

INDIA IN NAIPAUL & MEENA ALEXANDER

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Abstract

Movement is only the determinant of Time. If there is no movement Time will stand still. This may be called dynamism or flux. On the other hand Time is alive in this flux. This flux or movement also is found in every organism. Movement is, in fact, significative of life. We find this movement in human life also. But if the movement in human life becomes spacious, it is called dispersion, a word come from the Greek word *diaspeirein*. 'Dia' means 'across' and 'speirein' means 'scatter', and thus the word '*diaspeirein*' literally means 'to scatter', 'to spread', or 'to disperse'. But term diaspora was originally used to refer to the "dispersion of Jews after the Babylonian exile in 586 BC and to the aggregate of Jews and Jewish communities scattered in exile outside Palestine." Now the term is used to denote to any group or community of people who are so dispersed. Though the root of diaspora or dispersion is embedded in the Bible, it has now become more frequent because of globalisation. But before globalisation diaspora became familiar. When man began to colonise the Other, diaspora was a common characteristic. We must have to brood over the fact that if a community leaves a place and resettles at another place what changes it faces. Does that community really leave behind everything that it once thought part and parcel of its life? Do individuals of that community adopt and adapt to everything belonging to that new territory? Don't they feel nostalgia or sense of loss? And many other questions become relevant, but are not easy to answer unless we study their records alias writings, because their life and pulse are written in literature. Piece of writing that records the diasporic experience is called diasporic writing or diaspora literature. If we think for a moment, we shall notice that most of the writers of diaspora literature felt the burden of diaspora in their own lives. Thus diaspora literature record their lived experience which is, on the other hand is multi-layered. Diaspora involves journey which, on the other hand involves de-territorialization and re-territorialization, dislocation *from* homeland to re-location *to* new territory. Individual living in foreign land feels the loss of homeland, or makes an imaginary picture of his homeland, and ultimately becomes nostalgic. He has to adapt to new culture, creed, and creed of the new land, but he does not leave his old values. He there faces the language problem. Then a hybrid culture develops. But he always suffers from the sense of alienation in his adopted country, he is minority in the foreign land. Everything of these is vibrantly recorded in diaspora literature. P. K. Nayar gives a list of the features of "diasporic culture/literature":

- The shift, contrast, and relation between centre (from where there ancestors/parents originated) and the periphery (into which they dispersed)
- The memory --- the individual or communal --- of home, including details of childhood landscapes, historical events, people
- The sense of alienation in a new society/culture/land
- A need to retain features from the 'homeland' --- this includes a determined effort to retain rituals, language, forms of behaviour
- A reclamation of history of the homeland and childhood spaces
- A conscious attempt to assert ethnic identity in terms of the homeland, While simultaneously seeking acceptance/assimilation in the new cultures

(Nayar, 190).

V. S. Naipaul and Meena Alexander are two expatriate writers who picturizes their ancestral land India in their writings, but their viewpoint vary to a greater degree. While Naipaul is very much harsh in his criticism of India, Alexander comes back to her ancestral land on the wings of memory in their novels *An Area of Darkness* and *Fault Lines*. My focus is to bring out the difference between these two writers picturing of India in these two novels. Sir Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul, familiar as V. S. Naipaul, was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature for 2001. Born in Trinidad on 17 August 1932 Naipaul is now a British citizen Whose grandparents left India in the 1880s as indentured labour. His father became an English language journalist in the Indian immigrant community in Trinidad. Though Naipauls belonged to the Hindu Brahmins, they ignored many of the practices and restrictions common to Brahmins in India. His non-fictions include *An Area of Darkness*, *India: A Wounded Civilization*, *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (three travelogues written on India), *The Middle Passage* (travelogue on Trinidad), *The Loss of El Dorado*, *The Return of Eva Pan*, *A Turn in the South*, etc., and his fictions include *The Mystic Masseur*, *Miguel Street*, *A House for Mr Biswas*, *The Mimic Men*, *A Bend in the River*, etc.

Mary Elizabeth Alexander, commonly known as Meena Alexander, was born in Allahbad, India on February, 1951. She officially changed her name from Mary Elizabeth to Meena in her fifteenth year. In fact, Meena was the name she had been called since her birth. In her memoir *Fault Lines* she remarks, "I felt I had changed my name to what I already was, some truer self, stripped free of the colonial burden." Her name itself suggests her multilingual nature: 'Meena' means 'fish' in Sanskrit, 'jewelling' in Urdu, and 'port' in Arabic. Surprisingly the writer too is result of multiple cultures. When Sudan achieved independence in 1956, her father applied for job to the Sudanese government, the family moved to Khartoum. Most interestingly Meena, between the age of five to eighteen, moved between Sudan and India, between Khartoum and Kerala, between her parents and grandparents. She is a poet, novelist, and critic. *Nampally Road* and *Manhattan Music* are her two most famous novels. *Fault Lines* is her autobiography or memoir.

Keywords : Diaspora, Nostalgia, Deterritorialization, Reterritorialization.

