

*Gender, Migrations, and Kaleidoscopic Identities: Narratives from
Selected Fictions of Lakshmi Persaud, Peggy Mohan, Ramabai
Espinet and Shani Mootoo*

A Thesis submitted to the University of Hyderabad in partial fulfilment of the
prerequisite for the award of the degree of

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IN
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BY
NEETU DEVI



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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the research work embodied in the Thesis entitled, *Gender, Migrations, and Kaleidoscopic Identities: Narratives from Selected Fictions of Lakshmi Persaud, Peggy Mohan, Ramabai Espinet and Shani Mootoo* under the supervision of Dr. Amit Kumar Mishra, is an original research work done by me and that the Thesis or a part of it has not been submitted for a degree in any other University or Institution.

Date: 30/06/2017

Neetu Devi

Place: Hyderabad

Signature of the candidate



Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**Gender, Migrations, and Kaleidoscopic Identities: Narratives from Selected Fictions of Lakshmi Persaud, Peggy Mohan, Ramabai Espinet and Shani Mootoo**” submitted by **Km. Neetu Devi**, bearing Reg. No: 12SIPD01 in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in **Indian Diaspora** is a bonafide work carried out by her under supervision and guidance.

This thesis is free from plagiarism and has not been submitted previously in part or full to this or any other university or institute for the award of any degree or diploma.

Parts of this thesis have been:

A. Published in the following publications:

1. Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research. Refereed: Paper titled: Narrative of Identity and Multiple

Migration of Indian Diasporic Women: Translating Shani Mootoo’s *Out on Main Street* (1993) and

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2. *Contemporary Women’s Writing in India*, Peer Reviewed manuscript by Lexington book. “Negotiating with Pluralities: Gender and Sexuality in selected novels of Shani Mootoo”, ISBN: 978-1-4985-0210-8. pp. 104-114.

B. Presented in the following conferences

1. Three-day International conference on “Diversity and Margin, Local, National and Transnational Space” University of Pune India. 2nd to 4th January 2014. Paper titled as “Indian Diaspora and the Narrative of Indenture from Isolation to creolization of culture.

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Further, the student has passed the following courses towards fulfilment of coursework requirement for Ph.D was exempted from doing coursework (recommended by Doctoral Committee) on the basis of the following courses passed during her M. Phil degree was awarded:

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Introduction

The term diaspora and its definition seek a potent area of enquiry and interrogation when it comes to its application in Indian diaspora. The definition of the term diaspora in its classical delineation has lost its definitional touchstone in contemporary diaspora discourse when it botched to accommodate the assortment that exists within an umbrella term, called 'diaspora'. When diaspora was defined in its inception, it was limited to certain homogenous segments of diaspora societies specific to European diaspora communities such as Jewish diaspora; nonetheless with the passage of time this term went through multiple alterations and vicissitudes.

The definitions of diaspora have often been questioned, challenged and altered from its classical diaspora position, according to which, in order to be pronounced and considered to be a diaspora community, a community must have defined characteristics set by classical diaspora theorists. Classical definitions necessitated that in order to be measured as a diaspora community an immigrant populace must have certain defined physiognomies. It could be held as an extremely rigid and conservative approach. But these definitional criteria were interrogated and altered by later intellectuals who endeavoured to frame more inclusive and accommodative definitions, nevertheless it was still problematic for theoreticians and scholars from Indian diaspora scholarship to accommodate the negotiations of Indian community within conventional set of definitions. The contemporary diaspora scholarship failed to comprise Indian diaspora community within the given, so called inclusive, definitions because Indian diaspora has miscellaneous communities, practices, religions, cultures and ethnic diversities to

accommodate within a singular definition of diaspora. Classical definitions of diaspora and an effort to theorize it and put it in a set of theoretical frame by instrumental scholars like William Safran¹, Tololyan, and Robin Cohen to put a foundation for scholars like Vijay Mishra², Gayatri, Gopinath, James Clifford and Lisa Low to have a discussion on what the term diaspora entails, seems not to come up to scratch to define diaspora in context of Indian diaspora community and when one goes into the further inquiry of multiplicity and assortment which exists in Indian diaspora within postmodernist or postcolonialist outline, the proposed definitions becomes further inadequate, vague and ambiguous. In the past few decades the scope of diaspora studies and its influence has amplified, diaspora has emerged as an exceedingly preferred stint amidst the intellectuals of migration, transnational, multi-cultural, postcolonial and postmodern studies. Although the term diaspora is still disputed amid scholars who have differences of opinion regarding the function of diaspora, prominent scholars such as Carole Boyce Davies (1994) argues that:

“Migration and fluidity of movement which it suggests or the displacement and up-rootedness which is often its result, is intrinsic to New World Experience, fundamental to the meaning of the ... diaspora, rigid compartmentalization based

¹ William Safran in his definition of diaspora sets out 6 characteristics which a community needs to have in order to be considered to be a diaspora community, but his definition of diaspora has been derived from experiences of Jewish community, which is a homogenous community from one race and one religion whereas this definition gets limited scope and fails to define diaspora in terms of Indian diasporic community which has various linguistic, religious and geographical differences for further reading.

² Vijay Mishra (2007) in his book *Literature of Indian Diaspora* discusses about the gaps that have been left by many postcolonial theorists in order to define diaspora he also considers and addresses the issue of the distinctness of Indian diaspora and the failure of scholar community to provide an accepted definition of diaspora due to the multiplicity that exist within various diasporic society but Mishra in his definition have also left an aporia where he plainly defines the experience of Indian diasporic community without considering the various distinctive feature that Indian diaspora in its various geographical, cultural and linguistic locations might go under and most important he meagerly considered the inclusion of the experience of ‘other’ genders and sexes.

on geography and national identity, convenient for some critics and politicians, are rendered meaningless when confronted by many of these writers, migration and exiles are fundamental to human experience. And each movement demands another definition and redefinition of one's identity" (p. 94).

Diana Brydon (2004) says:

"Whereas older notions of diaspora implied the persistence of a homeland through the scattering of its peoples, newer notions stress transnational circulations, multidirectional flows, and the capacity to occupy multiple locations" (p.701).

Further, Floya Anthias argues that "diaspora refocuses attention on transnational and dynamic processes, relating to ethnic commonalities, which can recognise difference and diversity" (Anthias, 1998, p. 557). Similarly Paul Gilroy argues that "diaspora is a valuable idea because it is... an alternative to metaphysics of "race" nation and bonded culture coded in to the body" (Gilroy in Anthias, 1998, p.328).

Stuart, Hall (1990) in his article "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" opines that:

"The diaspora experience as I intend it here, is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by *hybridity*. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (p. 235).

Further Rey Chow (1993), in her manuscript *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies*, conferences about the existing crunch in diaspora and transnational studies. She argues that at present we are living in a global nation-where several fresh nation-states have been incapable to grow a state which offer a dialogic position for to its intelligentsia. In contrast to many nation states who can speak in a homogenous language of intellectuals from other countries feels an expatriate position of in-between-ness. (1993).

Peter Manuel (1998) in his article “Music, Identity, and Images of India in the Indo-Caribbean Diaspora.” States, that:

“Diasporic identities are inherently unstable and complex entities, in which allegiances to contemporary and ancestral homelands are variously reconciled, weighted, or compartmentalized. These antipodal orientations are themselves asymmetrical and qualitatively distinct, involving, on the one hand, the immediate, engulfing presence of the new environment and, on the other, the generally indirect and mediated images of a lost motherland. In recent decades, the globalization of world culture -- with its intensified transnational flows of money, people, goods, and media content -- has added new dimensions to the construction of migrant identities and the role of former homeland images therein” (p.1).³

Furthermore David Chariandy (2006) argues that:

³https://www.jstor.org/stable/834410?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents. Access date 11/07/16.

“Diaspora studies will help foreground the cultural practices of both forcefully exiled and voluntarily migrant peoples; that diaspora studies will help challenge certain calcified assumptions about ethnic, racial, and, above all, national belonging; and that diaspora studies will help forge new links between emergent critical methodologies and contemporary social justice movements”(p.1).

Chariandy (2006) further argues that in present time:

“We are still struggling to develop adequate terms for the profound socio-cultural dislocations resulting from modern colonialism and nation-building, dislocations epitomized in the histories of indenture, transatlantic slavery, and the expulsion of indigenous peoples from ancestral lands. Of course, in addressing these dislocations, we aspire not to mythologize victimization but, rather, to better appreciate how historically disenfranchised peoples have developed inventive tactics for transforming even the most sinister experiences of dislocation into vibrant and revolutionary forms of political and cultural life”(p.1).⁴

Avtar Brah (1996) in her manuscript *Cartographies of Diaspora* describes the position of Indian diaspora. She gives a term called “diaspora space” and argues that, “diaspora space is inhabited not only by diasporic subjects but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous” (Brah, 1996, p.16), further she states, “it is this space at which boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and otherness of “us” of them are contested” (Brah, 1996, p. 209).

⁴<http://postcolonial.org/index.php/pct/article/viewArticle/440/839> access date 11/07/16.

When one uses the term Indian diaspora, it inherently brings into its fold various communities that form one grand Indian diaspora, which includes multiple religious, cultural and social communities of India. When one discusses about old Indian diaspora, it vividly includes the indentured labourers spread in various sugar and rubber plantations of the British Government. Indentured labourers were banqueted in countries like Mauritius, South Africa, Fiji, Trinidad & Tobago, Guyana, Surinam, Natal etc. This community worked hard on plantations to make their both ends meet facing the harsh and grim living conditions. However, after the abolition of the Indenture system or expiration of the Indenture bond, a small percentage of population made a return journey to their homelands while most indentured labourers from India decided to stay back to their respective colonies to construct a renewed life for them. Rising from these communities, especially since the 1970s, has been an ongoing secondary diaspora to New York, Toronto, Netherlands, and Australia and to several other regions. The reasons for such migrations from old diaspora to new multicultural nations were multifarious, for instance in certain countries there were hostile political and economic circumstances which forced the migrant population to migrate further.

During post-indentured era, there were eruptions of inimical anti-immigrant sentiments, for instance, the extremely hostile circumstances in some countries like Fiji⁵ and life-threatening political upheaval in South Africa. From these countries the migrant population was forced to leave as there was political lobbying against the migrants, to evict them from the lands into which they were brought as indentured labourers. One

⁵ Indian diaspora had to face extreme form of hostility in some host communities like Fiji and Africa, Coup of 1990 in Fiji and political exclusion of Indian diaspora by various acts by African government and massive mass displacements of Indians from Uganda (as shown in movie *Mississippi Masala*) shows how diaspora faces different kinds of exclusions and discrimination because of its migrant position.

such situation could easily be seen in movies like *Mississippi Masala*, where the mass migration of Indian population took place from Uganda, due to extreme hostility and political encouragement of anti-immigration sentiments. While aforementioned reasons are applicable on certain sections of multiple displaced Indian diaspora currently, there were also people from old Indian indentured labour diaspora who migrated to various multicultural countries like Canada, USA, U.K, and Australia in optimism for a better future and enormous opportunities for personal and professional growth, the illustrations of which could be perceived in fictions like *The Swinging Bridge* (2003) by Ramabai Espinet, *Butterfly in the Wind* (1990) by Lakshmi Persaud and *Out on Main Street* (1993) by Shani Mootoo.

Majority of labourers who travelled from India belonged to the lower caste communities of Bhojpuri-speaking region of what is now Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh. Although a few of them returned to India after expiration of the term of their indentured bond, majority of them remained in their respective countries of plantation. Descendants of the shifted and settled indentured labourers now constitute one of the largest ethnic groups in various countries where their forefathers were brought to work as indentured labourers. The progeny of indentured labourers of Indian diaspora now form a sizeable number as an ethnic community in countries like; Mauritius, Fiji, South Africa, Trinidad, Guyana, and Suriname, outnumbering their Afro-Caribbean compatriots, and accounting for about twenty per cent of the English-speaking West Indian population as a whole. While the first generations of immigrants inclined to persist in comparatively isolated villages, the second generation Indian Immigrants became more active and participatory in terms of claiming their role as citizen of that nation. The Second

generation took active part in the political, social and cultural life of the host country which was their motherland. The example of such active political and social involvement in majority cultural, economic and political life could be clearly comprehended in balloting of an Indian origin political face who was voted to be the Prime Minister of Guyana in 1992, and also an Indian origin Prime Minister of Trinidad in 1995.

For the first generations of immigrants, the indentured labourers, recently shifted and settled, living in foetid, pestilential garrisons in an unfamiliar abode, created emotional connections with India. It reminded them of their origin and from where they had landed to an uncanny terrestrial, their alienation from the host land and living an alienated life kept them going and played a vital role in the psychological fortitude and physical survival. The missing links and inaccessible distance from the homeland forced them to create a motherland in the locality where they had their dwellings. It strengthened their ties with the homeland and they felt closer to India. The option of going back to home, for instance, travelling to India for vacation wasn't feasible to old indentured Indian diaspora as they were an economically backward people who migrated due to extreme poverty and the sole purpose of their migration was survival. Also due to lack of technology, this population had extremely little contact with their motherland.

The bond and relationship with the motherland was basically emotional in nature and found an expression in various religious and cultural rituals that they performed. Later these bonds were rejuvenated through the commercial means, for example, by merchandise imported by a limited numbers of merchants from India, or the sporadic meetings organized by religious groups, both Hindu and Muslim, who visited these

locations to preach and advertise their religious proselytization. As an outcome of such restricted interaction with the motherland and limited emotional attachment to the cultural, religious and social links of the homeland gave birth to a local notion of “India”, This India is created in various locations where diaspora has been living, for example, in Mauritius, the creation of river Ganges and construction of various Hindu temples is one such instance. Also the teaching of Bhojpuri in the primary schools of Mauritius is one of the examples of how indentured Indian diaspora struggles to keep the link with the motherland alive.

Although there is a development of second generation of Indian diaspora who, associate themselves more with the migrated land, than with India, they intersperse their identity as a sandwich of Indian multiple identity. Hence this generation could be termed as creolized Indians, who have begun to assimilate with mainstream culture and society to a certain extent, in contrast to the first generation of Indian diaspora. This generation adapted to the mainstream culture and society in order to pronounce their affiliation with the host land but in this generation too one can observe a sense of belonging with India, their identity as Indians could clearly be perceived.

While there were attempts from second generation of diaspora to associate themselves with the land in which they were born, these lands were not always favourable for them to be inhabited, for instance, the coup of Fiji and the mass eviction of Indians from Uganda shows how the host, the new homeland, became unfriendly and hostile to this generation which forced this and the subsequent generation to re-migrate from their familiar new land to another unfamiliar new land. This theme of multiple

displacements is demonstrated in M.G. Vassanji's (1991) *No New Land* where the protagonist conferences about the substitution of new unfamiliarity with an old new familiarity. Also there were migrations from old indentured colonies to new lands in order to get a new self or a new life. It was a voluntary migration of second or third generations of indentured Indian diaspora to new lands of opportunities and hopes. This generation of multiple migrants often associate themselves with multiple affiliations and consider their identities to be the product of multiple origins, experiences and multiple migrations. This generation from old Indian diaspora community pronounced themselves as Indo-Caribbean-Canadian or Indo-Caribbean-American, Indo-Fijian-American, Indo-African -French- etc.

As discussed above the body of literature on Indian diaspora is undergoing several conflicts, amid strict critical enquiry, and it finds itself to have been marginalized and flouted, it observes that the existing organization of literature and theory on diaspora fails to integrate the discourse of Indian Diaspora. Thus, the question of the 'other' gender, the 'women', is remotely expected to have been integrated in loftier discourse of Indian diaspora studies. Indian diaspora remained unsuccessful to have been cohesive concerning the assimilation of various, multifarious dimensions of the 'other' gender in Indian diaspora. Although women were mentioned, howsoever rarely, by a handful of theoreticians' who depicted women based on their perceptions; ironically these perceptions and depictions were rather generalized and clichéd. Amid such circumstances the negotiation of women who come from various communities of Indian diaspora and are still struggling to create a space for themselves and to have a voice for their gender in extensive axiom, which has remained unspoken thus, unheard. Hence women in Indian

diaspora studies had to fight hard to make a space for their experience in the wider typology of diaspora that was quite monolithic in its inception. One can quote Keya Ganguly here, she reasons that “Immigrant women are subjected by the double articulation of discourse of cultural difference and patriarchy” (Ganguly, 1992, p. 48).

Definitions of diaspora seem inadequate to put gender specific experiences in them and when theoreticians of Indian diaspora tried to theorize diaspora in context of Indian diaspora they barely considered the different accommodation of gender experiences. This act of invisibility and ignorance was raised by later feminists of diaspora studies, who claimed that the theoreticians of diaspora studies did not consider it to be important enough to accommodate the ‘other’ gender⁶, their experiences, life and mediations which form such a major component of any community or society, but were historically silenced and excluded from such an imperative juncture, in the history of Indian women. Floya Anthias in her article “Evaluating Diaspora” conferences about how the term diaspora failed to be inclusive, when it came to its application to gender relations. She impresses upon the readers “what the term ‘diaspora’ purports to do, and what in fact it often fails to do” (Anthias, 1998, p. 556.). To quote, Anthias, (1998):

“My argument is primarily that the concept of diaspora, whilst focusing on transnational processes and commonalities, does so by deploying a notion of ethnicity which privileges the point of ‘origin’ in constructing identity and solidarity. In the process it also fails to examine trans-ethnic commonalities and relations and does not adequately pay attention to the differences of gender and class. This failure seriously hinders the use of the concept ‘diaspora’, as an

⁶ The term ‘other’ I used in special context in reference to women.

enabling device, for understanding differentiated and highly diverse forms of transnational movement and settlement. The issue of gender is particularly important, given the increasing recognition of the ways in which gender, ethnicity and class intersect in social relations” (p.557).

If such is the case with Indian diaspora in general, where various issues that exist within this community fail to be integrated by the general definition, imagine the position of women and their experiences and negotiations within the whole discourse of migration and multiple migration studies. Writers such as Mootoo, Espinet, Bahadur and Mohan through their works have endeavoured to raise the question of deliberate historical silencing of indentured women, their fictions often conference about the far-reaching fissure that exists in Indian diaspora studies which voluntarily excluded women due to its inherent gendered biases.

The present thesis analyses the literature centred on indentured labour women from indentured times to contemporary era. It analyses the literature which explicate the experiences of first, second and third generation of Indian diaspora women. It further attempts to understand contemporary Indian diaspora society and culture from first to further generations, the development and changes that have taken place within the community in terms of culture and politics; their journey from indenture bonded to free migrant settlers and their further negotiations after migrations to countries like America, Canada, U.K., Australia, New Zealand etc.

I am reviewing and analysing the literature that contextualise multiracial gendered identities as its major theme; it further attempts to understand how women who have

multiple roots and have taken several routes mediate with these experiences. Does their gender provide them a more oppressive position or it brings in some positive sights in their persona? The aim is to bring into light these important themes which are often overlooked by diaspora study scholars specially women scholars of the first generation Indian women writers, who are recently migrating from India to various countries. Their literature is also overshadowed by women writers from their various acquired homelands, who are writing from lands that were their later homelands, for instance indigenous women writers from countries like; Fiji, Guyana, Trinidad, Mauritius etc. The present thesis endeavours to understand the hidden voices of women from Indian diaspora community who have their roots embedded in indentured Indian diaspora; it attempts to unearth history and voices of women writers that had been outshined beneath the voices of male writers of Indian Indentured diaspora. The study tries to understand how the voices of women have been silenced by the male writers, and how male writers of Indian diaspora became the sole representative of the homogenous experiences of Indian diaspora community from indentured history. It demonstrates how, historical silencing of the voices of women from Indian indentured diaspora has established an authority of male writers of Indian Indentured diaspora to be the monolithic and the only voice of the community. The void that has been left by the unspoken voices and the lack of gendered interrogation has conceded the scope for a more inclusive transgendered engagement. The imperceptibility of Indian women's voice has thus, exposed a serious literary oversight in the area of recent indentured Indian women studies by creating a wide gap in the theme of migration, transnational studies and postmodern identities with special reference to Indian indentured diaspora.

The women from old indentured diaspora with indentured ancestry were totally invisible from the history of migration and diaspora until 1980s. It was only after the 1990s, with the emergence of the writers like Lakshmi Persaud and Shani Mootoo, and Ramabai Espinet, that woman writers from this community began to get some place into the history of migration and Diaspora studies. Prior to that woman writers from Indian Indentured history and their experiences were highly subjective and stereotypical; if visible, they were described as ideal Hindu women by writers like Naipaul and Sam Salvon.

The women characters created by the male writers were epitome of Hindu construction of women. They created characters out of the myth of Hindu ideological description of women; the beauty of eternal feminine quality, according to which the woman is all obeying to her family and society and whatever she does she does it for her society. The writings of the male writers like Naipaul and Salvon marginalized the women by following a particular strategy of narrative, which confined the women in certain typed characters and roles and limited the possibility of the women to get an original and reliable representation in male authored texts. Women in diaspora were frequently subjected to the fetishist replica of the male authors' image of the Indian women who is ideal, and conforms to each and every constructed role which is assigned to them for being a woman. The writers have illustrated the image of women conforming to the centuries old image of Indian women that their ancestors carried from their homeland. The women in the writings of the male authors were either silent or veiled and if at all they spoke; they spoke, in most of the cases, either to obey the family or in the interest of the society.

The present thesis addresses the question of suppressed female self, and feeling of alienation and exile. It exhibits that women writers through their creative assertion by creating various fictional characters claim a physical and psychological space which was occupied by either the male writers or by first generation of female authors. The writings of indentured women authors explore about experiences of multiple migrations, homes, memories. Being a diaspora is a different experience for women as they negotiate with multifaceted patriarchies of homes and hosts.

Authors such as Peggy Mohan, Lakshmi Persaud, Shani Mootoo and Ramabai Espinet have demonstrated a spirit of feminism and revisiting of feminine spaces in order to claim a space for their negotiation. Their writings exhibit the ways in which Indian diaspora is trying to maintain its cultural, religious and ethnic identity amid multiple hosts. The thesis makes an analysis of texts written by the aforesaid writers in the light of exclusive experience of women as the 'other' gender. The arbitration of women in migration space. The negotiation of women with multiple identities, various experiences of women as a product of multiple migrations and with each migration the shifting of identities.

Research Questions:

The inductive questions which the present thesis is going to ask are: how and why diaspora refuses to accept its identity as an Indian diaspora in certain circumstances? What is the cultural politics that works in the host society that suppresses its diaspora population? And at the same time how does the host society reference its Indian diaspora in order to serve its business purposes with the home country and the contradiction within

the cultural and identical issues in diaspora? The question of conflict between the first second generation diaspora, and continuation of similar kinds of conflicts in subsequent generations too, amid their respective constructions of images of India. How do the first generation of Indian diaspora, the once-displaced and the successive generations of Indian diaspora, the twice-displaced or multiple-displaced associate itself with present India? What and how is India for the multiple-displaced diaspora? Is it the same India as it was for their ancestors? Why are they trying to dig their roots again and again with the crossings of routes? And further, the major deductive questions which the thesis raises are:

1. How have women from indentured Indian diaspora been negotiating with multiple migrations?
2. How do multiple migrant women from indentured diaspora articulate their identities as women?
3. How do multiple migrants of Indian diaspora negotiate with the diverse rituals and ceremonies that form an essence of their ethnic identity?
4. What is the position of women amid the diasporic sphere?
5. How does gendered identity operate within the whole diasporic community?
6. How do women articulate with multiple identities?
7. Has multiple-migration provided relative autonomy to Indian diasporic women?

Objectives:

Objective of the proposed research is to look into the narratives of indentured women and their journey from indentured labourer to post-indenture scenario till contemporary epoch.

- To look into the historicity of Indian indentured women and their struggle to assert their identity at various historical junctures.
- To understand the role of Indian women as a carrier of cultural identity and their assumed shifting roles as women in diaspora from isolated indentured population to creolised Indo-Caribbean, Indo-African, to Indo-Caribbean--, or Indo-Caribbean-American Women etc.
- It aims to understand the negotiation and amalgamation of Indian women with other co-existing culture or cultures, its *mélange* with other prevailing race or races of host countries.
- It endeavours to understand the process of construction of identity as women in diaspora
- It aims to understand how women in diaspora associate themselves with present India especially the second or third generation of Indian women in diaspora.
- It also aims to look into present cultural or social life of second or third generation of Indian women in diaspora, it aims to understand the different ways through which second or third generations of old Indian diaspora women assert their identities, for example, by celebrating Indian festivals or by observing certain rituals while performing worship or through their language, clothing, provisions or cinema.
- What is the meaning of home and memories as a woman?

Methodology:

The study has an interdisciplinary approach it intertwines gender, migration and literary analysis of gendered discourse. The study employs basic principles of feminist research pedagogy. It constructs a knowledge on negotiations of women from indentured Indian diaspora by exhibiting their struggles from centuries against multifaceted patriarchies of colonization, Indian patriarchy, creole male subjugation and contemporary forms of sexist discriminations. The present thesis employs methods of qualitative research; various literature, testimonies and historical narratives, political movements, cultural symbols, social peculiarities have been taken into consideration in order to analyse and understand the research area. This thesis has also significantly opted for the methodology of historical comparability; different genres of historical change and developments in the sphere of gender have been considered, and have been analysed. The situations of women have been compared and analysed. The present research methods consist of interpreting, analysing, comparing, contrasting primary literature. Historical, archival and newspapers materials are examined and analysed in order to establish social-political environment in which various author inscribed. The arguments are supported by findings with a significant number of critical essays, books and articles, films interviews, personal narratives etc.

Scope and Relevance:

Voices of women, their negotiations, experiences and dialogues within mainstream patriarchy with special reference to Indian diaspora indentured studies have barely found mention in current academia. Through this research I attempt to trace

changes and alterations that have taken place in diaspora communities with special reference to multiple migrations of women. This negotiation of women from old Indian diaspora opens a new area of study that needs immediate scholarly attention and more research. Authors, writers and women from multiple migrant communities have been facing historical silencing from centuries by multiple patriarchies; their histories and experiences as women have been muzzled and undermined and thus, they call for an instantaneous urgency for researchers and intellectuals to make further intellectual contribution in this field of study.

The present study contributes to the body of literature available on the old diaspora, second generation and the third generation multiple migrant diaspora. It tries to demonstrate different dimensions of the life of women in old Indian diaspora, via analysing literature, cinema, cultural negotiations, folktales, personal testimonies, etc., politics of the host as well as home country and the condition of the diaspora in the in-between space of two or more than two countries, its assertion and rejection of multiplicity of its identities.

It endeavours to explicate the in-between position of multiple migrant women from Indian diaspora. It demonstrates how women from indentured communities have been confronting innumerable forms of confrontation by various patriarchies of home and host that has received meagre attention from intellectuals. Various issues, aims and objectives and research questions have been answered and explored in various chapters of this proposed thesis. Given below is introduction of each chapter which provides one with the central idea or summary of those chapters in a nutshell.

Outline:

The **First chapter** of the thesis discusses about the history of indentured labours and the different histories of migration that took place from the Indian subcontinent in the past. It traces the genealogy of migration from India right from antiquity till current pattern of migration, for instance the old age migration from different provinces of India for trade and business, the travel of gypsies⁷ from India to different parts of the world and the very recent pattern of migration from India to middle-eastern countries after oil boom, and also the brain drain migration from India to different parts of the world. The history of migration from India could be traced back to the history of India as migration has always been an integral part of its culture and society. But there was one specific pattern of migration as a result of British colonization, that took place from India during late 19th and early 20th century and it was this migration that rehabilitated the historical narratives of migration from India. It was the migration of Indian Indentured labourers to different plantation colonies to work as indentured labourers. The migration was taken up by both the sexes, however the prominent history of indentured migration provides paramount descriptions to male-centric histories only thus, the mediations of Indian indentured women, their accommodations and negotiations in new (indentured) world have received selected critical inquiry.

The **Second chapter** of the thesis deliberates about the history and migration of women in detail, it traces the migration of women from historical times to present epoch, their journey from various parts of India to different plantations, and also the recent

⁷ According to recent developments that have taken place in researches on *gypsies*, recent historian have claimed that gypsies migrated to different parts of the world from Indian subcontinent centuries ago.

passages taken up by women. The chapter illustrates the history of indentured women's arrival to various plantations; their life, journey, and settlement in plantations, their struggle for survival during various stages of migrations. There are diverse accounts that each generation of women have to narrate. The history of indentured women from first generation as indentured women to existing relocations in the multicultural global world has multitudes of discrete narratives. The chapter demonstrates and critically examines how the naturally accepted rules and laws were extremely gendered in nature and how various patriarchies collided together to restrict the agency of women migrants.

The **Third Chapter** of this thesis endeavours to make a review of literature available on above theme. It analyses various literature to get an overview of the body of work that has been produced on the related area of the proposed research topic. Review of the literature includes theoreticians such as: Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Arjun Appadurai, Avtar Brah, Meena Alexander, Homi K. Bhabha, Radhakrishnan, R., Mariam Pirbhai, Brinda Mehta etc. The aforementioned intellectuals have been reviewed to support the statement of the proposed research. The chapter also peeps into the literature of Indentured women and thematically analyses their writings. One major area of fissure that was located during the readings was that literature have portrayed indentured labour scantily, except a few scattered works produced here and there. Another major split that was noticed during the readings was the total ignorance and invisibility of the second generation of indentured women who settled in plantations and lived in their respective locations during post-indentured era. One certainly notices a few descriptions of the first and the contemporary generation but the reference of second generation of women is quite rare to find in existing literature.

The descriptions of second generations of women have basically been portrayed in literature as: *my grandmother, mother, aunt, or a wife of a drunkard*. Second generation of indentured Indian women have found a feigned description in the entire body of indentured works and an exceedingly limited space has been allocated to these women in literature.

The **Fourth chapter** of the thesis initiates with unfolding the accounts of the lives of women in indentured plantations colonies. The antagonistic and adverse ambiances that were provided to indentured women. Treatment of indentured women as commodity and chattel interrelated objectification of women as mere sexual entities. The chapter furthermore describes about the first generation of Indian indentured women and their anecdotes of migration, settlement and survival in colony. Writers such as Peggy Mohan's, *Jahajin*, Brij V. Lal's, *Chalo Jahaji*, and Gaiutra Bahadur's *Coolie Women*, converse about this generation of women vividly in their writings. The first generation of indentured plantation life provides one with a glimpse of ordinary negotiations of independent, single women migrants who were mostly widows, disowned or prostitutes and if not any these they were either accompanying wives or daughters. This chapter discusses about the various insights into the lives of first generation of Indian indentured women, the sane as well as the sinner version. It illustrates how women and their lives were altered due to migration. In some cases it was negative but in few cases, women acquired slight autonomy which was a distant dream for women in homeland. Various cases of physical assault, murder and sexual exploitation of these women by multiple patriarchies can't be denied. One can perceive adequate instances of such violence inflicted on women in numerous fiction and narratives. But amid such ultra-exploitative

environments women fronted with life confidently and created their own terms of negotiations to live. One such example is the protagonist of Peggy Mohan's *Jahajin*. In spite of various efforts by men of her community to persuade her to get married, Deeda was reluctant to inducements and chose a life of independence and freedom.

Successively, the **Fifth Chapter** of the thesis illustrates the life of Second generation of Indian women in plantation. Some of them were born in India and migrated as children while others were born on plantations. These women so far have received a meagre critical or scholarly attention. This chapter makes an analysis of literature by Lakshmi Persaud's (1990) *Butterfly in the Wind*, and Shani Mootoo's (1996) *Cereus Blooms at Night*. Excluding a few selected works of fiction as exceptions, the second generation women have found absolutely no voice. Chapter four analyses the accommodations of post-indentured women in plantations. The chapter illustrates that post indentured Indian diaspora women started were the most suppressed generation, but amidst ultra-suppression women found a way out to negotiate their terms it was by strengthening their feminine qualities. Aforementioned works of literature represent a baffled, tough and doleful life of women in post-indenture colonies but it also explicates that women achieved certain level of independence by creating exclusive feminine spaces. Although women had attained certain autonomy in the new land but on the whole, the entire society was still governed by the inherent gendered predispositions and patriarchy. Thus, the position of agency and authority in hands of women was exceptionally limited and quite problematic in nature.

Further the **Sixth Chapter** describes the life of contemporary third generation/fourth generations of women from indentured community who are living in

multicultural societies and have experienced migrations. These women look back to the memories and histories of their great grandmothers and in some ways connect themselves with them. This chapter illustrates the arbitration of multiple migrant women in multicultural world. Writers such as Ramabai Espinet (2003) by her fictional work *The Swinging Bridge*, and Shani Mootoo (1993), by her short story collection *Out on Main Street* narrate anecdotes in which the aforesaid writers exhibit the position of Indian women who despite centuries of migration and life into western world face a 'nowherian' situation. The present chapter displays multiple and confused identities of women who have gone through several stages of migrations. There are women from indentured communities who do not associate with Indian identity, rather with indentured land. But identities of such women are often confronted and interrogated due to the physiognomy their body. And by being women sometimes they come under severe practises of sexual abuse.

Furthermore **Seventh Chapter** makes an analysis of previous three chapters and illustrates about the position of women. This chapter demonstrates that the position of women has always been oppressed in some way or the other. The expected cultural roles from women mostly never changes, thus, gendered discrimination never seems to come to an end. The chapter made a comparison of Indian diasporic women with the women living in other diaspora such as African multiple migrant women.

The **Conclusion** and future directions follow which say that in spite of centuries of migration, struggle and change, the situation of women has remained more or less the same. At certain times women had been offered the illusion of autonomy but in reality it has never actually materialised. Of course there have been strong and independent

women who have made their way out even amid worst of exploitative circumstances, and not only the women of Indian diaspora but women universally must learn to live a life of freedom, respect and solace and not to yield to the patriarchal ideologues that depower them.

With the revolution in feminist studies and its extension to various disciplines since the 1970s various women authors, theoreticians, feminist historians, ethnographers, and anthropologists have been trying to create a canon exclusive of female experiences. Authors and theoreticians have commenced on a voyage to reinstate women to history and to convalesce women's absent expressions. The present thesis endeavours to contribute to this field of study by analysing literature which have been produced by indentured community, for indentured community, by giving its special attention to the experience of indentured women and their descendants. It attempts to contribute to the canon of literature of women, by elucidating about negotiations of women from indentured Indian diaspora. It makes an effort to understand the complexities of identities of Indian diasporic women, on various historical junctures and through different generations and to enquire how identities of women in migration keeps shifting, and in what way identity in migration is more malleable and fluid. It also reflects upon how the identities of women in diaspora have evolved from historical times to contemporary civilization.

Chapter: 1

The Indian Diaspora: Old and New

The History of South-Asian Literature is highly complex due to innumerable variety that exists within the South-Asian continent; it consists of various countries with distinct geographical, cultural, linguistic and religious diversities. Along with its variety and richness, there are also communities that face exclusion and marginalization because they don't hold a majoritarian locus, thus, their experiences don't fit within mainstream practices. When one endeavours to understand this multifaceted community and takes passage to the interiors⁸of the Dark Continent⁹ of South-Asian literature, literature of indenture has often been invisible from the canon and has been marginalized for not constituting an essential part of South-Asian history. This area of study as a discipline found its abode quite recently into the mainstream discourse of migration, transnational and displacement studies. However, within the discourse of migration, transnationalism and displacement, there is again hegemonic categorization of migrant and diasporic communities, and in that category, bifurcation of one migrant community over the other based on class or position forms a major site of contestation. And amid those contestations, power always has an upper hand, thus, research and studies conducted on migrant communities tend to centre on mainstream migrant communities.

⁸ The usage interiors I used here to demonstrate that on the surface the literature of South-Asia illustrates about the mainstream writings which have formed the canon of this continent but when one makes a meticulous observation and takes a deconstructive mode of reading against the grain technique one find can finally uncover the invisible and hidden literary tropes which reflects the power discourse of one over the other.

⁹ Dark Continent I have used for the literature of the oppressed which have been made invisible and kept in darkness.

A similar kind of pattern can be observed in the case of migrant communities from South-Asia too where skilled businessmen, highly skilled professional migrants from India get to have an upper hand over other migrant communities. Although other migrant communities form a sizeable number, the locus is always provided to the ones who form the grand narratives. Such circumstances provide little or no scope to study marginalized groups of migrants from India. One such underrepresented community from the Indian diaspora, the community from indentured Indian diaspora of bonded servitude. This area of Indian diaspora is filled with grim, murk, diseases, death and extreme poverty. Old Indian diaspora has a momentous history of oppression and coerced migration of Indian people to numerous British plantation colonies. When one skims through the history of migration and forced displacements it is always the narratives of Black slaves and the displacement of the Jewish community that has an upper hand, and while indentured labourers from India ought to have a voice here as well, one can observe that the scope to look into history of Indian indenture is extremely limited and is given insignificant and negligible attention.

Indenture brought a new ray of hope for the British government to still sojourn in power and be on the pinnacle of prosperity and affluence by occupying the entire world map with the act of the British to substitute workforce, where browns replaced black slaves during post-slavery regime. Although on the surface there were many promises made by British to provide indentured labourer with apt facilities and healthy working environment. But people who were dehumanizing blacks from several millennia barely had any concept of a healthy working environment thus, working conditions were almost similar for both black slaves and brown indentured labourers.

In the beginning of the Indentured labour system, workers were proposed a better working environment that included apt medical facilities, hygienic places to dwell, sufficient rations, lenient work timings and freedom of mobility; but all of that was just a reverie and the actual conditions encountered by indentured workers were more akin to slaves than anywhere near to how it was proposed in contract. Indentured labour system brought the life of contractual workers into further melancholy in a new alien land since these people were already anguished and migrated due to heavy taxation, poverty, drought and famine in their homeland. Indentured labourers witnessed a ruthless, unkind life in their homeland, their loved ones were dying in front of them due to poverty and desolation. They did not have food to eat, no proper nutritional sources to survive, and as a result mortality was too high, filling them with hopelessness and sorrow. Amidst such hostile circumstances, Arkatiyas (middlemen for indentured labour recruitment) provided them with a false dream of a life beyond this unbearable reality. Arkatiyas and arkitiniyas provided them with a hope to sojourn in a dream world that would end all of their miseries. This hope to live and flourish was flamed in minds of the peasants by the British, who ironically snatched every hope to live and prosper from the same peasants, the result of another British policy of colonization and dehumanization in plantation colonies.

When alluring towards migration, people were given a dream of a prosperous and heavenly land away from the pitiable and deplorable life in India. Although treaties of *Manusmriti* and Vedas, that foreboded crossing of oceans for Hindus, created in them a fear to cross *Kala Pani*. Crossing of *Kala Pani* was difficult to breach for a percentage of population; but The *Ramayana* worked as a consolation for these people giving them the

hope of returning to their homeland after suffering the punishment for their sins¹⁰ after spending time in a jungle, which was seen as a phase of repentance, and the hope that they would be more virtuous after coming back by earning and acquiring an innumerable amount of wealth. The journey of indenture has not been easy for any country whose people were sold in different plantations as indentured labourers, their life was hard and full of teething troubles at every step of survival as they were trying to advance. The life in plantations not only conferred¹¹ gloom and unforeseen pangs to migrants but it also played as a force that swayed and corroded their cultural, historical, religious and ethnic identity to the maximum extent; whatsoever is retained, is a new form of ethnic, cultural and religious identity. Extreme form of coercion in plantation made indentured labourers aware of a need for resistance, in order to keep their distinct identity intact, which was often brought into multiple subjectivity of conversion to different religions or further motivated towards cultural assimilation.

The historicity of every single one of these multiple subjectivities, identities, unfixed self, up-rootedness, and multiple hybridity can be mapped out from one of the greatest historical, social, humanitarian and political movements that happened in the history of civilization, which is the abolition of slavery. The slavery abolition Act of 1833¹², helped slaves achieve a life of freedom and individual choices, as opposed to the

¹⁰ The worst life that British governments was offering to Indian during colonization were thought to be result of sin that Indians might have committed in their previous life and this is a common believe among the followers of Hinduism is that whatever a person is going through in one's present life is the outcome of his/her Karma that he/she performed in his/her previous life. Thus most of the indentured labourers who were believers of Hinduism assumed that they were suffering in such a way due to their sins of their previous birth.

¹¹ It has been used sarcastically here, as the workers were made to dream of a life which was supposed to be a blessing.

¹² The act in 1833 brought freedom to slaves from thousand years of slavery and dehumanization, due to the result of centuries of struggle and resistance by collective efforts of blacks and various societies of the world along with

old, barbaric dehumanizing practices; it gave a new life of hope and aspirations to the slaves who were subjected to multiple marginalization, oppression and were cursed to live under wretchedness. Black slaves were subjected to English fantasies and atrocities from time immemorial, their stereotypical portrayal as *honest Slave, Silent Slave, and Self-Sacrificing* made them even more vulnerable to oppression and domination. Many Political, historical, sociological films, literature, history books, testimonies and travelogues are based on the life of Blacks, or even if not based on the life of blacks, have always homogenised their experiences of life and have constructed a stereotypical image of the black community.

