes instead of green ones" (313). Golden Temple tragedy and the blooming anger distorted all faiths and hopes for future generation. Everywhere there were the echoes of humiliation, indignity, death" (335). Lalloo fills with bitterness on the possibilities the ruin of Sikhs. In all resentment, Lalloo cries out, "I am beginning to like the idea of divorce from India" (337) .Nobody's care for their feelings and insecurity. They are alien in Canada and equally they are alien and indifferent to India. It was a matter of their personal sensibility. He concludes, "Are you saying that it was okay for the Indian army to invade our temple. What kind of talk is that?" (339).

Against the sentimental affinities of Paji and Bibi-Ji, Nimmo becomes the victim of Sikh massacre after the death of Mrs.Gandhi. The terrible murder of Nimmo and Kamal creates the worst example of 'dislocation' for the entire Sikh Community. The immigrants in spite of their division and alienation feel safe in

Canada, “All that occupied the Indian community in Vancouver was the assassination of Indira Gandhi and the resulting murders of innocent Sikhs. Horrors piled on horrors” (372). Leela becomes determined to bring back Nimmo to Vancouver. As soon as Leela leaves airport in the hope of the India of her dreams, she declares, “Right now, she was literally between two worlds. She yawned, pulled her blanket over her legs and feel into a deep sleep” (392).

The analysis of the novels of Anita Rau Badami affirms that the matrix of location and relocation emerges as a central motif in her novels. In reconstructing the experiences of Indo- Canadian diaspora, she lays emphasis on the inter dependence of the dynamics of cultural relationship and the dynamics of geographical locations. Most of her immigrant characters encounters rootlessness, isolation, nostalgia of homeland, the innate urge of their cultural variables, the craving for the lost relationship and assert their affinity with their roots and deal with these issues in diverse ways. The geographical shift of location generates the dilemma of dislocation, alienation and rootlessness in her novels.

Anita Rau Badami’s in her another novel *The Hero’s Walk* represents the formation of diasporic identities as an empowering process shaped by multiple changes on the local level rather than by transnational mobility. Set in a fictive seaside town in Tamil Nadu, southern India, Rau Badami’s novel narrates the story of a genteel but impoverished Brahmin family. In the midst of globally induced environmental catastrophes and local process of social disintegration, Sripathi Rao, the father of the family and the novel’s protagonist has to cope with the death of his estranged daughter, Maya and the arrival of his Canadian granddaughter, Nandana.

Interestingly the novel is not primarily concerned with Maya, who used to live with her family in Vancouver and is perhaps the novel's most conventional diasporic subject. Instead it examines how Sripathi's multiple displacements and re rootings and Nandana's reversed journey to the old world, mediate diaspora through the character's everyday life experiences and locally defined events.

The Hero's Walk dramatizes the formation of diasporic identities as an interdependent process of individual self-discovery and social reconnection on a local rather than a global level. This process frequently depends on the protagonist Sripathi Rao and his ability both to remember and reluctantly re-evaluate his own and his family's pasts. Having never left his hometown of Toturpuram, Sripathi initially depicts a culturally rooted rather than mobile character. It is not until he has to move his granddaughter Nandana from Canada to India that he comes to occupy a diasporic space. But such a space, as Avtar Brah argues, is "inhabited not only by those who have migrated and their descendants, but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous…". -The concept of diaspora space ….. includes the entanglement, the intertwining of the genealogies of dispersion with those of 'staying put' (209). In order to understand their different historical genealogies and political effects within the nation-state, it is necessary to differentiate between forced diasporas, flexible transnational diasporas, and intra-national diasporas.

The political effectiveness of the latter notion of diaspora depends on how, to quote Paul Gilroy's terms, "it problematizes the cultural and historical mechanics of

belonging" and breaks the presumably natural bond between , "place, location, and consciousness"(123).

Intra-national diasporas, then engage in a critical discourse of emplacement rather than transnational mobility and designate the fragmentation and reconstitution of social space through the local effects of global events. In *The Hero's Walk* becoming diasporic entails breaching the different political, social and psychological regimes of the normal. In fact, Sripathi and Arun emerge as diasporic characters precisely because they 'stay put' and witness the ways in which the material effects of global developments transform their quotidian lives. At the same time, their diasporic agency is contingent on the diasporic configuration of Maya and Nandana and thereby raises questions about the ways in which the constitution of diasporic identities is contingent on normative gender identities, In different ways, the novel's narrative construction of diasporic subjects effects a critique of the postcolonial nation-state without subscribing to a unified, one-world vision of global belonging.

This book is Badami's interpretation of a dance-step. The step she is talking about is in a classical Indian dance-form called Bharat Natyam, a pretty common dance-form in India. When she was young, she used to notice that the hero in dance-dramas always came in with this strutting gait. When the demons came on they used the same kind of walk, except that there were some embellishments. The demon, or the bad guy, or the villain--call him what we want to--would twirl his moustache, thump his chest, flex his muscles. And that immediately set him apart from the hero, who had certain humility to his gait. The clown in the piece would stumble and fall and trip, so it seemed to her a fine metaphor to use for the way each of us lives his or her life. She says that nobody in the world is perfect. Nobody is absolutely good or

bad or stupid. Each one of us combines all those qualities in our daily lives, so that's the metaphor.

Curiously enough, the book began with Ammayya and Putti. Badami had written a short story with these two characters years ago, and somehow the short story kept growing a little bit each year. It never seemed to end--and she didn't know how to make it end. So when this book started, she thought that she was actually going to be writing a book about these two women. But they didn't seem to have enough going for them for a whole novel. At about that same time, she was reading Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, and she was just thinking that we always connect the hero with the large, big, wonderful character who plunges into all kinds of adventures and comes back with a trophy of some sort.