Full Paper

The word *diaspora* has been derived from the Greek composite verb *dia-* and *speirein*. 'Dia' means 'across' and 'speirein' means 'scatter', and thus the word '*diaspeirein*' literally means 'to scatter', 'to spread', or 'to disperse'. But term diaspora was originally used to refer to the "dispersion of Jews after the Babylonian exile in 586 BC and to the aggregate of Jews and Jewish communities scattered in exile outside Palestine." Now the term is used to denote to any group or community of people who are so dispersed. Diaspora may also be defined as the movement of a community of people away from his homeland to a new country where they begin to live. Diaspora may be willing or forceful movement from the land of origin to a new country, and having arrived in a new geographical location the dispersed people face completely new culture, manners, language, etc. And moreover, diaspora does not include the exclusion of people's former (his own or original) heritage, rather the dispersed people retain their own culture, and try to negotiate two cultures: their own and the new one. Thus the diasporic culture is inevitably mixed culture, an amalgamation of two cultures.

Diasporic move includes de-territorialization and re-territorialization. De-territorialization is the loss of territory which is both geographical and cultural. Re-territorialization is the *adoption* of a new territory which is too both geographical and cultural. Again de-territorialization and re-territorialization is connected by journey or travel. Journey, on the other hand, involves a change of place from 'home' to 'foreign country'. Thus also occurs dislocation and relocation. Dislocation *from* is followed by relocation *to*. Diaspora then is the dislocation of community/culture from a settled land and relocation of community/culture to a new region. When communities settle down in a place they develop their own culture, and when the same communities migrate to a new region and relocate there they take their long preserved culture with them. Thus diasporic communities find themselves between *past* and *presenpast* customs, belief-systems and *present* (which is alien to them) customs, belief-system. Dispersed

people now evolve a mixed culture combining both of their 'own' and 'foreign' culture, known as hybrid culture. Diaspora culture is then the effect of migration, immigration, and exile.

Since times immemorial diaspora has remained as a dynamic phenomena in the heart of human civilization. Dislocation which is deeply associated with diaspora, may occur due to many forces such as religious, economical, natural disaster, or even political. Even when borders of nations did not take birth in cartogram, or religion was not given written form in scriptures, people had to migrate to new places mainly in search of food, or being forced by natural calamities such as flood, draught, earthquake, and would settle down in that new region often after triumphing over the natives, or often compromising with them.

“The term *diaspora* comes to us from the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, particularly Jews living in the Egyptian diaspora. In the broadest possible terms, the entire Septuagint could be described as diaspora literature, because it is the work of Jews living outside their homeland --- and their translation reflects that orientation. But specific books within it, such as the books of Tobit and Judith, which feature Jewish protagonists living outside land or under foreign domination and which reflect on how the Jews might conduct themselves in this situation, could be described as especially diasporic because of contents and concerns.” Hence, there is no denying the fact that the tradition of exile is deeply rooted in Jewish literature, but exile as a metaphor did not start with Jewish diaspora; the story of exile is first seen in the banishment of Adam and Eve. Ian Buruma argues in an article entitled, ‘Real Wounds: The Romance of Exile’:

Exile as a metaphor did not begin with the Jewish diaspora. The first story of exile in our tradition is the story of Adam and Eve. No matter how we interpret their expulsion from the Garden of Eden --- original sin or not --- we may be certain of one thing: there is no way back to paradise. After that fatal bite of the apple, the return to pure innocence was cut off forever. The exile of Adam and Eve is the mark of maturity, the consequence of growing up. An adult can only recall the state of childlike innocence in his imagination; and from this kind of exile a great deal of literature has emerged. (Buruma 2001:3)

In his symbolic statement Buruma has suggested a far deeper insight that is punctuated spiritual diaspora beside physical dislocation. In spite of such scriptural allusions to mythical diasporas it is to be noted that world witnessed diaspora probably long before the Jewish literature, and most interestingly that happened in India with the arrival of Aryans after 1400 – 1500 BC. Aryan was a nomadic tribe that settled down at the Gangetic Valley after a long clash with the indigenous people here. One more interesting fact is that the non-Aryans who were the architect of Indus Valley Civilization had similarity to the Sumerian Civilization in many facets. This similarity between two civilizations led some scholars to believe that the Indus Valley Civilization was actually the creation of the Sumerians, and if that is so, then definitely the architects of the Indus Valley Civilization too came from foreign land, in other words they were diasporic community. Again in the history of ancient India we notice accounts of the Buddhist *bhikkus* who travelled into remote corners of Central and East Asia. The trade of ancient India with East Africa too formed a permanent settlement there. {In a footnote, McNeill (1963: 210) observes that ‘there is some reason to think that a colony of Indian merchants lived permanently in Memphis, Egypt from about 500 BC. In the 19th century, when ‘European explorers like Burton first ventured into the interior [in Africa] they were guided on their way by Indian merchants’ (Tinker 1977: 2-3).(INDIAN DIASPORA, P. 19).} These early diasporic communities to East Africa mainly were small trading communities like the Ismailis, Bhoras and Banyas of the Gujarat region.

The banyan tree has thrust down roots in soil which is stony, sandy, marshy --- and has somehow drawn sustenance from diverse uncompromising conditions. Yet the banyan tree itself has changed; its similarity to the original growth is still there, but it has changed in response to its different environment.

--- Rabindranath Tagore (cited in Tinker1977:19)

--- (Indian Diaspora, p.15)

Migration and dispersion are widely familiar to the worlds of plants and animal kingdom. Human beings are no exception. Nomadism is thought to be the stage preceding their settlement as communities. Even after their evolution as settled communities, human beings have been subject to migration from their land of origin. N. Jayaraman identifies two unique factors in human migration: “migration does not mean the mere physical movement of people. Migrants carry with them a sociocultural baggage which among other things consists of (a) a predefined social identity, (b) a set of religious beliefs and practices, (c) a framework of norms and values governing family and kinship organisation, and food habits and, (d) language” (Indian Diaspora, p.16). He also says, “the migrants are not inevitably irrevocably cut off completely from the land of their breed.” (p.16).