These stereotyped images provided colonial the master with the idea that the entire black community is replete with such stereotypical populace and westerners were used to dehumanizing slaves and when Indian labourers substituted black labourers, Indian indentured were expected to act identical to the black abiding slaves in their conduct and submit humbly to the master. Working conditions provided to indentured labourers were not considerably better than that of slaves. Hygiene, sanitation, and living environment were just as pathetic with minimum degree of exemption. As it was said to be different from slavery, the health care facilities were also hopeless, and although on paper everything was provided to the labourers, in practice they were far away from its proper implementation. As a result death rates were exceedingly high amongst indentured labourers, and their desensitising conditions were apparent in the suicide rates in the plantation which without uttering a word exhibits and cries out that everything was not

numerous social reformers and massive uprising in different parts of the world, the unconditional support that Abraham Lincoln received from various countries and communities.

well in the colonial policy of indentured labour migration. Although migration and its repercussions for Indians was not a new phenomenon, Indentured labour migration brought with it the utterly dark veracities that were for the first time confronted by the Indian migrant community. Migration was not a new occurrence in India, people from India have always migrated and lived their life away from home in order to earn for their family, however, the phenomena of migration was common among the male population, and even though it was rare with women it didn't mean that women never migrated, as women too have migrated in historical times, and this can be observed in the history of migrations from India since millennia ago.

The record of migrations from India can be traced back from 250 B.C. Though the early wave of migrations from the Indian subcontinent is highly disputed among scholars of history and the intellectual community. But by now we find an agreement within the community among certain types of migrations from India. The earliest migration of the Indian community that could be found is the migration of the Romani people of the Indian subcontinent famously known as *gypsies*, and they could be considered our first instance of migration. Today, substantial and sufficient studies done on the Romani population suggest that their genealogy and genesis comes from the hinterland of India, researches were based on study of linguistic and genetic peculiarities and idiosyncrasies of this community. The research shows that the Romani people migrated northwest near 11th century. They gradually migrated towards west around 1000 AD. The researches done on this population, such as various historical and linguistic studies, suggest that they belonged to the *dome* community of central Asia, who in contemporary India are known as *banjara* (nomadic tribes), community researches

done on their genetics propose that they belonged to the Rajput communities of Rajasthan and Haryana¹³.

The next generation and flow of migration from India began around the beginning of the 2nd millennium towards South-East Asia. This wave of migration was generally for economic reasons and this was the era of migration of the trader classes who migrated abroad. But there are also signs of other kinds of interaction between the communities, for instance the religious symbols and the cultural exchanges into the south-east Asian countries are still present, and these are the signs of not only economic but cultural, political, and religious interactions too. Artistic and literary exchanges, architectural reciprocation, philosophic and intellectual gossips could also be observed in the study of history of international relations between these countries; for instance the presence of Hindu Temples in Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand, Myanmar and Laos etc., the famous Shiva Lingam in Da Nang Vietnam, one of the oldest Sanskrit inscriptions was also discovered in Vietnam. The Southeast Asian migration started during the early interfacing of Indian merchants with traders from other countries.

The trades in the beginning were only limited to certain sections of the community, but later formed and paved the way for the establishment of Indian kingdoms in Southeast Asia in which trade and commerce formed an inevitable part¹⁴. These Migrations were done on the lines of trade exchanges and also due to

¹³<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/dec/07/gypsies-arrived-europe-1500-genetic>. Accessed date: 17/02/2013

¹⁴<https://books.google.co.in/books?id=h-LE5FIUgdYC&pg=PA64&lpg=PA64&dq=presence+of+Hindu+temple+in+Cambodia+and+thailand&source=bl&ots=G>

invasion in some countries by some dynasties that were in power during that time. for instance; people from royal family of Cholas, were famous for their expertise in ship and sea, their naval power was the backbone of their economic and material prosperity; they invaded and ruled in the peninsula of Sumatra and Malaysia for a long period of time and thus, India had a massive flow of migration of its people to these countries; people from Indian origin can be easily found in Sumatra and Malaysia.

There is another interesting fact about a community called ‘Shendu’ in China, although precise information is not available on the origin of this community in China, this community traces its root from South-Asian continent of India. This community traces its ancestry from the time of the Han dynasty, which was invaded and during that time it is believed that there was a migration from central Asia to China. Even if one denies the existence of their narrative and say it is a castle in the air, one can’t deny the existence of merchants who travelled from India to China for commercial purposes. Indian merchants had close tie ups with other Asian countries which slowly extended and flourished, and with their extension, Indian merchants became incredibly popular and successful among middle-eastern countries. Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq were famous countries which had frequent commercial exchanges with India. Another very interesting historical migration of Indians could be seen in a place called Astrakhan that falls within the Tsardom province of Russia where an Indian merchant colony was acknowledged and

proven to have been there as early as in 1610s; Russian chroniclers have also accepted the existence of Hindu merchants in Moscow and St. Petersburg around the 18th century.¹⁵

There are also evidences and proofs that international trades were one of the most accepted forms of trade among the royal families and these trades used to take place between kingdoms and among the royal families, people from royal families used to travel for commercial purposes. These kinds of migration existed in historical times but they were small in scale and were limited to only the extremely elite sections of the Indian community. The above patterns of migrations that took place from India were only limited to certain sections of the Indian community and people who migrated mostly returned to their country of origin; migration was solely taken up for business in most of the cases and were only limited to trader classes, thus, very few people migrated.

Reasons for Migration as Indentured Servants:

For the first time, in the history of migration, the massive migration that took place from India was a result of colonization in India which brought India to her knees due to extremity of exploitation of natural and material resources available in the country and illegal export of goods and wealth from India broke the backbone of the country. The extreme corruption in the system, over taxation on already waddling into famine masses turned the country awfully scrawny and fragile. The common populace was tormented by economic and political conflicts in which people were executed blindly for not paying taxes, taxes were high, land was snatched away and even if there was land, the revenue to own a piece of land was too high. As India was already facing natural calamities like

¹⁵http://petersburgcity.com/news/city/2004/11/23/indian_diaspora/ accessed date 21/10/2013

drought which brought famine that caused innumerable deaths, which frequently compelled people to migrate on such enormous scale, this outsized scale of migration from India began towards the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century; due to various economic and political factors.

Migration from India in the 19th and 20th century, which is termed as modern era, took place from India to numerous British colonies; this migration followed two types of patterns of migration, the first pattern was the migration of indentured labourers, which could be termed as Indentured labour system or Kangani or mistry system. The other pattern of migration that the Indian community followed was the passage of traders, merchants, bureaucrats, diplomats, professional or skilled migrants who formed the category of clerks and accountants; they were mainly artisans who belonged to the baniya community of Uttar Pradesh whose primary profession was trade and business, there were likewise the Marwari community of Rajasthan and Chettiyars who belonged to Madras and furthermore traders from Gujarat and Punjab. Amidst these binary pattern of migration, the principal kind took place on a massive scale and it was this migration that changed the course of Indian history and outmoded the conventional arrangement of migration from India.

There was a system of peasantry and farming, it was a significant feature of the Indian social system but as a result of British invasion, lands were taken away from the native people who possessed some part of land and were under restrictive rules which imposed huge tax upon them, towards the end of 19th century there were recurring natural calamities rampant in India which affected cultivation and farming and as such there was scarcity of food and basic human necessities. The British government, instead of

providing exemption to farmers, increased the tax which made the life of farmers in India extremely thorny; this extreme poverty also played a vital role in the migration of Indians to plantation colonies as indentured labourers. Indians at the time of signing of contracts were given a reverie of a serene land which would end all of their anguish and provide them a life full of possessions and opulence. These accounts have aptly been described in the literature available on indentured history for instance Sharlow Mohmmad gives a scornful denunciation of the rehearsal of the British Raj, Mohmmad describes the bitterness towards this system, Mohmmad depicts the false promises that were made to lure the innocent labourers for migration. Sharlow traces the devastation of the solace of a pastoral Indian village. The arrival of tax collectors used to be the most hazardous sign for peasantry because the collectors were always accompanied by arkatiyas (or recruiters for overseas) in the form of rescuers by offering them the temptation of migration from which they could unburden the debt. In case of rejection of the offer of migration, people were also jailed and penalised. For the character of Mahadeo, then, the 'refusal to pay taxes for our property' results in not only his removal from his family's land but also a six-month jail term the new 'land-laws' of the colonial taxation system.¹⁶

The first war of independence in year 1857 was furthermore a major cause for migration because of amplified police surveillance, augment in military activity and trepidation of persecution for people to be suspected of anti-colonial commotion. People were immediately executed and jailed for failing to obey the orders given by the British government and due to the rising of 1857 even coming out in public, sitting together and talking in a group was prohibited. People who were found doing this were considered to

¹⁶ <http://sharlow.virtualave.net/THE%20PROMISE.htm>. Accessed date: 07/01/2014.

be terrorists and they were anticipated to be planning against the colonial government. In such circumstances living condition became nastiest; thus, people began to escape, this kind of narrative and account of many Indians can be found in a lot of literature and fiction.¹⁷

The major ports of embarkation were Madras, Calicut and Calcutta, the population were in majority rural Hindu dominated populace from around the Malabar, Tamil, Telugu, and from northern region of Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The composition of population according to the data available were 86% Hindus, went to overseas 14% Muslims who were largely free passengers largely merchants. Some Punjabis also migrated to different colonies as free passengers but they mostly went for their different occupational category as policemen or as military officers, not as merchants or indentured labourers, (Punjabis were also the first population to migrate to United States of America around 1820s as agricultural labourers and constitute the first generation of Indian diaspora in U.S.

The massive migration from India came up as an essential need of the hour, individuals were asked to sign contracts and migrate for a certain period of time to British plantations with the assurance that they will be compensated with enormous amount of money in exchange for their industry. Due to abolition of slavery there were colonies of British, French and Dutch that were severely affected parsimoniously during the year 1834, the year 1846 for French and, 1873 for Dutch plantation titleholders. It was the

¹⁷*Fijidwip me Mere Ekkis Warsh* describes about a fictionalized historical narrative of indenture of indentured labour system. It traces the life history of Totaram Sanadhya, along with his personal narratives, it exhibits the socio-political environment of that society with its developments and the various reasons of migrations of labourers from India.

obliteration of black slaves that created mammoth scarcity of work force and labour to work in Coffee, Cocoa, rice, rubber and sugar plantations; as colonial masters were fronting pecuniary difficulties they instigated to gaze for another source of cheap labour which could substitute slaves, the option that made a crack in their brain was South-Asian countries. Hence the British began to Bargain and outsource labour from countries like China, India, and Sri Lanka etc., from entire south-Asian continent, India outsourced the highest number of labourers because the condition in India was most fragile and rampant poverty forced various communities towards migration. From year 1834 to 1937 million of labourers from India migrated to different colonies of British, French and Dutch plantations. In this epoch of migration, foremost sections of migrants were from lower class and unskilled drifters; Major colonies that received the work-force from India were; Mauritius, Guyana, various islands of the Caribbean, Fiji, and East African countries. The migration that happened during this time was enormous and the one of its kind. Furthermore, the subsequent colossal migration from India was the migration to Middle-East countries, which was the result of oil boom that happened during 1970s. This migration was not permanent rather it was temporary in nature as there were strict rules in Middle- Eastern countries for the citizenship of immigrants. Middle-Eastern countries did not allow permanent residence to any foreigner, the immigration law of the Middle-Eastern countries strictly directed that these countries would not provide citizenship to anybody who is non-Arab even if he/she is born in Middle-Eastern countries. The employments were made mostly on contractual basis, and majority of the migrants were involved in low-wage services thus, mostly received low-paid professions. And the immigration law subsequently suggested to the immigrants that immediately after the

expiry of contracts migrants had to return to their homelands as the nature of the employment was temporary.

While with the neo-liberalization in India around 1990s the doors for migration to countries like America, Canada and UK were opened up for migrants from India, during this period of time, economy of countries such as Canada, U.K., and U.S.A was on the rise and that paved the way for many people to migrate, the nature of this migration was principally the migration of highly skilled professionals, who had sound training in their area of expertise. The migration of skilled professionals has been termed as brain-drain migration from India. It was these skilled professionals who later formed one of the largest flourishing Indian communities in the Silicon Valley. At present the Indian population constitutes the third largest immigrant populace in the United States of America. The typologies of diasporic outflow from India, starting from antiquity to its journey till contemporary era has marked its distinguished identity throughout the globe, Indian community is not only discernible in host culture for its distinct ethnic ethos but also for its tolerant and hardworking attitude, which types it to be one of the most flourishing immigrant communities in host country.

Migration created various experiences among migrant populations, sometimes the experiences were warm when migrant population holds discursive position in global sphere. Whereas the migrant communities confronted exclusion in certain diaspora because in those countries migrants had minority positions and discursive spaces were handled by more powerful countries, it was the minority position of Indian diaspora in such countries that aired innumerable racial abuses on Indian immigrants. Migrants from the third world countries as Indians often had to face severe form of hostility from the

host countries. Indians confronted violence and othering in most countries of the world, exploitation and case of abuses could be observed in Gulf countries, where passports and other necessary official documents were confiscated by the owners and employees were severely abused, in some cases mutilated and killed too.

However, when one unveils the history of indentured labour system it surpassed every other kinds of violence that could be inflicted on Indians in the host countries. In indentured labour migration system, approximately 3.5 million Indian migrated to various British colonies. Amid this 3.5 million there were numerous reasons of migrations for each migrant. Some migrated due to debt bondage, whose, lands and properties were confiscated due to their incapability to pay hefty taxes that were forcefully imposed upon them by their colonial masters. It was due to their incapability of tax payment that led them to migration where a dream of utopia was embellished in their eyes, which exhibited that migrants would earn innumerable wealth and live a luxuries life. While the reality in plantation was quite antithetical to the promises that were made to them. Apart from hostile colonial rules, there were many natural causes like famine and draught that brought poverty and desolation into the lives of Indian peasant communities. As hunger rose, mortality rate began to increase people instigated to quest for an escape from their starvation. They looked for a place which offered them solace from poverty and famine. Peasants and rustics who migrated as indentured labourers were illiterate and destitute even for the rudimentary requirements of life, there were handful of individuals who understood the entire terms and conditions of the indenture, and the ones who comprehended the terms and conditions were not so petrified in the commencement as terms appeared flexible and friendly on face value, due to its deceptiveness. To quote:

“Many were commonly misled about where they were departing for and the wages they would receive. Through testimonies of the migrants we now know that many workers were recruited from rural India to work in cities like Calcutta, but once there were tricked or persuaded to sign the contract which took them to the emigration depot and to the plantations overseas”¹⁸(p.1).

When one reads testimonies and narratives of indentured labourers, one can easily find out that the journey into indentured world for Indians were often full of deceptions constructed with false promises. According to Indian Immigration Commission Report, Natal:

“An Indian woman (who)... belonged to Lucknow, ... met a man who told her that she would be able to get twenty-five rupees a month in a European family, by taking care of the baby of a lady who lived about 6 hours’ sea-journey from Calcutta; she went on board and, instead of taking her to the place proposed she was brought to Natal”¹⁹ (Carter and Torabully, 2002, p. 20).

In majority of the cases communities from India had no alternatives but to migrate, they could either decrease out of hunger and scarceness in India or they could earn and live a prosperous life in plantation²⁰as promised by arkatiyas, the recruiters. Henceforth, in most of the circumstances individuals chose to rove, even when reluctant

¹⁸<http://www.striking-women.org/module/map-major-south-asian-migration-flows/indentured-labour-south-asia-1834-1917> for illustration visit the link. Accessed date: 12/05/2016.

¹⁹Indian Immigrants Commission Report, Natal, 1887, cited in Carter and Torabully, 2002, p. 20 cited in <http://www.striking-women.org/module/map-major-south-asian-migration-flows/indentured-labour-south-asia-1834-1917> Accessed Date, 15/06/2015.

²⁰The use of the word prosperous life is used in reference to the deceptive promises made by the recruiters of the indentured labourers.

were forced to migrate. One such instance could be observed in Totaram Sanadhya's autobiography where he illustrates that when individuals showed reluctance to migration, they were often threatened and many coercive methods were opted to threaten people in order to convince them to migrate. Totaram Sanadhya in his autobiographical narrative *Fijidwip me Mere Ekkis Warsh*, describes that he was threatened and kept locked in a mucky room, famished and thirsty till he finally gave up and gave his consent to migrate.

There were migrations of Indian Indentured Labourers in different parts of the world, majority of these places came under British government. It were mostly British colonies where indentured labourers were sent to work as labourers but there were also a few colonies in some parts of the world where indentured labourers were sent as a part of bartering done by the British. Indentured labourers were sent to non-British colonies such as French and Dutch. There were huge number of migrants from India to different colonies, the labourers were distributed as: Mauritius with 453,063 labourers had the highest number of Indentured labourers from India, next to it was the British Guiana, where 238,09 Indentured were transported, after this Trinidad, with 143,939 further Jamaica with 36,412, then Grenada consisting of 3,200 labourers next to it was St. Lucia, with 4,350, then Natal 152,184 after the migration to Natal the Indentured were sent to St. Kitts 337, St. Vincent with 2,472 people, then to Reunion labour force of 26,507, then to Surinam the labour force of 34,304 and Fiji 60,965 then to East Africa 32,00 further to Seychelles with 6,315, indentured were sent altogether 1,194,957 Indian population was split into different parts of the world which was a massive number and as a result of which Indian diaspora in contemporary era is one of the highest populated and widely

spread diaspora in the entire world. The detailed description of the migration of Indian people is given below:

Migration to Mauritius:

The idea of indentured labour as a form of workforce was first put into thought by French colonizers; they introduced this as a substitute to slavery. With their idea of introducing indentured labour system, they created rules and regulations for people who were willing to migrate. It was on 18th of January in the year 1826, when the actual manuscript of indenture with terms and conditions came into force. The rules said that willing and ready individuals were supposed to declare it in front of the magistrate that he/she is willing to migrate on his/her own free will, voluntarily. The contract would be for five years and willing migrants would be told about it beforehand. The migrants would be paid eight rupees per month and given rations on weekly basis throughout the week. Although initial attempts of labour transportation to Mauritius were not successful, hence the practice was discontinued for a while and resumed in the year 1829, the next passage of transportation of labourers took place in the year 1834 when slavery had almost disappeared into pages of history and the first indentured labourer's ship from Indian continent was sent to Mauritius.

After this wave, British government followed identical pattern of indentured labour for its own plantation colonies. The British government came up with its own terms, conditions and regulations. In case of French colonies, major portion of migration took place from Pondicherry now known as Pudducherry. British government brought a

regulation in the year 1837, with terms and conditions for the migration of indentured labourers. Migration to British colonies took place from Calcutta port. Methods of British plantation for recruitment of labourers were: the British government had assigned officers who would recruit labourers. The officer would carry book of contract and the incumbent, has to appear in front of the officer with his agent, the officers were assigned by colonial British government of India, willing migrant had to agree to the terms and condition and had to sign the contract. According to British regulations, indentured servitude was for five years of tenure, indentured labourers would return after completion of their terms of services after five years, the return migrants would be dropped to departure points from where they had migrated. Although in regulation there were deceptive standards mentioned for migrants, the terms mentioned about considerable amount of space, food, and health facilities that were going to be provided to indenture labourer on ship but the actual situation son ships were blatantly paradoxical. Ships were bursting with filthy and unhygienic circumstances, migrant labourers were stuffed into ships, there were no shadows provided to labourers, so labourers had to spend their day and night on the deck of the ships. Even when it rained labourers had to remain seated on deck only. There was a doctor and medical facility provided to, would be migrants, but proper implementation of medical facility was missing.

The system of indentureship was unknown to the world for some time especially in the beginning years of indenture transportation. But as soon as people in India and Britain came to know about this labour system, there were strong hue and cry about it throughout these two countries. Voices of protest came out loud and the system was severely criticised. Innumerable campaigns were staged against this new form of slavery,

the campaigns were identical to anti-slavery campaign. On August 1st 1838, as a result of attacking and violent protests against indentured labour system, a committee was formed to see into the abuses that were taking place in indentured labour plantations. This committee reported about multiple violence, pitiable condition of manual labourers and as a result of investigation of the committee, manual labour was prohibited in plantation, if anybody was caught practicing manual labour and violating law, he was fined 200 rupees, and three months of imprisonment.

While due to prohibition, colonies of Mauritius and Caribbean came under severe financial crisis and plantation owners began to lay enormous pressure on East India Company to provide and supply labour force and transfer it to the colonies, but anti-slavery committee played a very significant role to ban it for quite some time. In spite of their endless effort to ban indentured labour system, capitalist class ultimately won the battle and under extreme pressure of plantation owners from the Caribbean Islands and Mauritius, the East India Company eventually agreed to uplift the ban.

It was on December 2nd 1942, Indian government permitted the transportation of indentured labourers under intense pressure of planters, their supporters and East India Company. The departure was permitted from three different ports Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. This phase of migration was permitted under additional rules and regulations, during this wave of labour migration, emigration agents were appointed at each departure port. They were appointed to observe abuses and exploitations of indentured system. It was also promised that a return passage would be provided to the labourer after five years of their work and it would be given immediately after the claim is made.

After a long time of struggle and ban, the first ship to leave after lifting of prohibition, sailed to Mauritius on 23rd January 1843, and after the first ship it became a recurrent phenomenon and around 1843 Mauritius received around 35000 indentured labourers, in which 4,307 were women and 33000 were men which displays high gender imbalance, which later on became a major cause of violence against women in plantation, as a result of such disparity in sex ratio, wife beating, murdering of women, uxoricide etc. became a prevalent phenomenon in plantation colonies.

Although the second phase of migration of indentured labourer came into existence with strict regulations, which was supposed to restrict abuses, but it was terribly unsuccessful in its aim as the system continued to abuse powerless labourers. Recruitment of uneducated bucolic mass was done with deceitful information and by misguiding them with fabricated promises, abuses became so much of a problem that government of Bengal in the year 1843, made a provision for labourers, according to which, it was mandatory that only after the signature of the agent and countersignature of protector of immigrants on a certificate, the permission of departure to plantation would be granted.

The flow of migration to Mauritius continued with heavy wave, and during this phase migration of women was less, and women who migrated were mainly the wives and daughters of labourers. The death rate increased into plantation after the completion of contract tenure, workers were left alone with no money to support them, and often starved to death as their promised return journey as mentioned into indenture regulation was full of loopholes and was not being followed accurately. Migrations did not stop

rather planters began to recruit labourers from Madras port also, the first ship that sailed to Mauritius from Madras port began its voyage in the year 1850.

Due to cheap labour that planters were exploiting from indentured labourers, owners became more and more lured towards profit and wanted to exploit labourers to their fullest. An instance of it could be seen into great endeavour of planters in persuading labourers to settle them in indentured land so that plantation owner would save the monetary cost of return passage and also save up the cost of further recruitments and migration. In Mauritius, the government offered £2 to each labourers if they decide to stay back in Mauritius and relinquish their claim of going back on free passage. The Mauritius government made a provision to discontinue return passage, this provision came into existence on August 3rd, 1852, when government of India agreed to alter terms and conditions of indentureship, in which it said that if the return passage is not claimed by any labourer within six month after the conclusion of indentured tenure, it would automatically be forfeited though poor and sick people were omitted from this regulation.

The next amendment into indentured migration history came in the year 1852, this amendment said that labourers can come back to India after five years of their tenure of work but they have to pay \$35, labourers would be given free passage to back home if they come back in 10 years. This law brought life of indentured labourers under further exploitation as wages were too less and in such a condition affording \$35 for the labourers was a dream. Conditions of indentured labourers were extremely doleful and couldn't do anything about new rules that were getting implemented on everyday basis. This rule brought a negative effect on plantation because only a few wanted to apply for

10 years of tenure and \$35 was too much to pay, and due to that this regulation was discontinued in the year 1858.

Migration to West Indies:

The colonies in West Indies, when Indian indentured labourers were transported to Mauritius, were still working with slaves, who were known after the abolition of slavery as emancipated slaves. These slaves were brought from Ireland, Germany, Malta, and Portugal etc. when great efforts of planters to work with emancipated slaves turned out to be a failure, as most of the workers were reluctant to work after the emancipation. And after seeing the success of indentured labour in Mauritius there was a high demand for labourers in West Indies by planters of Trinidad & Tobago, Jamaica and Guyana etc. After incessant demand of labour force to these islands, government of India legalised migration to West Indies. First ship to sail to West Indies was named Whitby, Whitby sailed from the port of Calcutta in the year 1838 and for Guyana on 13th of January. It reached to West Indies on 5th of May in the year 1838. The flow of labour to West Indies was discontinued for some time due to lapse and crisis in sugar industry but it was soon resumed by planters and transportation of labour force began to take place again from the year 1851 to 1860.

After the success of indentured labour system and innumerable wealth it was bringing into islands the planters did not want to give return passage to the labourers, who were supposed, as promised, to get free return passage after completion of their indentured labour contract. The plantation owners were reluctant to give free passage to labourers as a result, colonial governments often brought new policies in order to refrain from providing return passages to labourers. Colonial government of Trinidad followed a

different policy to lure labourers by offering a stake to labourers in plantation after completion of indentured tenure, although stakes were provided but it were temporary in nature. Thus, labourers were asked to acquire land where they could settle. However, this policy became quite successful as in the year 1873 the limit of acquiring land was extended by 20,000 m² plus 5 pound.

Migration to French Colonies:

British government was not aware about the transportation of labourers to French colonies via French ports, without any knowledge of British government around 34000 labourers were transported to French colonies by 1860s. It was in the year 1860, when French were provided official permit to transport 6,000 labours annually to its colonies such as Martinique, Guadeloupe and French Guyana. The labourers were sent for five year tenure there too, and the return passage had to be provided and a governor general was appointed to look into abuses in system.

Migration to Surinam:

The migration of indentured labourers to Surinam was very unconventional, it was more towards bargaining side, and it started with an imperial agreement. Dutch demanded power to recruit Indian labourers for its colonies in return to that autonomy, Dutch gave some old forts in West Africa and also bartered Sumatra. Labourers were transported with similar terms and conditions on tenure period of five years and a free return passage at the end of the contract. However, British provided certain level of autonomy to Dutch plantation owners for rule alterations. The first labour ship that was to leave for Surinam, sailed in the year 1873, in the month of June after that, successive six more ships sailed with indentured labourers in it.

Migration to Fiji:

The first ship that sailed to Fiji from India was in the year 1879, when labourers from India were sent to work in sugarcane plantations. The first ship that departed from Indian soil consisted of 498 labourers, who reached Fiji in the month of May, on 14th in the year 1879. In intermediate period from the first ship till the abolition of indentured labour system in the year 1916, around 60,000 Indian labourers were transported and transferred to Fiji. In Fiji, indentured workers were popularly known by the term *Girmitiya*, and the bond of indenture was called as *Girmit*²¹. In popular parlance indenture was known as ‘*Girmit*’, and people who were subject of its bond were termed as ‘*Girmitiyas*’. The *Girmitiyas* of 1879, later to the abolition of indentured labour system formed a large immigrant community of Indian diaspora in Fiji and the descendants of indentured labourer in Fiji formed around 44% of the entire populace of Fiji conferring to the census of 1996.

Although Indian diaspora from Fiji had almost no links with their homeland from centuries, and it was very recently that Fiji-Indians began to link up their ties with India, but despite of staying away and alienation from their homeland and limited connectivity with religion, culture and tradition, Indian diaspora in Fiji, is culturally and traditionally quite rich and diverse. However, the identity, religion and culture that the diaspora has retained so far couldn't be termed as pure in the sense of its original transportation from India that their ancestors brought and practiced. Rather the religion and culture has evolved with time. It had acquired a new shape an altered version of Indo-Fiji culture and tradition. The similar reflection of plurality and blending could be seen into the language

²¹ The Term *Girmitiya* was used in Trinidadian Bhojpuri, it was used by the indentured laborers who traveled from Calcutta to *Chini-dad* or Trinidad, it is an intellectual pun for Trinidad as a land for Chini, or Sugar in Hindi.

of Indian diaspora in Fiji, the Indian diaspora speaks dialect in Fiji which is a fusion of English, creole and Hindi, the Hindi that is spoken in Fiji is a mixture of Awadhi and Bhojpuri, which is pronounced as Hindustani and it has been given an official recognition as a language in the constitution of Fiji as per 1997 constitution.

Hindi is a common language amongst the old Indian diaspora community and is taught in schools and colleges, there are so many radio channels which broadcast round the clock Hindi program. The popularity and success of Indian community began to play a threat for the host community who felt that the employment opportunities, lands and the major business were into the hands of immigrants and the natives were living in their own country as second class citizens, it created a lot of ethnic conflicts in host communities but at times it became threatening. As a result of ethnic clashes and conflicts in 1987 and in the year 2000 coups took place in Fiji, which snatched and withered the life of millions of Indian diaspora there, and migrants were coerced to leave Fiji, those who were well off left the country and those who could not leave are still living a destitute life in Fiji, the percent of rich Indian was less thus, a substantial number of Indian diaspora are still living in Fiji amid destitution. Over one million Indian diaspora migrated from Fiji between the years 1987 to April 2004, majority of them settled in the countries like Australia, New Zealand, US and Canada, as a result the significant number of Indians in Fiji according the census 1997 decrease in the census in 2006.

Migration to other Colonies:

Indentured labour system due to its success in terms of financial gains from colonialist and planters' point of view flourished for a century, it was not only limited to

Mauritius, West Indies and French colonies but later on labourers were sent to Caribbean Islands, like St Lucia (1858), Grenada (1856), St. Kitts (1860) and St Vincent (1860), migration of labourers was also approved in Natal in the year 1860, they were likewise sent to Durban, Danish Colonies, Australian colonies and Queensland too.

Although indenture labour system was very successful from colonialist's and planter's perspectives but when one takes the perspective of indenture servants and of the colonized into account, it was one of the most dehumanised form of violence against humanity. People were sold as indentured products and once the contract was signed labourer had limited right and autonomy of their own. Keeping these discrepancies into mind voices were raised against this system of indentured labour, however, colonial government of India was under extreme pressure of capitalist classes thus, it couldn't abolish it system. While as a result of mass uprising, the colonial government brought several regulations, acts and provisions to watch over the abuses. The British government in India brought regulation in the year 1864, that directed immediate actions against perpetrators on paper but in practice none of these rules were effective.

According to the regulation of 1864, the recruit had to appear in front of the magistrate in the village of recruitment, in district not at the port of embarkation. Rules and regulation were for everyone, the agents, the health offices, the protector of emigrants, there were serious repercussions for not adhering to the rules of recruitment, and for not following the legal procedure, and there were serious penalties too. The agents were strictly directed not to take commission and were directed to be dependent solely on their salary. There was another rule to provide apt care and health treatment to indentured labourers on the ship viewing into rampant mortality rate on ships. The rule

that made recruitment of forty women against hundred men was further impressed upon and was directed to be followed strictly but the point is, was it sufficient? The population of women was one third of male population; rules were made on paper however, the implementation of those rules looks almost null when one skims through the testimonies of indentured labourers. There are various testimonies of indentured labourers that demonstrate that the sole purpose of their migration was poverty caused by colonization. And it got worsened due to natural calamities that brought Indian republic hand to mouth, people were deprived of their basic need and sustenance, there were chaos ubiquitously and people were dying in homeland out of starvation and paucity.

Various literature inscribed on indentured labourers describes about life of Indian common masses, his work illustrates that how amid anarchy and atmosphere of depravity came the great²² opportunity of migration as indentured labourers to different colonies of British masters. Thakur describes that even though Indian were reluctant to leave their home land or their village that they belonged to, however, unbearable surroundings at home made them stranded and take a decision to migrate to a new land, where there would be innumerable wealth, rives of milk and gold. The potential indentured labourers thought that they would go and earn enough to support their loved ones who were going to be staying at home, so that their families could survive and get rid of their despondent life. They hoped a golden future in front of them in a foreign land which would bring them immeasurable wealth, happiness and prosperity which ironically brought them more

²² The term great in this context has been used sarcastically to exhibit that how grand the offer of migration to Indians was shown to be and how hollow and deceptive it turned out to be, how miserable and helpless it made the people who migrated imaging the terms of contract to be true.

wretchedness and bereft them whatever meagre milk and gold they had saved up for them in order to pay for their passage.

Life on Ships:

Life in India was harsh and difficult for the indentured labourers and they left their homeland for a better life which they expected would be full of gold and milk and happiness, as described by recruiters. But ironically their days of misery and pangs began into the first step of their sea voyage that were ships that carried them. The journey was cruel and full of challenges at every step. It took about three to four months for indentured labourers to reach to their destinations as destinations were generally long distanced, the conditions of labourers' ship were akin to slave ships. Although it was promised that indentured labourers would be given better facility, the similarity of the indentureship with slave ship could be drawn from available data on death rates in ships. Death rates in ships were almost similar in both cases of slave ships and indentured ships. In 1856-57, the average death rate for Indians travelling to Caribbean was 17% due to diseases like dysentery, cholera and measles. After the labourers disembarked, there were further deaths in holding depot, during the process of allocation of the plantation colonies.

Suresh Pillai in his Article "Indentured Indians: Emergence of Hindu Identity in Caribbean Countries" articulates that for the larger portion of 19th century migrant vessels were mostly sea faring ships, these seafaring ships took three months to finish the passage. By 1880s, the ships were bigger in magnitude and better examined, but reports of overcrowding were still recurrent as rice, dhal and other necessities for the workforces

took up considerable amount of space, Asian cholera frolicked devastation on migrant ships around 1850s. Diarrhea, dysentery and many sea-borne diseases exterminated many lives, the mortality rate prior to fast steamers were quite alarming.

He further dialogues about James Crosby, an agent general of immigrants in his report to colonial secretary, on arrival of ship Rohilla, he wrote, to quote, Pillai (2003):

“There is nothing particular to notice in the voyage of the Rohilla except that cholera having previously broken out in the depot appears to have broken out among the immigrants on the day of the embarkation, and that 12 migrants were admitted into hospital suffering from this disease, out of whom 5 died and 7 recovered. The conduct of the compounder and inspector Raheem Buksh was very reprehensible and after having carefully investigated the charges brought out against him by the Surgeon superintendent, I deducted from his wages for his misconduct during the voyage twenty-five pound sterling” (Crosby in Pillai, p.9).

However, crossing of *Kala Pani*, black water was strenuous both mentally and physically for indentured labourers. Several of the recruits, became quite depressed, few jumped into sea during the voyage and committed suicide. In packet summary on Indian immigration to Trinidad, the agent general of immigrants wrote, to quote Pillai (2003):

“Two more coolie vessels -the Dudbrook from Calcutta and the Cleaveland from Madras have added to our number of coolies for the year...the mortality on board of the Dodbrook was excessive, of which a very long passage and outbreak of cholera were the apparent reasons” (Pillai, 2003, p.10). Further, “many feared that

they had not only infringed caste restrictions but had relegated to the position of pariah or untouchables” (In Pillai, p.10).

Life on Plantation:

The life that plantation brought for labourer was unimaginably rigid and challenging, promises made in homeland came to astray and stark-naked realism of exploitation and oppression made its way into the life of labourers, the labourers were already living under miserable circumstances. In India, due to poverty and starvation labourers were feeble but exploitation in plantations squeezed even the remaining blood and sweat out of their body in worst way possible. To quote Suresh Pillai (2003):

“They all came with the hope of practicing their traditional skills. But the world they came into on the sugar plantations, wanted something quite different from them. Many of them were not physically strong enough to perform the work demanded of them. They had little knowledge of English, which placed them at disadvantage. They were discriminated against, they were the only group required to carry passes to establish their identity. They could not choose either employer or the plantation to which they were assigned and they lived in isolation on the plantations” (p. 10).

The indentured labour contract bound Indians to provide 5 years of incessant service as plantation labourer. They were obligatory, to quote: “to work for 7 hours in the field or 10 hours in the factory, perform 5 tasks weekly, a task being defined as one day’s labour. The task, which was valued at 24 cents, was measured by what the stronger African Creole worker could perform in seven or eight hours” (Pillai, 2003, p. 11). When

Indian indentured workers reached to plantations, they were expected to perform similar tasks as performed by African slaves, division of workforce was discriminatory in its approach, the highest and the most authoritative positions were exclusively offered to the whites, apart from that managerial tasks and clerical jobs were given to local populations from African creole descent. The most labour consuming and the least paid jobs were reserved for Indian labourers in plantations. Indian labourers had to perform jobs as cane-cutter, weeder, porter, dock worker, attendant, watchman etc. and wherever Indian labourers were rebellious or raised their voices against ongoing exploitation, labourers were forced to work under notorious overseer who were extremely cruel to them. The indentured labour system handed over the power into the hands of white employers, who were managers in plantation and these people were mostly the previous slave owners who had no knowledge of humanity when it came to treat labourers because these slave owners were habituated to treat and oppress the labourers in every way possible.

The labour law provided autonomy to the plantation owners to enforce penalties and incarceration, if a labourer failed to complete five errands per week, and if he/she declined to work, the overseer was free to punish him/her and charge him/her with any penalty that he wanted to. Any worker who was absent from work for seven successive days was deliberated as a deserter, a punishable offence for which a fine of \$24 (about 6 months' pay), or a month's imprisonment. In addition to the labourer's contract could be extended to twice the period while he was in jail²³ because he did not perform any work for the period of imprisonment. Plantation owners expected analogous tasks as African slaves from starving Indians, forgetting that Indians were biologically weaker than

²³ Benevolent neutrality by Basdeo Mangru, (2012)

Africans, consequently it was impossible for Indians to perform equal tasks as performed by Africans. As a result majority of Indians could not perform weekly tasks, hence they were liable for punishment of \$1.20 a week, which they could not even earn. Historian Hugh Tinker, in his article opines to quote, “[i]n folk art the indentured Indian was always portrayed with his hands bound together and shoulders hunched: for he was now tied creature, a bondsman” (Tinker in Pirbhai, 2009, p. 5).

There were many laws that restricted the mobility of labourers, labourers were arrested if they were found crossing the threshold of two kilo meters of radius from plantation, and if at all a worker had to go out he/she had to obtain permission on a form duly signed by his/her overseer manger. The conditions became so stringent that Indian workers were only seen either in plantation fields or in hospitals otherwise in jail. There were punishment for everything workers who couldn't finish a day's task was liable for punishment and if he/she finished the task and reached early to his home they were liable to punishment too. The labourers who were discharged from hospital and were advised to rest, in such case of their absence from field labourers were liable to punishment or fine.

There are innumerable case where women were jailed during the advanced stages of their pregnancy and later they were put under the category of convicts because they could not report to the field due pregnancy, there were numerous instances where women delivered babies in fields while working in plantations. There were serious fines and imprisonment for religious preachers because British didn't allow reading and writing in plantation colonies for labourer class. Reading and writing was considered as offence in plantation by colonial laws. And these rules were exclusively applicable on Hindu preachers who were preaching Hindu religious texts. The reading and writings by

labourers was considered as an offence to British government, if labourers were found practicing their Hindu dharma, and reading, or writing either, *Ramayana*, or *Mahabharata* were immediately convicted and a case under vagrancy law was filed against them. The believers were sentenced to jail and fined for practicing the religion that was nowhere mentioned in the bond to be an offence when the labourers were migrating from India. The task of indentured labourer itself was too tough, but it was made harder by overlooking various facts such as: labourers often had to walk several miles in knee deep mud, to get to the fields during heavy rains, women even in the advanced stage of pregnancy were made to work which was contrary to the rules. The labourers were paid lower wages even when the price of sugar rose in international market, workers and their hard work was making a lot of money for their masters who were flourishing and never cared for a fig about the workers who brought them immense riches and prosperity.

The 80 years of indentured period created a lot wealth for British plantation masters. While affluence of masters was supported and standing on countless corpses of indentured labourers who committed suicide due to extremely hostile conditions and excessive fines, imprisonment and starvation due to wage cut made their life unbearable and ultimately there were many who had chosen the alternative of suicide than living. And in response to these rampant suicides the colonial masters in their report in all their innocence have written that they were unable to discern reasons for massive suicides, to quote, Pillai (2003):

“The national archive in Guyana has a huge bounded volume of registry with names of Indian labourers who died in the state of intestate (died without leaving

will). The registry has names of the labourers and dates when the dead bodies recovered, possible reasons for death, age at the time of death, the ship and estate registers and the amount of money they had at the time of the discovery of the dead corpse. The entries are made in alphabetical order. Each section has around 200 names. Each volume has several such sections” (p. 12).

Most of the workers who committed suicides were in early age of 19 to 20, they had lived in plantation from almost 10 to 12 years, there were cases of suicides but also there were equal cases of killing. Who killed these helpless and barely cared sufferers who grieved enormously in such young age? Aforesaid posed questions could never be answered. The payments were low, wages were insufficient, living conditions on plantations were hazardous there were no facility for proper sanitations and barracks were glimpsing worst form of civilization where British tried their best to “civilize” the coolies by providing them epitomic specimen of plantation life that they settled for coolie labourers. The conditions of coolies and their lives were similar in almost every plantation, there were no differences in one plantation to the other irrespective of their geographical locations, or social environments and working environment that were provided to coolies.

The working conditions in plantation were adverse and antagonistic, there were long functioning hours and wages were exceptionally low. Indian labourers were weak due to long hideous sea voyage. This made life of labourers demanding as they were emotionally stressed and physically tired, dissatisfied, deceived and cheated by the entire system. There were voluminous repercussions of these hazardous conditions which

labourers had to pay in form of suicides and disease. There are several available records which demonstrate and prove such instances, to quote, Carter and Torabully (2002):

“The annual mortality rate for Jamaica in 1870 was 12%, and little changed over the years, as thirty years later the same figure was common for Mauritius. Children were expected to work alongside their parents from the time they were 5 years old. In an interview he gave to Fiji Sun, Hausildar, an ex-indentured worker remembered: “We were whipped for small mistakes. If you woke up late, i.e. later than 3am, you got whipped. No matter what happened, whether there was rain or thunder you had to work - we were here to work and work we had to do, otherwise we were abused and beaten up””(p. 90-91).