There's no doubt that the hero is going to come back triumphant, and she was just thinking, "Well, what about ordinary people just leading their everyday lives?" she finds just ordinary people very heroic--just the whole business of living, she thinks, is an act of heroism. Just to carry that hope through, you know? You try to realize those hopes, and there are all kinds of pitfalls along the way. If you make it to the end of your life relatively sane and relatively happy, then she thinks it's heroic.

There's Sripathi's wife, Nirmala. Badami thinks she is a timid woman, who has spent most of her life observing what she considers are the Rules--rules set down by family, or society, or whatever. It's heroic that she has the courage to look at herself in the mirror, as it were, and realize that heroism isn't simply about following rules. Sometimes it's about doing what you think is right, at the cost of displeasing

people around you. The fact that she comes to this realization, and the fact that she holds on to those principles of goodness--she is the only character in the book who is really a decent sort, no matter what life throws at her. She is just a good soul. And we find her heroic in a sort of daily, ordinary kind of way.

While Sripathi, her husband, more than anything else, was a man who was too taken up with the whole notion of duty, and what people in the world around thought about him. Of the characters-- other than his mother, Ammayya--he was the most self-absorbed, and everything revolved around his notion of duty. As a result he made a lot of mistakes--he became this kind of unforgiving, obdurate character. Even though he thought he was doing the right thing all the time, unlike Nirmala, he wasn't doing it for anyone else. He was doing it for himself. He suffered humiliation when he was ten years old. His father embarrassed him and his mother by walking out with his mistress. Sripathi is trying all his life to get over that humiliation. Moreover, in contrast to multicultural narratives of the nation, diasporic narratives such as *The Hero's Walk* do not rely on the nation to redeem its migrant or diasporic subjects. On the contrary it can be said here that the space of cultural and domestic and national inhabitation which must be redeemed through the diasporic presence. This, at least is the case with Sripathi's son Arun whose political activism is directed against both India's lackadaisical environmental politics and their locally devastating effects and the ecological catastrophes generated through the ruthlessness and irresponsibility of global economic politics. At the same time, initiating a critical dialogue between the nation state and its diasporic constituencies often presupposes acts of remembrance that deal with the individual and collective

traumas suffered by those who experienced "forced dispersal and reluctant scattering" (Gilroy 123).

These experiences of trauma and violent psychic and cultural dislocation must be retold through everyday life events in the present location of displacement and reenacted through genealogical forms of diasporic remembrance.

Indeed the development of a diasporic consciousness relies on a critical awareness of the dangers that in Gilroy's words consist in "forgetting the location of origin and the tearful process of dispersal" (124). In *The Hero's Walk* it is Sripathi's traumatic loss of his daughter and his journey to Canada that compels him to remember and re-enact the past and eventually mark him as a diasporic character. Although *The Hero's Walk* explores national and local configurations of diasporic space, its narrative centers on Sripathi's development of a diasporic consciousness. When Sripathi and his family receive the news of Maya's and her husband's fatal car accident, they experience a dramatic upheaval. For Sripathi this accident functions as the trauma that inaugurates his cultural and personal process of transformation and is played out on different levels. First, his daughter's death requires him to travel to Canada to arrange for his granddaughter's reverse journey to India, a move that marks her as doubly diasporic. What Sripathi calls his 'foreign trip' to Vancouver turns out to be an experience of profound psychic and cultural dislocation, for it completely "unmoor him from the earth after fifty seven years of being tied to it" (140). Sripathi's sense of deracination establishes a historical continuity between the psycho-biographies of nineteenth century Indian indentured labourers-narrated in for example V.S. Naipaul's and M.G.Vassanji's novels and Cyril Dabydeen's and David Dabydeen's poetry- and Sripathi's own emerging

diasporic condition. Not only must he confront his own fear of a world that is no longer knowable to him, but more importantly he must face his granddaughter. Nandana has been literally silenced by the trauma of her parents' death and her relocation from Canada to Tamil Nadu initially exacerbates her psychological condition. To Sripathi, however Nandana's presence acts as a constant reminder of his regret of not having "know his daughter's inner life" (147) as well as her life love in order to uphold his authority over his family in light of a materially alienated and politically insecure world around him.

To maintain a sense of patriarchal control if not power, Sripathi relies on culturally purist narratives of belonging and disavows what appears to have shaped his life all along, namely his fear of social demotion and the diasporic reconfiguration of his family and social relationships. Both of these aspects are connected in that Sripathi is initially unable to consider his situation in the larger context of Toturpuram's belated entry into global modernity. More precisely his fear of losing his social status is rooted in his estrangement from his community, workplace, cultural traditions and family. To Sripathi, becoming diasporic entails that he recognizes the impossibility of stemming the tide of global modernity through an act of personal self-enhancement that prevents him from reconnecting with his dead daughter, his family, and larger community. In fact, Sripathi's symbolic act of "cutting (Maya) off as if she were a diseased limb" (32)- of expelling from his personal life everything that is unsettling yet always already present- comes back to haunt him through his own experience of having to contend with an increasingly dematerializing body. After his return from Vancouver, he "becomes more aware than ever that the world is full of unseen things, of memories

and thoughts, longings and nightmares, anger, regret, madness" (172). And dealing with these memories becomes inevitable because like Saleem's body in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children,* Sripathi's body registers and mediates particular memories and discourses of race and nation. At various points Sripathi feels that parts of his body are regularly vanishing and he experiences what could be diagnosed as phantom limb pain. But unlike phantom pain, the physical inscriptions of Sripathi's traumatic experiences appear in various places of his body so that the pain he feels can neither be restricted to a clearly defined area nor tied to a single source. The pain itself seems to emulate diasporic movements. While Sripathi's physical pain reflects his psychic state of displacement and the decay of his material world.