However, it is unanimously admitted that the term *Diaspora* was used to refer to the dispersion of the Jews after the Babylonian exile in 586 BC. Greek *Diaspora* or Hebrew *Galut* (Exile), though denote the physical dispersal of Jews across the world, yet it connotes religious, philosophical, political, and eschatological ideas, because Jews feel a deep relationship between the land of Israel and themselves. After the death of Hebrew king Solomon, the ten tribes, between 926 and 922 BC, initiated revolt against his son Rehoboam. At this juncture there created two kingdoms of Hebrews: Israel in the North, and Judah in the South. After 200 years, in 722 BC the Assyrians took the control of Israel by conquering the land. And conquered territories remained pacified, and many were forced to move to other parts of their empire. Assyrians were then sent to the conquered territory. This scattering of the ten tribes throughout their empire is considered to be the proto-Diaspora. Since then they virtually disappeared from history and are titled “The Ten Lost Tribes of Israel.” According to the Hebrew Bible the term “Exile” refers to the fate of the Israelites who were taken into exile from the kingdom of Israel during the 8th century BCE, and the Judahites the kingdom of Judah who were taken into exile during the 8th century BCE. Judahites became known as “Jews” while they were in exile. After Jewish diaspora, Greek diaspora may be worth mentioning. There is an old saying that you’ll find a Greek in the most remote part in the world, and its authenticity is evinced in the presence of Greeks in remote places such as Papua, New Guinea, and Madagascar. Greek diaspora too is one of the most significant and oldest diasporas in the world, and the dispersion of Greeks has been continuing from Homeric times to present time. Greek diaspora or Hellenic diaspora also is known as “Omogenia”, that refers to the communities of Greek people living outside the Greek homelands. Greek diasporic communities scattered in Russia and Ukraine, Asia Minor, Eastern Anatolia, Georgia, many other countries. In spite of their scattering Greeks usually maintain connection with their homeland. This connection may be with some family member living in homeland, or “cultural” and “spiritual” connection to the land of origin. And the most interesting fact is that Greek expatriates had a brilliant role in the emergence of the Renaissance. African diaspora may be termed as forced diaspora that gave rise to revolutions such as Zanj Rebellion in Basara (situated in present Iraq), Civil War in America. The term “African diaspora” was coined during 1990s. In fact, scattering of Africans occurred due to slave trade that began in the 8th century. Arabs imported African slaves from the central and eastern parts of the continent, and sold them into the markets in Middle East, Indian subcontinent, and the Far East. Arab slave trade is one of the most ancient slave trades that demand much hatred. The Arab trade of Zanj slaves in Southeast Africa is one of the earliest slave trades that predated the European transatlantic slave trade by 700 years. Male slaves were employed by soldiers, servants, or labourers, while female slaves were employed as concubines and servants. Zanj, from Persian *zanj*, means “Land of Blacks”. Zanj was a name used by Muslim geographers to denote a certain part of Southeast Africa and Bantu inhabitants. After this Arab slave trade, Transatlantic Slave Trade in Europe played an instrumental part in deporting a huge number of Africans out of Africa. Between 16th and 19th century Europeans brought Africans, mostly from West Africa to Europe, and later to North and South America. Existence of a larger community of African origin in Africa was due to the transatlantic slave trade. “The slave trade was the means by which the history of the America and Africa became linked and a principal way in which African societies were drawn into the world economy. The import into Africa of European firearms, Indian textiles, Indonesian cowrie shells, and American tobacco in return for African ivory, gold, and especially slaves

demonstrated Africa's integration into the mercantile structure of the world." Arab diaspora refers to the descendants of the Arab immigrants who migrated to non-Arab countries from their homeland. Though their presence is predominantly noticed in Latin America, they are found in South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Caribbean, and West Africa. Latin America, home of from 17-25 to 30 million people of Arab descendants, is the place where the largest Arab expatriates are found. Brazil itself has a significant amount of Brazilians of Lebanese descent (7 million according to the Brazilian and Lebanese governments), and Brazilians of Syrian descent (4 million according to the Brazilian governments). Apart from Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, Chile too have huge percentage of Arab descendants. There are about 4,500,000 Arab Argentines in Argentina, 1,600,000 Arab-origin Venezuelans, mostly from Lebanon, Syria and Palestine in Venezuela. Period from 15th century to 18th century, termed as The Age of Discovery or The Age of Exploration, saw the rise of both globalization and colonialism. During this period people from England emigrated mainly to New World. The colonisation of Americas led to the emigration of British, Americas later termed as United States became the greatest single destination of emigrant British. Again British flocked to places such as Southern Rhodesia, Hong Kong, Singapore, Jamaica, Barbados, etc. due to colonisation. People from Britain also migrated to South Africa and other Southern African countries including Zimbabwe, Namibia, Zambia. This diasporic British population in Africa is known as English-speaking white Africans. Though there were British people in Africa to continue transatlantic slave trade in earlier period, but the British settlement in Africa mainly began during colonisation. However, India which was the largest market for British Empire and most covetable colony, too was the place where British settlement took place. A survey, made by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, reveals that India has the largest population in the world, with 16 million Indians living outside from their motherland. However, Indian Diaspora will be discussed in the following chapter.