During 1895 to 1902, thousands of Indian indentured labourers worked day and night and sweated out to build the Kenya-Uganda Railway track. It was mainly for the construction of railway that Indian labourers were transported to South Africa, where they were given the title as ‘coolies’ on the construction of railways life of indentured labourers was always under peril. First of all, due to unfriendly masters and low wages and long hours of tiresome workload, secondly due to the attacks of wild animals, as these railway tracks were getting constructed in gloomy and uninhabited regions of Africa, workers were vulnerable to various attacks by wild animals. Around seven percent of indentured labourers died due to attack of wild animals, while building Kenya-Uganda railway track²⁴. Historian Hugh Tinker (1993) in his manuscript, *A New System of Slavery*, opines that the condition of indentured labourers in plantation was

²⁴ <http://www.striking-women.org/module/map-major-south-asian-migration-flows/indentured-labour-south-asia-1834-1917>. Accessed date: 21/06/2017.

excruciating due to over exploitation and it's not that labourers did not raise their voice against mistreatment, they came out and protested against many atrocities that were getting inflicted upon them. Tinker illustrates that migrant workers opposed various callousness inflicted upon them by their plantation owners. As owners were powerful it was difficult to get support against their autocracy. There were workers who filed petitions against colonial atrocities, against their overseers and planters. However their petitions and complains that were filed to bring them justice often worked as further oppressing tool for British planters. Planters not only increased the workload for labourers but also began to allot severe chastisements for paltry errors. Life in plantation for workers became more hostile and owners made rules more stringent. People who protested were assigned more tasks, people who raised their voices against the planters were pointed out and owners were forcefully accusing these people for trivial faults, fining and punishing them. (Tinker, 1993)

The daunting and unpleasant sites of indentured labour system made numerous workers to flee from the plantation, several labourers exasperated to escape from the plantation colonies. As it was an alien land, uneducated peasants migrated from small villages of Indian shores had barely any idea about the way of the world. The worker didn't have much idea of a safe place to run and flee thus, they were often caught by local police forces who knew the places way better than any of the outsiders from an alien land would ever know. As a result labourers were recaptured, imprisoned and pilloried. And as a punishment for their escape every so often their original five year contract was doubled to ten years for attempted absconding.

However, towards the end of their contract when period to reoccurrence to home came it was an assortment of cheerfulness and uncertainties. Few of the workers were prepared for homecoming but maximum of the labourers were petrified of disorder at home, anticipating social out casting and exclusion for their act of crossing the ocean, *Kala Pani*. Filled with multiple suspicions and intimidating uncertainties maximum of the ex-indentured servants were not ready to lose whatever money they could save up out of their hard-earned labour. As an outcome of multifarious disbelief and uncertainties many ex-indentured servants decided to sojourn back to the plantation countries in order to make a new life for them to construct a world which was left behind, to create a space for negotiation in the new land. More than men women were reluctant to head back to home, indentured labour system provided women hopes to live and make a new life. Even though life in plantation was difficult for women in terms of working conditions but in indentured system women were adoring the relative autonomy of being the sole decision maker and independent agents of their lives. The other reason for reluctance of women was their social status of marginality and subjugation in India when they left home. Indentured women knew that as there condition was already of an outcaste, they would never be accepted in their community which had already discarded them and was treating them with inherent disgust and subjected them to multiple abuses. In plantation they were able to exercise certain control over their life being the individual decision maker to decide about their personal choices.

The life in plantation was tough and there were intimidating circumstances which labourers had to reconcile and towards the beginning of 20th century the situation in plantation became extremely unbearable and the howling cry of labourers did make a

great impact in the homeland and their voices were given a prominent position in the broader movement of independence, which raised a nationalistic consciousness among the Indians. Mahatma Gandhi travelled to a lot of places in plantation colonies; he had the personal experience of discrimination and exclusion that Indians were facing in foreign countries where they were working as labourers. On his travel to various countries he saw extremely pathetic conditions of Indians and the plight of Asian indentured labourers. In South- Africa he also spoke out against it loud and eventually this system of cruelty and dehumanization was brought to an end with official abolition of indentured labour system in the year 1917 by the British government.

After the abolition of indentured labour system, the labours who decided to stay back have formed a major part of immigrant population in various countries in which they are living, countries like Jamaica Guyana, Surinam, Trinidad, Malaysia, South Africa, East Africa, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. However, after the abolition of indentured labour system the antagonism and discrimination against the indentured labour populace was over only on paper because successive generations of those who stayed back have been fronting multiple exclusion from host communities, while at few moments these little skirmishes had gone beyond the internal conflict zone. In such cases the diaspora was forcefully displaced and in few cases diaspora moved further from their country of settlement to another in search of better living environment and opportunities. And these forceful expatriates have formed the multiple migrants' community of Indian diaspora where multiple displaced migrants have found a space of mediation, this populace migrated mainly to countries like America, Canada, Netherlands, and Australia and to some extent to France.

As a result of colonization in India one can observe the tyrannical organization of indenture system which not only dismantled and ruptured the meta-narrative of Indian identity but also challenged the entire cultural distinctiveness of Indians as community within the complete discourse of culture identity. One often observes that Indian patriarchy have been asserted as Indian cultural identity, where men from Indian community have been seen as the protector, the hardworking manly men, who had the sole authority over their women and they took decisions for their women rather women having any agency of their own. Amid the grand identity of Indian men, who were the epitome of Indian cultural identity and who made patriarchy appear extremely natural and integral to Indian social structure often silencing the voices of Indian women thus, eclipsed their identity as Indenture women. Due to dearth of literature available on indentured women their experiences often appear natural to one's eyes. In most of the cases the struggle of women and their suffrage fails to get attention as in most of the literature available women have been described as mere numbers and if at all there have been explanation concerning women, these explanations have been used to exhibit the men women ratio in archival data. Though there is silence that is all encompassing when it comes to indentured but there certainly have been women who have compelled men to inscribe about women in the male -centric manuscripts.

To conclude one can say that indenture labour system has not received much critical attention as it deserved to have received, it was an institution of dehumanization, over exploitation, and corrosion of basic human rights, whereas discourse of slavery finds its space in every institution of learning, Indentured labour system catches almost no space. When on the whole Indian indentured labourer community finds no scope, one can

easily discern the situation of women in Indenture and their experiences have received almost no space at all in the conventional discourses of academics. However, at present, scholars and academicians from diaspora communities are raising the issues of diaspora society, they are endeavouring to provide this community a voice on the forefront and parallel can be perceived in case of women. Women authors, theoreticians and academicians from diaspora community are voicing the diaspora identity and its distinct experiences for the 'other' gender. While in this process of unearthing the lost voices women in diaspora are unveiling numerous historical, gendered junctures which had remained eclipsed till now.

Chapter: 2

Indentured Labour System and Women

The prevalent discourse concentrated around indentured labour system palpably exhibit a Eurocentric marginalization of proletariat classes, the general perception demonstrates that British authorship eulogised the slave trade, indentureship and intermingled the interpretations with affluence and magnificence of colonial British government. Literature inscribed around 19th to 20th century from British authors could be frequently observed with descriptions where the powerful and rich men from Britain were plantation owners, one such instance of it could be seen in Jane Austen's (1814) novel *Mansfield Park*, in which Sir Thomas has a colony in West Indies and owns slaves, and throughout the novel Sir Thomas has been described as an ideal man. *Mansfield Park* has been severely criticized by various subaltern study scholars who argued that Britain demonstrated inherent racial prejudices by creating such characters. Various scholars from indentured studies criticized the Eurocentric naturalization of labour classes where labourers were described as numbers and apparatus to procure wealth. However when one observes authorships from indenture, exclusively produced by male authors, it exhibit a similar marginalization and invisibility against description of female characters, where mediation of women have been snubbed away from indentured history.

A similar Eurocentric approach had been chosen by male authors who considered that the heart of indentured labour discourse was exclusive, and male centric mediations were paramount. Women, if mentioned or described were often portrayed as mere numbers. The male-centric debate about indentured labour system disremembered that

women are an intrinsic part of any society, and right from evolution till the contemporary times, women have always played prominent parts in various historical and social events. Innumerable existing literature on contributions of women in various historical movements illustrates unforgettable historical instances where women have exhibited invincible courage and endurance. In countless historical and political ventures of any country women have demonstrated their courage in significant measures and so did the women from India; at numerous historical moments, from the myths of *Gargi*²⁵, to women fighting the war of independence, Indian women have participated equally if provided the scope within highly controlled structure of Indian patriarchy. One such case of Indian women being part of a major history was the time when women for the first time in the history of India migrated as single women from their country to several British colonies to work as indentured labourers.

Indubitably women had migrated in India earlier too, but their mobility was only limited within the continent. Women have played several roles²⁶ in the history of migration from India, on some occasions women migrated on purpose to accompany their husbands, and on many other occasions women were sold as labourers to work in the household of colonial masters. Women were sent to work in the agricultural fields too,

²⁵ Gargi Vachaknavi (born about c. 700 BCE) was an ancient Indian philosopher. In Vedic Literature, she is honoured as a great natural philosopher, renowned expounder of the Vedas. And known as Brahnavadini, a person with knowledge of Brahma Vidya. In the Sixth and the eighth Brahmana of Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, her name is prominent as she participates in the *brahmajajna*, a philosophic debate organized by King Janaka of Videha and challenges the sage Yajnavalkya with perplexing questions on the issue of *atman* (soul). She is also said to have written many hymns in the Rigveda. She remained a celibate all her life and was held in veneration by the conventional Hindus.

²⁶ The traditional roles that women have played in the process of migration are the roles of women as dependent migrants such as-accompanying wives or daughter however women migrated as independent members during the indentured labor movement which made it compulsory for women to migrate in ratio of one fourth, after that single women migrant were travelling to Middle-East countries to work in the house hold of Middle –Eastern families and at present women are migrating from India to every part of the world as independent migrant and as dependent too.

furthermore women were also sent to work under indentured servitude in plantation colonies of British Raj. Late 19th to early 20th century women from India began to migrate as independent women labourers to plantation colonies. It was a colossal stride for the single women who were migrating unaided and migrated for the first time in the history of India. This process of migration took place due to the existing colonial system of Indentured labour; which imposed a rule, that the ratio of women in plantation must be minimum one third ratio to the male population.

This regulation duty-bound, executives to catch women who would agree to voyage which was a hard-hitting task for officials because Indian society was a closed society and women had stratified roles in the entire social structure which prohibited women from participating in male sphere. During 19th century of India drifting unaccompanied, single and earning was exclusively male domain; although few women were migrating, as accompanying wives but their numbers were extremely scanty. Thus, officials began to glance harder in order to persuade women from India to migrate and in that process women were searched, persuaded, swindled and misguided to travel to distant lands. Women were often lured into dreams of abysmal wealth that they were going to earn in plantation. Women were made to dream of a life so beautiful, beyond their imagination.²⁷ But when one debates about Indian women in diaspora, one often finds the tale of Indian indentured women every so often left unsaid. Indentured women voyaged through similar routes as Indian indentured men, they lived their life identical to indentured men, and nevertheless the voices of these women remain veiled and secreted

²⁷ Which ironically turned out to be something beyond their imagination.

into the limited pages of history, even though their circumstances were of ultra-exploitability they were hardly paid much attention to.

Records demonstrate that indentured labourers were both male and female where ratio of women was extremely less in comparison to men, majority of labourers were low class Hindus, around 16% belonged to upper caste, 32% to agricultural caste; which also indicates that it might be possible that the huge migration of lower caste people took place since they in a way wanted to escape Indian social structure of hierarchy that excluded low caste people by providing them a status of untouchables. Similar conditions could be applicable to women too, majority of the (single) women who migrated to plantations were fleeing from sexual and other kinds of exploitation of *zamindari*. To quote: “indenture was the first stage in the transformation of the feudal Indian into an individual” (Subramani, in Pirbhai, 2009, p. 7). However, women being a minority in plantation constantly remained into minority position and became prone to double exploitation. Although women were doubly marginalized in indenture labour system, but it also provided them, if not much but a certain level of autonomy which was not possible for them to achieve in home. To quote Brij V. Lal (2009):

“Indentured also provided women the means to escape various form of bondage, including child marriages and caste discrimination. Since this early generation of female migrants ‘were employed as individuals in their own right,’ they could exercise some level of economic independence once in the colonies” (Lal in Pirbhai, 2009, p. 8). However with this autonomy there was exploitation of women and it were these exploitations that made women more susceptible to abuses like concubinage, prostitution and uxoricide, Verene A. Shepherd has described the condition of indentured women in

British plantation colonies as of “ultra-exploitability” (Shepherd in Pirbhai, 2009, p. 8). Migration led not only to exploitation of people and hazardousness of trade, but also uprooted many people from their roots. To quote: “ like slavery, the indentured labour system was eventually dissolved, coming to an official end in 1922, after three generations of labour at a very low cost to the European Plantocracy and British administration”(Pirbahi, 2009, p. 8).

At the time of indentured around late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Indian women had nethermost social status, they were living under marginalized status with second class gender position. And when women voyaged through indenture labour system, the status of women as second gender didn't alter at all, rather they were further marginalized into the multifarious discourses of colonial and other categories of patriarchies. To quote, Beall, J. (2015):

“Indian women were at the very bottom of class-race-gender hierarchy in colonial plantation. As workers they were ultra-exploitable, being used for the most arduous and least skilled tasks in a forced labour system as Indians they were regarded as unwelcome additions to the already complex social make-up of the colony and, what is more, the person responsible for the increase of this despised and resented group; as women they had to struggle against two separate but convergent constructions of gender relations, both characterised by nation” (p.1).²⁸

²⁸ <http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/women-under-indentured-labour-colonial-natal-1860-1911-jo-beall>. Accessed date 05/02/15.

Women were perceived as unnecessary addition in the entire labour force, they were seen as a threat by planters to be precursors of permanent settlement in the plantation country as they could marry and set a family, thus, disrupting the national outlook of the host countries. Women were also perceived as feeble who couldn't perform equal tasks as men, thus, they were typically allotted the most inexpensive employment and paid the tiniest wages.

The Ultra-Exploitation of Indentured Women:

Although Indian labourers were employed into British colonies as contractual labourers and labourers were made to sense that labourers had a say in issues concerned to labourers, while in reality British had the highest authority to decide upon any issue in the entire system of labour production. At the time of negotiation about the labour force and migration of indentured, it was always the British employer who had the upper hand in the complete process of negotiation. However, indentured labourers were made to assure it in front of magistrate and had to attest on paper, by providing the labourers an illusion of independence of choices but once the attestation was complete and the labourers were transported to British colonies they had absolutely no say in any matter and their life became subject to the mercy of their colonial masters.

Once in the plantation, labourers were treated as captives and slaves who had no autonomy on even their food choices. Labourers became a means of production into labour force once brought to the plantation. Labourers were tied to contract bonds about which they hardly had any knowledge as majority of the labourers were illiterate. It was difficult for the labourers to breach the contracts of indentured bondage because the

moment they stepped into plantation colonies they were under immense debt, they were asked to pay for their passage and other expenses that were financed by the British government in the entire procedure of contract and recruitment. It was a challenge for labourers to earn and pay their debts quickly as the wages were relatively low and frequently labourers were subjected to various wage deductions as penalty to minor offences that they committed.

For many a reasons indentured labour system could be pronounced as a system of extreme labour coercion that subjugated workers and created exploitable circumstances for workers. In this entire system women had the lowest position in hierarchy of power, when it came to negotiation of workforce. Women were more exploited in the indentured system reasons being their minority status in terms of number. Women were the lowest paid workers in the entire hierarchy of workforce, when they were paid at all, with little wage. The position of powerlessness of women in the labour force was the result of attitudes of colonial masters towards labour system, in which women were seemed to be producing absolutely no profit. Apart from that women confronted another prejudice that deprived women out of their rights to earn. It was the marginalized position of women in India and in colonial society both. In both of these societies women were assumed to be a weaker sex. The tasks that women might have had, been assigned in order to develop experience in the plantation and become more independent, were considered unfit for women, thus, they remained unskilled throughout the indentured.

Furthermore women were restricted to work in certain subdivisions of workforce due to cultural and familial constraints imposed upon them. The familial restraints didn't

permit women to work in any tough or challenging areas, their domestic roles and boundaries created by domesticity played a significant role in the labour production. The young women in plantation were not allowed access to education even when male young migrants were allowed by British government to have a right to education; as a result women couldn't earn even clerical positions that could have easily been performed by women if educated. Further their responsibility as women, to bear and rear children restricted women from taking up certain jobs. Therefore such circumstances restricted women's option to choose work. Women were confined to few employments. The occupations that women were restricted to, didn't trained them enough to locate for better working environment. Which altered their scope for finding better alternatives in work. As a result women were enforced in a life of dependence. Women in indentured had to look for other sources of sustenance one such alternatives were finding spouse on whom they could depend on for their daily bread.

However, the aforementioned descriptions might make one to assume that amid such exploitative circumstances women were invisible and never raised their voice against such exploitative statuses. Illustrating on that, women were reasonably vocal about abuses and had reacted aggressively to it. However, their voice of resistance botched to make much space in the colonial patriarchal history. Women during the establishment of indentured had not raised many voices of protest in plantation but they had certainly reacted against the colonial atrocities in plantation. There is an anecdote of a woman named Sornam, when she was pushed too much and yelled a lot by her supervisor for not working fast enough, she got fumed with anger and in her reaction to her overseer's incessant yelling she hurled down her hoe, and tossed herself on the

ground, for this act of defiance Sornam was beaten severely later by the overseer. There have also been many incidents in which women had burned down entire cane fields in anger. One such case of a woman can be observed who set fire in the estate and she was repatriated saying that she was intellectually weak and had extremely low morale²⁹. Resisting the colonial structure cost a lot for many labourers, women who resisted and retorted were subjected to physical assaults, sexual abuses, wage deductions, repatriation, and rations withholding, fined or jailed etc. Sometimes as a penalty, their period of indentureship was doubled without any warning. There were instances where women had lost their jobs and were doomed to starvation and poverty. It was the starvation and poverty that enforced women to migrate but ironically women were facing a similar kind of dearth of food and hunger in plantation. The dreamed land turn out to be a tremor for indentured as they were promised rivers of milk and castles of gold. However, slowly and gradually such coercive punishments against resistance suppressed the voices of many indentured women and forced them to silently abide by whatever was coming through their life as that was the only thing that seemed feasible for survival in plantation life.

While there were also situations of Indian women being replaced by many creole African women, British found it easy to replace Indian women by African because, African women were physically fitter than Indian women and could perform more tasks than Indian women that brought a feeling of insecurity and further suppressed voices of many women who knew that they could be replaced by African women easily. Later it became a common phenomenon that women were dismissed by British even for trivial

²⁹ <http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/women-under-indentured-labour-colonial-natal-1860-1911-jo-beall>, Accessed date, 16/04/2015.

reasons, as a result women were again confined into the fore walls of domesticity that provided upper hand to Indian patriarchy because women had to count on Indian men.

Indentured Women and the Facsimile of Labour:

Women were exploited severely in plantation by their masters as they were performing multiple tasks for their masters. Women were not only reproducing labour by direct means by working in cane fields but also they were working in the gardens and households of British overseer. However, employment performed by women besides field work were counted as unproductive labour, as a result women received extremely low wages for their toil or no wages at all. Their wages were often seized by the planters on the grounds that the works that women performed were unproductive and it had no economic benefit. This attitude of British government could be observed as an extreme form of oppression of women. However, whatever insufficient amount of money that women were earning barely made a lot of difference in their life, as there was always scarcity of food and money to make both ends meet.

Many single women had children along with them so they were given labour of maintaining the gardens of the estate, where women worked along with their children nonetheless maintaining gardens produced extremely low wage and it was difficult for women to sustainance their daily needs with such inadequate amount of money. Women were performing these official tasks alongside their domestic duties that subjected indentured women to extreme burden. Women were working double shift in indentured labour system. As women were subject to extraordinary burdens, they were often made to perform several tasks in plantation barracks and in kitchen too. There were breaks in

fields and in such leisure men took rest while women had and carry food for their male counterparts who were either working at the mill or in the fields. This was an embedded duty of women apart from the above mentioned duties. After returning from fields, when their men relaxed, women had to prepare evening meal and sometimes they had to prepare meals for a lot of men, and women had to perform other domestic chores such as cleaning, washing and maintaining the household. As already known that indentured labour system had unequal gender ratio at its heart and it was because of that women had to perform the tasks for various men, such as community cooking, cleaning of households of neighbours, washing of clothes in exchange for rations. As women were earning less, they had to put further efforts to earn money.

As women were paid less for their work in cane fields or plantation related works, they concentrated more on domestic works which paid them more than the plantation work as a result of low payment, it increased the tendency in women to depend more on domestic works that further marginalized them and amplified their dependency on men. As already discussed that plantation owners didn't recognize women's work to be worth paid for and furthermore they were threatened by the re-indenture system which was started by planters as a fear of losing indentured workforce.

But when planters found that African indentured women were working proficiently they fired many indentured women, who lived the life of destitution after that. Various official records and data exhibit such incidents where women were found wandering on the roads starving in destitution. The official documents on such atrocities were found in records of the Indian Immigration Trust Board that divulged innumerable

examples of destitute women roaming, deprived of occupation and sustenance. British termed these wandering destitute women as free Indians, because according to British rule of indentured labour system, a destitute can't be given employment. Plantation owners considered Indian women to be mere liabilities and didn't allow them to be shown near the plantation area too. Thus women were often located in remote areas in starving conditions and their situation was so miserable that often African government had to repatriate women back to India.

Indentured women and Institution of Marriage:

As discussed previously Indian community exhibited a distinguish culture and religious identity in the host community. Indians endeavoured really hard to maintain the caste and gender relations in diaspora, but it was difficult to maintain the purest form of caste and gendered hierarchy. There were various cultural specificities that were alien to British, they didn't understand the Indian arranged marriage system and didn't recognize it. At workplace there was strong conflict between men of host, home and colonial community to operate their control and command over Indian women.

At the workplace there was both conflict and consent between male workers and employers for exercising the control over Indian women. Multiple patriarchies from the home and the host coincided together by working along the side to maintain gender relations. Indian men worked really hard to keep the Indian patriarchy alive in the plantation, but due to non-recognition of Indian marriage system the relationship between men and women became extremely unstable and relationships became prone to separation, Indian men once out of indentured system during the post-indenture regime

often left their wives and moved out of Indian marriage system because it brought no liability on them and no legal actions could be taken as a result of which women suffered a lot. There were many Indian men and women who, at the time of arrival to depot were unmarried but it was observed that men and men frequently married each other or pronounced as married couple, they migrated together as spouses. British authorities showed strong disapproval to this system of marriage, however they were forced to recognize it in India and gave green signal to it at the depot, but these marriages were claimed illegal and unrecognised in plantation colonies. And that provided men with an upper hand who often left their wives after the end of the indentured period and went back home, where they already had families. As Tinker discussed that, to quote Tinker (1993):

“The advantage to the man was obvious: he had someone to cook for him attend to him in a society where females were very scarce. But there also advantage to the woman in securing a protector in a savage new environment, and in establishing some sort of recognised position in a social order which held no place for adult single women” (p. 34).

The reasons for women to agree to form such liaisons were ubiquitous instances of multiple abuses of women on ships. Women formed these bonds to escape these mishandlings, women were subjected to various forms of assault on board, and these were: sexual and physical both in nature. Women were not only molested by their fellowmen but also assaulted by the crew members of the ship. Swan M. (1985) has described that the condition of women on plantation was unfavourable and hostile, they

were treated with resentment and disgust, women were often handled by Indian men as possessions. The Indian marriages were viewed with contempt and disapproval, British failed to provide recognition to Indian marriage system because of their racial prejudices. To quote: “ On one of the biggest plantation, women were routinely used to punish recalcitrant labourers ... thus a situation was created ... which permitted the whites to believe that Indians were incapable of sustaining bonds of mutual affection or responsibility” (Swan, 1984, p.37).

Because of its inherent gender and racial prejudices against Indian, the indentured labour system introduced by British unquestionably underprivileged numerous husbands and wives and made their matrimony illegal, which created a lot of tension in the successive generations. Also it became extremely difficult for many of the spouses to keep their conjugal bond alive as British overlooking the Indian marriage system frequently allocated different states to one pair that made it tremendously difficult for Indian couples to sustain their marriages. Because of unfriendly rules of British planters that didn't allow mobility to labourers and, if found trespassing the labourers were prosecuted. If at all by any means spouses were allocated into the same estate, due to overcrowded barracks and no leisure time couples found it difficult to have any lone time together.

The indentured system devoid people off of their rights to have leisure to spend time as husband and wife, this disparity was noted in report of Wragg commission, that said that scarcity of place for couples created a lot of tensions in marriages and couples found it difficult to have any time off as barracks were overcrowded. To quote: “We

regret to observe that too little regard is paid to this very essential requisite towards purity of life. There is a general huddling together of the sexes, of all ages, much to deplored³⁰ (Wragg report in Beall, 2015, p. 1). The conditions in barracks were tough and insecure for women, there were many cases of sexual harassment of women in barrack, and when women went to complain about it to protector, he in response to these complaints argued that even though there were many complaints laid by single indentured women of sexual harassments but there was nothing that he could do to prevent such activities.

However, the manuscript *Coolitude : An Anthology of the Indian Labour Diaspora* by Marina Carter and Khal Torabully (2002), exhibits an anecdote of Mulwa and his wife Nootini, in order to demonstrate that how hard the life got for indentured labourers in plantation. There were many incidences of murders and killings that were result of loop holed colonial policies. The incident of Mulwa and Nootini began with the murder of Nootini, who was killed by her husband. This incident took place on Blackburn plantation estate in the year 1890 in the month of April. Nootini and Mulwa arrived as a married couple in Natal, and they were allocated the same estate, as husband and wife they wanted a separate space to live and for that they negotiated with a man called Poonie, who gave them shelter, the husband and wife lived in Poonie's hut for four months. In the house the domestic duties were carried out by Nootini, as Nootini was not given any employment in the estate and received no ration from British masters. The couple had a young child too, with twelve shilling a week it was difficult for the couple to survive in plantation with a child. After a few months, the couple were offered a place in a person's hut whose name was Sahabdeen, he was a mill worker, who encouraged

³⁰ <http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/women-under-indentured-labour-colonial-natal-1860-1911-jo-beall>

Nootini to be a cook, and offered Nootini to be his mistress and house keeper, In his announcement before being penalized, Mulwa stated, that he declined the offer of Sahabdeen first then he said to him that he will get free rations, then he and his wife went, due to Mulwa's illness the couple had agreed to live in Sahabdeen's hut. To quote, Mulwa (1990):

“I declined at first - he again asked me and as an inducement said I should get free rations – the woman and I then went - the food we got from the estate was insufficient. Sahabdeen said if the woman would cook for him he would give her clothing - Sahabdeen gave me to the extent of 9s. I returned 8s. Sahabdeen asked me for the balance I owed and said if I did not pay I must leave.... I said where were we ... to go.... Sahabdeen then said I want you to go away but not the woman and child.... I went to Mr. Townsend [and] ... reported the matter and asked for a lodging - Mr. Townsend did not give us a house” (Walker, 1990, p. 161).

But life wasn't as simple in plantation as it was portrayed by the British colonial masters, it was difficult to survive in general for workers and when it came to the sickness of labourers, condition became worst as there were no health incentives provided to workers by British government. And in such circumstances when Mulwa fell sick, there wouldn't have been any other alternatives available for Nootini in such condition but to submit to her miserable circumstances. When Sahabdeen invited the couple inside his house apart from household chores he also demanded sexual favours in return from Nootini, and one morning when Mulwa, witnessed Nootini with Sahabdeen, he lost his temper which is not something unexpected from a husband, and in his

temperament he killed his wife Nootini, in his statement before the court Mulwa said, to quote: "I killed her because she went with other men" (in Carter & Torabully, 2002, p. 101). This exhibits the extent of powerlessness that Indian men were made to feel as a result of colonization. And amid such circumstances women became prey into the hands of multiple patriarchies as they were multiply exploited. Nootini was sexually exploited by Sahabdeen in exchange for rations for her sick husband and child but it was Nootini who at the end bore the brunt of everything. Women were sexually assaulted by many men, the men from their own communities, and by their managers, overseers and white male employee too.

Another incident of sexual assault was reported by a women named Vellach. She reported to the protector that when she was working in her master's bedroom, she was assaulted by her master. In her statement Vellach said to quote Walker (1990):

"About ten days ago, whilst in my master's bedroom regulating it, he came in, striking his pocket and saying that he would give me £3 if I were to lie with him, as the mistress and her family had gone to town. I refused saying that my husband would beat me. He said he would not tell him" (In Walker, 1990, p. 162).

But as colonial attitudes were prejudiced against Indian women, the employer of Vellach took full advantage of it. In his response to the allegation, he employed the clichéd practices quite common among British to blame Indian women stating and stretching that it was nature of oriental women to be sexually promiscuous, and oriental women were infected with venereal diseases and he would have never even thought of putting his eyes upon someone like Vellach. Mr. Hulley, the employer of Vellach,

efficaciously convinced the protector that he was innocent and deputy protector assuming it from a white men's perspective didn't sense or accepted that Vellach would have spoken the truth. Mr. Hulley, from his advantageous white man position spoke, to quote: "Putting aside her personal appearance which is not very attractive, is it likely that I, a married man, knowing what had been the matter with her ... would be guilty of such a charge?" (In Walker, 1990, p.162). In such position where pleading of Indian indentured women were given biased attention, women were denied the requests to transfer them from one estate to another or from one employer to the other. The reasons for employers winning in most of these case were not only that they were white male in the plantation that had offered expedient positions to whites but also they were wining for the reason that right from protector to owner every official was a male in a male dominated plantation society. Sexual assaults were normal phenomenon against indentured women, and it was not only the white officials who were harassing them but there were overseer sirdars who were confidant of British officials. Sirdars were handed over with the responsibility to look after the workplace, estate, barracks etc. and sirdars took quite undue advantage of this position by frequently harassing indentured women. Apart from sirdars and white officials, women were used as commodities of sex work, such bargains happened with consent of employers, officials, sirdars and also sometimes of women, who were starving and in desperate need of money due to low wages. As plantation was marked by its huge gender gap existing between the ratio of men and women, there was an implicit rivalry amidst various men to assert their authority over women in order to exhibit their patriarchal control.

One way to exhibit control of men over women was the institution of marriage but marriages were expensive in plantation as it cost £5 in plantation to acquire a marriage licence and marriages performed by Hindu or Islamic rituals were not legal and unrecognised by British government. To attain marriage certificate for indentured labourers was a challenge who were mostly earning in shillings and often subjected to wage deductions. These policies acquired by the British government to disapprove the marriage rituals that were norm of their colonial subjects, exhibit that the British government too wanted to assert its authority over indentured women. The act of British government to make marriages expensive, which could not be afforded by labourers was to demonstrate that the highest authority over its colonial subjects that anybody could ever possess would always be the master. However, the rules imposed by British government somehow couldn't restrain Indian men to assert their patriarchy over women. Indian men often took law in their hands by inflicting violence against indentured women, professing that women had deserted men, they were involved into adultery and many a women broke the promises of marriage. In spite of British government's multifarious effort to restrain Indian men under control seemed useless due to innumerable case of trials of Indian men who were accused of violence against women.

The reasons for sexual jealousy, killings of women, uxoricide and innumerable violence committed against women were: the scarcity of women and various patriarchies who were attempting hard to impose and assert their authorities on indentured women. There were already too many men who were working in plantation prior to introduction of law that made migration of women compulsory via quota system. The plantation was already filled with single men and later with arrival of more men with handful of women

created a lot of sexual tension. The underlying agenda of colonial government to restrict women as they perceived women as liabilities created a grave situation in plantation. The condition for women became more and more unfavourable in plantation. Due to outnumbering male population women were offered various alternatives in marriage that created numerous conflicts in women's life, rules that were brought in plantation were often supporting to men, and if anything that has been done by men, women often had to pay the price for it. The rules stated that women, to quote, Walker, (1990):

“Agree to marry, if either party refuses to marry, they should punish the guilty person. If a woman commits adultery, punished by cutting off her hair, and ten days' imprisonment that if she goes to another man, she must pay to the first husbands ten pounds. The adulterer should be fined five pounds, and be imprisoned for 20 days, and get 12 lashes. The wife should be imprisoned until she repaid the money, or went back to her husband” (p. 163).

While the discourse of violence in context of women concerning indentured labour system would be always integrated. Women were often victimized due to scarcity of number and exclusive to Indian indentured colonies in Natal the situation of women were worst because the number of women were not even one third as quota proposed in indentured system, the number of women were always below the quota number throughout the period of indentured in Natal. Further in case of other colonies in Caribbean, women were not fulfilling that quota, they were maximum twenty-five in Caribbean. Mohapatra pointed out that suddenly the colonial government became conscious about the ratio of women against men when the epidemic of wife murder and

beating became too rampant in the colonies around 1970s. The colonial government went into enquiry to examine if wife murder was a social and cultural phenomenon in India but failing in getting their answer as expected, the colonial government was forced to accept that these chaotic conditions were the result of British led indentured labour system. Thus the colonial government decided to provide stability in plantation colonies by providing them with grand solution of introduction of patriarchal families. However, the ratio remained the same, less women against outnumbering male population. And in this entire process women as always had to pay the price for what happens in patriarchy, women were transformed into domestic household workers from wage workers, the difference was in plantation women were paid workers and in household it became an unpaid work. Women were demoted from their working position to domesticity. (Mohapatra in Sen, 2013, p. 103).

Mauritius was the first country among all of the indentured labour plantation communities to recognize Indian marriage system. And Mauritius was somehow successful in controlling its women population by creating and recognizing the Indian marriages. This phenomenon of colonial law can be described as saving women from one form of patriarchal violence by imposing another form of patriarchy. The law of Indian marriages brought by colonial government in Mauritius plantation can easily be associated with further marginalization of women. Marina Carter argued that the marriage law of 1853, that legalized marriages celebrated according to Hindu or Islamic rituals, further created a rule according to which, any indentured men who would persuade and entice the wives of their fellow indentured men would be subject to British law and punished.

Further in order to prohibit internal negotiations and settlement within the families the Mauritian colonial government made marriage registration compulsory. When one analyses these laws, rules and regulations it clearly demonstrates that by controlling the choices, mobility, and autonomies of women, British government was keeping everything in its favour. Whereas registration, certification, were all plotting against women and were working as tools to restrict their mobility. Carter, (2013):

“These marriages did not as they were supposed to do, reduce violence in marital relationships, rather they encouraged transactions in women. There was little to distinguish between recruitment commission and bride price marriages, though the latter was justified as cultural continuity. Most crucially restrictive marriage laws often trapped women into attachments by mis-statement and bureaucratic bungles...immobilizing women within conjugal households was given priority over their individual liberty” (Carter in Sen, 2013, p. 103).

Furthermore, slowly and gradually other colonies followed the footsteps of Mauritius, the British colony of Guyana, copying the law of Mauritius brought a rule proposing that if someone attempts to attract or convinces other fellow labourer's wife would be strictly punished under British colonial law. Marriages and laws that were brought into plantations favoured men, be it colonial, or Indian, patriarchy was further empowered in colonies by de-powering women at every juncture. Thus, marriage was used by the British government to control women, to restrict them from their agencies. British government couldn't do anything to assure the safety of women, as a result of their incapability to eradicate violence of patriarchies, British bound women under

various laws of domesticity that curtailed women from their freedom to earn, for instance women in Mauritius were restricted to work in the fields, they were strictly confined to domestic works. This could be observed as an extreme form of coercion against women. Men were killing women, men were committing suicide, and men were committing uxoricide. However, in response to tackle such violence women were deprived of work, mobility, and disadvantaged of choices to select partners. Further, women were succumb to abide by colonial patriarchal laws that were strictly gendered and sexist in nature.

Keeping in view the opinions of certain theoreticians who claimed that indentured labour migration offered women the autonomy and agency, it provided women an escape from their outcaste social status. Indenture offered women and especially single women to create a life away from starvation and widowhood, in certain cases prostitution and most frequently from beggary, to quote: “that the decision to emigrate was in itself a sign of independent character of these women and the decision to emigrate alone and as individuals was their strength” (Reddock, 1984, p. 13). The claim can be accepted observing the situation of women in early indentured period. In early indentured period women were single and mostly working and earning for their lives, even when women were earning less they were figuring other ways out to tackle with their misery and starvation, sometimes women were getting rations by performing household chores of others’ houses, sometimes they were getting monetary benefits by providing sexual favours. Whatever it was, women were free agents of their own choice, and they could decide if they wanted to marry or stay single until the emergency like morality was imposed into plantation colony by collided efforts of multiple patriarchies.

With that being said, the present research doesn't make a claim that women, who were marrying men were all forced into it, the research also doesn't make a claim that women were universally de-powered by the institution of marriage. Women in indentured evolved or rather opted many strategies to make their survival possible. There were many women who were widows and were brutally abused by various men as sex slaves, they were passed on to many men from barracks to barracks, from one owner to another, from one overseer to another out of force. For these women the scars were deep and it needed genuine support of a counterpart. Along with it, there were many women who had gone through a lot of physical and psychological abuse in plantation, for them settling down with a family came as a support system where they seek a protector. Apart from such women there were also many women who had suffered hugely in their early marriages, there were women who had gone through child marriages and had been married to drunkards and alcoholics. Women who suffered in early marriages never wanted to settle into this institution. Thus, women might have been provided with authority to choose for them and accordingly laws might have been formed catering to the needs of both the genders.

Attitude of Colonial State towards Women:

Adding to the previous discussions around indentured women, the attitude of British government is quite explicit concerning to indentured women. It was occupied with preconceived notions, a patronizing attitude to civilize and govern the sexual, immoral, pervert, oriental women. It was the condescending and denigrating attitude of the colonizers towards Indian indentured women that became the zone of conflict in later

phase of indentured system. The voice and cry of women was barely given a heed, as a result women kept on becoming prey to the positions of multiple assaults and victimization. Women who were received in plantation were kept in unreceptive environments and had to suffer a lot, they were not provided with any facilities like separate spaces to take bath, or separate lavatory, there were no lavatories provided in indenture, so everyone had to go out in the fields, even in such careless facilities women were not provided secluded safe places for their hygiene.

However, women reacted against such mismanagements and under-facilities by various methods for which they had to confront numerous rebuttal as discussed earlier. But after decades of discrimination women ultimately reacted against these multiple ferocities and they reacted quite strongly this time. The reactions of women were in various forms by picking up on several colonial devised methods of resistance. Towards late 1800s and early 1900 indentured women planned to fight strongly against such inequalities which were existing against them. It was the indentured women from Fiji plantation colony who raised their voices of protest first and foremost. It was indentured women from Fiji who created a forum named as Indian Women's Committee, the sole aim of that committee was to challenge the multiple domination that women were undergoing. With the help of each other in the group indentured women raised their voices collectively against the economic, physical and sexual abuses which women were encountering every day in plantation.

These movements of resistance were the result of marginalized condition of women as labourers, mothers, wives and daughters in plantation. Women were subjected

to recurrent, sexual violence. Men who sexually debased indentured women, were often castigated by these women by publically humiliating them. Indentured women deliberately engaged, in overturning, the identical or similar kind of procedures or pattern of brutality, mortification and squalor that they themselves were unremittingly confronting. This process of confrontation not only created a mutual confidence amongst women but also incorporated indentured men into the trajectory of plantation conflict. (Shameem, 1987).

Further the method of resistance that these women determined, were methods of open protests and going out in public to raise their expression, to openly declare about the imperceptible mistreatment that indentured labourers were made to suffer. These suffrages found their voice in various movements, riots and strikes in various plantation colonies like Suva, Rewa and many more. During this period most of the strikes and movements were led by indentured women. Women openly spoke against economic, gendered, social and political oppression that they were subjected to. The prominent newspapers like *The Fiji Times and Herald* wrote that the Indian Women's Committee submitted representation and a delegation to the Governor, entreating for increased prices and remunerations and an official inquiry into mounting prices of food and others necessities. Jaikumari Manilal a satyagrah activist from India created furore in plantation who wrote a petition against the colonial governments for not being able to give women the wages for the amount of work that women were made to produce. Rajkumari Manilal was a middle class woman, wife of an Indian Barrister. Being the official representative of indentured women Jaikumari called for protest and demonstration against the economic exploitation that were confronted by indentured women.

Although Rajkumari was not physically present in the earlier strikes but in spite of her invisible position in the movement, she threatened the entire colonial patriarchal imperative of work. Her contribution in the fight of women in plantation played a vital role, although women like Rachael, Sonia, Mungri, Kalan, Ladu, Majullah, Hansraj, Dreemal, Hanki, Dwarka, Junkaom and Etwari together played an important role when they physically attacked British official agents. On February 23rd there was a violent strike in Fiji by women who were extremely annoyed due to the existing discrimination in plantation colonies; The *Fiji Times and Herald* few of the most reputed newspapers, wrote about this strike, the newspapers wrote, “this group of frenzied, kava-drinking, veiled women attacked colonial officials Constable Reay and Mr. Savage with dog sticks as they chanted ‘hit, beat, kill” (Indian, Riot: Women the Cause: 9).