The dissolving body parts also signal a change of the ways in which Sripathi produces knowledge. No longer can he subscribe to the existence of a single truth with which he previously judged his daughter's decision and defended his own self righteous behavior towards Arun. Instead, he is forced to acknowledge that "he could never be sure of anything in the world again, not even his own body" (162). The constitution of diasporic identity, then, involves processes of both emplacement and embodiment. So far, however, these processes have been linked to the construction of male diasporic identities, even though the fragmentation and emasculation of Sripathi's character indicate a certain blurring of received gender categories under conditions of social and cultural displacement. This however does not mean that Sripathi's diasporic transformation takes place outside the technologies of gender. On the contrary, it is contingent on both Nandana's and Maya's unsettling effects on the everyday life of the Rao household. Nandana's

arrival in Toturpuram symbolically restructures domestic space in terms of public space. Through the death of her parents, Nandana experiences the instability of her home environment and the illusion of safety and harmony often attaches to the notion of home. Moreover Sripathi's resolution to 'take her home to India' (143) further complicates the ways in which Nandana negotiates home as a locus of diasporic displacement. More specifically Nandana brings the post colonial moment of what Homi Bhabha in his *Location of Culture* has famously termed the "unhomely" (9) into the privacy of the big house, Sripathi's family home. The "unhomely" reconfigures domestic space as "sites for history's most intricate invasions" (9) and confuses "the home and the world" (9). Thus, the "unhomely" Bhabha argues enforces a 'vision that is as divided as it is disorienting' (9).

This experience of cultural disorientation literally shapes diasporic forms of embodiment, as Nandana's loss of speech and Sripathi's disappearing body parts amply testify. If Nandana is an agent of the 'unhomely', carrying in her baggage the global realities of displacement and uncertainties of belonging, her arrival in India also unsettles the neatly gendered and 'patriarchal……symmetry of private and public' spaces" (Bhabha 11).

For example, with Nandana's entry into the lives of the Rao women, Putti, Sripathi's sister, finally manages to rebel against her manipulative mother and against the caste prejudices rampant in her family and society, marries a man from the dalit caste. In contrast to Nandana, Maya acts as the novel's most conventional diasporic character. She is the defiant and heroic daughter who "had dared everyone" (46) and lives as a haunting presence in her father's and brother's

consciousness. Interestingly the novel's dramatization of Maya's and Sripathi's relationship suggests that Sripathi's painful "labour becoming diasporic while 'staying put'- results from a crisis of patriarchal authority rather than from an experience of spatial dislocation. From the time of her birth in the eyes of Sripathi, Maya was the "perfectly formed creature" he "had fathered" (95) and designated "to reach for the skies, nothing less" (96). While these sentiments might reflect no more than the proud hopes of a young father, they are also symptomatic of Sripathi's fears of social failure, poverty and decline in class status (70). It is only with Maya's admission to an American university and "an offer of marriage" that "Sripathi's life began to acquire a glow" (70). Indeed Maya's engagement to Prakash Bhat, the son of a rich family who "just started a job in Philadelphia" (99) is a match that would have permanently marked as a diasporic character and increased her father's social and financial standing. As a dutiful daughter, Maya is expected to honor her father's name and wish and as her prospective father-in-law remarks, as the wife of a middle-class Indian expatriate, she is also expected to 'fit into life in the west without losing sight of our Custodian and nurturer of cultural traditions in "renewed patriarchal structures" (Clifford 312) to foster an imagined unified and self-sufficient cultural community with strong ties to the Old world. But Maya cancels her engagement with Prakash to marry her Canadian love. By defying her father's wishes and forsaking her family duties (116), Maya, on the one hand, initiates her own transformation into a diasporic subject with multiple belongings and groundings, on the other hand, she confronts Sripathi and the decay of the civil society of India's nation state. Both aspects eventually facilitate Sripathi'diasporic transformation. In other words, Maya's refusal brings to crisis Sripathi's patriarchal

authority and thus undermines his last resort of control and power. What remains problematic however is that the novel assigns Maya the traditional task of diaspora women, namely the painful role of "mediating discrepant worlds" and of, "connecting and disconnecting, forgetting and remembering, in complex, strategic ways" (Clifford 314). Thus, in the narrative logic of the novel, Maya's death is not an accident but a symbolic necessity that facilitates Sripathi's diasporic transformation.

Sripathi's development of a diasporic consciousness, namely a consciousness that recognizes the interdependence of local and global developments on a personal and political level and risks the "uncalculable" is contiguous with his understanding of Arun's political commitment. When Sripathi finally agrees to accompany Arun to the beach to watch the arrival of the olive Ridley turtles, he develops a sense of the importance of his son's work. For the first time, Sripathi is able to relate not only to his son but also to his dead daughter. While the act of recognition enables Sripathi to reconnect with his family and social environment, it does not result in a narrative closure.

The Hero's Walk elucidates the ways in which becoming diasporic relates to the ruptures and rituals of everyday life and necessitates the abdication of one's privileges of gender, cultural location, race and class. Particularly through the figure of Sripathi, *The Hero's Walk* suggests that being diasporic is not a cultural given but a mode of operating within a cultural emergence of this particular (diasporic) subject. With a view to Canadian discourses of identity, Rau Badami's novel teaches us to think global and national forms of belonging in diasporic terms. In many ways

The Hero's Walk dramatizes diaspora as a form of cultural critique that questions the very categories of identity.