To study a banyan tree, you not only must know its main stem in its own soil, but also trace the growth of its greatness in the further soil, for then you can know the true nature of its vitality. The civilization of India, like the banyan tree, has shed its beneficent shade away from its own birthplace.... India can live and grow by spreading abroad --- not the political India, but the ideal India.

--- Rabindranath Tagore (Cited in Tinker 1977: iii)

Indian diaspora, as has been mentioned in the preceding chapter forms the largest diaspora population in the world. People have migrated from India to various corners in the world for various reasons at various periods. Larger amount of Indians are found in many countries like Fiji, Mauritius, Guyana, Malaysia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, etc. N. Jayaraman writes: "The people of Indian origin from the single largest ethnic community in Fiji (49 per cent), Guyana (53 per cent), Mauritius (74 per cent), Trinidad and Tobago (40 per cent), and Surinam (37 per cent). They form substantial minority communities in Asian countries like Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and in South Africa and East Africa. They have a significant presence in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States of America." (Indian Diaspora, p.16-17).

In the study of Indian diaspora it is customary to identify two main phases of emigration: (i) Overseas emigration in the 19th century, and (ii) 20th century migration to industrially developed countries. These two phases may also be termed as pre-colonial, postcolonial phases of Indian diaspora. But Indian diaspora has a longer history than these two phases focus. in the history of ancient India we notice accounts of the Buddhist *bhikkus* who travelled into remote corners of Central and East Asia. The trade of ancient India with East Africa too formed a permanent settlement there. {In a footnote, McNeill (1963: 210) observes that 'there is some reason to think that a colony of Indian merchants lived permanently in Memphis, Egypt from about 500 BC. In the 19th century, when 'European explorers like Burton first ventured into the interior [in Africa] they were guided on their way by Indian merchants' (Tinker 1977: 2-3).(INDIAN DIASPORA, P. 19).} These early diasporic communities to East Africa mainly were small trading communities like the Ismailis, Bhoras and Banyas of the Gujarat region. A major emigration from Indian subcontinent to Southeast Asia took place possibly due to the invasion of Kalinga by Emperor Asoka, and the expedition of Samudragupta towards the South. Maritime history of ancient India evinces a constant communication between kingdoms of Coromandel coast

and the islands of South-East Asia. This resulted in the establishment of so-called Indianised kingdoms or Greater India. The South Indian Cholas who were renowned for their naval powers, defeated Sumatra (now Indonesia) and Malay peninsula. The Cholas vanquished the great Indonesian empire of Sri Vijaya. Another diaspora in ancient time took place in India, which has not got so much light, is the movement of Indian “Shendu” community. It was recorded when Yunnan was annexed by the Han Dynasty in the 1st century by the Chinese authority. However, in modern times in pre-colonial period Indian subcontinent saw another diaspora which was of mercantile reason. In the mid-16th century a community of Indian merchants moved to Central Asia and Arabia, and this diasporic movement was active for over four centuries. During 1610s Astrakhan at the mouth of the Volga was a place in the Tsardom of Russia where colony of Indian merchants was established. In Safavid Persia Multani people from Multan, Shikarpur, and Mawar of both Hindu and Muslim background was active as bankers and merchants. European colonialism also played an instrumental role in Indian diaspora. In fact, mercantile capitalism at this time was a crucial moment for Indian diaspora. To satisfy the need of cheap, docile, and dependable labour Indians were taken to colonised countries. This was a large scale emigration of Indian labours as in the first quarter of the 19th century, the demand for labour was deepened by the ever expanding colonial economy, and the increasing opposition to slavery. Tinker gives a significant survey of emigration Indian labour overseas during the colonial period. Three distinct forms Indian emigration are identifiable in this period: (i) ‘indentured’ labour emigration, (ii) ‘*kangani*’ and ‘*maistry*’ labour emigration, and (iii) ‘passage’ or ‘free’ emigration. Indentured labour emigration was officially sponsored by the colonial government after the sign of the contract by the individual labourer to work on plantations. This contractual system in Fiji was known as *girmit* (the Hindi-ised version of ‘agreement’), and the labourer signing the contract was known as *girmita*. This sort of labour emigration continued from 1834 to 1920. The *kangani* was actually the recruitment of labourers for emigration to Ceylon and Malaya. The *maistry* was a variant of the *kangani* system that prevailed in the recruitment of labourer for emigration to Burma. The *kangani* or *maistry*, himself an Indian could recruit families of Tamil labourers from villages of earlier Madras Presidency. The labourers thus recruited or employed were legally free, they were not bound by any contract. Beginning in the third and fourth quarter of the 19th century, this system continued till 1938.

Apart from these two patterns of emigration, there was another system of emigration that was not sponsored by the government, rather the emigrants paid for their ‘passage’. Most labourers emigrated to South Africa and East Africa (Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda) to work on the construction of railroads. As they themselves paid for their emigration, they were ‘free’, and were not bound by any contract.