After this incident these women rioters were imprisoned and Jaikumari was deported to India as she was accused to be the prime instigator of the strike. She was further blamed that Jaikumari was organizing women and plotting against the British government. From the defiant spirit of protesting indentured women one can clearly infer the indomitable spirit of a marginalized gender that had been suppressed for a long time and whose outpouring became challenging to control for authoritarian colonial government. Although colonial testimonies over and over again portrayed these women to be orientalist having submissive trait of sacrifice, docile, silent follower of their male counterparts, further the other colonial beliefs to portray oriental women who didn't follow the latter category of stereotype, as sexual pervert, promiscuous as inherent trait. What is important here and worth observing for is the way indentured women were

rupturing and smacking the colonial ideologues of patriarchy and rebelliously fighting against the domineering forces.

Women in indentured labour system and their scuffles were receiving gargantuan amount of sustenance from numerous countries like Australia, New Zealand etc. indentured women were commended for their audacious endeavours. On August 25th 1920 *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported “Recent official communications from Fiji reveal in interesting detail the unostentatious and humanitarian efforts, not widely known, of a band of Australian and New Zealand women to improve the moral and social conditions of Indian women in Fiji” (p.1)³¹. The determinations of Australian women to speak in support of indentured women had two step methodology, in their first step Australian women communicated about the male-centred notion of women, the predominant understanding of that discourse was the idea of chastity, purity, that are constructed under patriarchal purview about women. The patriarchal purviews described that men and women must have different parameters for assessment on morality. The second step methodology chosen by Australian women was about fighting against the atrocities. However indentured women tussled fairly well against these stereotypical constructions. Furthermore, women didn’t confine their movement only on the issues raised by Australian, Dutch or Indian women rather the protesting women included most of their issue that were related to basic amenities like, wage, health facilities, reproductive rights and against extremely explicit form of gendered discriminations, that needed immediate attention. Women in plantation were getting massive assistance from home country as well, the report of Andrews and Parson’s which came out in the year

³¹ <http://australianhumanitiesreview.org/2012/05/01/between-women-indenture-morality-and-health/> Accessed Date, 23/09/2015.

1916 created a furore and raised a serious concern amongst women in India, this report made British government to question the indentured labour system and the implementation of its policies in indentured colonies, the report received immediate response from the then viceroy of India, on March 20th in year 1920.

The viceroy announced the abolition of indentured labour system. But when women in India came to know about the datum that the plantation was still going to continue the indentured labour system, there was an out loud hue and cry about it. People began to stage strong campaigns against this order, women from India, especially the middle class women began to protest in favour of abolition of the indentured labour system. And began to speak against the multiple discrimination in plantation ruthlessly. By their voice of protest Indian indentured women invoked a universal sisterhood that wrote, spoke and campaign stringently against the sexual mistreatment that women were going through, in indentured colonies. Women from India spoke upfront against the atrocities and beseeched in front of “immense audiences for the honour of their sisters” (12-130) in Fiji.

By close reading of the protests one can observe the hidden patriarchal tropes which the Middle class Indian women protesters were trying to impose on indentured women. It was imposition of a stereotypical brahminical concept of honour, chastity and virtue, the honour of sisters abroad. It could further be argued that, in these protests the protesters were exasperating to stimulate the emotion of nationalism and the role of women as the representative of their culture and nation. Women who were fighting on streets of India for their sisters abroad were imposing traditional characters that women in plantation had to acquire, because it advocated the control on female sexuality and

pleaded for monogamous relationship that Indian women must have in plantation as these were the Indian virtues that women must had to be equipped with.

In the name of resistance and reformation, different committees were formed to safeguard the honour of indentured women. Such committees worked as further agents of marginalization. By advocating about the patriarchal notions of honour chastity, it was promoting new-fangled Victorian model of chastity and purity. Further Australasian Board of Missions, the Young Women's Christian Association and the Australasian League of Honour for Women and Girls, and Some of the Australian-based organizations, included the National Council of Women in states throughout Australia, the Church of England Mother's Union, the Child Study Association, the London Missionary Society Women's Auxiliary, the Women's Christian Temperance Association, the Women's Reform League, the Women's Peace Army, the Association of Women Workers, the Baptist Women's Missionary Association Auxiliary, the Church Missionary Society, the Methodist Mission Auxiliary, the Women's Service Guild of Western Australia and the Society to Combat Social Evil, tried to impose a Christian, Imperial, colonial way of honour on indentured women, who were already ostracised under numerous predicted characters to perform. Women from home who seek help from these organizations and asked these foreign women committees to help their indentured sister abroad, were imposing analogous ideologies of Indian patriarchal honour. There were various political and ideological issued that were raised in these mass protests but indentured women were stable on their demands from these protests. The major issues related to women health, reproductive rights and equal wages from women were the issues at core. This shows the deep understanding of the entire political propaganda of

numerous organizations that were trying to take political mileage from the movement but without paying much heed to that indentured women were continuously demanding for their basic needs as women first.

With time these movements became more inclusive, and there were various protests raised by various women organization concerning to sexual health of women, for instance: to formulate a standard for sexuality and promoting anti-prostitution. Although there was integral intersection of religious morality to women's health, the underlying tone of controlling indentured women on the name of further morality and health was another invisible propaganda that colonial patriarchy tried to impose on indentured women. But apart from such audacious and daunting historical narratives of survival and resistance Indian indentured women from their communities have found almost no allusion in the wider discourse of feminist studies and have suffered negligence and have been existing under misrepresentation or underrepresentation.

Due to these neglectful attitude towards women and inattention to their contribution in the indentured discourse of plantation history, indentured women have lost their voices and history into the hands of careless patriarchy. But this phenomena against women from old indentured history continues to persist even in contemporary era. Women who hails from indentured community, and claims to be the successor of indentured women are abutting various interrogations interrelated to their antiquity and distinctiveness. Women from old Indian diaspora community are left out from the grand narrative of Indian diaporic migrations that are taking place in present society. And whenever both old and new Indian diaspora meets each other, they can't associate

anything common their personality as Indians. Women authors from old Indian diaspora have portrayed this conflict in their writings often.

The women from old Indian diaspora traces their identity and association from the as a country with strong patriarchal values and male domination during late 19th and early 20th century, was reluctant to send single women on voyage to work as labourers in British plantation colonies. Henceforth in the commencement, it was only the wives and daughters of the male indentured labourers who travelled on ships to accompany their husbands and father, it was the dependent women who first put their foot in the indentured colonies. The plantation owners were equally indisposed to employ women into the plantation due to profit policy, self-assuming that women would work less and would not be productive in the plantation colonies but as a rule women were mandatory to migration in colonies. The coolie women came on plantations mostly as single women and rarely as wives, they were paid less and were subject to multiple assaults. In the beginning phase of migration of Indentured labourers, there was a huge disproportion and gender imbalance as the women were meagre in number. The migration of women during early indentured period was small in number. The first effort to balance this gender disparity was the act of secretary for the colonies. The secretary dispatched letters on 18th march 1856, stating that the number of women in plantation must be at least twenty five percent. The letter was sent to the governor of Demerara, the letter further said that the percentage of male population must not outnumber women more than three times. However, it was difficult to find women and make them agree to travel overseas. Nevertheless the provision of proposed twenty five percent of female population against hundred men was again revisited and on July 1868, further instructions were directed

stating the number forty against hundred male. This was never put into consideration for revisiting and alterations, hence remained in force throughout the indenture period. Rhoda Reddock (1984), in her article “Indian Women Indentured in Trinidad and Tobago” articulates that:

“From its inception Indian indentureship in Trinidad, as in all receiving territories, was characterized by a numerical disparity between the sexes: far fewer women were recruited and a number of reasons could be used to explain this. In India, since the 19th century to the present, unlike in most other countries of the world, the ratio of women to men in the population is much lower. In 1911, the ratio of women to men in the United Provinces was 915 to 1,000⁹ while in the Punjab and Delhi, at this time, the ratio was only 817 women to every 1,000 men.¹⁰ Recruiting the Before took place in a situation of an already existing unequal sex ratio. Throughout the indentureship period, the approach towards the recruitment of women varied over the time in relation to the desire of the plantocracy and the exigencies of the recruiting situation as mediated through the policies of the colonial authorities. Some of these have already been identified and include the relative necessity to reproduce the labour force locally, the need to stabilize the male labour force and the problems incurred in securing the ‘right kind of woman’” (p. 2).

But women migrated, despite oppositions, reluctance, and unwelcomed status, women lived in plantations despite oppression as minority, women resisted fought and created an identity and space for negotiation for them, even when their autonomies and individualities were forcefully repressed under stringent patriarchal laws. Women

protested for their rights, for their place for an identity. Women were subjected to further marginalization in successive generations too where men had created an India in colony and as Indian women, indentured women were burdened with responsibility as cultural ambassadors.

But recently into academia the successor of early indentured women have been making a lot of voices in order to claim a space for mediation of their identity as diaspora subjects. The women authors who have been claiming these spaces are multiple migrant subjects of Indian diaspora, as discussed in previous chapter due to rising anti-immigrant sentiments in many colonies, in post-indenture era Indians were forced to leave their indentured land and there were also few cases where Indians left their indentured land in order to create a new life for them. The recent multiple migrant community women are the upshot of that phase of migration, multiple migrant women associate their identity with multiple homes and their memories are replete with multiple accommodations.

Women from old Indian diaspora associates their identities as multiple identities due to their locations and roots in multiple countries. Experiences of multiple migrant individuals are multiple due to multiple encounters with cultures, languages and societies .As a result of multiple encounters identity of multiple migrant authors have also become hyper mobile. The multiple migration from old Indian diaspora societies made the identity of its subjects unstable, and when one stretches it further to multiple migration of women it becomes extra puzzling to cope up with multiple alterations. Women are expected to maintain the ancestral cultural identities as conventionally they are considered to the cultural bearers. Women have the sole responsibility to bestow her culture and traditional from one generation to another. The struggle to maintain cultural

and ethnic identity of a community in majority of ratio falls on woman. Women have to maintain a distinct identity and keep intact the ethnic distinctiveness of her community. The scholarship of diaspora studies have to take into the consideration the internal struggle of women who migrate to countries and have to understand the struggle, discomfort and complication it brings into the lives of women as migration subjects.

The brawl and the enormous impediment that comes with multiple migration are exceedingly perplexing, the expected role of being a woman to maintain the cultural and gendered identity becomes a core issue. Women are not only surrounded by multiple patriarchies but also governed by gendered roles that naturalises their role as cultural bearers. These constructed roles comes from the history of migration from India. The multiple roles that these multiple migrant women are assigned with are interconnected pieces of dislocations from India by their ancestors. In majority of literature and texts that are being produced by multiple migrant women authors has indentured history as an embedded part of the manuscript. The indentured history plays a significant role in the life a female protagonists, who are depicted to be struggling to reposition themselves in multiple societies. Women feel uprooted, rootless and powerless, and exhibit gendered history confronted by their great grandmothers. The present generation of women feel a strong association with their early ancestors. They often compare their migrant status with their great grandmothers.

Thus, from above discussion on indentured women and their history one can easily infer that the history of indentured women is one of the important eras for South-Asian diaspora study. The voyage of Indian women who journeyed with hardship confronting multiple hurdles in order to craft a different life for them, away from the

cramping patriarchy that subjected them into multiple subjugation, the act of Indian diasporic women who are rediscovering and rewriting the history of indenture are playing a vital role in giving voice to the voiceless, in giving power to the powerless, in giving authority to the oppressed. Contemporary feminists from diaspora studies who are giving recognition to the oblivion, needs more attention from the present scholarship of diaspora feminism

Chapter: 3

Marginalization within Marginalization

Review of Critical Literature

The contemporary postcolonial world is an outcome of enormous exploitation and wringing of countries that emanates within ascribed Eurocentric terminology of “third world countries”³². Colonization in Africa, Asia, Middle East and pacific countries have macabre and gruesome anecdotes to chronicle. Colonizers not only considered it to be their legal, social, moral and ethical responsibility to “civilize”³³ aboriginals but also in guise of mission civilization aboriginals were ‘dehistoricised’³⁴ and ‘decultureised’³⁵ off of their histories, cultures, that autochthonous populace adhered, prior to colonization. Inhabitants of colonized countries were not only plundered and contraband, economically, culturally and historically but furthermore autochthonous were deliberately and strategically confined within four walls of master’s alien laws that seized the socio-economic rights and autonomies away from inhabitants, who ultimately became subject of colonial master, and master was bequeathed with the sole autonomy to decide if a native had the right to live or to die.

³² This term has been given to former colonized countries who were subject to British rule, recently the term has been criticized by various subalterns’ studies scholars who views that term which have been given to third worlds countries are also a subject of inherent superiority.

³³ To civilize was one motto of Colonization who travelling from West without understanding the social structure of Eastern countries and their cultural values and without understanding that each and every culture and society must be given due respect considered their culture to be superiors thus tried to convert people according to their beliefs.

³⁴ Dehistoricization took place because history has been always written and narrated by the people who govern the structure of power discourse, it has been penned down only by people who had education which was not accessible to everyone in historical times.

³⁵ Deculturization took place by the act of conversion of natives by the British Missionaries, Natives were taught to live and follow the western mode of life culture and religion forgetting everything that they had of their own from their soil.

Collins English Dictionary defines that colonialism is, to quote: “the policy and practice of a power in extending control over weaker people or areas” (p.1). Further, *The Merriam Webster dictionary* defines colonialism as to quote: “something characteristic of a colony” and “control by one power over a dependent area or people” (p.1).³⁶ Furthermore the (2006), *Stanford Encyclopaedia* defines colonialism as, to quote:

“The term ‘colonialism’ to describe, a process of European settlement and political control over the rest of the world, including Americas’, Australia, and parts of Africa and Asia. It discusses the distinction between colonialism and imperialism and states that given the difficulty of consistently distinguishing between the two terms, this entry will use colonialism as a broad concept that refers to the project of European political domination from the sixteenth to the twentieth century that ended with the national liberation movements of the 1960s”³⁷ (p.1).

In his preface to Jurgen Osterhammel’s *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, Roger Tignor says, the core or the central part of colonialism is the existence of colonies that are governed by the laws rules and regulations exclusively created to govern territories in order to establish in influence in an informal sphere. Osterhammel (1997) defines:

“Colonialism is a relationship between an indigenous (or forcibly imported) majority and a minority of foreign invaders. The fundamental decisions affecting the lives of the colonized people are made and implemented by the colonial rulers

³⁶<https://essay-paper.com/indigenous-education-and-perspectives/>. Accessed date: 14/08/2015.

³⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colonialism#cite_note-3. Accessed date: 14/08/2015.

in pursuit of interests that are often defined in a distant metropolis. Rejecting cultural compromises with the colonized population, the colonizers are convinced of their own superiority and their ordained mandate to rule” (p. 16).

As a result of colonization emerged a society entitled as postcolonial society which under colonization of several centuries went under sever alterations, revisions and adaptations. It were the colonized countries, majorly the previously British subjects that were pronounced as post-colonial societies and formed the major discourse of postcolonial studies as a discipline. Postcolonial study deals with cultural legacies of colonialism and Imperialism, it exhibits mortal consequences of governing countries and establishment of anti-human social order solely for economic exploitation of natives and inhabitants of postcolonial nations. Drawing from postmodern schools of thought, postcolonial study demonstrates and evaluates that how the politics of knowledge sustained colonialism, and how it was the similar concept of politics of knowledge that depowered countless civilizations.

Postcolonialism has multidisciplinary approach, as a genre of historical study it decentres the centre of colonial history, it reinvents innumerable methodologies to view and review traditional histories that are often inscribed by biased pen and authored by Eurocentric historical hegemony. Postcolonialism study conferences about historical records that stretches a peep into sever exploited status of subaltern populace who now form the category of postcolonial society. As a critical theory, postcolonialism demonstrates, elucidates, and explains the philosophy of neocolonialism, with instances drawn from history, literature, philosophy, communication studies, political science, subaltern studies, Marxist philosophy, cinema, religion, theology, feminist studies,

language studies etc. Postcolonial studies have borrowed its literary lineage from multiple disciplines that presents narratives and genres that further demonstrates stories of colonial conquest of subaltern societies.

Postcolonialism came into existence due to the need of contemporary society of postcolonial world, who were subject of colonization, the previously colonial subjects identified them as marginalized and under-represented in wider cannon of literature. Thus, the postcolonial realised a necessity to raise their voice and give world a view about their life and experiences as a product of unadorned exploitation and dehumanization that was confronted by colonial communities in hands of British Raj.

Postcolonialism emerged as a discipline of study in 1970s with thought provoking authorship of people as, Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Michael Foucault, Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak etc. The post-colonialist identified them with a different genre of writing, they felt that mainstream writings have often misrepresented, oversimplified, distorted, generalised and universalized the experiences of colonial subjects. According to postcolonial critics literature crafted by mainstream theoreticians often universalize the experience of human beings, it often represents Eurocentric experience to be a universal experience thus, needs to be abided with great respect. Peter Barry (2004) in his manuscript, *Beginning Theory: An introduction to literary and cultural theory*, states that:

“One significant effect of post-colonialism is to ...undermine the..claim that ...great literature has timeless and universal significance...thereby demote disregard cultural, social, regional and national differences in experience and

outlook, preferring instead to judge all literature by a single supposedly universal standard”(p.193).

The ancestry of post-colonial criticism can be first traced from the work of Frantz Fanon (1961), in his book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, in his book he gabbed about the cultural resistance towards colonization, he believed that first step towards resistance of decolonization for any community is to reclaim their own past.

He opines that, for centuries Europeans have colonised various nations and in that process they have devalued the indigenous histories, cultures and religious beliefs of those nations, they have described histories that were centred or revolved around Europe and its culture. As a result British subjects (the colonized nations), that were living under British rule were taught to perceive, learn, and understand histories and literature from Eurocentric perspective. Thus, British subjects, (colonized nations) were made to learn histories and cultures only from European standpoint. He further suggests that, the next step is to erase colonial ideology that has shackled minds of colonial subjects. Here he intends to convey that if one has to live with violent history as a part of their subconscious it might always make an individual to carry hatred and feeling of desertedness and an aversion to a non-retrievable past which was unjust to them.

On Violence, explicates one of Fanon's extremely illustrious arguments on the theme of violence as it relates to decolonization, it begins by describing diverse representations of colonialism and further demonstrates that the world of colonization was as a tantamount of a compartmentalized, Manichaeian world. (Fanon, 1961).

Further Fanon goes on unfolding about the living conditions and surroundings in that were provided to colonized in British colonies, he illustrations that there was a clear

segregation and demarcation in the living condition of colonial master and the life and living condition of slaves in colonies, he states that in the colony of Algeria in era of Pre-liberation as well as in other colonized colonies, one can perceive a stark segregation, it had two quarters, one quarter was called the quarters of colonists 'sector, and the other quarter was termed the colonized or native's sector.

Fanon (1961) in his *The Wretched of the Earth*, gives an account of colonists 'sector that was built to last, all of stone and steel. It was a sector where there were unsoiled roads and houses full of sparkling lights, in that colony dustbins and garbage bags were filled with different and strange food, the leftovers of those foods seemed to be something which natives had never heard of (Fanon, 1961, p. 4). The way Fanon depicts colonialist sectors, demonstrates that life of masters were full of immense riches where only cleanliness existed and that sector was always filled with all the things that were never to be found in other (native's) sector.(Fanon, 1961, p. 4).

Subsequently Fanon gives description of native's quarters, he illustrates that the quarters where hard toiled bodies seek for rest and had to relax themselves to get ready to face another day full of hazard and hostile circumstances. Fanon speaks of the desolate, sick and unhygienic conditions that were provided to natives for living. He natters about awe-inspiring paucity and poverty, the bedraggled and miserable conditions of native quarters, he describes it as, the repugnance, foulness and abhorrence of the native quarters as "a famished sector, hungry for bread, meat, shoes, coal, and light" (Fanon, 1961, p. 4).

The aforementioned description of Fanon concerning two separate quarters of colonizer and colonized, where one was antithetical to other, one the symbol of purity

and other the symbol of filth, where one was an emblem of silver, purity and light whereas the other was an emblem of darkness. The depiction exhibits an explicit racism that was an embedded part of Eurocentric ideologues that considered the racial superiority of west over the other Non-European races.

In a rather raucous piece, about the situation of natives, the colonized and the unkempt circumstances in which the natives were forced to live in, Robin Cohen expresses deafeningly, he illustrates that relationship involving two sectors and division amid the European town and the local town, indicates an “interstellar coldness of colonialism” (Cohen, 1997, p. 856-857).

After Frantz Fanon the most significant work that one must to declaim in the area of Postcolonial study is the exceptional work of Edward Said, His furthestmost distinguished manuscript of *Orientalism*, which is considered to be a ground breaking introductory and significant work on which later developments in post-colonial theory took place. Edward Said’s *Orientalism* focuses on various dimensions of understanding, critically analysing, investigating and interrogating the artificial boundaries, or the stereotypical boundaries, that have been clearly demarcated amid East and West.

Throughout his book he derives instances and illustrations from the Middle - Eastern countries, He centres explicitly on typecast of Middle-Easterners, he argues by mentioning Middle -Eastern that this is how Western treats and views Oriental people. He further says that his instances could be applied to all oriental communities in general and the similar idea can be applicable when one dialogues about the exclusion of minorities from the majority community, how this system works in sphere of nation or within a community. When one says this is ‘us’ and they are ‘others’ in this context it debates

about how, when a colonizer enters into a country and when he has preconceived notions about a country or a population it brings a negative shadow of a community. And it makes colonizers to think and base their discretion on various generalizations which further leads to innumerable misconceptions. These generalizations and preconceived notions of the colonizers about the natives formed the basis of Post-Colonial study where scholars and researchers tried to study and understand how these preconceived notions ultimately caused havoc into the life of Orientals.

Said, breaks successfully with the tradition of colonial masters' archetypal representation of orient and raises the question of inherent racism, he simultaneously challenges what European and American scholars conventionally referred to as *Orientalism*. Orientalism is an ingrained formation of thought, a prototype of constructing assured generalizations concerning the fraction of the world documented as the 'East' Said further says that Orientalism was indirectly a political phantasm of accuracy and the unabridged organization of Orientalism recommended the discrepancy amid the acquainted that was Europe or west to that they termed it as 'us' and the unfamiliar and bizarre or the Orient in East to which westerners termed it as 'them'.

About this stereotypical representation and its internalization by westerns who considered it to be natural for Eastern communities to have these characteristics and westerns think that, Eastern or orients irrespective of their experiences as human beings possess universal traits and characteristics described by their Western counterpart. Traditional construction of the image of Orientals which was assigned to Oriental or Eastern cultures by European is precise, and point by point chronologically inscribed, but

the major highlights of those characteristics are they are often described tyrannical, autocratic and clannish.

Rudyard Kipling pronounces that Orientals are repressive, tyrannical when hold powerful position moreover furtive, toadying and fawning when placed in an inferior or subservient place. He further goes on speaking in generalizations further adhering to the archetypal images stereotypes, he suggests that Orientals are that kind of people who must not be trusted, they might have the credibility of sophisticated abstractions, but they can't possess the concrete, they are strange and only capable of matter-of-fact organization or meticulous, detail-oriented analysis. He further says that Oriental men are sexually incontinent, and their women live under highly oppressive circumstances they are non-mobile and totally dependent and are sheltered behind the bars. He summarizes it by saying that:

“East is east and west is west, and never the twain shall meet”³⁸(Kipling, 1989, p.246).

The claims made by Rudyard Kipling and other prevailing European discourses were later refuted by Edward Said, he questions it by asking that where are these nifty, deceitful, tyrannical, preternatural orientals? Said further asks the question as has anybody ever had the chance to meet an oriental who meets to the above descriptions in all of its entirety? He furthermore points out that there are no special attributes or characteristics attached to any oriental. Rather the concept of oriental was a particular form of myth constructed by west during 18th century. He argues that in the beginning oriental was a myth or a typecast assigned to eastern by the west. However, over the course of

³⁸ <http://www.bartleby.com/246/1129.html>. Accessed date: 02/05/2015.

centuries, the prevalent myths and stereotypes turned into the mechanism of *systematic knowledge* about the east. To quote Edward Said (1978):

“Because the myth masqueraded as fact, the results of studies into eastern cultures and literature were often self-fulfilling. It was accepted as a common fact that Asians, Arabs, and Indians were mystical religious devotees incapable of rigorous rationality. It is unsurprising, therefore that so many early European studies into, for instance, Persian poetry, discovered nothing more or less than the terms of their inquiry were able to allow: mystical religious devotion and an absence of rationality”³⁹(p.1).

In his later literary and cultural work, especially in *Culture and Imperialism*, Said (1993), blends political-historical analysis with literary criticism, he utters that the sole aim of Imperialism was not just to rule and expand the business of West into East. It was not only to gain material profit rather there was a an implicit undertone of commitment of imperialism over and above profit, it was a commitment in unvarying flow which legitimized respectable men and women from the country of colonial Masters seized with notion that, it was natural that, people who lived far behind from England or France were meant to be ruled, westerners were divinely gifted to rule and subjugate others.

Further westerners also thought that people who lived beyond British Empire had celestial obligation to be governed and ruled by British people, non-British must submit themselves in service of their colonial Masters because their masters were living in the so called metropolitan cities and were way more educated⁴⁰ and advanced than the colonised so it was moral obligation of the colonized to be a humble servant.

³⁹ <http://brurenglish.blogspot.in/2016/> . Accessed date : 12/01/2017.

⁴⁰ Here I want to explicate the problematic involved in the term educated. Accessed date: 22/07/2015.

However, with passing of time the systematic stereotypes, social and moral codes were conventionally accepted to be natural of life of Easterners by the West. It rooted to internalization that one hardly observes any domestic resistance inside Britain and France against such inhuman and cruel treatment, there was a manner of fantastic harmony and concord on the issue of having a kingdom⁴¹.

With similar theoretical fervour critics such as Bhabha have challenged Western notion of the concepts of Eastern and Western and the stereotypes that formed the identity of 'orient' and 'occident'. Homi K. Bhabha (1994) in his article, "The Commitment to Theory," vanguards about the dejected and unfortunate debate within Academics according to Bhabha there is a counterfeit opinion active within the academics which some critics have created to enquire about the snobbery and Eurocentrism of contemporary existing postcolonial debates. He opines that there is a disadvantageous postulation that theory is unquestionably the elite expression and lingo of the socially politically and culturally propitious class. It is assumed that the position of academic critic is predictably and anticipated inside the Eurocentric annals of an imperialist or else neo-colonial West. (Bhabha, 1994, p.19)

Bhabha has encouraged and also advocated for a scrupulous rethinking of the term nationalism, representation, and resistance. He uses the Term 'Ambivalence' and 'Hybridity' in special reference to colonial sight of oppression. He states that colonial sight of oppression symbolises the site of "colonial contestation" a "luminal" space. It is into that "luminal" space, where cultural variances coherent and actually produce imagined "constructions" of cultural and national identity. (Bhabha, 1994).

⁴¹ <http://www.zmag.org/zmag/articles/barsaid.htm>. Accessed date: 22/07/2015.

The aforesaid theories and discussions related to Postcolonial identity and various sights of oppression struggle and resistance often communicated about different modes of oppression and resistance that various communities went through in order to challenge well accepted and naturalized rules of west that were accepted to be natural. But very rarely one discovers male theoreticians and authors' conversing about the place that women have received within the broader discourse of post-colonial migrations or displacement theories. Their struggle oppression and sever oppression done on numerous echelons has hardly grab much critical attention in the discourse of male centric theoretical sphere thus, women need a specific critical attention that unveils their experiences as postcolonial subjects.

Third World Women in Contemporary Postcolonial Society:

One of the protuberant theoretician of postcolonial feminism Gayatri Spivak in her essay entitled, "Can the subaltern speak" has raised countless critical curiosity. In her essay, she questioned the ultra-exploited locus of women in third world countries. She raised the question of marginalization within marginalization. She opined that where subaltern man is subjugated, demoralized and marginalized the position of Subaltern women is even multiple marginalized and negligible. She articulates that due to multiple marginalization and highly controlled structure of Patriarchy subaltern women face a position of invisibility. Henceforth subaltern women can't speak rather they have to be spoken for, She rejected the possibility of agency of women in third world countries, she illustrated that third world women have no agency of their own further an invisible entity. Spivak was severely criticised by her random judgments and generalization about third

world women, her claims were rejected, interrogated and criticized by the later postcolonial feminist from third world countries.

Later feminists have rebutted and rebutted the claim made by Spivak who alleged that Subaltern women can't speak thus, they have to be spoken for, in reaction to that, later feminists have responded that, subaltern women have always spoken but in their own languages and dialects which their colonial masters, western theoreticians and authors have failed to understand so due to their inability to understand subaltern women and their language they rather shift the burden on women of third world countries by blaming them to be ultra-oppressed and subjugated.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, in her essay "Under the Western Eyes" disparaged standardized standpoints and deductions in a number of Western feminist manuscripts that centred on women from third world countries. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, derived instances and accounts from western feminist scholars like Fran Hosken, Maria Cutrufelli, Juliette Minces, Beverly Lindsay, and Patricia Jeffery who published a manuscript entitled as *Third World Series*. These Scholars in their published manuscript had provided a highly generalized depiction of third world women, they described Third world women to be a group of women possessing universal qualities and trait. Third world women have been portrayed as women who have homogenous, monolithic qualities and experiences. Third world women have been described as a homogenous assemblage who have analogous features, and universal characteristics, To that Mohanty writes that these kinds of writings, "discursively colonize and ghettoize non-western, "Third World" women as the collective other" (Mohanty,2003, p. 337).

The western feminists have undermined and ignored the different, socio-political, cultural and linguistic experiences that women from various communities of third world countries have gone through. Mohanty further argued that, west constructs the image of third world women as “poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family- oriented victimized etc.” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 337). Neglecting the existing intricacies, multiplicities, and array of women present in the non-Western world. Mohanty opposed the notions that over-categorized non-Western women, she discoursed that the over-categorization and construction of third world women as ‘Victim’ is the outcome of western notion of superiority and inferiority that forgets the experiences of class, race, ethnicity geographical location, cultural and political surrounding that different women are born in and experience. Mohanty further suggests that these kind of construction and attitude of western feminist who over generalizes the experience of third world women damages the solidarity and unity among women. It also classifies and divides them into various groups whom the western feminist considers to be inferior to them.

Western women think them to be the people, who are comprehensively progressive, adore parity these women have massive or full rheostat over their own bodies and can take their decisions regarding their sexual life and sexuality while they have categorized the third world women to be totally opposite of altogether qualities and attributes which western women have; According to western stereotype about third world women, third world women are perennially ever uneducated, always victims of unfavourable circumstance, sexually passive and often oppressed. These women are living under hostile and marginalization circumstances thus, they need the hands of their superior and enlightened western feminist to provide them help in order to achieve

salvation. This kind of imbedded and couched categorization exhibit that how western feminism considered it to be superior form of school and excluded most of the non-western women and their experiences,⁴² from the canon of western feministic literature. The postcolonial women critics' from third world countries pointed out that the universalizing tendencies of western feminism and their ideologies, misinterpreted and underrepresented the lives of women from non-western countries, hence the exclusive purpose of postcolonial feminism was to critique theories and theorists from the developed countries who universalized the experiences of third world feminism.

Postcolonial feminism argues that western feminists have use the term 'women' and have considered the term women to be applicable on the entire women race failing to understand that various women are subject to several social class, race, ethnicity, or sexual preferences. Postcolonial feminists try to bring on forth the movements struggle revolutions and resistance of third world countries. Third world feminism branches from the knowledge that feminism in non-western countries has not to wait for affirmation from first world feminism. Third world feminism would not look for inclusion and integration of its ideologies into first world feminism rather it would originate from internal ideologies and socio-cultural factors that were exclusive to third world women.

Postcolonial feminism has extremely close relationship with aboriginal feminist movements and wider and more inclusive relationship with postcolonial theory. A close association of this school of feminist could be observed with Black Feminist movements because both school of feminism argue that Western feminist movement had miserably failed to include the wider difference and variety that exists within feminist schools.

⁴² <http://www.feministschool.com/english/spip.php?site>. Accessed date: 11/01/2013.

Feminist from other races and ethnicity have tried to be more inclusive and made conscious efforts to comprise more and more deference and bring forth an all-encompassing school of feminism which could be more eclectic in its approach.

The postcolonial feminists have to struggle hard to bring variety of women together and dialogue about their difference, social strata and cultural and political experiences that they stem from, in this process Postcolonial feminist critics have received sever criticism from Mainstream western feminist, the western feminists argue that Postcolonial feminist are trying to hamper the reputation of the wider feminist school and they are trying to divide the harmony of the school. The feminist movements of contemporary era which seems eclectic inclusive and extremely flexible is the result of the consistent scrutiny and alterations in this school at various stages of its development.

The history of feminism broadly can be divided into three phases of revolutions or movements. The first weave of feminism arose out of the need of legal and social discrimination that women were facing in workplaces or outside of home. It was a political movement initiated by white women from west who had access to education and other resources. This phase was only limited to white middle class western women from developed countries, this phase approximately and solely deals with the issues of supreme rights of these women who were fairly well off. It centred on the absolute rights of women for instance the concern of suffrage and capsizing the barriers to legal gender equality. The first weave of feminism was very limited in its approach it left many gaps, and did not include the experiences of women of colour, ethnically different racially oppressed, economically disadvantaged and were forced to live under miserable circumstances.

The second wave of feminism was vital among the women it was a movement basically to inspire women to fight against the patriarchy and the patriarchal forces and the power struggle that women go under. It suggested women to look at the inherent power struggle that implicitly governs the life of women. It made women to understand how their personal lives choices and decisions are the result of sexist ideologies. The second wave of feminism included varied issues and discriminations that women were facing for example the discrimination in workplace, matter of sexuality, family, and reproductive rights. The second wave of feminism tried to be more open and receptive in its approach it endeavoured to club together many issues which were left by the first wave of feminism it also tried to be wider. But unfortunately the first century of evolution of feminism somehow could not be as inclusive as it could have been. This wave although focused on imperative and crucial subjects which needed immediate attention and a proposed solution failed to again embrace the experiences of women of colour experience of many more women who were living out of western coast and were governed by a different kind of sexist power structure which marginalized them in dissimilar way. Thus, it could only satisfy the needs of white middle class women to whom this movement so far belonged to.

And from then onwards all the experiences and issues of women were only addressed analysed and interpreted from the perspective of white middle class feminist theories which considered the experiences and struggle of all the women as one uniform struggle and experiences which mostly fell short in explaining the issues when it came to the experiences of women who were falling out of the category which was defined by

western feminist and non-western women felt a dire and important need to define themselves and their lives which they felt were often misrepresented or underrepresented.

And it was during the later part of the 20th century that women from non-western countries, communities came on the front and communicated about their experiences and with that we witness the third, recent and contemporary weave of feminism, it is often termed as Postcolonial feminism. It emerged as a part of third world feminism which describes about the diverse experiences that women from postcolonial communities go through. The diverse nature of oppression, and life occurrences that are part of a myriad of cultures which often find that it is natural for women to be oppressed.

Postcolonial feminism claims that it is more evolved and receptive as it concedes the difference that exists among a multitude of people it does not only include the resistance and struggle faced by women based on gendered lines but also it includes the nature of oppression that are even getting practised against different sexes and genders not inclusively women. It claims that post-colonial feminism provides more space for various oppressions which are inflicted on each gender. Postcolonial feminism is still evolving, altering and modifying its thoughts, theories and ideologies which makes it more and more approachable. The life and lived experiences of various genders has never found such a vital scope in any of the former weaves of feminism those were exclusive to women and only to white middle class western women.

Postcolonial feminism is an evolved way of thinking which is developing from the scholars and theorists who try to study and understand to look power relations have governed different societies and how throughout human history the others have been viewed and perceived by the colonial or imperial lenses and how due to that influence

diverse culture views postcolonial societies. But postcolonial feminist school of thought argues that this school provides a broader point of view to understand the intricate multifarious stratum of oppression that subsists within a society. Postcolonial feminism criticizes not only the over-simplified theories and ideologies of western feminist but also it came in response to the general theories of Post colonialism which did not do the justice with postcolonial women.

Post-colonial theories provided the account of the life, struggle and resistance that were part of male centric writing and experience and women from postcolonial communities felt often left out and invisible and even if there were account of women in the male texts it were from the point of view of a man and women were often given very ideal roles in which they were wither invisible and existed just a presence in family and don't have much say and if they were described to be a speaking all living creature they were doing all of it probably because of the absence of a male or if the male counterpart is effeminate or if the women has to be all sacrificing. Postcolonial feminism began a burgeoning theory and method to analyse and critique the problematic involved in both, theory of western feminism and mainstream postcolonialism and tries to address the existing key issues. Postcolonial theories focus on understanding the enduring impact of colonialism on the colonized society. It tries to understand how colonial institutions suppressed and governed the colonized community and resistance. It also tries to understand and focus on present socio-economic repercussions that present countries that were formerly colonized are going through. But unlike postcolonial mainstream theories Postcolonial feminist theorists are keen on understanding and analysing the reasons as to why the Mainstream postcolonial theorists failed to include the experiences of

postcolonial women, their life, issues, struggle and resistance and the most importantly the key issues of gender.

Postcolonial feminism refutes the claim of western feminism which considers the experiences of western women to be the universal experience of all women and thinks that it is the most inclusive in its method and approaches. not only postcolonial feminism show the hidden lacuna in western feminist theories but also along with that it claims to be proposing a more inclusive and eclectic theory which is more receptive. The conception of colonization has various approaches in which postcolonial feminism deals with it or looks at it. Colonization is available in both spaces in the discourse of postcolonial feminist theory it discusses about the abstract as well as concrete form of effects of colonization on the postcolonial society. How it was not only the act of acquiring the land enslaving the aboriginal and getting material benefit out of colonization but also it talks about the deleterious effect of colonization that how it psychologically enslaves the colonized population by forcefully alienating the inhabitants out of their culture and society.

One of the important factors for Postcolonial feminist criticizing the western feminist is due to the fact of colonization. Postcolonial theorists are of the view that that western form of feminism has the tendency to universalize the experience of women from all the race and ethnicity. Postcolonial feminism is against that, it rather argues that the experiences of women in various cultures are highly affected by colonialism and is time and again enormously dissimilar from the cultures of western women from Western countries and this truth must be acknowledged and taken into consideration.

Thus, postcolonial could be described as a school of thought which criticized not only the universalizing tendencies of its male counterparts but also it criticizes its own gender for universalizing all the women as one and criticizes both the genders for forgetting to put their attention towards other communities and genders. It also blames these schools of thoughts for being too limited in their approach and provides explanation and proposes third wave of feminism. Postcolonial feminism began to scrutinize the intricate ways that gender intermingles with other systems of subjugation and prejudices. Postcolonial feminism came in practice as a reaction to western feminism which oversimplified its theories and left wide gaps and issues which were later modified by postcolonial feminist theories. Postcolonial feminists try to illustrate the issues of third world women which they feel is complex, intricate and beyond the experience of first world feminism to incorporate it within its defined theories. It is of the view that first world feminism or western feminism identify that all women from all over the world live a similar life and under similar circumstances, they criticise western feminism by saying that all women in this world survive the particular social political and cultural location and are highly influenced by their environment thus, they all have different experiences.

Postcolonial feminists from different parts of the world endeavour to provide broader voices to the struggle and resistance movement of third world women in the broader discourse of feminism. This endeavour has found a lot of scope in feminism and helped the different feminist movements from different parts of the third world to make it more strong and developed. The fundamental criticism that western feminism receives from third world feminism is not that it did exclude the experience of third world women but the criticism lies in the fact that apart from a century of theorization it even in later

stage failed to prove a guide for third world women to which they could look up to and idealizes; which ultimately led the foundation of third world feminism who felt the need to theorize their experiences. Western feminist have argued that third word feminist have tried to rupture the universal sisterhood that feminism tried to attain by dividing it, in contrary the Postcolonial feminist argue that monolithic experiences are highly problematic and ignore the experiences of different individuals thus, it is the shared experience and variety which brings an inclusive unity among al. the women if a certain section is left out of the broader it will not feel unity rather it will have an hostile approach, it is the difference which makes postcolonial feminism more rich and diverse yet brings out a universal unity among each and every sex and gender from all over the world because they feel included and accepted.

By universalizing the experience of women and asking for a universal sisterhood without giving voices representation and visibility to third world women they forget that third world women are still suffering and bearing the brunt of colonialism and are going through socio- cultural oppression and are coming from the society which are yet to decolonize themselves from colonial legacies, which further complicates the struggle of third world women in fighting the patriarchal forces which have been oppressing them. Whereas women from first world countries do not have to fight colonial structures and legacies also they do not have to fight of the racial differences and religious disparities which cause a lot furore in third world countries and is not a matter of even minor significance in western world. Chiefly the area of struggle that western feminists are to fight are socio-political and cultural oppression of women by their own men while third world women have to fight various layers of patriarchy they are not only marginalized by

their social structure but also colonial legacies along with that they are subject to oppression b colonial men and women.

The aim of postcolonial feminism is to bring together different varieties of women and various differences and look for binding forces that brings all the women gender and sexes together.

Further it tries to negotiate with myriad of engagements and understand distinct features of postcolonial feminism in which women are forming a unity to fight their liberation war. It strives to take postcolonial feminism to a place where in various theories, researches, histories, testimonies, biographies, autobiographies movements, literature and archives finds their place in mainstream feminist discourses or till it alters the mainstream to the periphery. Here we can also term postcolonial feminism to have opted for a deconstruction approach where it ruptures the centre and tries to create a periphery and gives it the central position.