Much has been written and said on the intersections of diasporic people , their 'old' or 'new' homeland , their expatiations over their status and the diversity in this discourse. But the kind of change which has come over the years that makes this field conflictual and fertile enough to explore further into it. A diaspora faces pressures from many sides. Not only from outside, as it was the situation with first generation immigrants, but second from within, as it is happening with second generation children. Uma Parmeswaran, traces four phases of immigrant settlement. The four phases as recorded by her are, "1. Fear of the new land and nostalgia for the old, 2. An immersion in the rat race of the workplace or school that precludes creative work, 3.Involvement in one's ethnocentric community which energizes creative work and the 4th starts taking an active part in the public life of the national community" (Parmeswaran 33). The four phases, as she says, are experienced at both the individual and community level. And Uma Parmeswaran feels that the Indo- Canadian community as a collective has stepped into the fourth phase. But this journey towards assimilation goes through hard paths of feeling alienated, dislocated. What a diaspora seeks is acceptance and that too with ethnic identity kept intact.

On the other hand, if we take Parmeswaran's *Mangoes on the Maple Tree*, for the Bhaves and Moghes in all settled in Winnipeg, migration was a voluntary decision. Sharad Bhave, an estate broker came to Winnipeg and chose to be a broker instead of being a nuclear scientist in India. And the irony is that though he himself,

as well as his wife, Savitri, both feel comfortable with their choice, it is their son Jayant who rejects it, “Why the hell didn’t he stay there? A nuclear scientist, right from the beginning, he was there ----------. Instead, he quits the place and rots here, selling houses, Jeesus, a crappy real estate broker” ---------- (8).

Right from this incident, till the last, we will see one of the ironies Parmeswaran talks about, exercising here in the Sharad- Jayant relationship as well as in other ones, an intergenerational gap between the first and second generation members of the diaspora. The second generation members are articulating their own identity but with individual differences, as we see in the case of Jayant and Vithal . Both belong to almost same age group and tied to blood ties but with distinctive individual differences on similar issues.

Vithal is Veejala’s son, (Sharad’s sister) an astronomy professor here in Canada. Vithal is the eloquter who is the representative of that irony where Parmeswaran said that we are moving inwards into a kind of self-ghettoization. She says that in “New Lamps for Old”, Vijay Mishra says, “Diasporic cultural identity is by its very nature predicated upon the inevitable mixing of castes and peoples”. But we really do not see any such mixing happening here. Much is still unchanged, ‘we eat only Indian food, see only Indian movies and meet and party a few Indian friends. So we see here, this whole group of engineering students, Rajen, Arun, Prakash , Vithal and Danesh , meeting at Jayant’s house and being introduced to Danesh, who recently has come from India.

Indians already settled, normally help the new fellows, invite them to their parties and introduce them to 'their own circle'. People like Danesh who are new, may feel that we should try to assimilate here and even the Canadians would appreciate that. But some like Vithal get irritated over it saying:

> They – White Canadians, don't want us to assimilate. They want us out; we'll be squashed like bugs soon….He is of the view that all these years 'They' led us to believe that the isolation was coming from 'Our Side'. That we were communal, parochial, closed within our natural exclusiveness but now that we are trying to merge their real selves are coming out. (63)

He voices this self-ghettozation in such words, "We have to stay separate from them and stay together, and we have got to show them we have as much right to be here as all those pissed –off whites who've bullied their way into this country these last three hundred years. We've got to stay apart, stay together. That's the only way"(63). And so strikingly similar, Danesh questions "But that would be living like ghettoes"? Over that, Rajen criticizes Canadian Multiculturalism and compares it with a zoo and Sridhar finds multiculturalism just only a 'hooplah- only the policy of divide and rule:

> They want to perpetuate their power so they promote more ethnic divisions. First, by starting ghettoes that separate one hyphen from another and more insidiously by dividing each ethnic group within itself by baiting them with funds. As the money comes, people will squabble over it. That's what the Culture and Heritage Ministry does. (64)

These young men present another side of the story. They think that ghettoes are necessary, only in ghettoes unity can thrive. They have to build their temple "at the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine". But Jayant exhibits a different attitude. He does not share the national diatribe of his friends and sounds more like a Canadian, totally assimilated?? He wants to stand apart from the 'uncouth, ribald hooligans' (Indians). Jayant represents those children of second generation, who though born in India, has no homeland because of 'No Memory' related to 'Homeland'. As he says, "Our people, our old country- Dad, there's No our people, No old country for anyone in the world anymore, least of all forces. This is Our Land and we shall stay here" (22).

Canada, may not be their birth place like their parents, but they neither see it less than their homeland nor cherish India as 'the lost homeland'. They do not seem to have those extreme nostalgic fits like those of their parents, who though sometimes moved away, voluntarily from their birth place. His father's all boisterous extempore of 'Roots' and 'identity', and 'heritage', do not appeal him at all. Veejala is another member of first generation but strikingly different from her counterparts, sharing the feelings of second generation. When Sharad says, 'I think children should know about their heritage. It gives them something to fall back upon'. Veejala comments, "All that baggage from the old country is just a crutch, all that weight on our backs. We have to strike roots here. And one should not mess up things for children. For Sharad past is important but for Veejala, this 'Romanticizing of Past is an escape route at best and it can be toxic." (36)

So here, we see two strikingly different approaches towards homeland and dislocation. Memory and experience have a role to play. For some people, memory of homeland is too overpowering than the present experiences on the adopted land but others like Veejala , only believe what they experience in present.