This must be noted that a significant era of emigration from India began after India achieved independence in 1947. This post-independence emigration can be categorized under three phases: (a) the emigration of Anglo-Indians to Australia and England, (b) the professionals and semi-professionals to the industrially developed countries like the US, UK, Canada, etc., and (c) the emigration of skilled and unskilled labourers to West Asia. Anglo-Indians, the descendants of intermarriage between Indians and the English, left the Diasporic literature is vast concept that incorporates in it all those literary works written by the authors outside their homeland, that is in other words, writers who describe diasporic experience in their poetry or fiction, too are invariably diasporic in their real lives. Though written by man living outside his homeland, the narrative evidently is associated with native culture and background. Thus diasporic literature encompasses the sense of loss and alienation, which emerged as a result of expatriation. Generally diasporic writing is associated with alienation, displacement, existential rootlessness, nostalgia, and quest of identity. Uma Parameswaran defines diasporic literature thus:

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

(Uma Parmeswaran. ALR, VOL. 1, NO 2, pp - 165).

Roger Bromley says that every narrative in diasporic writing is ‘both an individual story and explicitly, a cultural narrative’. It is interesting to note that almost every writer having personal sense of dislocation injects his own experience into his diasporic writing. But it will utterly foolish to severely limit those writings to merely autobiographical narrative. In fact, author acts as a metonym -- one who stands in for his whole community. He describes the immigrant experiences shared by many others in the new land, which they would have expressed if they had a voice. Any diasporic fiction deals with the dislocation and relocation of the protagonist or other characters. Diasporic character(s) come(s) to new land leaving behind his homeland, but he cannot dissociate himself from his earlier culture, ritual, manners, habits, and moreover, his own language. Now he faces another problem, that is to adopt new culture, new manners, new habits, even language in his new country. He feels racially and ethnically alien. He suffers from nostalgia and tries to go back to his root, but there is no way. Thus having been sandwiched between past and future he finds a fragmented identity. He looks back to the past (analepsis) and looks forward to the future (prolepsis). “Analepsis involves a negotiation with a retreating history, past, traditions, and customs. It produces nostalgia, memory, and reclamation as literary themes. Prolepsis involves a different treatment of time, where the writer looks forward at the future, seeking new vistas, new chances. This produces themes of the ethics of work, survival, and cultural assimilation. The proleptic narrative is agenda-driven, as the characters seek to survive hostility, adapt to new circumstances, and gaze upon the future” (P.K.Nayar, P. 188-89).

Diasporic writing across the world is concerned with space, landscape, and journeys, since diaspora involves dislocation or displacement, which is associated with the change of place through a journey. It is also interesting to note that dislocation is followed by relocation.

Dislocation *from* home is followed by relocation to new territory. Diasporic literature’s dealings with space thus move between space thus fluctuates between ‘home’ and ‘foreign country’, between the familiar and the strange, the old and the new. Titles of a significant portion of diasporic writing imply that spatial location: *In an Antique Land*, *Shadow Lines*, *The Calcutta Chromosome* (Amitav Ghosh), *Brick Lane* (Monica Ali), *An Area of Darkness* (V. S. Naipaul), *The Famished Road* (Ben Okri), *Tales from Ferozsha Bagh* (Rohinton Mistry), *Bombay Duck*, *Poona Comapany* (Farrukh Dhondy).

Any diasporic writing captures the nostalgia of the character and his very desire to return to his homeland with much delicacy. This literature explores the theme of original home or country as now lost. Ian Buruma says in his article ‘Real Wounds, Unreal Wounds: The Romance of Exile’:

Exile as a metaphor did not begin with Jewish Diaspora. The first story of exile in our tradition is the story of Adam and Eve. No matter how we interpret the story of their expulsion from the Garden of Eden --- original sin or not --- we may be certain of one thing: *There is no way back to paradise.* (*italics mine*)

Sanhya in Meena Alexander’s *Manhattan Music* is described thus: “She kept returning to her childhood home, a house with a red-tiled roof and a sandy courtyard where the mulberry bloomed.” Sandhya’s imaginative return to her childhood home constitutes diaspora literature’s one of the central focuses. Imaginative return to old home is born out of deep nostalgia, memory of bygone days. Grandma of the narrator in Amitav Ghosh’s *Shadow Lines* unburdens her heart to him thus:

It was a very odd house. It had evolved slowly, growing like a honeycomb, with every generation of Boses adding layers and extensions, until it was like a huge, lop-sided step-pyramid, inhabited by so many branches of the family that even the most knowledgeable amongst them had become a little confused about their relationship.... Every evening the five children would be led by their mothers into his study, where they would each have to recite their alphabets --- Bengali first then English --- with their hands held out, palm downwards, and he would rap them on the knuckles with the handle of his umbrella every time they made a mistake. If they cried they were rapped on their shins. (p.121)

The narrator's grandmother 'had no time to go back to Dhaka in the next few years. And then, in 1947, came Partition, and Dhaka became the capital of East Pakistan. There was no question of going back after that'(125).

Melancholy is one of the most prominent phenomena that diasporic literature encapsulates. Whatever the reason of migration the migrants feel the pain of being far off from their relations. Their mind is always disturbed by the anguish of being far off from their homeland. William Safran has noted:

... they continue to relate personally or vicariously, to the homeland in a way or another, and their ethnic-communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship."

Diasporic communities feel alienated in their new or host country. They emigrate to their new territory with "sociocultural baggage", but there find an altogether new atmosphere where they has to cope with religion, language, music, art, costume, cuisine, and other cultural practices. They become the victim of double consciousness --- one belongs to their past while simultaneously belongs to the present. Meena Alexander writes in her *The Shock of Arrival*:

Coming to America, I have felt on my own heart what W. E. B. Dubois invoked: 'two souls, two thoughts ... in one dark body.' But now, at the tail end of the century, perhaps there are many souls, many voices in one dark body.