Also it solely does not aim to decentre but it aims to integrate women in both the developed and the developing world into the theoretical milieu. The tendency in academics is to adopt models from European theories and tries to interpret and analyse things based on that model make it a touchstone against which the experiences of women from non-European countries are made universal. Postcolonial feminists opines that there are movements and revolutions that often takes place with a particular country and in certain cultural political contexts and these revolutions and movements and scholarships go unnoticed and unobserved by mainstream western feminist discourses. Postcolonial feminism strives to fetch and convey the accents of Third World women to the vanguard, and aims that their theories would help to shape and alter the notion of feminism.

Postcolonialism provides a newer perspective for various citizens from distinct countries and it provides scope or various experiences that postcolonial societies have gone through various ages as a result of centuries of colonization. Experiences which are part and parcel of postcolonial society as a result of colonization the experience of migration,(forced, and voluntary), displacement, indenture, slavery, oppression, struggle, resistance, representation, underrepresentation difference, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, place of origin, multifarious identities are some of the imperative characteristics specific to Postcolonial society. And these issues become further vital and essential when women encounter it, they go under severe identity crisis and their marginalization takes place on various level Postcolonial feminists see the analogous amid lately decolonized inhabitants and the position of women inside patriarchy.

Another after effect of colonialism on postcolonial society is that it lost a lot of its history,-language, dialects, culture and social identity and sometimes this anxiety results in the veneration of pre-colonial culture that colonized society had. And in most of the cases the history that they could retrieve was a past which has a stratified social structure and women had no agency or very limited agency in to the whole social structure. Thus, women became more powerless and had went through multiple discriminations as they were already the product of colonial oppression and later their cultural and traditional roles didn't provide any autonomy rather it further created more restraint on the postcolonial women. One method that postcolonial feminists want to confront this ingrained gender discrimination is by situating gendered issues and queries into the postcolonial conversation, and thus, forces postcolonial theorists to start tackling women's question in their theories.

Vera C. Mackie describes about the third world feminist movement that took place in Japan in the late 19th century. Women in Japan felt highly discriminated and marginalized and began to question the social class system of Japan during the 19th century regime of Japanese Emperor. Vera's book describes about the questions that Japanese women asked, they confronted and began to fight against the gender oppression that was trying to suppress their autonomy. The reason for including the Instance of Japanese feminist movement here is to show that women who live in a community which is homogenous and women live homogenous kind of live as women from western/white cultures live but still have different experiences as women from another continent. There are different social structure and socio cultural conducts that takes place in Japan which might seem subjugating to women in the eyes of western feminist but what third world feminist seems to be arguing here is that it is necessary for people to respect the culture but also at the same time it is also important to try to make it sure that women in any place must not be excluded just because of gendered ideologies.

Chilla Bulbeck another feminist argues that postcolonial feminism attempts to battle for parity of the sexes through the policy of equal pay, equal prospects, reproductive civil liberties, and educational rights. She further writes that these rights must be provided to third world women unconditionally as it is extremely difficult for third world women to get access to these facilities, women and girls in East-Asia are undergoing a different kind of life may never be able to understand the definition of freedom for women belonging to western countries and United states is very different than the definition of freedom from women and girl in Asia, Africa and middle Eastern countries. Sherine Hafez, author of "An Islam of Her Own: Reconsidering Religion and

Secularism in Women's Islamic Movements", describes the ways in which Islam suppresses basic human rights of women in the name of religion. She in the article opines that when women in Islam protests for their rights and initiate to raise their voices against rigid Islamic patriarchal religious forces, women are often suppressed by their Islamic religious laws that favour men. Hafez points out that how after centuries after advent of Islam women are still forced to live within the religiously constructed roles. She opines that Islam is forcing women to endure to be unassertive and protected, hereafter being termed as secularists. (Hafez, 2011).

The life of third world women is difficult and very different than the life of first world or western women and when one observe minutely within the discourse of Postcolonial feminism one finds that the even within postcolonial feminism there are some sections which have been discussed seldom, infrequently and have been often left meagrely spoken, one such category of the negligence is diaspora feminism and even within the diaspora feminism the ignorance towards the diaspora experience of Indian diaspora women. When one discuss about Indian diaspora women and their experience as migrant entity, one often restricts oneself only to the reading of new or recent migration from India and the position of women in first generation after the advent of post- liberal economy and migration, thus, it integrates the saga of women on move from recent times. Within Indian diaspora feminism the mention of old Indian diaspora women and the recent development of women from old Indian diaspora community fails to grasp the attention of the academicians in Indian diaspora feminism. Thus, the entire Indian diaspora feminism spectacles how the existing school of feminism have failed to accommodate various communities and strands of women, how it has excluded women

who do not follow the majoritarian school of feminism, and how it excludes the women who plunge outside of the experiences of prevalent feminism.

Indian Women in Diaspora:

R. Radhakrishnan in his Manuscript *Diasporic Mediation* (1996) discusses about the position of Indian diasporic women and various gender issues which are often left unspoken in wider discussions of diaspora studies. He proposed and advocated a theoretical approach which must be exclusive to focus on various aspects of gender. He made an analysis of Partha Chatterjee's proposed model of nationalism and its disapproval of the dichotomy of westernized nations and nativist ones⁴³.

The dichotomy of one verses the other often reduces the other into non-significant entity when one uses expressions of public against private, modernity versus timelessness, and when it is specially used into the context of male versus female, this reduces the gender female into essentialized identities. The identities of women are always constructed on the nation's linear route from feminine prey who are always victims of male atrocities and achieves a position of goddess for the benefit of masculine nation state. Chatterjee in his book demonstrates the history of colonial India he outlines various phases, progress and developments from anticolonial to postcolonial India and the spirit of nationalism at every juncture of history. He opines that there is continuously a feeling amid nation state to protect one's identity as a nation, and its cultural identity and when it is threatened by outside forces like the invasion of colonial power, in these circumstances the indigenous community becomes more protective to saviour its identity.

⁴³Chatterjee Partha. *The nationalist resolution of the women's question*. issue: occasional 94, Publisher: Rutgers University Press, Pages: (233-253), 1990

Radhakrishnan argues that aboriginal occupied, societies discrete the material from the spiritual, the material is the axiomatic territory of “outside,” knowledge of science and technology, of commerce which is occupied by west which exercises its power over these domain and East succumbed to it and failed at it. The inside the “spiritual “which is often considered to be the space of the other and women are manifested to be the agents of inner, the spiritual arena, that west has attributed to east, for being weak to tackle the outside the masculinistic arena in such political scenarios “Woman becomes the allegorical name for a specific historical failure: the failure to coordinate the political or the ontological with the epistemological within an undivided agency” (Radhakrishnan, 1996, p. 195). Further Radhakrishnan (1996) argues: “This failure is both essentially gendered and unavoidable, as the model itself seemingly forecloses the possibility of alternative national identities. The internal or ‘native’ identity can only be ahistorical, apolitical, and static. Reading national identity in these gendered term means that if the nation is, as Benedict Anderson⁴⁴ argued, an imagined community, then as Chatterjee notes, [e]ven our imaginations remain forever colonized” (p. 195).

Further the book *Diaspora & Hybridity* (2005), gazes on what may be described as the ‘significant minutiae’ of Diasporas within dynamics relating to gender, ethnicity/race, class, life-stage and sexuality. This book refutes the western norm of thinking of diasporic women as a homogenous category and says that this constructed stereotype has been challenged and questioned by the third world postcolonial feminists like Inderpal Grewal, Norma Alarcon, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Valerie Smith, Hortense Spillers etc. who have challenged the values of heterosexual and patriarchal

⁴⁴ Benedict Anderson in his book *Imagined Communities* (1984) coined this concept of imagined community where he believes that a nation is a community socially constructed, imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group.

conventions, which more often than not are buttressed by the state, by highlighting “the centrality of racial and class formations in the constitution of gender itself” (Hutynuk et.al.,2005,p.51).

The book evaluates the gendered dimensions of migration and the symbolic imagery that is deployed, distinguishing men and women in the migration and settlement process. In this process, women become both the creators of the ties that bind as well as the carriers of culture. (Hutynuk et.al. 2005, p. 52). Alison Murray⁴⁵ as quoted in the book observe that now many women are involved in mass migration in human history, the majority are employed on a contractual basis as foreign domestic workers (the ‘maid trade’) in situations which often involve debts, exploitations and sexual abuse” (Murray in Hutynuk and Kalra, 2005, p.52).

Arjun Appadurai (1996) in his *Modernity at large*, discusses about the role of women that is constructed in diaspora, he argues that cinema is creating a site of negotiation of cultural space in diaspora. In diaspora the savouring of national identity and tradition becomes an essential motive when it’s often questioned and interrogated by host community. Cinema is one such medium that provides diaspora a connecting dot, however, Appadurai questions the essentialized roles and gendered illustrations that Bollywood exhibits. Appadurai opines that Bollywood demonstrates essentialism in general and it further essentialized the identity of women. Women characters in Bollywood are still living in historical times, women in Bollywood are exhibited to be the sole career of their culture and tradition. They are all-sacrificing and do not have the

⁴⁵ Alison Murray is a renowned author from Scotland she says that the explosion in theoretical and historical scholarship on empires and imperialist discourses in the last decade is one part of a worldwide movement to come to terms with the facts and fantasies of colonial domination in different historical and geographical contexts.

concept of self when it comes to tradition and culture. Women in Bollywood are portrayed to be wearing traditional attire, draped in saree, wearing dot on their forehead.

Women portrayed in Bollywood are epitome of asexuality, they are not a sexual being, they only form liaison with men because they are forced in it by family and they take marriage to be a social duty. The repressed sexuality of women is directly proportioned with the honour of her family, the more repressed it is the more the honour of the family is eulogised. Bollywood embellished these women characters with few more virtues of chastity and virginity. Women characters are often to be taken care of they are always under supervision of either their father, brother, husband or son. Women are never independent bold, living, speaking beings who are left free to experience sexual freedom.

Women are represented as chaste, her chastity and honour of her family is solely a responsibility of women to take care of, but when it has to be put into in actuality in diaspora such cultural spaces comes under conflicts, in their ideal to attain a fine balance between tradition and femininity.⁴⁶ Such essentialized interpretation of South-Asian femininity that idealizes women in saree in her traditional role with repressed sexuality often leads to various conflicts amid diaspora families where women becomes the sole victims of such essentialized discourses, where in diaspora women are expected of idealize these Bollywood role of being traditional women to be an epitome of tradition and culture as demonstrated in Bollywood.

⁴⁶<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/cujas/SATHIAN.pdf>. Accessed date: 07/06/2017.

In his *Modernity at Large*, Appadurai (1996) states that:

“the honor of women becomes increasingly a surrogate for the embattled communities of males, while their women in reality have to negotiate increasingly harsh conditions of work ... deterritorialized communities ... may enjoy the fruits of ... capital and technology, [but] have to play out the desires and fantasies of these new ethnoscaapes, while striving to reproduce the family as microcosm of culture” (Appadurai, 1996, p.45).

Further Avtar Brah (1996), in her manuscript *Cartographies of Diaspora*, illustrated about the problems of patriarchal racism in the south-Asian community in Britain. Brah stated that colonial policy on issues concerning the position of women were filled with contradictions. When they liberalized the law on some issues there were many policies that were still existing with disparities and these policies were exclusively enforcing gender inequality or many of the policies were too oppressive for women. The British created a system into which the position of women were systematically integrated such that the gendered positions negotiated with British imperial ideology. There was a discourse on Asian women in Britain around post world war II that described Asian women as submissive, delicate, passive, and flaccid and victims, of traditional patriarchal practices of their own men that often the migrant community brought with it from their homeland. These racial and sexual representations created various problems that Asian women confronted due to over simplification of their identities.

The immigrant women from Asian countries were considered as threats to Britain because British government figured out that due to the Arrange marriage system of Indian societies, massive number of immigrants were inflowing in Britain and in order to

curtail that British governments brought various immigration rules. The immigration rules were brought in five times started from the year 1969 to the year 1983, during this period of time countless immigration rules were brought into force, some were altered in each immigration policy. However, the rules that were created were primarily focused to restrict black and Asian immigration. In a petition filed in the year 1985, in the verdict of European commission of human rights, it was said that the British policies that were bring into force were discriminating and mostly restricts selected migrants, and the rules were discriminating especially concerning to women, thus, it discriminated women on the grounds of sex.

In response to that, British government was forced to amend the immigration policies and claimed that the forthcoming rules would bring equal opportunity of migration to women. But implicitly the rule made it impossible for men to sponsor their wife or fiancée. Migrant women were made to go through strict scrutiny at the airports or British ports of entry. Women were forced to go through various tests, they were forced to produce a certificate of marriage that exhibited that the marriages were genuine, however, the marriage system of Indian community at that period of time didn't produce any certificates as such and most of the marriages were traditional ritualistic marriages. But British didn't agree to recognise such marriages as a result of that many couples were put under excruciating forms of investigation.

There were various reports of harassments and after various complained British government claimed that they have discontinued the rigorous scrutiny. But even after the claim there were many cases where, to quote, "Asian women being subjected to 'virginity tests', and Asian children to x-ray examinations in order to establish their age" (Brah,

1996, p.75). As a result of such hostility and biased immigration policies there were so many children and wives who could not unite with their families in Britain. There were so many separated women and children waiting for their turn but never got the chance. There have also been many cases where Asian women and children legally settled and living in Britain were forced to leave country due to new immigration policies. There were many husbands and wives whose families broke because of various discriminatory British anti-Asian immigration policies. There were wives and children who were liable to deportation because they were living in Britain after the death of the husband with children, they were coerced to live the country too, innumerable divorced wives were subjected to deportation because they were alone and Indian women had to have a husband, who would sponsor her.

Thus, the image of Asian women as dependant, passive, meek, docile, always under the constant surveillance of Asian men worked as a basis for deportation from Britain. British government considered women as mere liability who wouldn't contribute much to their economy. Although various feminist groups raised their voices against the forceful deportation but as the voices were mostly raised from western feminist who implicitly adhered to the Eurocentric descriptions attributed to Eastern women or their world women.

The manuscript *Tracing Indian Diaspora* (2008) offers a comprehensive assessment of Meena Alexander as a postcolonial feminist poet. She in her literature and writings provides interesting illustrations of experiences of women immigrant though her various poems and fictions she explicates the prejudices that women confront in the sphere of diaspora, when a woman migrates and neo-colonial western world and its

environments provides one with a sense of rootlessness and placelessness that ultimately turns diaspora subject into self-enquiry and migrants amid multiple crossings are left with nothing but an in-between space where they feel unfamiliar in home and host both the locations. Her manuscripts discuss about such issues where characters are straddling through multiple spaces of negotiations and affiliations. In her novel *Fault lines*, Meena Alexander says, to quote (1993): “I am a women cracked by multiple migrations, uprooted so many times she can connect nothing with nothing” (Alexander, in Sahoo et.al., 2008, p.392). She stretches a hackneyed prevue of Indian cultural practices and gender relations and its operation in diaspora sphere. In *Shock of Arrival* (1996) Alexander professes, that “the Shock of Arrival is multi-fold-what was born in the mind is jarred, tossed into new shapes, an exciting exfoliation of the sense...what the immigrant must work with is what she must invent in order to live”(Alexander in Sahoo et. al., 2008, p.393).

She further articulates stating that this shock demonstrates the question of race, ethnicity, gender and nationality. And these questions are arbitrary signs to be contested and swotted so that one can revisit oneself anew, give oneself a new beginning away from the conventional tropes that discursively governs the life of ‘other’⁴⁷. She scripts about the psychology of migrant women, who feigned madness because the spaces that they are put into create a space for madness where women are put under surroundings that could drive one insane due to multiple violence that occurs in that maddening sphere. She opines that these maddening spaces are in a way providing women with an agency to

⁴⁷ The word other is used in context of othering of a community that doesn’t fall within the meta-narrative of grand identity of a monolithic nation.

rewrite their voices, experiences, histories and anecdotes that are often eclipsed into oversimplification.

Furthermore one can infer that women in diaspora have been found to be undergoing a transitional phase from centuries from generation to generation. The relative autonomy that women had during the inception of indentured system resided temporarily into the lives of indentured women. Researches and studies carried out on Indian diaspora women demonstrates that women were veiled under multifarious prevalent stereotypes created around them which reveals the inherent gender prejudices predominant amongst the Indian immigrant communities. Scholars Brah, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Radhakrishnan R., and several more critics from diaspora feministic study have argued that women suffered in migration by multiple patriarchies due to stereotypical gendered representations of these women. The dominant male ideology that often provided a subservient position to the Indian diasporic women.

Indian diasporic feminism especially the diaspora community of women from old Indian indentured diaspora is one of the significant area of critical study which has received almost no mention in the broader discourse of postcolonial feminism. The reason behind this negligence within postcolonial feminism is due to the similar kind of treatment that postcolonial feminists have received from Western feminists and they somehow adopted the identical approach for old Indian diasporic feminism too. Universalizing the experiences of third world women by the first world feminist raised a furore in throughout the third world countries where feminists from these geographies blamed western feminists for excluding the voices of third world women by attributing

then with certain universal characteristics. However, when third world feminism bloomed, it began to follow the similar pattern of excluding the marginalized voices from predominant postcolonial feminist voices by excluding the voices of old Indian diaspora women until they came on the fore and began to assert their identities. This act of postcolonial feminism explicates a similar attitude of generalization that postcolonial women raised their voice against.

The sea voyage made by Indian indentured labourer women is one of the important area of critical inquiry which needs more scholarly attention. The struggle, oppression, resistance, development and vicissitudes that this community is going through have found barely any significant place into the broader discourse of postcolonial feminism. The migration and transoceanic journey taken up by Indian indentured women that changed the life of Indian diasporic women forever and impacted their cultural and political position in the system of power, have been eclipsed by various factors that existed within postcolonial feminism where on the one hand it claimed to have included each and every experiences of postcolonial experience blames western feminists for not being able to include the experience of non-white non-western women but postcolonial feminist from south-Asian, African or mainstream Diasporas have done the same with the women of old Indian diaspora.

Writers and theoretician who belong to old Indian diasporic society argue that women writers from old Indian diaspora have been subjected to various literary and cultural marginalization by either the mainstream women writers from the host countries, that are homeland of these women or by the mainstream diasporic Indian women authors or theoreticians living in Europe and America and have freshly migrated from Indian

unlike old Indian diasporic women who trace their roots from India that goes to centuries back. They are of the view that within postcolonial feminism the hegemony works quite explicitly where authors, theoreticians are given importance according to their place of belonging. The writers and literary figures puts it that, their enormous contribution which is one hope for these women to speak to the world about their identity and history have been totally overlooked. They find anthologies, theory books and historical studies completely forgetting their part in the world, their anecdotes, their struggle the dehumanizing conditions through which their ancestors were made to live. In context of writings from old Indian diaspora women one can say their writings and literature have brought a different world on the front altogether, to quote: “their work has explored the complexities of female subjectivity or self- representation in societies undergoing sociocultural and political transition as a result of indentureship, creolization and postcolonial realities such as immigration and neocolonial regimentation” (Mehta, 2004, p. 1).

Until very recently the experiences of these women were if at all they were there, were the product of the authorship of male writers and women have been given traditional and stereotypical roles to play, Writers like V.S. Naipaul, Sam Salvon, Rohinton Mistry have, although discussed the old Indian diasporic women but women in those characters have been often the subject of clichéd representation. Either the women characters are justifying the traditional roles bestowed to them or they are symbolizing another form of patriarchy, Mrs Tulsi is one such character from *A House for Mr Biswas*, a patriarch who completely dominates each and every member of her family. The women from old Indian diaspora are often the object to literary negligence, various archetypical

images still operates around the personality of women from old Indian diaspora, Even today the women from old Indian indentured diaspora are observed and perceived as slaves of thousand years of old Indian patriarchy and these misconceptions are often formed about these women without even having a proper understanding of it. They are still considered to be backward, submissive, and still battling with traditional patriarchy and trying to come out of it. Haniff Nehsa (1999) argues that:

“While our politician keep busy themselves with race politics, gender does not seem to be an issue the advocacy for males always takes precedence over females, more so over Indian females. Perhaps our advocates are not Indian men. Their chauvinism expresses itself in violence and in silence. They advocate for us only in the private sphere. Thus, do Indian men keep us invisible and perpetuate certain stereotypes about us” (p.26).

Indian indentured diasporic feminism like other schools thoughts as postmodernism and feminism has prominent key features, and phases which broadly and clearly defines it and their movements are different historical junctures of developments of Indian indentured diasporic feminism. The first phase of its development could be traced back from the inception of indentured labour system and the position of Indian women in the whole power discourse. The first phase was a time in which situation of women was the most marginalized, women were recently migrating to unknown, to places they never thought of. Although marginalized but they learnt resistance from their poor hostile conditions in India. Women in this phase though marginalized but demonstrated a great vigour of confrontation.

Women authors and theoreticians argue that there had been revolutions, changes and development in the history of Indian indenture women but these revolutions and movements found counted reveal in postcolonial studies, Sociologists Rhoda Reddock, Patricia Mohammed and Historian Verne A. Shepherd, mentions about the position of Indian Indentured diasporic women in their socio-cultural environment, they clearly mention that Indian indentured women were not the always victims as portrayed and they struggled and battled hard to negotiate their terms in plantation. They raised their voice against the injustices and discriminations that were taking place in plantation on political and social level both even though they were a minority in plantation colonies they fought against the unequal wages that were given to men and women, Indentured women argued that even though they performed similar tasks as men they were paid lower wages and were often cheated and misguided in the contract. This was a kind of discrimination that they were facing in the hand of colonial masters, another kind of discrimination that women were going under by the men of their own community who treated women with disrespect and the incidents of rape, uxoricide and domestic violence were high in the personal sphere. Women who claimed sexual freedom and choices were often attributed to have quality of a witch women with low character and morally corrupted.

This phase could also be termed as the phase of recent crossing of *Kala Pani*, and the rupture of which created sense of assertion, agency and identity in women of plantation. The women who migrated from India had never realized the sense of self or agency they had been living the life of marginalization and oppression in India. Migrated as Independent women, widow, accompanying wife and daughters these women put their feet on the new land in hope of creating a new life for them a life full of hope,

possibilities in new land to create a new lifestyle. Brinda Mehta, speaks in context of Caribbean, To quote, “ this breaking of new ground through the search for new channels of self-affirmation characterises much of the contemporary Indo-Caribbean female writing that articulates a particular *Kala Pani* discourse as a literary grid of (self) knowledge and creation to negotiate otherness” (Mehta, 2004, p.4).

While crossing of *Kala Pani* was a sign of losing Hinduness and the purity for Hindu male the women from the community took it quite positively because they had most gain from the crossing because they were already facing hardship violence and trauma into the hands of various patriarchal forces working around d them thus, “enduring the hardship of *Kala Pani* was a worthwhile risk to take” (Mehta, 2005, p. 5), as it offered women a ray of hope through which they could attain a life which they did not have a chance to have in homeland.

Brinda Mehta in her book *Diasporic (Dis)locations* debates about the discourse of Kala Pani in Caribbean context, she argues that, the discourse of *kala pani* worked as a landmark in the entire question of women and their identity because it provided women with a tool to assert them, to quote, Mehta (2004):

“The *kala pani* has provided them with an initial script to negotiate the simultaneous ambiguities, contradictions affirmations and contestations involved in subjective representation. By naming a culturally identifiable women centred experience, in the process of self-discovery, the *kala pani* Discourse uncovers a literature that emerges from a nexus that has been silenced objectified and marginalized. Coming to writing represents an act of self-asserting and recovery, giving voice as it does to a previously unarticulated Caribbean Reality in which

Indo-Caribbean women have had to confront a triple dislocation within the power structures of history, Culture and gender inequality by inhabiting the very, “margins of marginality”, as indicated by Rosanne Kanhai. However, within the parameters of literature Indian women have addressed the issue of marginality and invisibility by creating imaginative works out of historical and socio-cultural obscurity”(p.6-7).

The idea of *Kala Pani* with mobility and how women negotiated with it is one of the important experiences of women in indentured community not only the discourse of *Kala Pani* crossings have formed an essential part of the life of women in indentured who were migrating from India but also it provided a necessary base of understanding to mediate with one’s identity as women in Indian diaspora who were migrating to other countries from indentured land to new lands. The women who migrated during the time of indentured faced an ambiguous transgression which included within it a fear of crossing at the cost of betrayal to their homeland, also at the cost of social ostracism they entered in a discursive zone of multiple patriarchy which was ready to fly its wings and eclipse indentured women out of their movements and life of mobility.

However, the multiple subjectivities that indentured women occupied as a result of migration brought them to a position of empowerment and oppression at the same time, the empowering positionality that women acquired were their autonomy to have a self-fulfilling life, sexual assertion, and away from the land of rigid patriarchal system but at the same time they were oppressed by a different kind of patriarchy which discursively governed them to succumb to the power of colonization in which patriarchal

ideologues were an intricate part of the rules that were administering lives of labourers in plantation.

During later stage of indentured, as a result of various alterations and modifications by British policy makers these women got a chance to settle in the colonies that they were brought into and it was during that period, when women achieved relative autonomy. Nevertheless it didn't sojourn for long as in order to create a new India in plantation Indian men began to go back to invoke their Indian roots which hardly provided autonomy to women and further corroded the independence that women were getting in plantation as a temporary single women worker. Patricia Mohammed views this phenomena as a new kind of patriarchy which was born in plantation and it was neither the Indian nor the western form of patriarchy it was a muddle of both which further subjugated women.

Mostly the brunt of subjugation and oppression took its highest impact on the second generation of Indian diasporic Indentured women; this can also be termed as second weave of Indian Indentured feminism, women in this phase in post-indentured era were observed to be governed by both hegemony of home and host the gendered biases of both the communities were trying to oppress these women but these women due to the abolition of indentured labour system had certain level of autonomy, though still governed by various patriarchal forces. These women could negotiate about their social and cultural identity, these women had their say in familial matter and they were also playing the role of decision makers in house when it came to take decisions about their children.

This generation of women have found almost no say and place in the literature of indentured either by men or rarely by women, these women have often been left out. They have received meagre critical attention from the literary critics they have never played the role of protagonist or never formed the major theme of any theoretical inquiry. *Butterfly in the Wind* by Lakshmi Persaud has instance of these Characters Kamala's mother is one of the vibrant examples of such characters, she is independent yet dependant on her husband, free yet bound by her regressive Hindu traditional roles, and vocational but still not the sole bread earner of the family, important but yet not the matriarch image in a family. (Persaud, 1990)

The other example of identical character is Mona's mother from *The Swinging Bridge* of Ramabai Espinet, her mother is educated and has her opinion about everything but when it comes to decision making her mother do not have the authority to question her father. We see that Indian diasporic women who trace their roots from Indenture have a dissimilar literary piece to showcase to world, the historical and recent developments that occurred in their community communicates that there was another institution of slavery but carefully filtered from history. Their writings foreground the hidden life of an ethnic community and their experiences past and present. The writings raises completely diverse issues of migration apart from the usual interrogation into gender and identity in migration space. (2003)

Rosanne Kanhai, discussed about old Indian diaspora community, she opined that in this community, to quote, Kanhai (1999):

“Creativity is developing in an environment of social justice, helping to identify and justice. In this regard, the writer assumes the unusual position of working

alongside the social advocate, helping to identify and discuss openly what her society continues continue to repress in acts of social and historical amnesia, and through models of feminism... evolving within history and experience of the group” (p. 211).

Third Phase of Indian indentured diasporic feminism provides novel a new kind of gendered perspective on the lives of women whose life is governed by multiple patriarchal forces, indenture, indigenous culture, the culture of host land, further migrations to newer lands and the most important the patriarchy of colonization. Their theories on gendered history of plantation and the hybrid and bastard, dougla culture which have been created due to various negotiation of these women with different culture, community, gender and politics makes it an interesting area of study which need more scrutiny and critical attention by the research scholars and academicians.

The issue of dougla, creolized plural identity is one of the integral part of the writings of women from old Indian indentured diaspora is one of the key theme that I am exploring in my research. Women who consider them to be going through multiple identities consider themselves to be the part of their life. Due to multiple migrations or multiple identities they find it difficult to associate them with any set of institutionalized or defined identity set. This phase of writings mostly show or negotiate with the experiences of women on move or women going through migrations and their defying nature to battle against the religious and patriarchal restraints which multifariously oppress them. Rosanne Kanhai, Shalini Puri and Sheila Rampersad⁴⁸ conferences about

⁴⁸ This particular diaspora community uses the term dougla in the context of multiple mixing that is a normal phenomenon extremely common now a days in multiple migrant communities. Due to the racial, social, cultural and political mixing this community has attained a hybrid identity, for which this community uses the term Dougla,

the racial mixing and creation of a new identity and how due to that mixing the usage of the term dougla has been accepted to be a natural idiom and does not contain or carry any negative connotation with it, as originally it was used as a negative word for impure blood. Term dougla is used as literary trope a Hindi word for Bastard, Shalini Puri favours the term dougla and support the usage of it in order to define ones identity to be multifarious, which Rosanne Kanhai Favoured too. With the use of the term dougla Indian women in diaspora assert their multiple malleable, fluid identities which are beyond any set of definition to define. Many authors, theoreticians and writers in this category associate them not just with one singular identity but rather the affiliation extends itself with multiple identities. Women who associate themselves with multiple identities claim that their identity is complex and nuanced so in order to understand their identity one must have a deep understanding of the concept of cultural and national identity.

Shani Mootoo is one of these writers who claim to have multiple roots and a person who have taken multiple routes in her journey. She is the product complex cultural identities, she considers her to be a “Cultural Bastard” a woman on move. She has history of multiple migrations born in Ireland with Indo-Guyanese parents and then her journey to Canada. She explains that her multiple identities are the result of her multiple experiences that she had encountered as bastard diaspora subject, where she is neither recognised as Indian or Guyanese or Canadian, she has achieved an ambivalent position of ‘nowherian’ identity. Further like Mootoo, Ramabai Espinet also considers her identity to be the product of multiple affiliations. She has multiple roots and history

(in Hindi) which means bastard. This community associate its multiple associations of identity with such multifaceted emotions and pronounce that they are the product of multiple experiences as diaspora subjects.

of multiple negotiations with multiple culture and her ambiguous identity which is 'nowherian' and ambivalent. She opines that having Indo-Trinidadian-Canadian Identity and her associations with multiple national or cultural roots gives her a different identity altogether. In almost all of her fictions, her characters are straddling between multiple psychological conflicts and dilemma; they are struggling to attain a sense of belonging but are clueless and are often marginalized. And due to their multiple self they are also facing multiple hostilities from various cultural that they are exposed to.

Thus, to conclude one can say that women centric, fictions, historical narratives, biographies, autobiographies and folklores that exist in Indian indentured women diaspora, needs further critical and scholarly attention, the paucity of intellectual meditation midst this diaspora feminism often miss out the existence of minority or marginalized group of women even within this community. Hence it is high time the intellectuals from diaspora community begin to pay more and more attention towards the group of women who form the minority position. And also it is important for the present postcolonial women authorship to embrace Indian diaspora feminism to be one of the imperative area of feminism into the broader canon of postcolonial feminist literature.

Chapter: 4

**Identity and Accommodation in Indenture: Reflections from
Peggy Mohan's *Jahajin* (2007)**

Budding as an effervescent subgenre that includes a broad array of milieu, perspectives, socio-political veracity and aesthetic style Indian women from old Indian diaspora, who trace their ancestries from Indentured labour system, are creating cultural customs of writings that have been obscured into misrepresentation or oversimplification of experiences of ethnic Indian diaspora women. Indenture histories are filled with explicit incidences of exclusively male centred historiography, from where the histories of women have been voluntarily filtered from a larger discourse of indenture history.

Invisibility, historical silencing, obscurity, paucity of narrative and testimonies are some of the strategic features of history of Indentured labourer women in special context to history of Indian diaspora women in indenture labour system. When one makes an endeavour to skim through the accounts of women into indentured labour system, he/she is bound to find that their accommodations at various historical juncture as single women migrants have found inadequate attention. The data that are available provide an atypical and limited subjective reference related to women in broader discourse of diaspora studies. And when one attempts to collect the micro snippets of the history of indentured labourer women, she/he finds nothing except some stereotypical roles that are assigned to women in certain historical fictions and literature from texts authored by male.

Traditionally, as it is said, history encompasses a lot of information about the progress and development that takes place at a particular time in a community and that is how various histories are inscribed, but when that history itself becomes biased and gets inscribed from a subjective perspective, it becomes highly impossible to receive or retrieve true information. The similar kind of prejudices and biasedness could be perceived if we look into the history of Indian indentured women too. When one attempts to flick through the historical data related to indentured women migration that took place from India, she/he finds that these documents have often been carelessly handled, mostly distorted and poorly written in which information are incomplete, numerous columns left unfilled and descriptions often ambiguous.

Due to paucity of information on history of indentured women in plantation, one finds that the mode of feminist historiography and counter archival process is fraught with methodology of recovering histories and voices where women historian and theorist are often found to be labouring hard by collecting testimonies, folklore, oral literature, and family histories in order to create a canon or for framing a theoretical framework for diaspora feminism in context of Indian indentured labour women. When one analyses the fictions and writings by women authors who write about indentured labour feminism, the narrative explicates pattern for connecting the various strings of histories. Women authors tend to be following a typical pattern of connecting the dots. In the narratives, of such literature, the protagonists of indentured fictions or historical writings are usually young women, who are mostly found to be tracing the histories of their community or family and the story develops in a flashback mode. Mostly in this narrative mode time and again complex and multiple histories compel these young women to take an

excursion into the past and in the present life of diaspora community, and through this process these women try to recover the histories of indentured women and create a new space for theoretical negotiation for indentured labourer women, their history, and present social stratum.

The history of indentured women is eclipsed and silenced by the patriarchal discourses which, due to its inherent prejudices, did not substantiate the contributions of women in indenture labour system. Their minority status in plantation system due to which they often fall prey to various abuses, their status as multiple marginalized gender, their resistance, indomitable spirit, their struggle and battle to attain gender equality, freedom and empowerment amid multiple marginalization seldom find mention in the historicity of Indentured labourer system. The historical act of indentured women who dared to move beyond the *Kala Pani*, their voyage the hardship that they encountered during the journey have found no significant mention in Indian indentured diaspora history.

Multiple-migrant Indian diasporic feminism took its birth as a result of the experiences of people who migrated to various plantation colonies due to colonial British policy of importing labour from Asian countries after the abolition of slavery. Discussions about identities related to multiple migrations can't be developed without mentioning plantation history. Even though British Raj claimed that living condition in plantation were well maintained, however, it was just an outward sham and real circumstances in plantation were marked by extreme dehumanization and the situation of indentured labourer was miserable, morbid and full of gloom irrespective of any location, geography or country.

Indentured labour system was a system that deprived indentured labourers off of their basic human rights and their basic needs, their mobility and movements were policed and were restricted, their freedom to move outside the plantation was strictly prohibited and monitored. The labourers were not allowed to cross the threshold of plantation without permission from their British overseer. Labourers were living in a prison like environment and if they moved, there were serious repercussions of it in form of various physical, psychological and economic punishments for instance their wages were cut as fine, they were made to work for free without any ration. The labourers were bearing with this prison like status where they were forced to abide like culprits of certain crime and were punished for that certain crime about which they had absolutely no clue. One can't overlook to mention Foucault here, who argues that discipline and punishments are integral part of modern societies. Foucault points out that policing, regulation, surveillance, are fundamental body to govern, and it is a powerful tool of predominant discursive practices, that dominates the power discourse. He further opines that in modern times power is exercised and practiced by various methods of control. It is psychological and physical both in nature and it is largely exercised by punishment techniques such as prisons, military, schools, hospitals etc. (Foucault, 1977).

The similar techniques of power were exercised by British government against Indian indentured labourers, wherein women were fronting through multiple such power discourses. Without keeping much consideration of gender, colour, class, caste, and age in mind most of the labourers were thrown in the vacant, murky, muted barracks abandoned by the slaves. Without even considering and respecting the cultural, religious and traditional idiosyncrasies labourers were coerced to performs tasks that were

considered as sin according to their religious beliefs. The over-crowded barracks, unhygienic surroundings and murky dwellings that were provided to indentured labourers were agonizing to breathe in. Further, indentured labourers became victims into the hands of British colonial system that threw them into inhumane conditions. Workers were made to toil hard on a low wage, heavy fines for being absent and rarely any leave. There were poor health facility and no leave was granted even if someone was sick due to long hazardous working hours. The journey to return back to home was a dream to think beyond as the labourers were already under debt due to low wage and heavy fine imposed upon them. It didn't matter after a point of time if the worker wanted to work or not as the helpless circumstances compelled the workers to verve and slog in the field for their survival.

The next major issue of indentured labour system was the position of women, who were already one third of the male population, thus, a minority. This unequal gender ratio has often been raised by feminist scholars and intellectuals of indentured Indian diaspora to be one of the principal factor working behind women's marginalized position. In reference to Caribbean in the year 1865, a mere number of 81 women arrived after 570 men to which Mahadai Das says that it is due to the unequal gender ratio that migrant women suffered. Mahadai Das, through her poems like "They Came in Ships" (1987), and "I want to be poetess of my people" (1976), discusses about women, the struggle, the pain and the oppression that indentured Indian women went through and their resistance against such patriarchal subjugations.⁴⁹ Due to minority status, women were not only victimised by the men of their own community but also they were treated as socially, economically and politically inferior to men. Indentured women were looked upon as

⁴⁹http://www.guyanajournal.com/women_gy.html, Accessed date, 06/05/2017.

women with loose moral and the sole reason why these women travelled and crossed *Kala Pani* was because of their social status as boycotted, untouchable women. The first generation of indentured women had to wage a battle against and confront various stereotypes and rumours that were weaved around them. They were assumed to be either *Rand*⁵⁰ (widows) or prostitutes and as a result of such taboo indentured women were treated with disrespect and looked down upon. This attitude can be easily observed in one of the incidents that happened in Fiji. During indentured labour system, this incident became a political issue. This incident took shape as international news, and was published by various newspapers too. This incident has been mentioned by Brij. V. Lal in his literary work *Chalo Jahaj* (2000). *Chalo Jahaji* exhibits the life of indentured women in British plantation of Fiji. He describes the life of women in indentured labour system and their negotiations with plantation patriarchy. In one of the stories that is entitled as “Kunti’s Cry”, Brij V. Lal takes an ostensibly slight occurrence of a coolie woman being attempted rape by a supervisor in plantation of Fiji. He describes about the attempt of colonizer, to be an implicitly ideologically governed discursive practice and a stereotypical racial attitude towards women of other race, and of minority status and attitude that women were treated with. An attitude of superiority for being white, who have the right to govern others based on racial and gendered lines, led to many such violence that women were being thrown into.

In the story Lal deconstructs many myths created around Indian women in plantation who were perceived as prostitutes migrated from India to plantation colonies. According to Lal these pre-conceived notions about women pushed women more towards

⁵⁰It is a Hindi word for women who are widow and it’s also used for women who have low characters.

vulnerability and they became more prone to sexual violence. He views that the whole idea of women and their vulnerability in plantation was the result of pre-conceived notions that were constructed about indentured women, and according to those notions women were perceived to be possessing loose moral values once they lose their husband and were object of sexual fantasies of male members of their in-law's family. He speaks that women who migrated were not all prostitutes but they were perceived to be one and that contributed in developing the negative attitude of their colonial masters and of their own men. Women were treated with disrespect and violence because men in plantation thought that these women had no moral values thus, they don't really need or deserve any respect. Women were mistreated and assaulted in plantation by men. It was not only Indian men from their own community but plantation masters too took advantage of the constructed image of Indian women with lose character and often raped, assaulted and attacked women taking them for granted. Whenever women complained about such assaults officials were derelict and paid non-serious attention thinking that such women might be accustomed to treatments of these kinds Thus, it was not important for Plantocracy to pay thoughtfulness to indentured women, and in explanation to their carelessness, plantation owners created some more stereotypical empirical myths in which British officials harangued that oriental women inherent traits and personalities that make oriental women sexually immoral, therefore sexual assaults might not have been the case, women themselves might have chosen for it.

In "Kunti's Cry", Brij V Lal has ruptured the idea of colonizer's myth, where they created the myth that oriental women, who migrated as labourers, were all prostitutes and all of them came from low castes that's why it is in their nature to be licentious and

immoral. He also disagreed to colonizers claim that sexual jealousy was one of the important features of oriental community and it's due to sexual jealousy that the death rates were high in Fiji plantation. Further the myth purported that men were possessed with extreme form of hatred towards women who deserted them for other men thus, men killed their women. In certain cases it happened that men couldn't bear the shame of being deserted and felt that their honour was lost which ultimately drove them to committed suicide. Plantation masters and officials argued that it was a vital trait among orients to get violent out of sexual jealousy and also to get emotional and commit acts of suicide because of this particular trait.

Lal demonstrates how, in order to justify oppression and domination of indentured labourer by their colonial master as a natural phenomenon, the plantocracy created myth about indentured labourers which made oppression to look as an integral part of plantation system. These myths were a certificate which made oppression of indentured legal. And especially in context of women, assault and hostile attitude towards women were common in plantation due to the most predominant myth that colonizers that altogether women migrant were prostitutes or from lower caste hence it was natural for these women to be pervert.

Lal, with instance of attempted rape of Kunti, exposes the condition of indentured women in plantation and explicates the casual attitude of plantation owners towards these women. Such inferior treatment to women in Fiji plantation is a symbol of oppression of the entire indentured women irrespective of the geographical location of their plantation. Lal has exposed the inherent biases of British government. He has illustrated that how, in

order to hide the loop holes that British government had in plantation system and their lack of understanding the nature and environment under which women were forced to live, they constructed random myths to justify their dehumanization. He argued that the environment in plantation was particularly extremely hostile towards women migrant and the reason that some women fell prey to dire circumstances was because of excessive hard work and less wage for their back breaking work. During sickness also these women were not given leave, as a result of absence in field their wages were deduced which often made the situation of women worst as they often didn't have money to feed themselves which ultimately forced a few women into prostitution.