But besides these, there are those who are all the time oscillating between their own Choices and the Pressures from their community. They are well assimilated, as they assume and pretend but in actual their inner turmoil has yet not settled and they are in a "Trishnku state". Jyoti is one such character in this novella who loves a Canadian boy, someone not from her "Community" and is in intimate physical terms with him. Pierre, the boy too is serious enough to marry her. Now we can ask what is the dilemma than?? The complication is one and only of "Not an Indian Match." If it would have been someone within the community, there would not have been any objections rather much or less would have been ignored. But here even the very idea of their girl dating someone out of the community is too hard to digest for Jyoti's Family as well as others. And such thought inflicts Jyoti also, in spite of her love for Pierre. There we see the overpowering pressure on second generation to cling tightly to ghettoes, ironically revealing the whole reality of multiculturalism. The dramatic increase in migration from South Asian countries to Canada and the resultant problems had become fodder for the diasporic writers. While most of them made their writings awareness-raising campaigns in general, some of them recorded independent issue based responses to underline the need for developing structures to provide help and support to migrants in need, especially women who have migrated recently from the Indian subcontinent in large numbers to the Western countries for the higher studies or as NRI brides.

Diasporic Writer Ashish Gupta feels that the question of "insider-outsider" is of slotting. It can be a function how you remain an insider/outsider. So, many a times situations/circumstances decide the prospect of 'insider-outsider'. So belonging is a multi faceted process. Belonging is a social treaty. And 'belonging', 'longing' both are sisters.

At every turn, there will be someone who will say, "hey! I think I am missing something". We will always have people who will come back with a sense of longing and with a desire of 'belonging' for 'homeland'. This is the dilemma of modern men that he has to face the feeling of 'getting uprooted' from his native land, experiencing the loss of language, culture, traditions, values, living on an unaccustomed land like an alien, with multiple injuries and lacerations of heart and soul. Immigrant writers recreate the past apart from their nostalgic musings. They are like folk historians, myth makers and custodians of their collective history. Diasporic writing occupies a very significant place and position between cultures and continents. It negotiates boundaries, creating conflictual metaphors. As Jasbir Jain says in the "Introduction" of *Writers of the Indian Diaspora,* "Cultures travel, take root or get dislocated and individuals internalize nostalgia or experience Amenesia".

And no longer has the margin/centre theory applied to diasporic writing. Diaspora has shifted the centre towards itself and it has become the parallel centre. Various reasons have paved the way towards increasing migration. And diasporic communities all around the globe are varied, complex, showing a great mobility and adjustability. Diasporic people might have multiple homes but this multiplicity of

'homes' cannot bridge the gap 'between'-home'- 'the culture of origin'- and 'world-the culture of adoption'. Migration and immigration have directly or indirectly affected several generations of contemporary writers in English, engendering hybridism and culture complexity within them to grapple with multiple cultures and countries and tensions between them.

South Asian women writers are the most rapidly emerging group on the North American literary scene. Ramabai Espinet,Jhupma Lahiri, Amulya Malladi,Bharati Mukherjee,Uma Parmeswaran, Kirin Narayan, Anita Rau Badami, Shauna Singh Baldwin are some of them. These diasporic writers are not merely assimilating to their host cultures but they are also actively reshaping them through their own new voices bringing new definitions of identity. Their works signal an engagement with a matrix of diversity, of cultures, languages, histories, people, places and times. The diasporic community is varied and complex. As Bhikhu Parekh also puts, "The diasporic Indian is like the Banayan tree, the traditional symbol of the Indian way of life, he spreads out his roots in several soils, drawing nourishment from one when the rest dry up. Far from being homeless, he has increasingly come to feel at home in the world (106).

Yet this multiplicity of "homes" does not bridge the gap between 'home'----the culture of origin and 'world'-----the culture of adoption. The immigrant writer 'writes' his sense of belonging and this is worked out through retellings of the past in various different ways and thus the pre occupation with the past, the lost homeland and the lost identity is always there. It is through these retellings that inner conflicts are worked out and resolved, a renegotiation takes place with the self and a voice is found for self assertion. When writers frame their realities and look for

parallels elsewhere, the connections are being made between the remembered, the experienced, the collected and the desired. The past remains a part of the 'self', conscious of inhabiting different worlds. Their imagined communities do not substitute old ones; rather create new marginalities, hybridities and dependencies, resulting in multiple marginalizations and hyphenizations.

The sense of an identity is very crucial for an individual both as an independent entity and social relationships. It is defined through environment, past experiences, collective memories and in this process the space occupied by the place it is located in, is crucial to the construction of the self.

The past always lingers back in the mind and have a tendency to surface either through recognition or memory or collectivity. The role of imagination is also a crucial one in this whole process, culture; history and memory interact with multiple dimensions. Women writers, who migrated to different countries have always recalled their past, showing the inevitability of forgetting. They write their identities, negotiating the memories of inherited past and female projections of duties and rights.

For centuries, India has been a patrilineal and patriarchal society where the role of women has been highly marginalized and her status constantly reduced. From this standpoint, when we look at the Indian diasporic women writers in Canada, we find an attempt on the part of these writers to transcend societal restrictions and renegotiating or relocating the 'self' in another culture. Relocation in another culture, leads to the re-examination of gender roles. The 'adopted land' with a different culture and seemingly an entirely different set of norms gives them an

opportunity to redefine gender roles. They cast off the parameters lined for women in the patriarchal set up. But we need to study the experiences of the female protagonists to see how far they try to emerge out of the 'other'. Women characters are crucial as for them it's always a state of perpetual dislocation- firstly within the family due to patriarchy secondly after marriage away from the 'birth place balancing two fronts', facing 'double dislocation'. They are internally dislocated and their dislocation is beyond borders. Novel has been one of the prime genres of literary expression, a torchbearer in the realm of women's emancipation.

Women writers abound in themes that relate to the plight of women and their struggle to seek recognition and rightful place in family and society. Celebration of women has a long tradition in Indian ethos and literature which recognize the Shakti (power) of women. However, empowering them in real life always legged behind the declared myths. Women writers those in India and those of the Indian diaspora have portrayed real protagonists who are peculiar in their relationships to their surroundings, society, and their families or so on.