Same tune is heard in Derek Walcott's 'A Far Cry from Africa':

Divided to the vein
How choose
Between this Africa and the English tongue I love?

Diasporic individual then tries to integrate or combine two cultures and languages without abandoning either. Grace Nichols writes in her poem 'We New World Blacks':

The timbre
in our voice
betrays us
however far
we've been
whatever tongue
we speak
the old ghost
asserts itself
in dusky echoes.

The clash of cultures originates something new as we find in the fictions of Salman Rushdie, Wilson Harris, and in the plays of Wole Soyinka. And that clash or blend of cultures gives birth to "hybridity" (a concept popularized by postcolonial critic Homi Bhaba). According to botany, from where the term originates, hybridity is the grafting of species belonging to variant nature. But "hybridity in postcolonial societies can be in the form of a retrieval/revival of a pre-colonial past --- such as folk or tribal cultural forms and conventions

--- or to adapt contemporary artistic and social productions to present-day conditions of globalization, multiculturalism, and transnationalism.... Most societies favour a more assimilatory move, where older forms are retained but recast to account for present day concerns and markets."(P. K. Nayar, P.200).

Thus a diasporic character finds himself in between two cultures, he tries to search his own identity, which in turn already becomes a split identity. He achieves his hyphenated identity such Black-American, Asian-American, Anglo-Indian, or Non-Resident Indian. Diasporic literature demonstrates this shared or hyphenated identity that has been produced by dislocation.

OBJECTIVES

My objectives is to probe into the writings An Area of Darkness and Fault Lines to elucidate the diasporic inclination of Naipoul and Meena Alexander.

(a) A Dark complexioned traveller from White Land in *An Area of Darkness*:

V. S. Naipaul, a Nobel Laureate (won Nobel Prize for Literature for 2001) was born in Trinidad, whose origin lies in India. His grandfather belonged to India, who left India for Trinidad in the colonial period as an indentured labour. On being awarded Nobel Prize for literature for 2001 V. S. Naipaul is reported to have said: "It (the Nobel) is a great tribute to both England, my home and to India, home of my ancestors" (*Italics mine. The Times of India*, October, 2001). It is important to note here that India is the land of his ancestors, not his own, and it would not be much wrong if it is said that he belongs to no land, though the Nobel Committee has taken him as 'a British novelist and writer.' But the fact is that Naipaul is a traveller and many of his writings are travelogues. Naipaul's three travelogues on India are: *An Area of Darkness* (1964), *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977) and *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1991), and the travelogue on Trinidad is *The Middle Passage* (1962). Naipaul not only attacks India in his travelogues on India, he also comes down heavily on Trinidad, country of his origin, place of his birth. There are critics who are equally dubious about the merit of the travelogues of Naipaul and the merit of the Nobel Committee.

An Area of Darkness is Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul's travelogue, written in 1964. It is the first of his Indian trilogy mentioned above. The book is a very pessimistic account of Naipaul's encounter with his ancestral land during early sixties of the twentieth century. We, the Indians, who are proud of being Indian or boast of our rich culture and tradition or take pride in our unity in diversity, will definitely feel giddy or nausea if read the book by this Nobel Laureate. He takes no time to annihilate anything good about India. After his first trip to India in 1961 he translated his experience into words in 1964. Moving from place to place, he came into contact with the people in India. He visited many temples to note down the performance of the rites, and observed various rites and rituals. Naipaul stayed in Sringar for long, went to Amarnath, a traditional pilgrimage and holy place having a five feet high ice-lingam which usually forms in summer. But all he did, was nothing but for making fun of them. The ice-lingam is actually the symbol of Shiva, but for Naipaul it is 'doubly the symbol of India':

and in the cave the God the massive ice phallus. Hindu speculation soared so high; its ritual remained so elemental. Between the conception of the world as illusion and the veneration of the phallus there was no link. They derived from different starts of responses. But Hinduism discarded nothing; and it was doubly the symbol of India.

Though he is from a Brahmin family, his thought is self-consuming:

I came from a family that abounded with pundits. But I had been born an unbeliever. I took no pleasure in religious ceremonies. They were too long and the food was served at the end. I did not understand the language --- it was our ancestors expected that our understanding would be instinctive and no one explained the prayers or the rituals.

The way Naipaul hammers his ancestral land and his ancestors is deeply pathetic, the writer deserves to be weighed by the words of C. D. Narasimhaiah:

It shouldn't surprise us when we know this is the man who, as an 18-year old son, going to England on a scholarship from his Government, which has first shortlisted him, would not look back at the parents who had come to the airport to see him off --- so obsessed he was with his success. Worse: he wouldn't respond to his dying father's last wish to see his son, for he had just started working at the BBC and had not met with the desired success yet.

Apart from religion and ritual he goes on to describe persons and personalities from religion and religious philosophies with his usual aplomb. He divides Gandhi into two halves --- South African Gandhi and Indian Mahatma Gandhi. In his illustration of Gandhi and Gandhism Naipaul refers to the “insider” and “outsider” outlook. He thinks that the life of Gandhi in South Africa was his formative period, because there he learnt what the “outsider” is.