The next myth which was constructed by colonizers was the myth that orients were committing suicide and killing their women out of sexual jealousy which was not the fault of their system rather it was a nature of orients to be excessive emotional. Lal argues in his "Kunti's cry" that the indentured labour system created a world which was dehumanizing the labourers in every way. The reasons which often forced men to commit suicide were extremely dehumanized living condition in which they were forced to live, narrow barracks which were over populated and were made for slaves, no facilities for sanitation, non-hygienic surroundings, lack of privacy, the quality of ration, amount of over work, back breaking day-night toiling in field, no holidays and no sick. These reasons were making the life in plantation extremely difficult to sustain and turned labourers to self-loathing and self-misery which created pessimism within and ultimately labourers found it easier to commit suicide and kill themselves rather than living a life which they often compared to hell (Narak) in various testimonies of indentured labourers.

Further Lal discussed that the reason why women were facing hostility and attack in plantation from their own men and also by various British officials was the disproportionate gender ratio in plantation. Women had ratio of 40 women / 100 men due to a quota system which was made compulsory by British government. But in a country like India where mobility of women were rare in that period of time, it was difficult for authorities to convince women to travel alone. Even the proposed ratio of 40 women against per 100 men was also not fulfilled many a times so they had to sail ships sometimes with only 15-16 women per 100 men which was unfortunately highly disproportionate ratio. In such circumstances women were vulnerable as they were minority they were multiple vulnerable and when they were lured into more wealth and prosperity by multiple men it often caused conflict. Thus, it was not sexual jealousy rather it was the ratio which created the scenes in which women were killed and beaten by their men for marrying another men or for running away with another men. Here one can observe that women, although in minority, were relatively independent in plantation because they had their autonomy to change their partner or to stay alone if they wished to. They were also enjoying their sexual agency in plantation owing to which they were not only choosing their partners but also freely rejecting the men whom they didn't want to live with or have a relationship with. This sexual agency of women often challenged the patriarchal values that men from their community inherited which ultimately resulted in extreme repercussions of women in form of murder, beating etc. even by their own men. Such incidents in plantation created a furore in homeland. Incidents of extreme exploitation of indentured labourers, attacks and assaults on women raised a serious concern among the people in homeland. Further Lal also refers to the political

effectiveness of the Kunti occurrence which helped to ignite an anti-indenture lobby in India, and due the Kunti incident one section in political party severely criticized the violence and atrocities which were inflicted by colonizers on indentured labourers. It gave birth to an anti-migration discourse in India which saw staid and concentrated campaign against the migration of Indian to plantations. Incident of attempted rape of Kunti was perceived and sounded differently. Different political parties interpreted it differently and a set of authoritative politicians exploited it severely for many political means only for their personal schema and objectives. To quote, Mishra (2003):

“In the end, however, it was an expression of all that was wrong with a labour system based on gender disproportion, narrow, barrack housing lacking in privacy, nonrecognition of customary, marriage practices, and collusion in the excesses of task-work that forced some women into prostitution”⁵¹ (Lal in Mishra, 2003, p. 225).

Lal, (2000) in his manuscript *Chalo Jahaji*, by his example of Kunti demonstrated, that the entire system of plantation was hostile to women and the way women were treated in plantation needed immediate attention. The indentured labour system has been called as “a new system of a slavery” by Hugh Tinker who argues that although the indentured labour system came into existence due to abolition of slavery and it was proposed by the British parliament to be a system of work which would not curtail the autonomy of workers, which would not be turned into life time slavery, where they would be provided with healthy working environment, would be paid apt wages, would be

⁵¹ Sudesh Mishra. *Chalo Jahaji: On a Journey through Indenture in Fiji* (review) Sudesh Mishra The Contemporary Pacific, Volume 15, Number 1, Spring 2003, pp. 224-226 (Review) Published by University of Hawai'i Press DOI: For additional information about this article Access provided by University of Hyderabad (28 Feb 2017 09:08 GMT) <https://doi.org/10.1353/cp.2003.0022>.

provided with freedom to practice their cultural, religious and social life in plantation and would be given sufficient rations and immediate medical facility. But plantation owners, who were used to keep slaves, were not in habit of respecting labourers and actually providing them with each and every facility proposed. As a result the indentured labours were forced to lead a life which was almost similar of the lives slaves were living. The barracks were the same, and number of members to be accommodated in each barrack was also same and no further facilities for bath or lavatory were provided to labourers. Their mobility was curtailed in plantation amid hazardous working hours and in case of health issue and inability to report for work their wage was expurgated.

Amid all of it women were suffering a lot due to multiple discriminations e.g. social, economic and sexual. They were considered weaker gender thus, were presumed to be working less than men and paid lower wages for performing the similar kind of task as men. Due to patriarchal attitude of colonizers, which looked down upon women, their hard work never got paid off accordingly. Due to long-strenuous working hours women often fell sick due to the lack of proper food as they were paid less. When it came to child birth, women were not given maternity leave and if they were not being able to come for work, their wages were deduced as a result often women had to leave their children at home and go to field to work. It raised the ratio of infant mortality in plantation where children were suffering with mal-nutrition and dying. Thus, the story of Kunti raised not just one issue but various layers of marginalization and discrimination that women were encountering in British indentured labour system.

The story of Kunti explicates the situation of women in indentured system by not only highlighting the dehumanizing condition of women but also by pointing out the extreme exploitation of women where they were degraded into being mere objects of colonizers' sexual fantasies. The incident of Kunti found its mention in various reputed newspapers in India and created outrage among people in home where this kind of degradation of women was severely criticized. Indentured women received mass support from homeland and Kunti's act of resistance and her act of coming out and speaking about it was highly appreciated and praised by the people in homeland. According to K.L. Gillion, Kunti received unconditional support from homeland and it created a strong movement in homeland against the migration of women to plantation. Even though Kunti hailed from lower cast Kunti, she was eulogised for her act of being brave in all of these incident⁵² (Gillion, 1963). One can argue here that the whole anti-immigration movement was highly politically motivated and nothing had been done in large scale to improve the circumstances of indentured women. In fact different political parties quoted and used this incident to gain narrow political mileage.

Various political parties were trying to gain politically from the anecdote of Kunti-the indentured woman and trying to portray indentured women as exploited subjects in plantation. Whereas women in their respective locations of indenture were not submitting to victimhood and accepting oppression rather they were coming up and speaking up boldly about the system of marginalization that was working around indentured women to dehumanize them by trying to take advantage of their minority status. Women were forced to migrate to such hostile circumstances from their homeland in order to escape

⁵²*Fiji's Indian Migrants—a History to the End of Indenture in 1920*. By K. L. Gillion. Oxford University Press, Melbourne. 1963. Pp. 1–234. Price 52/6 Aust.

financial trouble and hardship that made their life miserable in India. There were also many women migrants who migrated to escape domestic abuses and some escaped due to the fear of oppressive cultural practices that often restricted women and their mobility. Few women migrated and agreed to take up indentureship in order to avoid tough, intimidating and quarrelsome domestic life at home⁵³. Besides the reasons discussed previously there were also instances of kidnapping of women by the recruiters who fraught their mind with the dream of affluent wealth and prosperity. Women in India were already living a life of hunger and poverty due to biased economic policies of British government, their status as social outcast, epidemic and famine. Amidst such chaotic state when they were promised by the recruiters that the land where they are migrating would provide them copious amount of riches and food and they would be given a relaxing home with comfortable and friendly working conditions, to guess it fairly nothing might have sounded better to those who were already living in the reign of death that time.

Indo-Fijian Feminist scholar Shireen Lateef described about the way recruiters approached to various women. She opines that there were undoubtedly the cases of dupe and deceptions in which women were lured to. Lateef conferences about the journey of her grandmother to Fiji. Lateef (1987) illustrates that:

“While my grandmother was getting water from a well, a recruiter approached her and asked her whether she would like to go to Fiji, a faraway place where there was good weather, picturesque surroundings, easy work and plenty of food. Without telling anyone, she left with him immediately” (p. 2).

⁵³ The above idea has been centred around the argument that Brij V. Lal made at pg. 57

Further Brij V. Lal argues that after the arrival the life that was anticipated (as boon) turned out to be a bane for the indentured women. The circumstances which were proposed to women existed nowhere rather they were forced to live in poor living stipulation, marginalized to a minority consign and were subject to exploitations like physical sexual abuse, hostile working condition that made their life hell. They were also subjected to remunerations lash for squat attendance during serious situations of sickness and pregnancy (57). However these exploitative circumstances although frustrated indentured women but it did not let the spirit of indentured women down rather these assaults, discriminations and circumstances of ultra-exploitability triggered a strong feeling of resistance among indentured women which often resulted into mass movements against the exploitation of indentured labourers and often these movements were led by women.

Women whosoever migrated to plantations were often the victims of contractual deceptions. The reason for women to agree to migrate was that they were living a banished life in homeland and some of them became ready to migrate in order to run away from prosecution at home. Thus, migration worked to be an escape route for them to a new world, a world of hope and a new life.

The present chapter seeks to understand various negotiations of women from the old plantation Indentured diaspora. The chapter further argues that while women were undoubtedly confined by Indian patriarchal structures and were equally marginalized by colonial patriarchy but they resisted confinement and marginalization. The history of women in old plantation and their life during the indentured labour period have often

been silenced and marginalized due to the lack of scholarly attention towards this field of enquiry. The women during indentured and post-indenture were often exhibited the spirit of defiance. The early indentured women could be pronounced as agent of struggle and resistance in order to make an independent life. However, the life in plantation was an exemplary specimen of dehumanization and over exploitation of the 'other' gender who lived under sever exploitative condition. The life of indentured women was oppressed and governed by the patriarchs of home, host and colonial masters. There are instances of resistance by women that were the result of extreme unfriendly, hostile and ultra-exploitative condition of women in plantation which forced women to give violent reaction against the oppressive structure of plantation system which ultimately emerged forms of various resistance movements.

Recent studies, carried out on early indentured women, exhibits that women were historically silenced as there was privation of women writers, theorists and historians to unveil the history and struggle of the courageous indentured women who dared to cross the *Kala Pani* and survived odds of their lives hence bring forth the prime feministic spirit in the Indian diaspora. The indentured women are often evoked by the multiple migrant writers who recently took up the responsibility to narrate the anecdotes of their feminine ancestors and their life as indentured women coming from regressive and patriarchal Indian society to a more regressive, exploitative multiply marginalized society where their men forced them to create an India abroad that often turned into a pastiche of Indian society. The foundation of a new India in host country emerged out of the guilt of Indian men who were living under sin for crossing the *Kala Pani*. *But Kala Pani Crossings* turned out to be empowering for women as women were already excluded

from religious texts like *Manusmriti* that barred oceanic crossings for men, exclusively for Brahmin men. The religious treaties of *Manu Smriti*⁵⁴ that streaked oceanic crossings was exclusive in its approach as it describes only about high caste Brahmin men and how a Brahmin man would lose his caste, tradition and cultural identity if he happens to cross the ocean. According to the treaties of *Manusmriti*, if a righteous Brahmin man crosses the ocean, he would be punished by being fed along with prisoners and served by son of adulterous and he would not receive the rituals of annual appeasement of spirits (known as Shradha)⁵⁵ (a popular ritual among Hindu Brahmin from North India and is celebrated once in a year during the fortnight of the luni-solar month ashvin). These were the popular religious beliefs among Indians that governed their life amidst rampant poverty and heavy taxation imposed by British government. Epidemic caused by copious famine and draught made life difficult and living conditions hostile and morose in India. Thus, colonial masters provided the peasants with an alternative to wealth and luxury⁵⁶ but it was away from home. In the beginning there was reluctance but later deception, and helplessness often forced people into oceanic crossings.

⁵⁴Treaties of *Manusmriti*, was firstly exclusively laid its principal especially in context of ocean crossing with special reference to Brahmin men, who hold the highest position, whereas women, Shudra and other caste people were allowed to take up sea voyage, but with time this dictum became a taboo and in general crossing became a religious taboo. To quote, “ *Manusmriti*, (Written circa 200BCE, Chapter 3, Verse, 158) mentions the rules- if a Brahmin did cross the waters, he is to be denied a Shradha, (the annual appeasement of spirits-Shradha-serves to remind one at important times throughout one’s life that death does not sever the link between the present and the past, between the living and the dead). Such an offender is grouped with prisoners, sellers of soma, one who eats food given by the son of an adulteress, a bard, an oilman or a perjurer”. (<http://historicalleays.blogspot.in/2009/01/hindus-and-ocean-taboo.html>).

⁵⁵According to *Garuda Purana* and *Markendya Purana*, says that if ancestors are happy with Shradha they shower and bestow health, wealth, prosperity and longevity to the family. For more information visit the website, <http://www.astrospeak.com/slides/24-dos-and-donts-for-pitri-paksha-puja>. (date of access, 06/06/17)

⁵⁶ The term is used in reference to explain how recruiters described the plantation. According to testimonies of indentured labourers, recruiter illustrated that the land would provide them with immense wealth and luxury and they could earn innumerable wealth and can return to their home after accumulating wealth.

The *Kala Pani*, crossings is one of important marker in the history of indentured labour women. It is a symbol of independence that indentured women acquired due to their migration as single women. They transgressed their social and cultural boundaries in order to negotiate the new identity that they were attaining in plantation. According to sociologist Gabrielle Hosein (2013):

“I have stopped maintaining a claim to racialized, sexualized, feminized self. At times I identify with and reproduce these identities, and their hegemonic meanings, but I do so transgressively, playfully, seriously, rebelliously, performatively and unpredictably, in ways and as forms of power that I am still defining” (Hosein, in Mahabir et.al. 2013, p.153).

The idea of *Kala Pani* with mobility and how women negotiated with it is one of the important experiences of women in indentured community. The discourse of *Kala Pani* crossings not only have formed an essential part of the life of women in indentured who were migrating from India but it also provided a necessary base for understanding to mediation with one’s identity as women in Indian diaspora who were migrating to other countries- from one indentured land to new lands through succeeding generations. The women who migrated during the time of indenture faced an ambiguous transgression which included within it a fear of crossing at the cost of betrayal to their home land, also at the cost of inflicting social ostracism to themselves. They entered in a discursive zone of multiple patriarchy which was ready to spread its wings and eclipse indentured women, their movements, lives and mobility.

However, the multiple subjectivities that indentured women occupied as a result of migration brought them to a position of empowerment and oppression at the same time.

The empowering positionality that women acquired were their autonomy to have a self-fulfilling life, sexual assertion and away from the land of rigid patriarchal system but at the same time they were oppressed by a different kind of patriarchy which discursively governed them to succumb to the power of colonization to which patriarchal ideologues were an intricate part. Patricia Mohammed confirms that the indentureship and post-indentureship period put gender relations and norms, as well as constructs of masculinity and feminity that underpinned them, in flux. Moreover the sexual material and social liberties that women might have excreted or enjoyed necessarily affected, if not altered, male behaviours and this was invariably manifested in the male populations' sense of emasculation and loss of (an Urdu term for individual or group honour) *izzat*.⁵⁷

According to Mohammed, to quote: “a masculine assertion of power in Indian gender relations, and for a masculine definition of the Indian community to emerge in the contestations of patriarchy in the wider society in Trinidad” (Mohammed in Mehta, 2004, p.195). There was sense of cultural preservation existing in plantation society especially in men and women became one of the major tool to preserve culture and tradition. The control of men on women in the name of cultural preservation often ended into forceful violence that men tried to impose upon women and in order to preserve ethnic distinctiveness men often justified violence too. These attempts frequently curbed women's sexual agency and their sexual autonomy. Their sexual transgressions were vilified as the attempts of contaminating the sanctity of ancestral religious, traditional and cultural heritage.

During indentured era, one can observe various cases of wife beating, domestic abuses, uxoricide by men and these incidents were reported by the British officials to be

⁵⁷ Patricia Muhammad in Mahabir and Mariam Pirbhai, 2013, p. 29.

the result of sexual jealousy where men were deserted by women and they turned violent. Various reports by British officials also illustrate that men felt that women were playing with honour of their ancestral culture and tradition that's why men were often morally compelled to punish these women for their promiscuity. Thus, these acts of indentured men could be understood as an attempt of a ravaged, powerless patriarchy of Indian men to subjugate Indian women, their agency and sexual autonomy. In such circumstances violence against women was justified as purging of women who were morally corrupting Indian culture and identity. During this time in the indentured system women were attached with stigma of whoredom and witchery. Thus, they were pushed into marginality and excluded from patriarchal indentured history of Indian labourers.

There could also be another interpretation to this anecdote, however, one can't forget to mention Edward Said here, and whose theory of Orientalism changed the course of Eurocentric history. British officials wrongly wrote that entire killings and wife murder happened due to sexual jealousy where men felt powerless and out of frustration they murdered their women. There were also many cases in which men committed suicide and British officials claimed that men were committing suicide out of shame as their women were deserting them for another man and for that men felt ashamed and often resorted to suicide. However, their claims don't seem to be justifying all the cases in the entire process because the entire plantation system was filled with hostile dehumanizing experiences, where everybody was reduced into mere flesh and blood without being given any autonomy of their own. No vacation, hazardous working conditions, wage deductions even for absentee during sickness created morbidity and gloom in the minds of indentured labourers. Due to wage deduction labourers often ran

into debts to make both of their ends meet and sometimes circumstances became too hostile that they were coerced to commit suicide out of their miserable circumstances that were bestowed and bequeathed to them by inhuman British work environment that kept only profit as of paramount importance.

But instead of putting blame on their own shoulder British official portrayed these men to be feeble, emotional and weak who committed suicide because their women deserted them. As Edward Said points out that west often considered and portrayed east to be opposite of what westerns were. According to Eurocentric ideologies men are rational, non-emotional, masculine and powerful who could not fall prey to feebleness and weak emotions that's why they found it too laidback to shift culpability on women and their act of defiance as the reasons for suicides rather observing into the loopholes of colonial system and its desensitising policies.

Writers and theoreticians like Gaiutra Bahadur and Peggy Mohan have discussed about the life and history of various indentured women whose experiences and involvements are often missing from historical data. Bahadur and Mohan traced their history from indenture labour system and dug through innumerable sources and took multiple routes to attain some knowledge about their roots. Peggy Mohan's (2007) *Jahajin*, dialogues about one such tale. The novel is the story and life of an indentured woman in plantation. She traces the history of her family and tries to know about her great grandmother who was a traveller in the ship name the Clyde, in which an indentured woman named as Deeda travelled too. Mohan parleys about Deeda, who is ninety years old and only among the counted few who survived and lived for this long to

narrate the tale of struggle and survival. Peggy Mohan says that Deeda was one person who had seen generations and spent most of her life in plantation. She goes to Deeda to know more about her family and about her great grandmother and in this process she unveils the history of many more indentured women who went through similar indentured journey and whose story had been silenced and edited out either from Indian patriarchal history and literature or from colonial patriarchal historical or literary narratives. And it is the need of the hour to recover these veiled narratives from the ravages of history. Authors like Peggy Mohan are trying to re-edit the chapters of history that neglected the experiences and mediation of the 'other' gender as downright. Abigail Ward opines that Peggy Mohan, in her novel *Jahajin*, proceeds artistically to the abandoned preceding history of Indian indenture in the Caribbean in order to recommend the manner in which Indian women, in particular, have been amended out of the official histories of both Trinidadian and Indian migration. (2013).

In manuscript of the novel *Jahajin*, Mohan uncovers the life of thousands of women who were part of indentured labour system. Through the narrative of Deeda, Mohan unearths the harsh and inhuman realities of Indians indentured women, who were ironically lured into false dreams of wealth and luxury, in order to achieve colonizers' dream of affluence and extravaganza. Through testimonies of Deeda, we come to know how akin to her there were many women who were duped, deceived and entrapped to make a journey into unknown land that was so far that people who were travelling there could not even imagine it. It was such a journey that none of the women had thought it to be like this as tedious months in the sea were far ahead to even imagine for any women at that time. Deeda, narrated her story by illustrating that how, due to poverty and

starvation, she was forced to leave her village with her son and travelled in search of a job and how on her way to Faizabad she confronts *arkatinia* - the woman broker and how was she lodged in Kolkata. She explains how Indian men and women were treated if some of them expressed their wish of not travelling or were reluctant to make sea voyage or refused to leave their homeland, their village, their clan and identity. Deeda recollects that people who refused to travel were deprived of food, severely beaten, and locked in a room for days. People were kept inside the locked room until they reached to the condition of starvation and were made to give up thus, ultimately agreed. She also describes about two brothers named Sahatoo Maharaj and his elder brother. Sahatoo Maharaj fell sick when the boat was about to harbour and his brother went to clinic to get medicines for him, in the meantime the lashkars began to sail the boat, and in middle of this the younger brother got panicked and scared, he cried out loud, to quote Mohan (2007):

“Bhaiya rahi gail! Bahiya rahi gail! Jahaj rook! (my brother is not here! Stop the boat!), Then Sahato Maharaj grabbed one of the Lashkars shouting at him... begged them to take us back. And when they didn't listen spun around and headed for the railing and started to climb it, ready to jump off the boat” (p.30-31).

He was calmed down by others who said that they have seen his brother in different part of the boat and they would search for him, but nobody found him while Sahatoo Maharaj's health kept degrading. He felt alienated and lonely and after few weeks Sahatoo Maharaj was often seen sitting on the deck, murmuring to himself asking where

was his brother etc. He gradually turned psychologically disturbed and begins to behave insanely.

She narrates the story of women there. When she first saw women waiting to board and make sea voyage she could not believe that how come so many single women were migrating alone on their own. She describes about a woman who was widow and pregnant and was travelling alone. Through the anecdote of Deeda, narrator explicates the account of migration of indentured labourer women from India, the struggle, conflict and clash of Indian Indentured migrant community within and outside. The Saga of Deeda has a symbolic affinity with the tale of *Rani Saranga*. This anecdote works as an imaginative personality acquired by Deeda to finish her dream to meet her lover which could be her homeland and her husband who could be a symbol of her home that she left out of compulsion while she was still awaiting the arrival of her beloved husband who was assumed by Deeda to be alive after 90 years of migration and settlement of Deeda in Trinidad. Other interpretation could be a hope and expectation of Deeda to see her homeland, her aspiration to unite with her monkey lover could be a symbol of India, the prince could be a symbol of her current residence in Trinidad which is comfortable, but she has emotional attachment to her monkey lover with whom she often dreams of flying on an *uran khatola* (flying mat) and land in front of the house of her in-laws and welcomed by the family of her in-laws. This could be interpreted to be Deeda's longing to go to her permanent homeland that was India and Trinidad to be her parental home. According to tradition the house of a husband is the permanent home of a woman and the house of her parents, irrespective of its comfort, is temporary. Thus, longing of Deeda

could be interpreted to be her longing to meet her home- her in-laws home that was her ultimate dream.

To quote, Mohan (2007):

“ Now the sister came and the three of them sat in the uran khatola, and he flew the plane and he made five rounds over the palace, he circled five times, and people below kept watching, thinking, ‘now it will land, now it will land’ and he flew the plane away and then they were gone...it went and landed outside his own house...then his mother came out to meet them, and she took her son and daughter-in-law with her into their home”(p.267).

Towards the completion of her story of *Rani Saranga*, where Saranga unites with her in-laws who welcome her. This demonstrates Deeda’s unconscious longing and her desire to unite with her in-laws, whom she left while leaving for Trinidad. The airplane on which the voice of Deeda travels and reaches to India symbolizes the yearning of many migrants who yearns to see their homeland but this yearning often remain restricted to their imaginations only. The yearning of Deeda to see her homeland but inability to see, is the idea of imaginary homeland in words of Salman Rushdie. In his essay “Imaginary Homelands”, he debates about the imaginary homeland which every diaspora constructs within it and there is always a yearning to go back but when it comes to migrate to homeland the fear of unacceptability follows and with it follows many more reasons. The alter ego of Deeda was given an imaginary character which Deeda weaved into a tale and along with her tale we encounter life and story of many more migrant women like Sunnariya and Janaki didi etc. The novel describes about the entire process

of migration and settlement of Indentured labourer women in plantation, their daily lives and provides an insider perspective. It demonstrates that the life of women in indentured labour system was of multiple marginalization. Their lives were governed by multiple patriarchal forces conflicting with each other to prove the superiority of one over the other. The instance of this could be observed in the assault of Sunnariya who was assaulted by overseer and was circumscribed within the fore-walls of her house. Her father avenged the overseer for his daughter's assault by murdering the overseer and finally Sunnariya paid the price for the assault by getting married to Janaki's Son who was an alcoholic and never paid much attention towards Sunnariya. He also never appealed much to Sunnariya, to quote, Mohan (2007):

“Deeda's fear about Sunnariya's husband were not out of place. He did earn, as Mukoon Singh had hoped, and provide materially for Sunnariya. But his true love came out of a bottle. He was an alcoholic. ...Sunnariya didn't give any sign of resenting this, or of feeling that she had expected something more out of him...And she turned rest of her attention towards her children. These were one ones who would listen to her” (p.190).

Thus, one can observe that Sunnariya never had the comfort and safety that she was seeking. All that she got was an alcoholic husband instead who just got confined and tied into the knot of wedding with Sunnariya in bargain to provide safety and comfort to her. Hence already assaulted and with an absconding father, Sunnariya further suffered marginalization of a different kind. Kirsch Holst, Peterson and Anna Rutherford have used the phrase 'a double colonization' to refer to the ways in which women have

simultaneously experienced oppression of colonialism and patriarchy. Peterson and Rutherford argues that “colonialism celebrates male achievements in a series of male-oriented myths such as ‘mateship, the mountains, explorers, freedom fighters, bush rangers, missionaries.’, while women are subject to representation in colonial discourses in ways which collude with patriarchal values” (Peterson et.al in Barry, 2003, p.175).

The characters in Mohan’s *Jahajin* are real life characters who provide a testimony of their lives and are the people who have suffered the harsh realities of indentured life. Deeda’s narrative reveals the life of a young women who goes through hardship and discriminations in plantation system. Deeda is a symbol of all the single women who migrated to various locations in plantation and were facing the similar kinds of marginalization. The story of *Jahajin* displays that how due to extreme poverty and famine the young woman Deeda was forced to travel, and it was during her sea voyage, that Deeda felt that she had acquired a different sense of self. Deeda felt stronger and independent. Deeda’s story is the story of triumph amid the punitive subjugations.

For women like Deeda Migration has been shown to have a positive impact as it brought the kind of freedom and agency that they might have never expected to have in home. Mohan, in the novel, has subverted the gender relations and has deconstructed traditional way of women were to be seen and perceived. Her character Deeda is epitome of that kind. One can rightly quote Rhoda Reddock here who argues: “For single indentured Indian women, emigration presented the possibility of a new life, and escape from a situation in which prostitution or starvation were the only alternatives. Thus, these were the women whom circumstances had forced to become independent ...and take

some control over their own lives”⁵⁸ (Reddock, 1994, p.30-31). Pirbhai argues that in the novel myth of *Ramayana* and the situation of migrant women, which was considered to be mournful and their purity and piousness have been put under danger due to migration in a foreign land, has been clearly revised by Mohan, to quote, Pirbhai (2013):

“This is because Mohan does away with conventional readings of diasporic Indian women as fixed repositories of cultural memory, as dour reminders of lost or fractured identities or as helpless victims of colonial injustice. Instead Deeda’s Story functions as a narrative and historiographic recasting of Jahaji-bhain as a signifiers of a dynamic and transformative New World experience” (p. 33).

Similarly Gaiutra Bahadur, in her book, *Coolie Women: The Odyssey of Indenture* (2013), have strained to conjure the root and routes of the life of the indentured women via their historical and literary contributions. Empiricist in approach, Gaiutra Bahadur’s *Coolie Women* is a tale of Indian indentured women who were not given apt voices in history and whose experiences lay buried near shores of Sea, whose lives and their stories have been left unsaid because they belonged to a different gender. The book dialogues about trans-oceanic journey that indentured women took from India. It describes the entire process of how the journey was undertaken, how women negotiated with their position as minority in plantation, how they form the bond of sisterhood and worked as support system for each other. The terms sisterhood is used in context of crossings by Indian indentured women as they called each other as Jahaji-Bhain (ship sisters). It demonstrates a womanist experiences of first generation of indentured women from

⁵⁸Reddock, *Women, Labour and Politics in Trinidad and Tobago*, 30-31.

India. Ship Sisterhood/Jahaji-Bhain⁵⁹ was formed during the journey to refer to the sisterhood that women formed to support each other and be for each other even after the journey ends.

She begins the book with her explanation to revisit the term coolie. She illustrates that Coolie was used during the beginning of indenture for Indians especially for labourer class, uneducated and non-skilled Indians. However, this term was used for Indians in general in Africa even after the abolition of indentured labour system and it became a natural description for Indians to be pronounced as Coolie. But Indians began to respond to it quite seriously by considering it to be offensive, racial and reacted strongly for being pronounced as Coolie. The word 'Coolie' created a lot of communal tensions in various locations where Indians were described as Coolie. The communal tension arose to the extreme level and people reacted so violently to it during the year 1956 that the future prime minister of Trinidad had to request and beseech his countrymen to abstain from using the term. He even requested his countrymen to banish the term completely.

But Bahadur here supports a revisiting to the term Coolie. She argues that we need a movement to reclaim our heritage, and asks for revisiting of the term coolie. She argues that one must embrace it with pride and subvert the stigma that is attached with the term Coolie. She quotes Rajkumari Singh who was proud of her heritage and history and proclaimed it by saying it out loud that "I am a COOLIE"⁶⁰. Rajkumari Singh insisted

⁵⁹ This term was first used by indentured women in 19th century to refer to their bond with other Jahaji sisters but at present this term is very prevalent among all the communities of old Indian diaspora. Now it is used in the context of Caribbean, Fiji, Mauritius, and other colonies of plantation.

⁶⁰ Rajkumari Singh quoted in Bahadur, in *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture*, preface xxi.

that there is no shame on being from a labour community, rather one must be proud that one has progressed so long from such a humble origin. To quote, Singh, (1998):

“The word must not be left to die out, buried and forgotten in the past. It must be given a new lease on life. All that they (the indentured) did and we are doing and our progeny will do, must be stamped with the name COOLIE, lest posterity accuse us of not venerating the ancestors”⁶¹ (p.85).

Further Bahadur describes about journey of a woman; a coolie woman, who was an indentured labourer. She wanted to inquire about the life of her great-granddaughter, Gaiutra Bahadur. Because of her highly complex history and equally complex identity, she makes an attempt to search and research her roots to understand her history and epistemology of her complex identity. She uses several methods of travelling in various histories that she could find and which might provide a cue to her search for her roots in India. The author travels through several continent and goes through rigorous archival data in order to search for her great grandmother’s details: who travelled from India to plantation as indentured labourer. During this process of unveiling past and history of her great grandmother, Bahadur comes across to the histories of many indentured women who crossed the *Kala Pani* and travelled through ocean in order to work in plantation as indentured servants. The uncovering of history of her great grandmother is one case but on a larger scale, Gaiutra Bahadur’s authorship symbolises a recovery of the history of Indentured women who travelled from India.

⁶¹ Singh, Rajkumari. “I am a coolie”, *They Came in Ships: An Anthology of Indo-Guyanese Prose and Poetry*, McDonald, Ian (ed.), Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 1998, pp.85-87.

There were many women who travelled alone. The author traces history and describes about the plight of these women who were emotionally compelled to leave their country and go on a sea voyage unaccompanied. Taking up a journey was highly impossible for women whose life were governed under regressive patriarchal system. There are different tales behind each and every woman migrant, most of whom were widow in their early age and thrown out of their home. After they became widow, in some cases, they were over exploited by their in-laws in form of sexual abuse and mental harassment. Some of these women left home to avoid sever exploitation, some were travelling as a consequence of famine and depressive poverty which compelled them to leave their home. There were also few women migrating from various religious Ashram where widow women were sent to spend their life after death of their husbands and often turned into prostitutes.

One such story which Bahadur communicates is the story of her great grandmother who, migrated after suffering multiple harassments and abuses. Bahadur describes that “One such woman was 27-year-old Sheojari: immigrant number 96153, with a scar on her left foot. She was four months’ pregnant when she left India – her son was born on the ship – and the name of her husband left blank”⁶² (Bahadur in Tripathi, 2013, p.1).

Through her great grandmother’s tale, Bahadur not only unveils the history of her own family rather she is explicating the socio-political scenario of the then contemporary India and the political situation which was tensed and under strict colonial regime and where people were deprived of their basic needs like food and shelter due to poverty and

⁶²<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/review-coolie-woman-the-odyssey-of-indenture-by-gaiutra-bahadur-hurst-20-8923394.html>, Accessed date: 05/04/16.

colonization. These factors actually compelled populace to migrate in search to quench and satiate their basic requirement.

She traces the history of various characters who left India due to poverty and hunger. Few were duped by “arkatiyas” (brokers) into migration, but that also happened due to lack of food and shelter. In some cases women migrated in order to avoid the regressive patriarchal system which were not favourable to them. She sketches the whole passage of the indentured women right from India to ship and ultimately to their arrival in plantation, their life and working condition in the plantation and life of women amidst such conditions and their struggle to survival and resistance.

Gaiutra Bahadur’s (2013), *Coolie Women* created a landmark in the recent development on the feministic history of old Indian diaspora. This book, with its various testimonies, uncovers the history of thousands of women who migrated from India as indentured labourers. It shows how women in plantation created a solid female bond of sisterhood which, just like Jahajji-bhai, was called Jahaji-bhain. Gaiutra Bahadur’s *Coolie Women* describes about the journey of a woman who has indentured background and who tries to search and research her roots by going and travelling in the histories that she could find, which might ultimately provide a cue to her search for her roots in India. Journey of the author; who is a product of centuries of old system of colonization and its regressive patriarchal system, tries to uncover the history of migration that opened up and created a new history within the discourse of migration. As a product of indentured history and female historiography, she invokes the feeling of historical memory to regain her sense of belonging and through this process of uncovering the history of her great

grandmother, she uncovers the history of thousands of indentured women who are still marginalized and hidden within the pages of history. These women faced hazardous journey to plantation and faced dejected life in plantation but they resisted and created a new life of independence and freedom for them in a new location.

Bahadur, in order to know the history of her ancestors in detail, goes back to her histories. She goes to various libraries, countries and old plantations where indentured labourers were brought. In order to get information about indentured labourer women, she faced a lot of difficulties in getting any information regarding the migration of women and information regarding their registration process. The information which was available through the data was very ambiguous on the whole but when it came to retrieve the information regarding indentured women, it was even more difficult because information about women were vaguely written, the files were not even well maintained and were not there where they supposed to be. She had to run through various archives to get information about her great grandmother.

The difficulties that Bahadur faces are examples of inherent gender bias of the whole system of patriarchy of the colonizers who treated women with extreme discrimination and had an attitude of superiority. These kinds of attitude of the patriarchs towards the 'other' gender and their attitude of othering the 'other' gender by excluding them from the historical documents by sharing carelessly written information about women shows how women who were travelling and were subjected to various conceptual deceptions and false promises of Arkatiniya did not have any say in the whole matter. They were observed by the colonizers to be a non-existent gender whose roles and

contribution in the system of plantation did not matter much to their recruiters and plantation owners thus, they faced discrimination even in the documentation process.

While reading the documents, Bahadur goes through various life stories of many indentured women who travelled from home alone or travelled as accompanied wife or daughters. In data, she finds that women who travelled alone were outnumbering the accompanying wives and daughters. The reason she gives for that is that during that period of time the restrictive Hindu society and its attitude towards widow was one of the biggest reason for migration of these women. Women who travelled alone and crossed Black water were scared and were often lured into the dream of enormous wealth and life beyond the restrictive environment at home. Many women in the plantation were run away widows who were living miserable lives within highly controlled structure of patriarchy.

Every single woman has a different narrative of her life. Some of them were running from sever domestic abuse, some of them were facing extreme poverty, some were over exploited by their in-laws, some had lost their husbands at a very early age and they were subjects of physical assault and rapes in the hands of male of their in-laws family. Some were single mothers who were travelling to make a new life for their children as the heavy taxation and famine has deprived a common family off even the daily bread. Some women were accompanying views of indentured labourers who had no idea of what are they signing up for because they didn't have much interaction with arktiya, while there were also accompanying daughters whose fathers were running away from poverty and because of their inability to support their family and feed their children.

Some of the women were running away from the religious institution where women were put to worship and offered as community service to the shrines and stay there and spent their entire life in meditation and worship of God and Goddesses, which became tedious after a point because these women were widow at a very young age. Every woman has different tales and different reasons to migrate, but they all migrated for one work and one destination: to work in plantation.

After this process of document searching and finding a clue about the roots of her great grandmother, Bahadur makes a journey to India, a land where she feels immense sense of historical rooting. When she comes to India she finds everything here quite contrary to what she had imagined India to be, the place which was described differently by her family and how it actually was. She gives account of the life of women right from their travel from India to sea voyage and from the sea voyage to a journey in plantation and their life its various negotiations, different identities and their confrontation with multiple patriarchies their final act of resistance in plantation in order to create a life of their own dreams choice and aspirations and She traces the whole passage of the indentured women right from India to ship to their arrival in plantation and their life and working condition in the plantation and the life of women during these conditions and their struggle to survival and resistance.

Thus, it can be concluded here that the first generation of women in plantation found their life to be governed by various outer patriarchal forces but they are the spirit of resistance, survival and fighting of feministic spirit in plantation. They did not submit to patriarchy rather they fought back and lived their life on their own terms although

sometimes the patriarchal rules and regulations were so gendered in its nature that it was difficult for women to breach the power relations but this did not dampen or lower the spirit of women there. Thus, we can consider these women to be the first feminists of Indian diaspora. They breathed and brought a feministic spirit even in the later generations of women in Post-indenture era. Indentured women, who were from the first generation, have a highly ambiguous position in the entire discourse of labour in plantation. Firstly women were offered a ray of hope and a way to live a life of their own choice but at the same time these women were expected to maintain an identity as Indian women who is ornamented with the traditional cultural, traditional and religious values thus, play a savour of cultural, religious and national identity in plantation. And when women denied carrying out any such duty, they were often vilified and stigmatized as whore and harlots. But without paying heed to much of the criticisms, early indentured women fought and maintained an agency although they faced violence at times as rebuttal to their independence. Life of indentured women wasn't different from the life of women in India as they were also living amid starvation and stigma and sometimes led into prostitution. Thus, indentured labour system brought the similar kind of life for women but along with that it provided women with relative autonomy and relative freedom. Post-indentured women had reconfigured their negotiations and lives by their experiments in public and private sphere. Women since time immemorial have been creating histories from home. The post-indentured women through their revolutionary subversion of public and private changed the structure of their home.

Chapter: 5

Identity and Conflicts in Post-Indenture: Readings of Lakshmi Persaud's *Butterfly in the Wind* (1990) and *Shani Mootoo's Cereus Blooms at Night* (1996)

The invisible historicity of Indentured women labourers, whose presence has often been silenced by the patriarchal discourse, seeks a cogent space of investigation from the diasporic feminist scholarship. The presence of Indentured women labourers has been polarized by the essentialized, gendered dichotomies between the domestic and the public, the spiritual and the material, the invisible feminine interior and the visible male exterior. The defiance spirit of the indentured woman labourer who in spite of being into controlled structure of Indian patriarchy, crossed the *Kala Pani* and made a different world (India Abroad) for them. Women were preys into the hands of Indian patriarchal ego (in the form of murders and killings), however, women constantly fought and reinvented themselves. Unfortunately, this spirit and struggle has found a nullified space into the historical narratives of indenture.

Post-Indentured identities of Indian women began with the inception of indentured labour system and its dark plantation history. Identities are complex and multifarious because of multifaceted life that they have been living from centuries. Life in plantation was difficult for indentured women labourers as they were governed by the intricate structure of patriarchy of home, host and the colonial master. The present chapter explores different negotiations of women in Indian diaspora tracing mediation of

women with various changes that they have gone through as a result of migration. The chapter traces the negotiations of women from old indentured diaspora to the post-indentured diaspora. It illustrates how women who crossed the black water defied multi-weaved patriarchy by their act of migration. Although women in indentured labour system were indisputably confined by Indian patriarchal structure, they successfully resisted confinement at home and created a new space for negotiation. This space was created out of newer experiences that women were going under as single, migrant, minority working women and they attained a distinguished identity which empowered them to a certain extent and helped them to have a life which they never expected in their homeland. This did not mean that women were a free entity in plantation. Rather they were governed by a different kind of oppressive structures that kept them on check and restricted their mobility and subjugated them multifariously.

The history of women in old plantation and their life during the indentured labour period have often been silenced and marginalized due to the lack of scholarly attention towards this field of enquiry. The women in the indenture and post indenture were often the agent of independence, struggle and resistance. The life in plantation was exemplary paradigm of dehumanization and over exploitation of the 'other' gender, who lived under severe exploitative condition. The life of indentured women was oppressed and governed by multiple patriarchies of home, host and of colonial masters. Women in the indentured colonies provide bases for the contemporary theorists, writers and women to put themselves and categorised to be predecessors of great indentured women, who soaked seeds of existence and inception of struggle and resistance in genes of these women.