And the narrative fiction became a canvas to challenge the hegemonic practices of gender biased society.

Shauna Singh Baldwin, born in Montreal and brought up in India, is one of the prolific writers of Indo-Canadian women diaspora. She is the author of *English Lessons and Other Stories* and her short fiction, poetry and essays have been published in various literary magazines in U.S.A., Canada and India. Her first novel *What the Body Remembers* published in the year 1999 has remained the receipient of Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Canada/ Caribbean region (2000). The idea for

this novel was born out of a short story titled “Satya” which won the 1997 Canadian Literary Award. With the partition milieu, *What the Body Remembers* is the story of a polygamous marriage and three characters, Saradarji, his first wife Satya and her archenemy Roop, the young girl whom Sardarji, a wealthy person, Rawalpindi born, UK educated with a degree in engineering, is a man caught up in the midest of transition on more than one front. Baldwin has drawn Roop’s character, her desires, her fears, her valor and most crucially her patience and altruism, with great detail and minuteness. Satya and Roop, the two women married to Sardarji who are so different in their personality and temperament, live under the same fear of the fragility of their security. From different levels of prosperity and status they see each other and with clarity the ease with their lives can be blown all away at the slightest show of free will or disobedience. It is a story lived by many women, all across the world. The writer, in an interview to Joseph Planta, Shauna Singh Baldwin, herself commented upon the agenda behind the novel:

> My challenge to myself was not to tell the story of the Sikhs from the standpoint of the men-----there a few non-fiction books that cover their story-----but from the perspective of the Sikh Women. This quickly became very frustrating because books on Sikh history are usually written by men. As a member of one of the few religions in the world that actually says women and men are equal, and demands that a Sikh woman be called ‘princess’ to show how valuable she is, I found my research running up against the difference between theory and practice.

Most of the history is male written but here we have two women- Roop and Satya- symbolically-Beauty and Truth, expressing and recording their experiences as being the members or representing thousands of 'other' women, who suffered silently at every turn of history.Virginia Woolf argues in *A Room of One's Own*: "Women are simultaneously victims of themselves as well as victims of men and upholders of society by acting as mirrors to men" (35).

This novel begins at a place in Punjab region called--------Pari Darvaza-------the doorway of fairies-------a small village where Roop takes birth. The historical frame work for the events in the protagonists' lives is 1937 to 1947.Deputy Bachan Singh, Roop's father, is a man of genuine standing in the village but of modest means. Roop, born into a Sikh family of dependents and servants, receives the benefit of a school education and some religious training but sees that it's a men's world and it's on her brother that her father's all ambitions are concentrated. Being brought up in a household which has more women than men, she is pampered as well, perhaps because she is more beautiful than her sister. In her household, a variance is found in women characters- her mother—Deputy Bachan Singh's 'Purdah' woman, who could never see anything outside in the world other than the house she lived, Revati Bhua---who after being widowed in a young age, is condemned to live in Singh's house, carrying all of his orders, Gujri, who was sent with Roop's mother as an alley in a very young age and the two daughters Madni and Roop.

Roop stands in sharp contrast with Madni, her elder sister, rather plain looking but Roop, so self aware of her beauty, always made herself believe, "I am Dipty Bachan Singh's daughter and have good kismat"(79). Stunningly beautiful,

Roop is a free spirit child who hates all sorts of restrictions. But it's right from her childhood that she, alongwith her sister Madni is being brought up and conditioned keeping in light woman's typical roles and responsibilities. Here famous lines of Simone de Beauvoir from the "Introduction" of *The Second Sex* click into mind, "One is not born, rather becomes a woman."

Roop sees how her mother happened to be so ill all the time and delivering yet another child for Papaji and here we see how women themselves are the very perpetuators of so-called 'femininty'in their own sex, marginalizing them doubly. We see how Roop's Nani highly objects to the very idea of Roop's mother being taken to hospital because for Roop's Nani, her daughter is not more than a 'body' which must not be shown to stranger men. Even if she is dying, a male doctor cannot see her body and cure the ailment. She is just a machine for 'producing sons'. Here we feel compelled to ask ourselves: What is a woman? Teta Mulier gives the answer that woman is a womb. Nani infuses the significance of only these roles for women in her coming generations also, teaching such lessons to her granddaughters at the time of Roop's mother's delivery as, "Ay, learn learn what we women are for" (32).

Roop sees her mother, suffering endlessly and ultimately dying after the pursuit of her goal to give birth to one more son to the house, the house which clinged to her like her 'Purdah', crossing its boundaries only to embrace death. But it turns up into a highly ironical situation where Roop's father comes out with an altogether different interpretation of the causes of his wife's death.

He rather superstitiously blames Revati Bhua's practices of Hindu religion for all misfortunes and evils upon his house and one more time proving that, "Men

see women from the corner of each eye, like a horse, never seeing what directly lies before them". One more poor victim of patriarchal hegemony, Revati Bhua suffers silently and little Roop learns one more lesson of 'Proposed, imposed and forced womanhood'. She learns how men control women lives and that too in such a closed way as to even decide the Guru and God for them to follow.

Deputy Bachan Singh who works on the fields of Sardar Kaushal Singh is the father of two girls. Elder one Madni is a 'sweet-sweet, good-good girl', destined to do all household chores, bear children and after living and dying unacknowledged. But 'women don't die of pain------it turns into children' (85) is what they have been taught right from childhood and this reminds Shirley Chilscholem's words that the emotional, sexual and psychological stereotyping of female begins from the moment when the doctor says 'It's a girl'. Little girls are being nurtured and conditioned within their families by such 'torch bearers' of womanhood like Lajo Bhua who in themselves are the biggest stereotyping agencies. Madni and Roop travel to Bhua's place to learn how to become 'good-good, sweet-sweet girls'. Here they are given a distinctive code of conduct to follow. Rule No.1: "You want to make a good marriage, you must be more graceful, more pleasing to your elders. I want to hear only 'Achchaji', 'Haanji', and 'yes ji' from you. Never 'Nahinji' or No-ji" (76). Rule No.2 "Speak softly, always softly" (76). Rule No.3 "Never feel angry, never, never. No matter what happens, or what your husband says, feel angry. You might be hurt, but never feel angry" (77).