Naipaul says,

He settled finally in India when he was 46, after spending 20 years in South Africa. There he had seen an Indian community removed from the setting of India; contrast made for clarity and discrimination for self-analysis. He emerged a colonial blend of East and West, Hindu and Christian ... Gandhi never loses the critical, comparing South African eye.

The writer chides Nehru for being Indian, and his deep respect for the country’s past. It seems that Naipaul unwittingly ridicules himself by making fun of Nehru. It must be admitted that Nehru was a great scholar who possessed panoramic knowledge of India as well as the world. Perhaps, it was out of inferiority complex that Naipaul says,

Nehru is more Indian; he has a romantic feeling for the country and its past; he takes it all to his heart, and the India he writes about cannot easily be recognized.

The writer even goes on to mention few examples of Indians to ridicule the Indian mentality and way of life. He investigates the life of Jivan, a thirteen year old boy who came to Mumbai leaving his village for work. When he earned 50 rupees a month, he slept on the pavement, and continued to sleep there even when he bought a taxi, and earned 20 rupees per day. Naipaul then cites Vasant who grew up in a slum in Bombay. He never ate during the day, and this habit didn’t leave him, even when he became rich. The writer also makes fun of two Brahmin brothers who began their earning by making envelopes, but became rich by manufacturing leather goods. Naipaul again lashes at the beggary in India, which he thinks, has downgraded India, and beggary has become an institution. Children are made blind to seek alms. The writer also taunts at the beggars in Benaras. Most surprisingly and shockingly

Naipaul belittles the beauty of Srinagar, paradise on earth. He depicts the place as hell! “He ridicules the Indian sense of people who use shamelessly the lower slopes for defecating. He condemns the bus station in Madras near the High Court, for being one of the most popular latrines. Even he talks of the people walking past the University on the Marina, who without embarrassment, raise their dhoti, piss on the pavement, and then let the dhoti fall. Naipaul sarcastically says that Indians are considered to be the cleanest people in the world – they defecate everywhere—beside the railway track; on the beaches; on the hills; on the river banks; on the streets, and even deny that it exists. He even mentions Gandhi who noticed the casual defecation in a veranda at a Congress gathering. Naipaul’s obsession with defecation and onesided approach to India has led Darshan Shingh Maini to state:

Of course, the thing which made the book ultimately famous was Naipaul’s discovery of defecation in India. A long, wry ode has justly brought him dividends in the West. We hold no brief for the bared bottom in a row seen along the railway lines in the morning or for the ‘companionable defecation’ of women in the fields or bush alongside the bridle paths, or for the street urchins easing themselves over running open sewers. Surely, we too are shamed into silence at such a brazen unconcern with the simple decencies of life. But, again one needs a measure of understanding. The compulsions of climate and cramped living in old, crowded cities are not basically questions of aesthetics, but of sheer creature existence. The stink is regrettable, but more regrettable is ‘the excremental vision’ which Middleton Murry and later Aldous Huxley, located in Swift. The energies of art proceed sometimes from mysterious sources! Naipaul’s pathological preoccupation with this problem surely suggests a defecation complex. That the thing should be so much on his brain leaves one wondering if he isn’t really constipated! Or he may be, the ‘repetition’ urge, which becomes a major concern in Freud’s later writing, is the reason for Naipaul’s compulsive return to dung, defecation and death.

country, the 'death city' of Calcutta, almost everything is humiliated by his sheer satire and unbridled criticism. Kashmir does not appeal him. The Dal Lake is horrifying to him. He pokes fun at us that we owe Victoria Memorial which was inherited from the British. His sick brain even thinks that Taj Mahal is ill-suited to India. He would ideally have shifted the Taj Mahal to some shining plaza in America. From his account or rather denunciation of India, his ancestral homeland it is prominent that he hates India, but does he love Trinidad, his homeland, place of his origin? The answer is definitely NO. In fact, it was a brown man with dark mind and white mentality, who came to India. Naipaul tries to elucidate the Indian concepts of *Dharma* and *Karma*, two among the most difficult theological concepts, and have not ever been translated perfectly, or it may be said that can never be translated properly. But Naipaul ridiculously as well as arrogantly leads his hand to illustrate *Dharma*. C. D. Narasimhaiah says:

As though the racial instinct never deserts an individual, Naipaul does grasp the full implication of the concept of *Dharma* in his *A Wounded Civilization* when he cites examples from unsuspected sources like Proust to illumine the concept, but before long mocks at it by a wilful distortion as when he seeks to convince the susceptible Western reader with stories like this:

A foreign businessman saw that his untouchable servant was intelligent and decided to give the youngman an education. He did so and before he left the country he placed the youngman in a better job. Some years later the businessman returned to India. He found that his untouchable was a latrine cleaner again. He had been boycotted by his clan... he was barred from the smoking group. There was no other group he could join; no woman he could marry. His solitariness was insupportable and he had returned to his duty, his dharma, he had learned to obey.

I don't think this propaganda-story, the like of which missionaries working in Afro-Asian countries fabricated to justify their misdeeds, needs comments to this audience. The hundreds of thousands of untouchables who are today the country's engineers, doctors, teachers, lawyers, judges, administrators, public men, in whatever small numbers for their population, should give the lie to this glaring piece of propaganda (216-17).

The passage Narasimhaiah cites is from another novel of Naipaul's Indian trilogy. After a decade Naipaul felt his quintessential itch to write another nasty novel on India – *India: A*

Wounded Civilization in 1977. Thus his attack on India continues, but all diasporic writers are not like him, or it must be said he is different --- different from all writers. He is the man whom, if Macaulay saw, definitely would be happy.