Recent studies done on post-indenture women demonstrate that women are historically silenced because of lack of women writers, theorists and historians to unveil the history and struggle of such audacious women, who dared to cross the *Kala Pani* and survived odds of their life put forth a prime feministic spirit in the Indian diaspora. Indentured women are often evoked by multiple migrant women authors, who recently took, the responsibility to narrate anecdotes of their great grandmothers. Multiple migrant authors exhibit arbitration of indentured women who coming from one form of regressive patriarchal Indian society landed into more degenerating exploitative environment.

The present chapter seek to understand and negotiate with feministic negotiations which were created in plantation by women to negotiate their terms of survival in plantation in indentured and post-indentured diaspora societies. The post-indentured writings and literature demonstrates a feministic engagement with a male dominated life, they show that women resisted and fought this structure by creating a feministic sphere exclusively for women. The first generation of women had certain level of autonomy which could not to be found in the second generation of women during post-indentured. Women in post-indentured system were products of rigidity of multiple patriarchies. The multiple patriarchies were of different kinds, first kind was the patriarchy that came into plantation due to colonial history and colonial laws that were gendered and sexist in nature. The second kind of patriarchy was of homeland that was invoked by Indian men in plantation when indentured labourers decided to settle in the colonies where, they were subjected to British labour force. The settlement came as an option provided by the British government, who in fear of abolition of indentured system thought to give indentured labourers the opportunity to settle in the land. Indentured labourers for whom

life was already vindictive and miserable, the thought of passage back did not provide any solace. The idea of going back terrified the ex- labourers. Ex-labourers considered themselves as sinners for breaching the *Kala Pani*. The labourers had a strong believe that it was because of breaching the *Kala Pani* that they were getting punished by living in *Naraka*⁶³, a Hindi word for hell. Some labourers feared that people whom they left back at home might not be there, they might not have been able to survive the gloom, depression, hunger and poverty. While few feared the exclusion which they would be subject to once they reach to their village because of their religious defiance.

Several anticipations made indentured labourers to reconsider their option of taking a journey back to home. There was a continuous hope in the heart of Indentured labourers to make their life better. However, in the entire discourse of migration to home women were reluctant to migrate back as they were enjoying the little freedom and autonomy which was provided to them due to crossings. When indentured men decided to stay back and create a little India in new locations it was indentured women who bore the brunt of it. Women were expected to play the role of the saviour of culture and tradition that diaspora had brought from home, women who were free and living life on their terms were forced to get married and create an Indian family in the plantation. As a result of this settlement, there was a birth of an Indian community in different locations of plantations. After the abolition of indentured labour system, the Indian diaspora community created a new Indian society, in post indenture era, and this society has a

⁶³ Naraka, is the Hindu equivalent of Hell, where sinners are tormented after death. It is also the abode of Yama, the god of Death. It is described as located in the south of the universe and beneath the earth. This was a phase often used by indentured labourers, who were living in a space which was unbearably hazardous working hours, living with the castes and communities who were considered to be untouchables brought the feeling of living in Hell for indentured labourers.

different version of narrative to unveil. Post-Indentured Indian community was established with an aim to create a new India and its culture in foreign land and that made the life of women difficult in post-indentured regime. Women were expected to play the role of Ideal Hindu wives, they were expected to carry and bestow the cultural and religious identity of one generation to another. In this generation one can observe that women were living under oppressive structure of patriarchy that was internalized by women as their natural responsibilities.

During post-indentured era women were encountering marginalization and discrimination from host community. Women were strictly prohibited to mingle with host community as their men feared that intermixing of women with other race was a shame and against their honour or *izzat*. Women from post-indentured Indian diasporic community were the most marginalized and suppressed. However, within that marginalization, women invented newer ways to assert their identity and negotiate with it. They revisited the spaces which were considered to be a typical feminine space such as kitchen and domesticity. Women in post-indentured mastered such traditional roles and took control of the entire domesticity.

Experiments in culinary provided post-indentured women with a freedom to negotiate their identity. Lakshmi Persaud's (1990) *Butterfly in the Wind* demonstrates the negotiations of female characters by inventing something new with their culinary experiments. Women, in her fictions find a place and a voice of their own by embracing their feminine roles. Food in post-indentured, represented the cultural identity of Indian women. Food became a pictogram of ethnic and gendered identity to show that experiments in cuisine and culinary are various forms of tool to assert one's identity.

Christine Mackie (1991) in her book *Life and Food in the Caribbean*, provides a history of culinary in Caribbean plantation. In the book Mackie illustrates that food was not just commodity of consumption rather it was a symbol of distinct identity that Indian women created in post-indenture plantation society. She traces the history of indentured community by explaining that Indians were poor in the beginning of indenture. Indians were labourers and British subjects in plantation, where they were provided with meagre food. Indians had to manage amid scarcity with meagre sustenance to satisfy their hunger. Whereas, conditions improved during post-indenture as Indians began to cultivate vegetables and began to invest time in farming and cattle rearing. During this period, when food was accessible to Indians, it became a valuable entity. Post-indenture diaspora considered food to be a sacred object, a gift from God, and had to be eaten like *Prasadam*⁶⁴. Lakshmi Persaud's *Butterfly in the Wind* describes that in post-indentured community women exercised power in kitchen. This position of women could be seen as a symbol of their problematic position. They obtained consignment of individuals who are caught between tradition and modernity, assimilation and purity.

Post-indenture society preserved its food, and evolved a distinct identity by experiments in its culinary. The newer kinds of food were representatives of alterations and changes that post-indenture community had gone through in plantation. Food exhibited their past and present, food experiments were exhibiting inclusions and exclusions that Indian diaspora was going through in post-indentured society. The carefully prepared food and its aroma rising from kitchen reminded the diaspora about its memory and root from homeland. There were many food articles that reminded

⁶⁴ Christine Mackie, *life in the Caribbean* (New York: New Amsterdam Books, 1991), 152.

diaspora of its positionality as immigrant community. The food item that found its inclusion in kitchen of diaspora worked as a constant reminder of their diaspora position. Further there were colonial cuisine that had made their way in diaspora kitchen too, and the colonial cuisines were the greatest reminder to diaspora of their past as indentured labourers. Indian diaspora in post-indenture had assortment of food, collected from various sources such as outer influences of other co-existing societies. Post-indentured diaspora community however, integrated other-co-existing cuisine and mixed it with Indian cuisines that were heart of their kitchen. With various mixture women created new cuisines that were hybrid in nature, mixture of creole- Indian slenderness or British-Indian delicacy. The cooking experience in post-indentured and blending exhibit the position of Indian diaspora in post-indenture community. The cuisines represents the experience of Indians, who were going through cumulative experiences. The cumulative life that diaspora lived was directly proportional to what kind of food it ate. Multiple experiments in cooking were outcome of the cumulative experiences that Indian diaspora had gone through. Due to its amassed encounter with several other communities, diaspora attained a newer form of identity, which was a combination of multiple positions of diaspora community. When one analyses food as a tool to assert one's identity, women seem to be playing the most important role in creating that identity. Experiments in the kitchen by mixing of newer cuisine with older ones created an innovative sense of identity and belongingness. This identity furthermore reminded diaspora of its constant shifting selves. It reminded diaspora that the identity attained by them is altering and changing. The cooking provided diaspora a memory of a dehumanized life, where they were preys to victim circumstances. It reminded diaspora about people who could make it

till post-abolition, in addition to people who died either on ships or on plantation due to spiteful environment of colonial system. The food prepared in plantation reminded diaspora of its memories of homeland, along with that food worked as a soothing agent amid despondent circumstances. In post-indenture era, the act of women to preserve memories of homeland and keep their identity intact in a new land brings them on a position of power. The power, powerful than the power of their men. Women in post-indentured were the identity maker of their community because distinctiveness of creation of a unique culinary culture and its distinct taste which others could relish were crafted by women. Uma Narayan, opines that kitchen space was located within a paradox of positionality, whereby women displayed complete autonomy in the kitchen. Women were further being procured to guarantee cultural durability as a means of safeguarding the welfares of their group. To quote: “A careful preparation of certain foods and the meticulous selection of the spices by the women reveal the desire to recreate the flavours and aromas of an imagined India in order to insure cultural stability”⁶⁵ (Uma Narayan, 1995, p.).

In *Butterfly in the Wind*, Persaud provides a description of how food worked as a symbol of identity for Indian women. She says, to quote Persaud (1990):

“(W)omen cooked outside It was a sensory delight to walk slowly in the dusk on the main Pasea road when meals were being prepared. The women busily darting in and out of their kitchens were probable oblivious to the pleasure I received of the rich warm aroma of wood smoke, roties lifting themselves from hot iron tawas

⁶⁵ Uma Narayan, “ Eating Cultures : Incorporation, Identity and Indian Food”, *Social Identities I* (1995),63-82

vegetables in Masala...by the time I arrived home I was in a more than ready state for my evening meal” (p. 59).

The cooking metaphor provides women agency to negotiate. To quote, Anne Goldman (1992):

The culinary metaphor is distinctively feminine.... the reproductive model of cultural development and identity is specifically maternal.... Such recuperation of female legacy enables self -assertion at the same time it celebrates the lives of women family member as role models”⁶⁶ (p. 191).

Food worked as a symbol of female bond that women were creating with their daughters. The act of cooking and taking control of it could be marked as a symbol of their authority to negotiate their sphere. Though women were subjected to multiple suppression and marginalization, but within home, particularly in kitchen they had clearly marked a demarcation. Nobody was allowed to have a say in that. Although women were wives and sisters but they negotiated with their roles assertively.

Women characters in Persaud’s *Butterfly in the Wind*, represents an autonomy that women were achieving in post-indentured period by reclaiming an economic right. Women were working as independent workers apart from their domestic duties. Though women were restricted to domestic roles but they moved beyond such constructed spaces to reclaim their economic rights. To Mehta (2004):

⁶⁶ Anne Goldman, “ I Yam what I Yam: Cooking Culture and Colonialism” in *De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women and Autobiography*, ed Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 191.

“Women’s eviction from national space has often been facilitated by their economic disenfranchisement, as a primary element of discrimination. However, the female characters ...are also involved in an economic reclaiming” (Mehta, 2004, p.152).

The kitchen provided women a space to negotiate their feminine space where by selling and buy of household goods and kitchen provisions created a female social bond among women. The economic autonomy within the restricted sphere of mobility provided women a sense of upward mobility, where women asserted their authority by bringing economic help. In post-indenture women’s economic reclaiming could be interpreted as, to quote: “women’s control of the household economy ...compensated by their extra-domestic market activities that lead to their multifaceted, transgendered occupational input” (Mehta, 2004, p. 152).

The character Daya is representative of such economic reclaiming. She works as a cook in Kamla’s household, but her economic skills of thrift and monetary management enables her to maintain her household. Daya has an alcoholic husband, an extravagant, his income is often spent in alcohol addiction. Hence Daya’s careful budgeting and meticulous organization of her household keeps her house going. Daya’s husband’s squandering of money reduces his influence in house, and Daya by playing the provider holds that position of power that her husband might have exercised. Daya in her conversation with Kamla, admits that, to quote Persaud (1990):

““It was I, Kam I, who saved and scrapped and saved and scrapped and it you see the house now, you wouldn’t’ believe it is the same house. You haven’t seen the

house?” I shook my head knowing that she meant, not the outside of the house which I knew, but inside her home” (p.31).

Another character Tara, from *Butterfly in the wind* exhibits the similar fervour of economic reclaiming of women that was supported by strong solidarity of female bond. Tara is a fruit vendor, she has extraordinary skills of monetary management. She is uneducated but her distribution of activities and sorting out of works on priority basis demonstrates her entrepreneurial skills. Amid controlled structure of economic hardship, monetary management of Tara marked her out to be chief and primary bread earner of her family and that brings Tara in a position of power. To quote, Persaud, (1990):

“Thin, tall, hard-working, Tara was never sent to school, but she was equipped with that rare, valuable understanding called commonsense. All day she worked in the Tanpura market, selling fruit, vegetables and ground provisions. Though she had a serious business-like side to her, which she needed to help her gentle, quite husband support their two sons and two daughters, she smiled a great deal” (p.105-106).

Tara’s act of helping her family and her husband demonstrates the subversion of gender roles, the characteristics attributes that are assigned to her husband, ‘gentle, quite’ displays a feminine attribute. Tara’s husband is powerless by possessing feminine traits⁶⁷ thus, could not support the family.

⁶⁷ As assumed and understood in masculinistic discourses.

The account of Daya and Tara illustrates that these women characters worked unaided, without support of their male counterpart. However, such women were encouraged by each other, where female bond of solidarity helped alleviating the status of each other. Kamla, the protagonist says, to quote, Persaud (1990):

“Tara provided my mother with good quality vegetables at a price that satisfied both ladies, and my mother, in return, allowed Tara to carry over her debts to the following month when things were tight with her. But more important, there was a magnanimity of spirit between them both” (p.107).

Thus, characters Daya and Tara exercised a freedom of movement by negotiating with boundary lines. The capacity of Daya and Tara to move beyond the space of boundary represents the spirit of Indian women in post-indenture who exemplified that transitional roles of women. Women learnt to negotiate with their gender positions and within the given position slowly women alleviated their status. This could be observed in Kamla’s Aunt’s commentary at the time of family gathering, when Kamla was travelling abroad in order to pursue her further studies, to quote: “Who would have thought of a day like this when our grandmothers and great grandmothers left India not knowing where they were going? They came in good faith...And look at this now, look at this success story” (Persaud, 1990, p. 200-201).

However, such history of progress, development, activism and assertion of female power has been marginalized within the broader discourse of Indo-Caribbean feminist literature. The majoritarian Afro- Caribbean feminist literature interpret experiences of Indo-Caribbean women from a masculinistic point of view that affect “a double literary

displacement.” It exhibits Indo-Caribbean women as inferior and ‘other’ as a result of both their gender and ethnicity. This mantle discernment has been confronted by scholars such as Bridget Brereton, Ramabai, Espinet, Patricia Mohammed, Rhoda Reddock and Verene A. Shepherd. While resulting theoretical frames, such as dougla poetics and hybrid identities have created a betwixt space that challenges the dominant narratives in Caribbean. The predominant narratives have perpetuated a concept of race based on Caribbean identity, and incorporated postcolonial and transnational feminist thought to dislodge previous models of identity based on race. *Kala Pani*, offers a feministic frame for forming alliances that are transnational and political in nature instead of biological and ethnic. This critical framework is, therefore, suitable to the experiences of other minority population in the Caribbean, such as the Chinese and Lebanese.

Brinda Mehta (2004), in her book *Diasporic (Dis) locations* discusses about Indo-Caribbean women and discourse of *Kala Pani*. She points out that the term *Kala Pani* refers to mythological taboo which warns and preaches to abstain from crossing oceans, in this case it meant Atlantic Ocean and travelling of Indian to reach to Caribbean shores. Mehta recasts this crossing as a positive and empowering move. According to the Hindu system of belief, crossing large bodies of water meant “contamination and cultural defilement” (Mehta, 2004, p. 5). Due to ways in which such crossings disrupted caste, class, and tradition. Mehta rereads this transgressive crossing of boundaries as a journey that empowers women and allows for “creative (self-) assertions in literary production” (Mehta, 2004, p. 4).

Post indentured writings by illustrating their experiences amid entries of violence and social exclusion explore about the life of women in plantation with its vivid

colourfulness. It took more than hundred years for women of the indentured and colonised cane and rice cultivation immigrant reserve to commence to barge on artistically through creative works. Lakshmi Persaud's *Butterfly in the Wind*, written in an autobiographical mode, traces the history of wounds, violence, trauma and rootlessness of Indian diasporic women in Trinidad. The novel has been written in bildungsroman mode. It traces the history and development of the protagonist, Kamla. Written in first person narration, the plot revolves around the life of Indian diaspora in Trinidad and Tobago along with its idiosyncrasies and peculiarities.

It is through the description of community one unearths the prevailing violence against women. Protagonist Kamla describes various women characters of Indo-Caribbean community, whose characters gives us a glimpse in life of Indian women in diaspora. One such characters is Daya, the cook in house of Kamla. She has a drunkard husband who spends his entire earning in drinking and beats up Daya when asked for money. Daya is physically weak and often falls sick, she has to work more than her capacity to make both ends meet of her family. She not only works outside the home as a domestic help but also takes care of her own household duties, along with duties of her husband in sharing the household work. In one such instance, Daya asks Kamla to spy on her husband who lies to her. Daya asks Kamla to go and check if her husband is there in the bar drinking and spending his money. When Kamla goes there, she finds out that the man in bar is spending all of his money, that he could have possibly earned. Kamla feels miserable and sympathies with Daya who exhausts herself more than her capacity, she says, to quote, Persaud (1990):

“You know, Kam, ‘she said, ‘I got up at since five o’clock with the alarm. Didi doesn’t know that. ... I have to knead the flour and make six good-size roti. And when I finish that, I have to make a big pot of *baigan* and *aloo* and saltfish...I felt sorry for her and told my mother how much Daya had to complete before she came to us”(p.35-36).

The other woman whom Kamla describes is her washerwoman Renee, who is too old to work and looks lifeless. However, due to the poverty and family pressure she still opted to work. She does bone breaking work to please Kamla’s mother who warns Renee, that if she doesn’t work properly she would not give her work. When Kamla’s mother bargains with Renee for her payment, Renee pleads Kamla’s mother to increase her salary, she says: “Maharajin, I have two children. How you think I will manage on that”(Persaud, 1990, p.31). Renee was too old that her health along with her too decaying but too poor to afford a doctor. She was old, poor and a downtrodden that made her circumstance pathetic, she works more than an old woman of her age could toil, Kamla recounts, to quote, Persaud (1990):

“Fridays were tough days for Renee. It was ironing day and the days of black irons heated on a coal fire in a coal pot. Daya got things ready for her, the coal pot with a good steady fire and four black, smooth, well cared for irons. Renee worked very hard and ironed all out visible clothes from handkerchiefs to my father’s trousers” (p.32).

Butterfly in the Wind explores a number of recurring themes in Caribbean fiction: the process of colonial education and as a result of it the clash between tradition and modernity, and the special experience of the woman in an era of change. The novel

explores how the Trinidadian Indian community was negotiating with changes and how the society was dealing with the gender roles. In this novel together with violence on gender and ideological patriarchal attitude towards a women, readers witness an advancement of women and shifting attitude of women towards the empowerment.

This approach could be observed in the scene where the maternal uncle of Kamla, when spoke against the education of women was rebutted immediately by Kamla's mother. Kamla's uncle opined that why women have to be educated so much, when they know that they are going to end up in the domestic sphere of their family. In response that Kamla's mother argued that, who knows if the marriage would be a blessed marriage and if it's not a blessed marriage at least women should be educated enough to leave their husband and make a different position in the society by standing on their own feet instead of being dependant. This statement of Kamla's mother not only shows her liberal and novel approach towards society who is receptive about changes and accepts the positive changes that takes place in society. Her mother represents the new spirit of change that women should accept for their own good. In Persaud's novel the women though oppressed but are ideologically very strong. They have a say in matters of home and are relatively mobile and mostly financially independent. The instances of this could be found in various women characters be it Kamla's mother, Daya or Renee. Kamla's mother who is a strong women takes care of the domestic and business affairs of her family. Though governed by patriarchy and its multifaceted ideologues but s she still is a strong woman character who argues for women and their rights to have good education.

Her mother's attitude towards marriage is also one of the greatest examples of strong and independent women. She does not consider the institution of marriage as an

eternal bound of several births as her religion and society preaches. Rather, she is practical and rational woman who look towards marriage as an institution where instability and clashes also exist. She believes in independence of women and firmly supports freedom of choices which can be observed in her views when she supports divorce. Kamla's represents the feminist spirit of revolution amid turmoil and violence in the highly patriarchal society of Indian diaspora in Caribbean.

The other character who represents the similar spirit of female bond of solidarity and a feministic spirit is Kamal's cook Daya. Her alcoholic husband squanders his hard earned money on his drinking that forces Daya to take charge to fulfil the need of her family. Although she screams at her husband for spending all his hard earned money on drinks, yet she understands that the drinking habit of her husband is the outcome of colonial oppression and humiliation that her husband goes through every day in the cane field. Here one observes the 'womanist'⁶⁸ trait in Daya who understands the inner trauma of her husband in spite of being ideologically and physically oppressed. She understands the position of oppression of both the sexes and understand the authoritarian discourse, the colonial masters. Thus, supports and sympathises with her husband.

⁶⁸ Womanism is a term that Alice Walker coined. She defines a womanist in her literary work, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose*, as: "A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or non-sexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women's strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or non-sexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health. Traditionally Universalist... Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. Loves the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. Loves the Folk. Loves herself. Regardless." For Walker, a "womanist" is one who is "committed to the survival and wholeness of an entire people" (Aldridge 192). The theory of Womanism is committed to the survival and wholeness of all people, including men as well. Rather than supporting separatism, Womanism promotes universalism (Steinem). Womanism, like Black Feminism, provides a space for Black women and women of color to create dialogue in a non-threatening environment

The novel also illustrates about the multiple migration of Kamla as a woman from an old migration to a new world of migration. She had internalised her old world of Trinidad. Trinidad was her homeland as India was to her great grandmother. However there were moments when Kamla was made to feel as an outsider. It were such moments the sometimes compelled Kamla to feel unsettled and uprooted. She felt as an uprooted self at various moment in a land that she had embraced with all her heart to be her homeland. Her hyphenated status as a migrant perplexed and puzzled her. In such unsettling consciousness she further migrates to Ireland that further confounded her. However, her journey brings a hope in Kamla to move in the new world to find a much more settled and secured status. To quote, Persaud (1990):

“Kamla finds herself at a pivotal moment in Trinidadian history, one that sees changes in the place and role of the Indo-Caribbean woman in the society. Kamla has access to education, and the reader journeys with her through the elementary and high school systems. The story ends when she boards a plane en route to Ireland, where she will attend university. Kamla’s departure marks another turning point in the lives of East Indian women. Indeed, she breaks ground by being the first female from her community to leave the island in pursuit of higher education, her extended family commemorates this moment with a family gathering that includes prayer and blessings” (p. 177).

Further, Shani Mootoo recalls the multiple memory of violence and extreme form of coercive patriarchy in her novel, *Cereus Bloom at Night*. it is the story of many characters who come on the fore, while Tyler unfolds the hidden life of Mala Ramchandin, who is convicted of a murder and is going under treatment for being

mentally sick. The story is in third person narration and the entire story is narrated by Tyler, a male homosexual nurse at Paradise Alms House. The setting of the novel is in Lantanacamara country. Through the tale of Mala, slowly and gradually one comes to know about Mala's sister Asha Ram Chandin who has been missing for a very long time. The novel shows how Mala suffers physically and psychologically from the society and her father, because of her mother's lesbian sexuality and act of defiance.

The novel vividly portrays the life of women in post-indenture Indian community in Trinidad. It uncovers the tale of unstable female psyche, which are the results of worst forms of oppression, physical abuse, the constraint on female mobility and confining women into the domestic sphere by coercion. Mala throughout her life paid the price of what her mother did. Mala in all her helplessness suffered the brunt of actions of her mother who, eloped with her lover Lavinia. Her mother's escape questioned, challenged and shook the foundation of Ramchandin's ego. The act of Ramchandin raping his own daughter explicates the wounded masculinity of Ramchandin, whose wife deserted him for Lavinia. This act of Sarah Ramchandin, Mala's mother, further made Ramchandin to question his sense of masculinity and superiority as privileged sex. The escape of Mala's mother brought hidden insecurities of her father out who, might not have felt sexually potent enough to keep his married life stable. His securities were further aired and were brought under scrutiny when his wife chose Lavinia over him.

The act of Ramchandin's raping his innocent young daughters, exhibits his underlying psyche to prove to himself that he is potent and masculine enough to satisfy women. In the novel there are many situations where Mala being an adolescent girl falls in love with the boys of her school. Each time Mala falls for a guy, it makes her father to

question his masculinity more. He tries to convince his masculine ego by violently raping and beating his daughter. The instance of this could be clearly observed in the scene when the lover of Mala, Ambrose, witnesses the cruelty of Mala's father. When Mala's father comes to know that Mala and Ambrose are in love, it fills him with a sense of jealousy and insecurity about his masculinity. After knowing about the truth of Mala and Ambrose's love affair, Ramchandin gets fumed with animalistic instinct and cowardice jealousy, and as a result of his animalistic instincts he violently attacked his daughter, beat her, and brutally raped her in order to prove it to himself that he is masculine and potent. The quotation here explains his true nature. In this act, Ambrose finds out about the miserable condition of Mala and her father's cruelty on her. Ambrose witnesses the scene where Mala was beaten and raped by her father. To quote, Mootoo (1996):

“Mala had been hiding behind the door. She tumbled over. Keeping her face buried between her knees she sobbed so hard that her body shook violently. Ambrose saw everything except her face: the over-turned bed, the torn clothing, the broken gramophone and worst of all, blue and violet bruises up and down Mala's arms and legs” (p. 226).

The extremity of spitefulness, and violence inflicted on women's body demonstrates the wounded masculinity of men from a community. Men were living with a depowered status. It was a society where British colonization had already snatched masculine power of excising control from Indian men. Thus, Indian men in post-indenture community were suffering with an inferiority complex and marginalization due to colonial legacy that suppressed their sense of masculinity. The only way that provided

men with an approval was by further marginalizing their women. The sense of power was often proven by men abusing their women to gratify their sense of authority.

This novel demonstrates how the extreme coercion and violence could transport the victim to the condition of insanity and madness. Mala has been introduced in the novel as an ageing woman, mad, notorious and also as a murderer. She is convicted for a murder and has been transferred to paradise Alms House when judge found her sick and unfit to stand trial. People are petrified and do not want to go near her, as she is mad and harmful to the society. She has been pronounced mad by the civilization. In *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault states that madness is a social construction and it depends on the society. Illustrating on Foucault, Morall (2017), argues:

“Various cultural, intellectual and economic structures determine how madness is known and experienced within a given society. In this way, society constructs its experience of madness. The history of madness cannot be an account of changing attitudes to a particular disease or state of being that remains constant. Madness in the Renaissance was an experience that was integrated into the rest of the world, whereas by the nineteenth century it had become known as a moral and mental disease. In a sense, they are two very different types of madness. Ultimately, Foucault sees madness as being located in a certain cultural “space” within society; the shape of this space, and its effects on the madman, depend on society itself” (p. 32).

People are so scared of Mala that none of the nurses from the Alms house wants to take care of her. Thus, the responsibility is enforce to the only male nurse in the Alms house, Tyler, who is also a subject of gossip in the alms house. Tyler is a ‘socially other,’

he is a homosexual hence a subject of contempt. Both Mala and Tyler are subjects of gossips and social outcasts. Mala and Tyler both are subjects to disgust and gaze. The compulsory heterosexuality expected from homophobic societal construction made both Mala and Tyler an object of disgust which can also be termed as “patriarchal controls over bodies”⁶⁹ (Corr, 70).

Mala, the convict is generally silent and does not speak to anyone. Her existence is always frowned upon by the people of Paradise Alms House. Being not social, and being a woman, who has committed numerous sins that are prohibited for a woman, she has become an archetype of madwoman,⁷⁰ who is found alone wondering and feared by entire community.⁷¹ Throughout the novel Mala is often silent and gloomy. However, Tyler has genuine concern for Mala and takes good care of her. Tyler puts in a lot of serious effort to make Mala comfortable in Paradise Alms House. Tyler makes various endeavours to make Mala utter words from her mouth. Despite all of Tyler’s efforts, Mala does not speak any words that make any sense, and she only uttered a few sounds. The sounds that are uttered from Mala are onomatopoeic sounds of birds, crickets, frogs and insects.

The novel exhibits the Victorianism that prevailed in post-indentured society of Indo-Caribbean diaspora, labelling Tyler and Mala as unnatural and anti-social. Foucault, in the first volume of his *History of sexuality* illustrates that we live in a world which, is regulated and organised by bourgeoisie and capitalist ideology. The bourgeoisie and capitalist ideology has suppressed the discourse of sexuality by aiming to govern

⁶⁹ The word I have taken from John Corr’s article “Queer Nostalgia and the Unnatural Disgust in ShaniMootoo’s *Cereus Blooms at Night*”.

⁷⁰ The name Madwoman has been taken from the title of Susan Gubar’s book *Madwoman in attic*

⁷¹http://canlit.ca/reviews/home_free accessed date 19/02/2014.

sexuality of men and women. They govern the sexual preference of masses based on capitalist society. Foucault (1978) has termed it as “Repressive Hypothesis” (Foucault, 1). In his *Madness and Civilization* (2006), he argues that 17th century was an age of reason. People were provided with rational response to madness. In renaissance mad were described and painted to be subjects to some cosmic tragedy. They were given a space into the margins of society. But during the later phase of renaissance mad were castigated into anti-social categories. Mad were alienated from society and were confined along with blasphemers, vagabonds and prostitutes.

Further in his *History of Sexuality*, he points out that there was an era of freedom for individual choices during renaissance but the era soon came to an end and he further states, to quote Foucault, (1978):

“But twilight soon fell upon this bright day, followed by the monotonous nights of the Victorian bourgeoisie. Sexuality was carefully confined; it moved into the home. The conjugal family took custody of it and absorbed it into the serious function of reproduction. On the subject of sex, silence became the rule” (p.1).

Further, Foucault (1976) critiques the power structure and describes that implicit policies of bourgeoisie took hold of sexual discourse and the Victorian Morality out casted to all who did not fall into the category of heterosexuality, thus, it began to suppress other discourse related to sex. He states Foucault (1978):

“What came under scrutiny was the sexuality of children, mad men and women, and criminals; the sensuality of those who did not like the opposite sex; reveries, obsessions, petty manias, or great transports of rage. It was time for all these

figures, scarcely noticed in the past, to step forward and speak, to make the difficult confession of what they were” (p. 38).

Therefore, one can observe that, in matter of sexuality, Indo-Trinidadian society of Paradise is abounding with homophobia and Victorianism. Tyler further narrates the life story of Mala’s Father Ramchandin, who was the son of an indentured labourer from India. After the abolition of Indentured labour system, Ramchandin’s father made Trinidad his home. Ramchandin was adopted by a person named Sir Reverend Thoroughly, a white man. Sir Reverend adopted Ramchandin in an early age at the cost of the conversion of his parent’s religion from Hinduism to Christianity. Ramchandin was attracted to Reverend’s daughter, Lavinia. Whereas Lavinia was not at all interested in male suitors and was contented in the company of her one girlfriend Sarah. The only Indian as ‘other’ in the seminary school. Ramchandin decides to confess his love to Lavinia who, without giving any thought to it, immediately rejects his proposal and announces that she has a commitment in northern Wetland and she would be leaving for it. While Ramchandin also heard that Lavinia is engaged to her distant cousin in wetlands. Ramchandin was disheartened and wrecked after coming to know about Lavinia’s engagement, frustrated and outraged from rejection. He announced that he is in love with Sarah and wants to marry her. Sarah having no alternatives agreed to get married to Ramchandin who, after his marriage threw himself into religious cause.

Sarah, Ramchandin’s wife gives birth to two daughters Pohpoh (Mala) and Asha. In the interim, Lavinia make her return to Lantanacamara where, she finds Sarah and told her that she has broken her engagement with her distant cousin in Wetlands. The women

are united once again and express their love for each other yet again. The women began to make love to each other. Lavinia's visit to Sarah house became very frequent and Ramchandin began to suspect their actions which he was finding ambiguous. One day Pohpoh (Mala) caught her mother and Lavinia in an intimate love situation and did not know how to react. To quote, Mootoo (1996):

“Pohpoh's heart leapt when she saw the tips of Aunt Lavinia's fingers grasping Mama's waist. She understood something in that instant but save for a flash of an image of her father's face in her mind, she had no words to describe what she suddenly realized was their secret. She tried not to let her eyes rest too long on Aunt Lavinia's fingers” (p. 56).

Eventually Ramchandin understood the relationship which was between his wife Sarah, and Lavinia. He blurt it to Sarah in a confronting manner that he has all the idea about their relationship. The confrontation of Ramchandin scared Sarah, frightened and apprehensive from her husband's skirmish, Sarah began to panic. Freaked and petrified, Sarah and Lavinia decided to elope. Both of them decided to flee from the house with children when Ramchandin would not be at home. They planned to move on a particular day but the unexpected arrival of Ramchandin, malformed the entire arrangement. Hereafter, Lavinia and Sarah left the house in such a hassle that they could not take their children along with them. as a result, Pohpoh (Mala) and Asha are left behind in the house to live a miserable and horrid life under their father's autocratic regime. Here the elopement of Sarah and Lavinia according to Judith Butler' is the “Denaturalization of

the gender and sex norms”⁷² (Butler in Corr, 2005, p. 72). However, for certain section of homophobic feminists to quote, Corr (2005):

“Sarah’s abandonment of the children is a confirmation of their expectations of the licentious lesbian, who cares more for her lover and so abdicates her familial responsibilities. While I do not suggest that a woman’s primary and essential goal is to care for her children, normative femininity has been constructed in such a way as to insist that it is the children who come first and all else after. To the unconvinced reader, Sarah, who has not made a second attempt to retrieve her children, is the reckless libertine who cares more for her libidinous freedoms than the well-being of her children”(p. 72).

Frustrated from his wife’s elopement, Ramchandin left his entire religious mission, began despising the religious chores and began to move towards agnostic faith, which prevailed upon him. When the news of Sarah’s elopement with Lavinia spread, Ramchandin began to feel ashamed and he left his social life and started to drink every day. One night in the state of his intoxication he raped his elder daughter Pohpoh (Mala). After that day it became a daily chore in the house. Every night he would call up one of his daughters and rape them. His daughters became sexual labourers in their own house. in the day time they would go to school like other girls but at night they become sex slaves, satisfying the sexual urge of their father.

⁷² The phrase has been taken from John Corr’s article “Queer Nostalgia and Unnatural Disgust in Shani Mootoo’s “Cereus Blooms at Night””

Towards the end of the novel, it is seen that the letters by Asha which she wrote to post to Mala were never delivered. The tireless effort of Tyler to search Asha turned out to be futile. Asha could also be a symbol of a hope for both Mala and Tyler for their future. A hope for meeting something that they have lost from their past, the hope for a future for both of them that also might be a search for identity in the homophobic racial conservative society of Trinidad. However the incessant search of Asha by Tyler provides readers an illusion that maybe towards the end they would meet Asha. Thus, it could be inferred that Asha is an alter-ego of Mala, which she lost in the chaotic and agonising world. Asha can also be a symbol of the aspirations and expectations which Mala and Tyler have from their future.

The title *Cereus Blooms at Night*, suggests that light comes from dark, life from death, as Tyler's young life blossomed beside Mala's aged one.⁷³ Gender, in the novel, has been portrayed as not an obstruction and hindrance. However, it has been demonstrated as a powerful entity. The gender of Mala works as a powerful source for Tyler who, drew strength from the condition of Mala. She became a source of strength in the gloomy and troubled life of Tyler. In the same way Ambrose also became a power and strength in the dark life of Mala. Ambrose came as ray of hope for Mala to come out from the sexual slavery of her father. Characters, in the novel bloom even in the dark and horrid conditions of their lives.

Throughout her novels, Mootoo focuses on the conflict and struggle that a person has to face if he or she is racially, sexually other and does not confirm to the status quo of

⁷³<https://caseythecanadianlesbrarian.wordpress.com/2012/08/14/shani-mootoos-cereus-blooms-at-night-a-visceral-sensual-and-compassionate-novel/> Access date 20/02/2014.

a particular community or society. Mootoo conveys it to her readers that sexuality and gender are not personal prejudices rather it represents a broader attitude of the entire society, community and nation as a whole. Crichlow, points that, to quote, Crichlow (2005):

“Many leaders of different Diasporas from around the globe offer similar arguments that frame same-sex sexuality as symptomatic of corrupt white culture or North American liberal indulgence. By creating a queer myth of origin that is firmly connected to a Caribbean landscape and committed to an anti-colonial politics, *Cereus Blooms at Night* disarms such myths and offers hope to queer diasporic subjects suffering multiple exiles” (In Corr, 2005, p. 90-91).

Despite the gloom, the darkness and morbid life, women in novel *Cereus Blooms at Night*, illustrates that in spite of life of these women being govern under highly patriarchal structures, they have exhibited resistance in some or the other form. The act of Sarah and Lavinia who loved each other but were living under the fear of homophobic society. Their decision to escape and live in a world away from patriarchal mode demonstrates their desire for freedom and their resistance to the established social norms.

Other account of resistance and confrontation could be observed in the act of Mala’s murdering of her father. The killing by Mala is a symbol of resistance and confrontation towards the power that tried to govern the life of ‘other’ gender, based on sexist lines. The interiors of Ramchandin’s house represent the powerful zone of Mala’s personality. It was in the house that she ended the atrocities of her father, by killing him inside the room. Mala created a world of solace and peace within the house, away from the outside world, which symbolises male sphere in the post-indentured era. Therefore,

Mala like many other women from post-indentured era found solace and power and a strong sense of authority within her house. It was inside the house that she lived after she murdered her father, away from outer world that made her life miserable.

The condition of her house implicitly exhibit the condition of Mala at every stage of her life, the house could be seen to be a mirror of Mala's personality and inner self as well as of outer disposition. The house was a place of happiness and cheerfulness when aunt Lavinia made Mala laugh out loud. The house was a place of mirth when, Mala met Amborse in the yard, inside the house. The house began to rot into decadence when the psyche of profligacy of Ramchandin horrified the life of Mala every day. It was within the house that Mala found peace as a mad woman, it was her yard the insects the reptiles that provided music and harmony to her decaying soul and body. It was within the house that Mala felt safe, away from the outer world of violent patriarchy. To quote: "Mala's companions were the garden's birds, insects, snails and reptiles, she and they and the abundant foliage gossiped among themselves" (Mootoo, 1996, p. 127).

The house in the novel represents the spirit of feminine space and how ultimately that feminine space brought a sense of belonging and a sense of authority in Mala. House worked as a support system that offered solace to Mala. The moment Mala leaves the house and shifts to Paradise alms house, Mala feels powerless as an outcast. The irony which is concealed within the name of Paradise demonstrates how that paradise made Mala to go through hell, when she gets panic attacks and get restless. The paradise doesn't seem to be providing her any comfort, rather the house where she lived with worms and reptiles that could be compared to hell provided her the comfort and consolation.

Thus, for women in post-indenture, home and the feminine interior provided them a sense of agency, and power. The novel demonstrates that in order to feel at power, women created a feminine space amidst cruel and hostile circumstances. Another theme of the novel, the lesbian sexuality indicates that how women were multiply gazed and were subjected to multiple exploitative treatments due to their different sexuality. The choices for women in post-indentured era were limited, and only confined to certain domestic sphere. Their life was surrounded with the preaching and training to turn girls into perfect Indian women.

Accordingly, women were the ultimate saviour of their culture and tradition. In post-indenture plantation, women were mandated that being a woman, a lady had to acquire certain skills in order to safeguard the identity of her culture and community. Most of the writings and literature produced on post-indentured community exhibits the imperceptible power discourse that formed the major part of the society of Indo-Trinidadian community. Authors such as Lakshmi Persaud, and Shani Mootoo, undoubtedly could be considered as spokesperson against the gendered segregation and ostracizing of women in post-indentured era. These women authors hold spectacles to gender violence against the Indian women in post-indentured Indian community.

Persaud and Mootoo demonstrated the life of women as migrant entities. They have explicated that the idea of India affected the life of its diaspora subjects who had never seen India. The authors exhibited that the abstract Indian patriarchal ideologies worked as tools of oppression for the women who had never physically perceived India. The violence on post-indentured women demonstrate that how inherent patriarchies governed the life of women who, were victims of an abstract patriarchal culture.

Both of the literary works- Mootoo's *Cereus blooms at Night* and Lakshmi Pesraud's *Butterfly in the Wind*, demonstrate the circumstances of women, who were surrounded by various forms of patriarchies operating against their life. In some cases these patriarchal forces are extremely harsh and difficult to breach. Further, sometimes the patriarchal forces inflicted physical coercion and violence. One such instance of it, could be observed in the novel *Cereus Blooms at Night*.

Although, post-Indentured society couldn't be considered as a women centric era for Indian diasporic women, since women were confined within domestic sphere. However, their confinement did not made them to bow down to patriarchy rather women in post-indentured created a strong feministic zone which provided freedom to women to participate in a life that was exclusively women centric. The negotiation of Indian women in post-indentured era by embracing their tradition, culture and kitchen created a space for identity that resulted in self-assertion, self-affirmation by asserting their credibility as women who could exercise power by their experiments in culinary. The outcome of these culinary experiments shaped the life of women when the experiments were successful. They achieved a sense of agency and authority.

Women in post-indentured took up their traditional roles like authority and men seldom had any say in domestic matters. Within their confinement women learnt to negotiate their term of survival. Women took command over every matter of domesticity. In Post-indenture women taking control over the lives of their daughter and deciding for the life of coming generation of women is central theme. In both the fiction mothers have decided about the betterment of their daughters lives. In case of Sarah, she plans to run away in order to save her daughter from the patriarchal forces which were too tough to

bear with. However due to invocation of patriarchy and its intimidating forces Sarah failed to safe guard the future of her daughters. While in the *Butterfly in the Wind*, the character of Kamla exhibit to have a strong feministic support from women around her.

However, the resistance, struggle and mediations of post-indenture women along with their histories have been marginalized and forgotten by main stream literature. Due to inherent superiority that mainstream migration studies have. Post-indentured women are side lined by feminist discourses in migration and diaspora studies who have generalized and oversimplified the experiences of post-indenture women and considered them to have universal attributes irrespective of cultural, religious, ethnic and political differences. While in present existing society post-indentured women have found their voices in few selected fictions and writings that are being produced by women authors and intellectuals form their own community. Further, women from this community are striving to create a canon which includes suppressed voices of women who holds minority position.