Here, we see how 'woman' is made, produced or manufactured in such stereotyping agencies. I again, feel like quoting Simone de Beauvoir's too irresistible lines "One is not born rather becomes a woman". And in our story, Roop

is the perfect specimen of this sort of 'becoming'. We witness the transformation of our little Princess Roop, from a self-centred, precocious, ambitious, rather proud child into a 'sweet-sweet, good good girl'. She forgets the taste of eggs and chicken, no longer a quarrelsome girl; she learns when to be quiet. She expects things only she truly needs. She is no longer adventurous, having learnt the fear of unrelated men. She has, at last learnt how to please Bachan Singh as Madni did, as Kusum does in turn, covering her head, being silent and obedient all the time. We, the readers witness ourselves how this whole process of perpetuation of womanhood has been going on relentlessly from generation to generation since those times and how this has become a commonly inherited code of conduct now for women to follow all around. And the irony of the situation lies in the fact that women simply do not know what they have been doing by bringing up, modeling their daughters like this. They are not the makers of these codes but over obedient executors. Such constraints and social constructs and relationships within their own gender complicate the whole discourse of gender rights and equality.

Simone de Beauvoir asks this question in *The Second Sex*, 'What is a woman'? Woman, she realizes is always perceived as 'other'. She is defined and differentiated with references to man and not he with references to her. In this book and her essay 'Woman: Myth and Reality', De Beauvoir anticipates Betty Friedan in seeking to demythologize the male concept of women, "A myth invented by men to confine women to their oppressed state. For women it is not a question of asserting themselves as women but of becoming full scale human beings" (20).Men only created this myth called women and they were women themselves who lived, highlighted and immortalized this myth.

After her elder sister Madni's marriage, Roop almost desperately waits for her own marriage, feeling claustrophobic in her father's house and suffocating under his endless restrictions. But Roop's marriage is not going to be an easy affair for Bachan Singh. Despite the beauty part on her favor, a dowry less girl is not at all a desired match. Here, Sardar Kaushal Singh enters on the scene with the match of his brother-in law for Roop, a man in his forties, already having a wife though barren. Sixteen years old beautiful Roop gets ready to marry a man almost thrice of her age and already married because she thinks that it will enable her to leave the poverty and restrictions of her father's house. She sees the future prospects of being a rich landlord's wife, with all amenities at her disposal and sees 'Sardarji' (as he is mentioned in the whole novel) as her 'liberator'. Though initially Bachan Singh could not reconcile himself with this decision of Roop but 'a manglik girl, with one deaf ear, also ambitious, slightly vain, lazily intelligent and above all dowry less and Bachan Singh excuses himself saying "the girl's kismat will take care of her" (100).

Carrying a sort of self assurance and her Papaji's words "Above all give no trouble", in her heart, Roop reaches to Rawalpindi after marriage with the hope that Satya(first wife) will be an old friend like a sister or even a substitute for the mother she lost as a young girl. But Roop only finds more trouble in the form of 'Satya'. Satya, married to Sardarji, is in her forties in the year 1937. She hails from a reputed family, excels in all duties at home and takes care of all Sardarji's business. But her doting position is threatened because of her barrenness, of her inability to produce a son for Sardarji's house. Sardarji, always a man with a strong sense of 'Dharma'

feels persuaded to marry for a second time because of his duty towards the preservation and promulgation of his family.

He uses Satya's barrenness as well as her impatience with her sharp tongue as excuses for marrying a second wife. Satya who would have welcomed Roop as her daughter will not welcome her as a competing wife and on the contrary of Roop's all hopes begins a subtle campaign to destroy Roop. She could never bear the thought of Sardarji's continuing favour and love for Roop. She could not reconcile herself to the thought of Roop's body thickening to ripeness—two children proof of her fertility and Satya's failure. Satya puts the umbilical cord of Roop's son on fire-full of hatred-not letting earth produce more sons to Roop. Even after taking Roop's children, Satya is not generous to Roop. Her haughty face knows no peace. In her grey eyes there is only fear, fear turning to hate, hate that radiates to Roop. But Lajo Bhua's rule no. three is so stuck with Roop that how can she get angry with Satya? She remains hungry but fear from Satya eats on Roop and she finds herself in danger. She writes to her father and ultimately returns to Pari Darvaza. But on return she finds that her father's home no longer belongs to her and for her Papaji, it's a matter of disgrace and ingratitude that she has returned from her husband's place, without his permission, whatever is the reason. Roop is being told that death is preferable to dishonour for good-good Sikh girls and Roop realizes the limits of her sky where she could only flutter her wings but cannot fly as her sky is in the Patriarchal territory. At one place, Joseph Conrad appropriately remarks that being a woman is a terribly difficult task since they have to principally deal with men.