(b) *Fault Lines, Walking down Memory Lane:*

Fault Lines, written in 1993, is a memoir of Meena Alexander. The memoir is an excellent retrospective narrative that digs deep into childhood and re-examines adulthood more painfully. Alexander asks in her book, "How did I become what I am? How shall I start to write myself, configure my 'I' as other; image this life I lead, here, now, in America? What could I ever be but a mass of faults, a fault mass?" Her assessment or inquiry suggest the title *Fault Lines*. 'Fault' in Geology or mining refers to "Fragments of the adjoining rocks mashed and jumbled together, in some cases bound into a solid, mass called fault-stuff or fault-rock." *Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of The English Language* gives the definition of the word 'fault' thus: 'A displacement or break in the continuity of rock masses, caused by disturbances of the earth's crust and resulting in a wide variety of surface features'. Meena Alexander states, "That's it, I thought. That's all I am, a woman cracked by multiple migrat

ions. Uprooted so many times she can connect nothing with narrative provides through the generational sweep of the Alexander and Kuruvilla families, the relationship of Alexander's ancestors, particularly her maternal grandparents, to the struggle for India's independence from colonial rule. But the political independence doesn't erase the psychic and cultural wounds of colonialism which her generation has to face. The continuing burden of legacy is explored dramatically in her relationship with various languages with which she grew up. *Fault Lines* explores her ambiguous relationship with the formal literary script of Malayalam, her mother tongue, her refusal to learn it, but simultaneously deeply drawn to the oral poetic traditions of the language. Her relationship with English, the language of her education and creative expression, is also described in her narrative in same

ambiguous tone. Her training in English elocution by a Scottish teacher, Mrs. McDermott, in order to nullify the Indian accent from her tongue produces both physical and psychic violence in her. Apart from her *Fault Lines*, her poem 'Illiterate Heart' also brings out such epistemic violence:

Sweet vowels of flesh they mouthed to perfection:
 aa ee ii oo uu a (apple) b (bat) c (cat) d (dat).
 Dat? I could not get, so keen the rhymes made me,
 sense of overthrown. [...]

In *Fault Line* she states:

How should I spell out these fragments of a broken geography? And what of all the language compacted in my brain: Malayalam, my mother tongue, the language of first speech; Hindi which I learnt as a child; Arabic from years in the Sudan--- ... French; English? How could I map out all this in a book of days?

Having married to David, Alexander moved to America, but there she had to face racism, or in other words racism is an all-pervasive phenomena with which an outsider lives there. She says that David with his Scandinavian friends and blonde beard was often mistaken for one of them, and being with David at his workplace in Minneapolis made her realize her 'otherness.' She becomes alienated in American society, where we hear mouthful word American Dream, and her alienation gets fulfilment when on an occasion calls her a 'black bitch.' Her marriage with a white man intensifies the anxieties of colour which even infects the identity of her children, Adam and Svati. Svati states, "You are brown mama, papa is blond papa, Adam is nothing." One of the most noteworthy features of the memoir is the question of cultural legacy of colonialism and its constant impact in the aftermath of decolonization. Alexander's brown,

and I am peach Svati." And when a black man asked Adam, "What are you? American or Indian?" Adam's bold reply was, "No... I'm Jedi knight." Meena Alexander's memoir *Fault Lines* is the expressive document of her multicultural and multilingual identity. Mary Elizabeth Alexander was born in Allahabad, India, on February 17, 1951. She changed her name from Mary Elizabeth to Meena in her fifteenth year.

'Meena' in Sanskrit means 'fish', 'jewelling' in Urdu, and 'port' in Arabic. She changed her as a symbol to strip the colonial burden. She says in *Fault Lines*, "I felt I had changed my name to what I already was, some truer self, stripped free of the colonial burden." Though she had to leave India at an early age, but she kept moving between Sudan and India afterwards, and thus India made an indelible mark on her. Indian languages such as Malayalam, Hindi had a greater influence on her. Though she refused to learn Malayalam, yet she was drawn to the oral poetic tradition of the language. When she felt uprooted, cracked psychologically, memories of her past in India rescued her from nonentity. The question "Why did I leave India" often torments her. Even in America when she faces racism, she faces spirit of India.

Conclusion

From the discussion of one travelogue by V. S. Naipaul, and a memoir by Meena Alexander, it is evident that the two books are poles apart in content, attitude, and style, and the similarity lies in both of the writer's displacement, and their connection to India. But Naipaul and Alexander experiences India from different points of view. While India is an area of darkness to Naipaul, India to Meena Alexander is a land of myth, is the land of her childhood days, and moreover, the land of her attraction, fascination. India, to Naipaul is the place of defecation, beggars, medieval cities full of uncouth faces. Naipaul actually is fascinated with Western culture, he even would like to shift Taj Mahal to America. But America is a land of racism, where every moment colour of one's skin is brought to the fore. Naipaul humiliates everything in India comparing to England, but never does he takes pain to learn India to the core. He ridicules Shiva Lingam in Amarnath, but he never questions

the authenticity of Adam and Eve. On the hand, Alexander never quits India in spite of leaving the country. She is Indian at heart. And so, she always regrets why she left India. In fact, Naipaul works as a flatterer of the British or the paid labour of the British to enhance the Western culture.

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