On the part of Sardarji also, Roop's step is betrayal, bestowed on him as a return of his generosity. He thinks that she should have communicated her fears to him but without informing, leaving his children behind and going all alone to her father's house could not be justified in any way, in Sardarji's point of view. And men as always only have their versions of 'Rights', "If Roop is going to get his protection, his name and live like a little rani in his home, she is going to have to give something. Whatever possible, sons, for one thing, not just one son, and that too a sickly little chap. Yes, sons and loyalty. These are his rights. He is within his rights, by Jove, within his rights" (272). Here Jane Fonda comes in mind, "A man has every season while a woman only has the right to spring" (25). But here, when Roop with her small daughter and son takes refuge with her father and her brother, the traditional protectors of women, Sardarji is forced to agree that Roop, the mother of his son, will be the wife who will live with him wherever he is posted as an engineer. Roop becomes the 'official' wife while Satya, the woman who has no males to protect her against her husband, is left without her husband or Roop's children she had laid claim to earlier.

But Shauna Singh Baldwin's constant references to Draupadi and Sita transform the personal struggle between Satya and Roop(of course, Truth and Beauty) into a struggle between two different strategies used by two different woman to secure their positions in a world hostile, or at least indifferent to women. Satya, who refuses to lower her voice or to stop speaking the truth about her personal life, about the effects of colonialization on her husband and her country and about the events taking place in India, is Draupadi. Roop on the other hand, chooses to learn from her brother's wife, Kusum, the art of seemingly acquiescing to

everything she is supposed to do as a traditional, dutiful wife, Sita of the popular imagination.

But at the end of the novel, Baldwin complicates the simple equation. Satya refuses to live her life as the solitary first wife and decides to choose her own death, her self-selected disappearance from the life of her husband. When she deliberately kisses and breathes in her own death from her cousion who is dying of tuberculosis, the author does not let the reader forget that Sita in the end also selected her own path, her exit from Rama's life, one needs to keep in mind that Satya's suicide is text of a one life/ one death belief system. She knows that she will be reborn to continue her struggle and her story. Satya refuses to live a life where her positions as the first wife and the desires and needs of her woman's body have been usurped by her husband's second wife.

Margaret Sanger says: "No woman can call herself free who does not control her own body" (45). And seeing Satya, we get the feeling of watching a warrior choosing her own death, rather than staying alive as a conquered pitied, subservient woman. Satya's suicide raises many complex issues and questions that are not easy to explain. It is a difficult act to accept. But it is certainly not an unfamiliar act in the women history. In *The Second Neurotic's Notebook*, Mignon McLaughlin puts: "Many beautiful women might have been made happy by their own beauty, but no intelligent woman has ever been made happy by her own intelligence" (37).

Satya dies, being an intelligent woman. But we wonder, seeing this equation of Sita and Draupadi, where would Baldwin place Kusum? Kusum dies, facing a ritual slaughter at the hands of her father-in-law, who kills her in order to save the

'izzat', the honour of the family and the community as the violence between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs escalates. Is this a continuation of the stories repeated throughout the India about women who voluntarily and involuntarily jump into pyres and into wells to escape rape and mutilation in order to save their men's sense of honour? It is a sense of honour constructed as dependent on women's bodies, on women's behavior and on women's fate. And this has increased the agony of the whole plot. Elaine Booster's words define woman's plight aptly that she is just a person, trapped inside a woman's body. The protection of women's bodies or the killing or the subjugation, lies within men's hands. Women do not possess their own bodies. Their bodies are like instruments rather than ornaments. And men are the players of these 'instruments', but not always without the complicity on the part of women. But as it is evident from the novel that this complicity on the part of women is born out of the need to survive in a patriarchal society. But this novel does not lack strong women also. When Roop briefly faces the possibility of a life without a protecting male, she calls upon the dead Satya and conjures up Satya's strength to help her. This blending of Draupadi and Sita in Satya's death is reversed at the end of the novel when Roop feels that she and Satya have become 'one woman'.

The core of the narrative is death and divison, during partition. The demand for the birth of a son visited upon Satya and Roop subjects both women to emotional violence and one of them to suicide. Baldwin, very well makes the two women and their story, her main focus, rather than the history of events leading to partition and independence. This narrative about fathers estranged from daughters, mothers from sons, husbands from wives, becomes a metaphor for the historical turmoil and flux. Though it's these three characters Roop, Satya and Sardarji and their movement

towards reconciliation that rivets the story. The canvas of *What the Body Remembers* also takes the sweep of history from 1895 to 1948, but what makes the novel striking is the fact that *What the Body Remembers* is one of those very few books where the history of partition is solely told from the point of view of Sikh women. And so, this novel is not just about a disposed and displaced community within community (women) and their struggle.

The violent birth and division of India are here played out onto the bodies and lives of women. Writers like Bapsi Sidhwa and Amrita Pritam have portrayed the destruction of women's bodies and lives as tangible. Baldwin's challenge in writing this book lies in the fact that there were only a few books which narrated the story of partition from the perspective of Sikh women. *What the Body Remembers* is a very feminist text so to say if one defines feminism as the radical notion that a woman is a person and it depends on how accustomed you are to women having rights as people, including the right to own their own bodies. It comments on woman power relations, surrogate motherhood, and the two strains of feminism-strident and persuasive, that we have in operation today.

At the end, last but not the least, it is about the division of India, the sorrows of patriarchy, the trauma and alienation and marginalization women face due to it and women's role in the emerging nation state and their ongoing struggle. In the epilogue 'Satya' is born again. Once again a girl with her eyes wide open and once again kicking and screaming. Her last words to the reader are, "I know because my body remembers without the benefit of words, that men who do not welcome girl-babies will not treasure me as I grow to woman—though he calls me princess just because the Gurus told him to, I have come so far, I have borne so much pain and emptiness! But men have not yet changed" (471). Here, we see how women writers

deal independently and diversely with these issues associated with human migration in the particular context of female protagonists. They walk on a ‘taut rope, balancing both worlds, but focusing on all the loose ends of the rope as well as enjoying this journey also. Diversity in themes, a diaspora touch, serious concern for ‘social cause’, and a clear and unclouded perspective can be seen in them.