Chapter: 6

Identities and Multiple Selves: Analysing Ramabai Espinet's *The Swinging Bridge* (2003) Shani Mootoo's *Out on Main Street* (1993)

In contemporary era, the discourse of identity is broadening day by day and endeavours to contain it within a confined definition are becoming problematic with advancing of commonplace. The complexity to define identity and its universal significance and application seems an impossible skyline to grasp. The non-achievable horizon of identity is already a difficult genre to explore when, one tries to comprehend the identity of a nation, community or a human being who has been living in a particular location, culture, nation and geography nonetheless it becomes a thought-provoking task to grasp the multi-faceted-ness that is entrenched in definable notions of identity. Furthermore when one makes an effort to understand the identities of people who are on move and have had exposure to multiple nations, communities, cultures, languages and geographies, it brings in, altogether different kinds of identities on forefront. Thus identity as such is a demanding area to deal with and when it comes to its application in the discourses of diaspora and migration, it becomes more complex and knotty concept to deal with.

Multiple migrant community of women from Indian diaspora is one such knotty and complex community that felt marginalized and left out from the broader discourse of identity in diaspora. The discourse of the gendered-identity into the axiom of diaspora has been dealt with severe critical rebuttal by diaspora feminist intellectuals, who have often questioned the generalizations and universalization made on behalf of critics who

oversimplified the experiences of multiple migrant women. Multiple migrant women writers of Indian indentured origin questioned and interrogated the discourse of migration and identity of Indian diaspora and in addition to that they have also questioned the theoreticians and scholars of migration and transnational studies for omitting the history of multiple migrations and discourses of multiple belonging. Women populace in multiple migration community find themselves in a 'nowherian' position belonging neither to homes nor to hosts. In recent decades, with the growth of multiple migrant population, the question of existence of this community in the particular space of academia has been a continuous question of debate and investigation.

There is a continuous sense of interrogation regarding multiple identities amid this populace of migration. Though there is a dearth of literature on this community but if at all one finds counted numbers of manuscripts, testimonies and literature centred on this community and efforts to make an analysis of those existing literature and manuscripts, one can effortlessly detect an universalizing tendency opted by the prejudiced inscribers. As an outcome of prejudiced inscriptions, the literature, testimonies and manuscripts existing on this community are observed to be entailing with the theme of universalizing the experiences of heterogeneous communities that are the subjects of migrations. The predominant narratives of multiple identities that are inscribed in few literature engraved by authors such as M.G. Vassanji⁷⁴, Neil

⁷⁴ The celebrated work of M.G Vassanji such as *No New Land*, and *In between the World of Vikram Lall* describes about the condition of people have who have migrated to new countries from old migrant lands, he illustrates about the underlying and explicit causes that compelled diaspora communities to migrate, however most of the characters that he is impressing upon to have been the exemplariness of such migrant experience are male characters conveying about the experiences of the male migrants.

Bissoondath⁷⁵, and Cyril Dabydeen.⁷⁶ The literature from aforementioned authors conferences about multiple identities and exhibit that due to various influences of colonization, plantation history and indentured system, old Indian diaspora community is still fronting through various interrogations, conflicts negotiations, marginalization and bigotry. Multiple migrant communities are unfixed selves, they demonstrate about a diasporic state that has been quietened by the major diaspora discourses. The predominant negotiations seem to have forgotten the historical moments and conditioning that multiple migrant community from indentured Indian diaspora have been going through. This community has a different kind of accommodation with their shifting to new lands, which are the shifting signifiers of their identities. Vijay Mishra (2006) in *Encyclopedia of Indian Diaspora*, discusses about these unfixed selves, he argues that, to quote: “those who are ...unfixed selves signal a diasporic awareness that cannot be contained within theories of diaspora that neglect to specify historical moments, specific experiences and difference in historical conditioning” (Mishra, 2006, p. 132).

Overlooking to have discussions, debates and dialogues about multiple migrant communities and its subjects the unfixed selves, obligated the multiple migrated communities to blame the conventional diaspora theoreticians for neglecting the experiences of multiple selves as diaspora subjects. While the mainstream multiple migrant diaspora male community itself had practiced the parallel kinds of negligence for women of their community. Multiple migrant mainstream male community neglected to stipulate the experiences of the ‘other’ gender in multiple migration discourse and the

⁷⁵Selling Illusion, 1994.

⁷⁶ There are two poems by Cyril Dabydeen that discusses about the theme of multiple displacement, these are ‘Insecurity’ (1986), and “security” (1986).

interventions of women as unfixed selves. The experiences of 'other' gender failed to grasp the attention of the mainstream male authors from multiple migrant community. Male authors from multiple migrant community tended to universalize the experiences of multiple migrant community, overseeing the 'other' gender perspectives. Midst mainstream multiple migration experiences of Indian diaspora, women migrants, and their arbitrations on gender issues have found it's seldom allusion in literature and dissertation of multiple migrant Indian diaspora community.

Women writers, theoreticians and scholars from multiple migrant communities made continuous exertions to elevate their voices in order to make the world ascertain their issues. Women attempted to nurture their voices, to embrace their experiences, negotiations about their voyage in an expectation to accomplish a space for women that had been snubbed away. Women intellectuals have been illustrating about the multiple selves of the 'other' gender, whose involvements have been made vague and treated as obscure. And it is through their writings and literature that women authors and intellectuals from multiple migrant communities are reclaiming their identities as multiple selves which have been voluntarily left perplexing and unattended.

Life of multiple migrant women authors is tough when it comes to the recognition of their literature, as their writings are first marginalized by the writers of their own community where they abode, and when it comes to the popularity of their work outside of their diasporic homes, in that sphere their literature are marginalized by the mainstream Indian men and women writers of first generation migrant from India. Thus, the issues that women from multiple migrant communities are trying to raise are often left unheard. Multiple migrant women writers give voices to the women who have been given

the identity as ghost persona; multiple migrant women authors raise the issues and discuss about the numerous challenges that women from this community confront. The situation of women who are subject to multiple migrations and multiple patriarchies are repeatedly flouted from majoritarian male centred narratives.

Multiple migration of Indian diaspora from one land to another is a recurrent phenomenon and highest number of migration of populace from indentured diaspora took place from various islands of Caribbean to several countries like: Canada, New Zealand, U.K. and America in pursuit of happiness. Furthermore the highest number of female authors who portray about the experiences of multiple selves trace their roots from the Caribbean, thus, most of my sources of literature have been derived from multiple migrant communities from Caribbean islands, and however, there are few literature on East African countries too but my primary texts are from multiple migrant communities from Caribbean. Hence when I illustrate about various negotiations of multiple migrant community I would cite literature and instances about multiple migrant women communities that migrated for many first world countries from Caribbean. However the reasons for choosing the tiled texts for describing about multiple migrant women are that there are dearth women-centric literature in context of multiple migration. However, most of the reflection that I could make on multiple migrant communities by reading various sources such as newspapers, web resources, and few literature, I observed that the discourses of identities in special reference to multiple selves of women are more or less similar in every location of old Indian diaspora, migrations of women from old Indian indentured diaspora communities have followed more or less similar patterns of migrations, and various testimonies that comes from various location of old Indian

indentured diaspora convey the similar issues of negotiations and mediations that women encounter in multiple migration sites.

Due to multiple ruptures of identities, the multiple migrant women have created a space, and that space has been pronounced to be a hybrid, bastard, dougla⁷⁷ space by multiple migrant women authors, in order to negotiate their ruptured identities. Women writers and theoreticians from multiple migrant Indian diaspora communities view that their exclusion from mainstream discourse of identities brings women in a space of placelessness where, negotiations of their identities are not possible to communicate due to complex historicity, cultural alterations and gender relations that women from multiple migrant communities have experienced. Rosanne Kanhai, points out about two categories of dougalized, bastard and hybrid identities; she pronounces that a rigorous scrutiny is needed of the dougla and bastard space because it is a complex area of enquiry, the postcolonial douglas are bidding to mediate their equivocal identities which are dithering between racial, gender or cultural bastard identities. Dougla identities are of two kinds: one who are biological dougla and the other kinds are the ones who are going through cultural bastardization. She says that although in recent identity discourse the cultural bastardization has found its scope to be discussed but even within that discourse, the biological bastards are still struggling to gain an identity which comprises their familiarities and them⁷⁸(Kanhai, 1999). Rhoda Reddock views douglas to be a community of people who are, “an example of marginalized multicultural group that has not benefited from its mixed ancestry” (Reddock in Kanhai, 1999, p. 209). David

⁷⁷This word is used in the sphere of multiple migration diaspora, it is used to signify the multiple attribute that one associates to have as part of one's identity. This community uses this term to explicate the in-between ness of their personality.

⁷⁸ Rosanne Kanhai in *Matikor*. (1999) 209-37.

Michael Rudder hails for a humanized space for the negotiation of identity, she in her song, “dougla women”, “let me understand your soul” discusses about dougla women, she yearns to understand the soul of dougla women as the soul is a central fragment of one’s identity, thus, yearning to comprehend the soul is synonyms with exertion to “de-objectify a formally devalorized human experience that has nevertheless created a brand new style of living” ⁷⁹(1999).

Diasporic women populace from Indo-Caribbean community, have been one of the most vibrant communities from the old indentured Indian diaspora who, have multiple migrated identities. This community has the furthestmost number of multiple migrations out flowing from its in lands. Many scholars who have studied multiple migrations and its impact in relation to migrations that took place from Caribbean Island, multiple migrant women writers from Caribbean-Indian communities have been extremely vibrant in asserting their identity as multiple migrant women. Women writers from multiple migrant communities have opened up possibilities for women of their community to negotiate their identities by moving beyond the constructed discourse of defining identity. In context of multiple migrations of women from one community to various newer communities, the migration of old Indian diaspora community women from Caribbean island to many new countries in pursuit of hopes and betterment, could be taken to be the representative of multiple migration community on the whole. Women from Indo-Caribbean diaspora can be a group of women representing women from Indian indentured diaspora, Indo-Caribbean women as a diaspora have demonstrated an immeasurable assortment; further due to various negotiation and

⁷⁹ Rudder’s “The Ganges and the Nile Part II”, in Rudders release of *International Chantuelle*, 1999.

integration of ethnic variety, Caribbean as a space for diaspora has also been portrayed as a diaspora per excellence by authors and intellectuals such as Stuart Hall, Antonio Benitez Rojo, Edouard Glissant and Maryse Conde. Stuart Hall in his article “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” states that the Caribbean diaspora, to quote Hall, (1996):

“Stands for the endless ways in which Caribbean people have destined to ‘migrate’ it is the signifier of migration itself of travelling, voyage and return as fate or destiny ... the Antillean is the prototype of the modern or postmodern new world nomad, continuously moving between centre and periphery” (p. 234).

While speaking about multiple migration diasporic women population in Indian diaspora, and its diverse negotiations in male centric criticism, male scholars and intellectuals have paid only marginal attention towards the gender issues of diaspora. Although male authors have described about class, race, ethnicity, and have also included violence inflicted on suppressed and marginalized communities together with issues of vehemence on citizenship and nationalism, however, amidst such discourses the issue of women and their measure in diaspora have been given sporadic, scarce and partial scholarly consideration. Whatsoever efforts that had so far been taken to describe migration, transnationalism and theorizing diaspora was always from an essentialized perspective of male Indian diaspora. The writers and critics have fallen short to describe the complex experiences of multiple migrant Indian diaspora women. The voices of multiple migrant Indian diaspora women are often suppressed by the mainstream Indian women writers on international front and by the male writers of multiple migrant Indian diaspora community. The literature by male authors from multiple migrant Indian diaspora community are habitually biased and the portrayal of women is subjective and

clichéd. The female psychology and female experiences have been illustrated by male authors with a tint of stereotypical representation. One of the major reasons of suppressed female selves and the invisibility of multiple migrant Indian diaspora women in the main stream discourse is the coercive violence perpetuated on female body of multiple migrant Indian diaspora. The invisibility of women and their omission from literary texts or their assumed statues in diaspora is the result of centuries of layered domination and regressive suppression of women and their agency.

Brinda Mehta (2009) in her book *Notions of Identity, Diaspora and Gender in Caribbean Women's Writing*, conferences about the invisibility and the omission of women's history from the Indian diaspora in Caribbean, she further illustrates about the relegated condition of the Indian diaspora women in Caribbean, Mehta (2009) opines:

“ this omission has taken many forms: the suppression of women's voices; marginality in the ...Caribbean's masculinistic discourses of creolization: and geopolitical feminizing of the Caribbean in graphically and “naturally” libidinous terms, conflating land and the female body in a “cannibalistic” economy of rape and male desire” (p. 4).

The multiple migrant women authors from old Indian or indentured descent not only complicate the notions of identities which is existing at present, but rather they subvert and question the notions of diaspora, transnationalism and identities through their subversive voices. By their act of complete insurrection and contest women have not only exposed the veiled patriarchal ideologues but also they have uncovered and disclosed the quiescent history of violence, marginalization, and oppression in diaspora space.

The present chapter tries to engage in the study of postmodern wounds of diaspora, it is an endeavour to see the politicised literary narratives that negotiate with various identity issues which are the consequences of colonization and make ones identity to be a typical postmodernist trope. It analyses the magnitudes of colonization which created numerous social circumstances that led multiple migrant women from Indian diaspora communities into catastrophic environments. The existing social life of multiple migrant women from Indian indentured diaspora is replete with conflicting issues of identity, memory and multiple accommodations. Along with that multiple migrant women confront various kinds of domestic violence such as beating, increased psychological compression, multiple layers of subjugation and the sentiment of placelessness. Multiple violence on women in the name of Indian tradition, culture and identity is one of the prominent issues amongst the Indian diaspora community in multiple migration. Women are expected to fill up various roles as women that brings colossal psychological stress on psyche of multiple migrant women.

The question of women and violence has been strongly criticised and raised in the writings of authors such as Ramabai Espinet and Shani Mootoo, these women writers have not only unveiled the wounded patriarchal space of old Indian indentured community and its further continuation in post-indentured and contemporary old Indian diaspora community but have also reclaimed their feminine space, via their act of writings and testimonies that signify a sense of agency and autonomy. The autobiographical and semiautobiographical female narratives have been one of the inscription genres used by multiple migrant women authors, and by their act of inscribing letters the women authors are subverting and undermining the male centric literature.

These women authors are toppling down archetypal images that the multiple migrant male authors had appropriated. Multiple migrant women questioned, interrogated and challenged the traditional authorship of Indian men being the representative of women's voices rather by their act of women coming into public, and by penning down their own experiences with their act of authorship, to quote: "agents of intellectual and cultural production...by this the women questioned the existing notions of Identity, migration, survival and spirituality through their gendered voices, which subvert and decentre ... the power structure of patriarchal hegemony" (Mehta, 2009, p. 6).

Brinda Mehta in her manuscript *Notions of Identity, Diaspora and Gender in Caribbean Women's Writing*. Further argues that, women authors...through their narratives have created "disruptive and dynamic textualities in their movement from silence to voice" (Mehta, 2009, p. 10). The women writers from multiple migrant community through their writings have illustrated that how memories haunt diaspora individuals and how memories become an essential situate for negotiation of one's identity as a diaspora subject. Lucia M. Suarez (2006) in her manuscript *The Tears of Hispaniola: Haitian and Dominican Diaspora Memory*, argues that:

"Diaspora literature, I insist, refuses to let the violence of the past be buried. It tells the stories of those who might have been and perhaps indeed did exist. Reader are reminded of the pain of violence and, as I interpret it, are asked to dream of possibility, to change the tears of oppression and powerlessness into a deep body- an ocean of (re) constructive human rights work. While physical monuments have not yet been erected to commemorate the abuse and/or death of thousands, enacted during different repressive regimes, different military

occupations, and/or from continuing violence throughout the Caribbean...Diaspora writing often a venue for rethinking the ways to remember and memorialize Caribbean transatlantic experience and history” (p. 11).

Thus, for multiple migrant women authors from Indian diaspora, writings and literature works as an essential tool to rewrite the history of patriarchy from the lance of the ‘other’ gender, and exhibit the oppression of a gender (male) carried out on the ‘other’ (female) gender based on sexist lines. The writings of Ramabai Espinet, and Shani Mootoo, elucidate the issues of tacit violence, (physical, psychological and social), and historical silencing of the existence of Indian indentured women. The history of Indentured for women of contemporary Indian diaspora forms a basis of a feministic spirit that was explicated by indentured women in plantation. Sociologists like Rhoda Roddeck, Patricia Mohammad and historian Verne A. Shepherd have viewed that most of the women who migrated from India to indenture, fought to maintain their individuality and autonomy. Apart from the gendered seclusion there were several facts such as the minority status of women, women were minority in indentured and their number was limited, they were not even equal to one third of the male population, however, one can observe a spirit of resistance in indentured women where women fought hard at every step of their life to attain their sense of agency, indentured women confronted and battled against sexist colonial rebuttal with a belligerent spirit.

The indentured women were appropriated with minority stature in the plantation and even if they worked equal to men they were paid low wages; women were subjected to multiple violence in plantation by men of their own community, their men made them subject to various domestic violence such as beating, rape, murders and uxoricide. Life

was more perplexing and forbidding for women who aspired for individuality and liberation, women who desired to be free from traditional shackles of patriarchy, these freedom-sought women were often the prime victims of violence. Patricia Mohammad criticizes it by stating that, “the reason behind the violence on the body of women was because... men wanted to redeem and reclaim a ruptured patriarchy from the ravages of indentureship” (Mohammed, 1988, in Ryan, p. 396). By coercion and force to control women, men also tried to reclaim traditional gender roles of the homeland that they brought and nurtured within them. Multiple migrant women have been subject to underrepresentation, biases and misrepresentation in the development of diaspora literary studies, but in recent academia of diaspora, migration and transnational studies have widened its scope by attempting to become more inclusive.

Due to lack of proper representation, the life of multiple migrant women is hazy and veiled, and these women were/are often subjected/subject to stereotypical images of ideal Indian women, they were prey into the hands of male narratives as silent or minor characters. Aruna Srivastava, in her article “Images of Indian women in Indo-Caribbean Literature” states that although some male writers have portrayed the situation of women in diaspora communities, and they have appropriated women as assumed, silent and unspeaking, unthinking beings who always suffer into the hands of multiple violence domination and patriarchy. To quote, Srivastava (1989):

“Those characters who are shown to carry or demonstrate the potential for spiritual and physical fortitude are nonetheless typecast as mothers or wives bound within the confines of the plantation settlement or village life. women writer rectify this typecasting by endowing even their most victimised of

character with a voice-that is “as a thinking, acting subject, rather than as an object of fate or destiny” (Srivastava, 1989, in Birbalsingh, p. 114).

Further to quote, Joy Mahabir et.al. (2013):

“In her study of West Indian fiction, Evelyn O’ Callaghan enumerates that, the various stylistic and other conventions common to African- American and Afro-Caribbean women’s writing including narratology multiplicity to represent ‘a world of fluid boundaries’ the centrality of the oral tradition, the prevalence of fictional autobiography and the interpellation between the political and personal” (p.5).

Callaghan’s observation can easily be extended to the experiences of multiple migrant Indian diaspora women and the literature of multiple migrant Indian women follows similar kinds of tradition mentioned by Callaghan, the first person narration, autobiographical mode and exploration into aporias, gaps, omissions, historical silencing and exclusion. Literary activism is one of the important features of the writings of multiple migrant women author, the writers through their power of authorship questions, subvert and bracket the conventional male dominated literary canon that constrained women only into stereotypical roles and made those women characters as representative of multiple migrant women universally and collectively. To quote, Joy Mahabir and Mariam Pirbhai who speaks in special context of Indo-Caribbean women writings, but that is easily applicable in the case of multiple migration sphere of Indian women’s writings, Pirbhai argues that the literature by women has been written “to foreground those aspects of ethnic Indian women experiences, past and present, that remain social

taboos, such as incest, marital rape, domestic violence and alcoholism” (Mahabir, and Pirbhai, 2013, p.5).

Rosanne Kanhai appreciates the work and contributions of multiple migrant women, who are bringing issues of women who trace their roots from indenture, the efforts of the indentured rooted women creates an atmosphere of literary activism into multiple migrant writings of women, Rosanne Kanhai views that it is because of literary activism a sense of creativity is emerging which is creating an atmosphere of social veracity”, To quote, Kanhai (2013):

“In the regard of literary activism, the women writer “assumes the unusual position of working alongside the social advocate, helping to identify and discuss openly what her society continues to repress in acts of social and historical amnesia and “through models of feminism...evolving within the history and experience of the group” (Kanhai in Mahabir et.al., 2013, p. 5).

Multiple migrant women authors are demonstrating a gendered and ethnic perspective on plantation histories and its hybrid sites of cultural production, reproduction and representations. The life of multiple migrant women is identically different from the life of first generation Indian women in diaspora, the first generation Indian women are traditionally observed by the host communities as submissive, passive, passive and hesitant which itself is problematic and essentialised way of observing a particular community and a particular gender. For the first generation Indian women India is their homeland and they strongly assert their Indian Identity. Being Indian women, first generation of Indian women have built up various communities and organizations where they celebrate different festivals and cultural rituals and when one

takes it into the further discourse of gender, even the first generation Indian women are subject to twice oppression of the regressive thought of home and host country.

When one makes a meticulous observation of the life of multiple migrant women, multiple migrant women are gazed at similarly as the first generation of women from India. Such gazes are the outcome of oversimplified and essentialized narratives that are discursively constructed for certain sections of societies. Women from multiple migrant societies are gazed at because of their skin colour, as essentialized narratives have constructed to assume one's identity based on one's skin complexion. In spite of having thoroughly dissimilar socio-political familiarity, multiple migrant women are looked at as brown women representing a homogenous religion. Although it is quite problematic when one perceives Indians with a monolithic perception, because India as a country has an assorted inhabitants in various geographical areas that consist of multiple religion, caste, class, language tradition and culture with various idiosyncrasies.

As women in general are perceived to be non-existent and when it comes to the perception of women from marginalized communities it becomes often subjective. And Indian women represent one such marginalized communities. Indian women are often perceived with a sense of inherent prejudice, they are often observed as dependant members of their community, they are perceived as domestic and unfit for outer world, in such prejudiced social environment, experiences of the multiple migrant women from indentured Indian diaspora are scarcely to be heard, because multiple migrant women represent the marginalized of the marginalized, in relation to the ultra-marginalization of women in diaspora, Ramabai Espinet (1997) argues that:

“The occurrence of diaspora women, has not been felt, in the public sphere. . . absent from art, from literature, as scholars and thinkers, as doers. . . They are functionally equipped to operate in the world of work, but once that is done, they revert to the seclusion of the patriarchal culture which has always kept them in women’s quarters”⁸⁰ (p. 1).

The writings of Indo-Caribbean women writers who are multiple migrant are replete with themes of unsettled consciousness and negotiations of multiple uprooted individuals. The key features of fiction by multiple migrant women authors are the wide-ranging themes of multiple displacement and up-rootedness of the entire community in general and it gradually the literature explicates the theme of gendered negations in particular.

It is generally believed that women are silent migrant and they migrate to accompany their male counterpart, and with development of passage it has become one of the prominent impressions into the host countries that women from India are passive and silent migrants who obey their husband and migrate usually after the marriage. While when one stretches these predominant notions into the sphere of multiple migrant women, it becomes even more stimulating, because multiple migrant women have already been subjected to multiple subjectivity by multiple homes and hosts. Multiple migrant women have already been struggling with multiple confrontations in making an attempt to prove themselves not only to multiple patriarchies but also to multiple segregations as migrant women. The multiple migrant women authors, question and interrogate the discourses of migration diaspora transnational identity and assert more on

⁸⁰http://section15.ca/features/people/1997/12/09/ramabai_espinet/. Accessed date, 18/04/2017.

to hybridity and plurality, and these perspectives contribute enough space to contest various patriarchies that have overshadowed the identity of women from centuries.

Diaspora emerges as a mosaic of multiple resistance, reaffirmations to marginalized identities which contest the status of the subaltern in colonial and neo-colonial discourse. The cacophony of multiple voices within the memory creates a new form of identity. When the identity of a woman is the product of multiple forces of violence and resistance in such scenario reclaiming their identity becomes a must. One such attempts of recovering is the recovering of veiled narratives of women from indentured ravages, and giving voices to the marginalized multiple migrant women whose oblique narratives are replete with multiple, complex, cacophonous and carnivalesque cluttering, which clutters to rise from history and ostracism to voice out loud.

And these carnivalesque cluttering could be clearly heard into the writings of Ramabai Espinet and Shani Mootoo. Their literature *The Swinging Bridge* and *Out on Main Street* respectively, voice out loud the multifarious dialogues from subverted voices that had been marginalized in dominant voices. although each of the women writers have their distinguish way of expression via writings, and different ways to portray the multiple memories of diaspora, but one can effortlessly highlight the connecting thread between each of the writers, the connecting themes and similar issues of multiple confusion and unsettled consciousness of women as subject of multiple migration. The literature of multiple migrant women illustrates resistance of women to not to confirm to what is expected from them. Their literature are an attempt of women to move beyond colonial powers and patriarchal discourses that shrouded the life of women. There is an

effort from women to resist power that constraint their mobility, autonomy and their sighing spirit towards regressive patriarchal structure. Multiple migrant women are segregated by hosts societies based on their primitive epistemic identity, for instance the colour of their skin often contributes to epistemic essentialised construction of their identity. Ramabai Espinet raises her voice against such inherent biases about the way multiple migrant Indian women are perceived by various hosts' communities. She opines that multiple migrant Indian diaspora has a different accommodation within the globalised world, this community has lived a different life than how Indians live, but just because of their skin colour, their identities are often misunderstood and often under-represented, she in her novel *The Swinging Bridge* explicates the differences that exist between the Indian migrants from Trinidad and the mainstream Indians, to quote, Ramabai Espinet (2006):

“We are not south Asians, in a true sense of word we are a peculiar hybrid, our cultural world more pronounced than most children of India outside it shores. We, for the most part speak no language but European tongue: English, French or Dutch in its standard form as well as the peculiar version of Creole” (Espinet in Mishra, 2006, p. 130).

Ramabai Espinet (2003) in *The Swinging Bridge*, deliberates about the experiences of trauma, history of violence, multiple homes and multiple displacement of a woman. The novels discourses about women from old Indian diaspora, who are going through series of fluctuations and are creating new areas of studies to define them. It conferences about the multiple selves of a woman, whose histories have been silenced. The theme of the novel demonstrates about the community of multiple migrant women,

who lost their voices in murky folios of antiquity and are reasserting their identities by recreating and reconstructing their multiple selves by moving beyond borders. *The Swinging Bridge* describes about the experiences of Mona, the protagonist, she is often observed as anguished and distressed due to multiple splits in her personality, her discomfort with her hyphenated self as Indian/Trinidadian/Canadian, or as a woman/migrant woman/, Migrant Indian women/Migrant Indo-Caribbean-Canadian women etc. makes her ultra-conscious about her identity, in the novel *The Swinging Bridge*, while musing over her Identity, as a multiple migrant woman, the protagonist Mona opines : “ All it took then in Trinidad was looking Indian; all it took now in Canada was skin colour” (Espinet, 2003, p.78).

Mona associates the position of multiple migrant women by bringing in the allusion of swinging bridge, Espinet compares the identity of multiple migrant women to be the subjects of multiple association of a individuals who, have multiple connections but each and every connection is equally weak and vulnerable like a swinging bridge which, has two ends but both of the ends are not resilient enough to grasp and regulate its vacillation, thus, it's in a constant locus of instability. Mona compares the swinging bridge with a spider's web which symbolises her position as a fragile subject whose identity is feeble and friable due to numerous associations but not durable, in the novel Mona illustrates: “The swinging bridge hung over the river, suspended by delicate filaments above the water rushing downstream. It reminded me of a spider's web-as transparent and fragile” (Espinet, 2003, p. 82). She further says, “I ... feel a sense of not being grounded anywhere. I can't remember a time when I belonged some place, when I was not an outsider” (Espinet, 2003, p. 223).

The novel is abounding with the memories of homelands and host lands it discusses about the life of Indian Indentured migrant women in Caribbean and in Canada both, it explicates that women from the migrant communities have to bear the brunt of migrations and exile to the most. The burden on women to be the cultural bearer of their ancestral identity and traditions, that migrant community has been inherited with. The burden of cultural ambassadors not only cripples multiple migrant women psychologically but, it also restricts their mobility as women. Indian women after centuries of migrations and relocations are still expected to play the roles of Ideal Indian daughter, mother and wife, the autonomy to choose a partner is still a taboo in Indian migrant community. Yasmin Hussein (2005) in her book *Writing Diaspora: South Asian Women, Culture and Ethnicity*, describes about the status of women as cultural bearers and how it brings loads of gendered expectations from women, Hussein says: “Culture is not genetically inherited but is instilled by upbringing within a given cultural context or a given set of parallel contexts, within which an individual has to learn about such ideas as race and gender” (Hussein, 2005, p. 3-4).

Syeda Smara Mortada debates about the similar kinds of cultural expectations and roles that women are expected to play, and shows how the whole society creates a role for each gender and the individual falling within that are expected to abide by these set standard norms⁸¹. Syeda Samara Mortada in her article “The Notion Of Women as Bearers of Culture in Monica Ali’s Brick Lane” parleys about the position of women as bearers of culture in Bangladeshi society, she says, that women coming from any culture

⁸¹Here I am problematizing the word set standard, how do one define what set standards are and what kind of people are expected to follow it, is it class specific are certain section of a community or society are not bound to follow these set standards.

encapsulates the identity her culture has already constructed for her, but it differs from culture to culture, to quote, “women lead their lives based on expectations from their family, society and community, and hence function as bearers in this context” (Mortada, 2010, p. 1).

Though Indian community has been residing in various different parts of the world amid numerous cultures and traditions and with recent developments of women empowerment and women acquiring multifarious positions of power have altered roles of women in certain method, however, cultural expectations from women to be abiding by Indian patriarchal homilies have not altered in major degrees in this community. The instance of this could be seen into the act of Mona’s father who, after knowing about her friendship with a Creole boy, humiliates her and behaves viciously towards her. He treats her as if she was not a human being with a sexual agency of her own, and a woman’s body is not her entity but rather a site of political contestations. Her father politicizes her body by humiliating her, for her act of defiance of meta-narrative of honour of Indo-Trinidadian diaspora community, he undermines her rights as a human, thus, by his act of humiliation and violence, he corrodes her personal choices and adoptions. Her body is treated as a sacred geography of her entire community in general and a sacred zone for a family in particular. Here Mona’s body is a conflict zone, the precinct of clashes between multiple hegemonic patriarchal culture and communities. Mona’s father not only slut shames her publicly but also abuses her for wearing certain kinds of cloth, that is not worn by ideal women. Her father accuses Mona for causing ogling to her body and attracting unnecessary attention of men. Here one can observe that the agency of women

to choose her attire is prohibited and if she desires to counter it, she faces harsh repercussions for her act of insolence of patriarchy.

The agency as a woman to choose a life partner is taken away from multiple migrant diasporic women in matter of marriage; the autonomy of Indian women is limited and when it comes to adoption of values, morals, traditions and cultural practices, women are expected to receive these values without any boundaries. Diaspora women are expected to take every responsibility into their hand and emerge out to be the cultural icon of their ancestral identity. Carrying and practicing of ancestral identity, cultural values and traditions are primary duty of women in diaspora and if women dare to breach it by any means then repercussion are violent, hostile and inauspicious for women, illustration of this could be perceived from the cruel beating of Mona by her father, when wearing a dress which was revealing certain parts of her body, her act of wearing a cloth that caused a tumult in the house of Mona, and it shook the well nurtured patriarchal ego of her father, that turned him into a beast who severely beat his daughter. By her public shaming and beating in the yard of her house from where anybody could observe made Mona wounded from deep within; this act of her father could be a symbol of frustration of patriarchal hegemony that appreciates stagnation of women, who must neither question nor deny their authority but Mona's act was an open confrontation to it, which raised the innermost fear of patriarchy of losing its authority over life of women, thus, by his cruel violence on body of the 'other' sex, (his daughter, Mona) patriarchy seemed to be coercing the disobeyers to establish its power and supremacy by hook or crook. Mona was deeply humiliated by her father, who abused her verbally and physically both, and left her out of the home in public to shame her. She was shamed by every onlooker and

passer-by when her father made her to stay outside of the house and burned her dress in public. The act of her father left a never lasting scar in the essence and unconscious retention of Mona that turned Mona into a being who never believed on men much, she lost her faith in the institution of marriage and family.

Ramabai Espinet's *The Swinging Bridge*, peeps into the life of single migrant woman from India who emanated in plantation as indentured labourer. The narrative of novel flows forward and backwards time to time, when narrator relates her present circumstances with her great grandmother. The novel demonstrates that single indentured women were put under serious scrutiny, they were policed strictly as they were considered to be women of loose morals, who were either prostitutes or *Rands*, thus, it was important for various hegemonic patriarchies to put a control on these women and keep them under check.

Patriarchal structures that aimed to police the life of these women exhibited inherent gendered prejudices and veiled gendered biases that worked against women and due to that women had to face difficulties in order to attain social and economic identity. Although women were fighting at every stage of their life in plantation, with various violence and assaults that were targeted on these women, besides that indentured women were creating a life and identity of their own with their various acts of defiance. Male jealousy and the structure of patriarchies were so strict that even the most strongest of the women in plantation had faced extreme form of violence. One such example of this could be seen in the illustration of Gainder's act where she was trying to buy land for her, in order to get permanent settlement but colonial policies were gendered and biased for

women which did not allow a women the freedom to have a life of her own alone independent, she was refused by the overseer to live alone.

As a result of such administration Gainder is enforced into a marriage which she never wanted to have, and after her marriage we are witnessed to see how a powerful single woman who was empowered and had independence turned into a helpless victim of female bondage and slavery. She was given economic security at the cost of her physical, social and sexual freedom, in form of another marriage. Her act of marriage indicates that how an empowered woman was forced to yield to patriarchy and from one system of bondage she was transferred to bow down to another system of bondage. Gainder got married to Joshua, who was a converted Christian and Gainder was a Hindu, this marriage didn't only changed her freedom status to a slavery and brought her in a new kind of oppressive system but also it delimited Gainder and restricted Gainder's cultural and religious freedom. Gainder, a vibrant Chutney singer was not allowed to sing by her frenetic husband Joshua, Chutney singing was looked down upon among Indian Christian communities and singing by women was not entertained in the new formed patriarchal structure based on colonial patriarchy that governed Joshua's home. Gainder was forced to leave her Chutney singing because of her husband's patriarchy. Here this action of Joshua to control the life if Gander explicates extreme form of violence that women had to go through. Her act of leaving her Chutney song is elucidated in her fractured identity that she acquires after her marriage. And when Mona purchases a land in Caribbean which her great grandmother wanted to purchase gives her a sense deep belonging with her history and most importantly with her great grandmother. This act could also be called to a win for the centuries of battle that women in diaspora had been

fighting for. Joy Mahabir argues that: “Even though Gainer’s land claims were thwarted by the inherent biases of a colonial system, the spirit of her ambition lays the ontological groundwork for a feminist awaking rooted in the agential history of women labour” (Mahabir, and Pirbhai, 2013, p. 37). Thus, it is through her act of buying the land that Mona gives a representational space to her female ancestors who wrought tough to have a room of their own, it was that very place where Gainer, Mona’s great grandmother had lost identity and it is in this very land that Mona gives it back to her, the thing that could have, if granted, might have given a different world to Gainer. Mona towards the end of the novel, pronounces that: “I walk around the land, ... I imagine that something of me, and all of our lives here, lies buried in it, ... The land, the land had remembered. I lay face down on the earth, my first earth, breathing it” (Espinet, 2003, p. 269-70).

Her act of purchasing the land is an act by which she pays respect to each and every feminist spirit in the narrative of indentured diaspora feminism, with her act of purchasing a piece of land, the ruptured selves of Indian Indentured women and their most desired and aspired need to find a settlement and independence is finally restored by their successors grand-daughters. The narrative of *The Swinging Bridge* shifts into multiple memories of a multiple migrant woman whose self just swings from one place to another. The narrative weaves three locations of migrations which the protagonists reminiscences, and describes. She traces the history of her family roots that she traces from India, her search to her great grandmother Gainer’s songs also symbolises her search to uncover a root for her uprooted self. The memories of Mona that she recalls from Trinidad could also be seen as an effort to stick with roots that she seems to be losing on shifting to different routes. The novel is further an effort to exhibition sorrowful

stature of Indian community in Trinidad and remorseful state of Indian women in Caribbean Indian diaspora community. Mona, the protagonist describes about a lot of characters from her neighbourhood who yearned for freedom and a just society one such instances could be seen in the character of Baboonie, who is considered as a mad woman, who sang songs from Indian Mythologies and especially from *Ramayana* and lived a life surrounded with multiple physical and psychological abuses embedded through dangerous patriarchal assertiveness, where men, considering her to be insane, raped her and thought it to be their right and prerogative to rape psychologically unstable woman.

In the novel the act of Mona, where she digs into the roots of her great grandmother and tries to find the songs that her great grandmother used to sing, demonstrates a kind of association of Mona with her great grandmother. Mona who considered Trinidad as her home, when migrated to Canada, and lived there as a single woman, felt a kind of connection with her great grandmother, Gainer, who too migrated to Trinidad alone as a woman. The experience of displacement and rootlessness with her identity always brings association of Mona with her great grandmother, she feels deep association of her present circumstances with her great grandmother because both are migrants and have struggle to establish themselves in new lands, both feel a sense of encountering multiple identities as migrants, women and single. Thus when Mona comes to know about the facts that her great grandmother was forced to leave her chutney singing and her manuscripts were burned by her great-grandfather in order to exhibit his authority over life and choices of her great grandmother. This action of coercion of her great-grand father on her great grandmother connects Mona with her great grandmother who also had experienced similar form of coerced violence, in the novel Mona says: “I

found myself overcome by anger that felt like a personal violation” (Espinet, 2003, p. 266).

Further the Short story collection of Shani Mootoo *Out on Main Street* by Indo-Trinidadian-Canadian writer, depicts the life of a woman straddling between their in-between identities. It elucidates about life of multiple migrant women from old Indian diaspora whose identities are upshot of multiple migration that comprehensively governs their life. As a woman she faces dilemmas of duty, career and multiple loyalties. The narrative of the stories is set in multiple settings Caribbean and Canada. There are nine stories in the entire collection and from all of the collections there are two stories that focus especially on the theme of multiple displacements and the in-between-ness and dilemma of women as a subject of migrations and complex history. The protagonists from Mootoo and Espinet exhibit a sense of dividedness a sense of multiple hostilities and multiple memories of violence and empowerment.

The short fiction *Out on Main Street* represents the lives of thousands of women who migrated from old Indian diaspora to new countries to achieve their ambitions, goals and aspirations. One such is the story of unnamed narrator from the titled story *Out on Main Street*, the protagonist lives in metropolitan city Vancouver, which could be considered a space where identities become malleable and ever shifting, where the notion of on identity turns into cacophonous voices of multiple sounds of identities that are product of multiple histories and political negotiations.

The entire collection of the work symbolises various negotiations of multiple displaced people from old Indian diaspora whose histories are complex and multi-layered. The collection exhibits an attempt from a woman author who endeavours to

bring her multiplicity of identity on fore by undermining simple and naive oversimplifications that are often assumed and framed under monolithic generalizations of a particular community and gender. The epigraph of the short fiction elucidates the intension of authors who want her multiplicity of history, experiences to be perceived and understood, the epigraph states:

“Which of us, here, can possibly know the intimacies of each other’s cupboards
“back-home”, or in which hard-to-reach corners dust balls used to collect?

(Or didn’t?)

One’s interpretation of fact is another’s fiction, and one’s fiction is someone else’s bafflement “(Mootoo, Epigraph, 1993, p. 1).

The Narrator exhibits the story of multiple migrant women, the protagonist in story is speaking from her multiple position as a diaspora subject, she carries with her the multiplicity of her past and present and complexity of her unfixed self and identity; that often makes the hosts uncomfortable, she by her multiplicity challenges the meta-narratives of identity advocated by pragmatic schools of criticism, the narrator rather takes one towards acknowledging and accepting micro-narratives to be more apt medium to define highly complex identities of contemporary diaspora communities from old Indian diaspora. Jean Francois Lyotard, advocated micro-narratives. He argued that in today’s postmodernist society everything must be looks with a tint of suspicion. He argued that as human beings people are bestowed with individual differences thus, our experiences are going to be incongruent and diverse. In such complex scenario, it is difficult for theoreticians to propound all-encompassing theories. He further points out

that interpretation of each individual is directly intertwined with his/her cultural background and individual traits. Henceforth, meta-narrative provides one with subjective and absolutist way to conform to prevalent discourse. Meta-narratives restricts the scope of different societies to integrate their experience, therefore we must replace meta-narrative with mini-narratives. (Lyotard, 1984)

Thus the experiences of multiple migrant who consider themselves to be hybrid must be seen with the lens of mini/micro narratives that believes in fractured, fragmented and fissured identities. The similar kinds of negotiations concerning to identity could be observed into multiple migrant communities too. Multiple migrant communities associate their fractured and hybrid, fragmented identities with postmodernist consciousness of identity. Multiple migrant women from old Indian diaspora consider their identity to be the product of their hybrid selves and plural identities. This community of women have theorized the discourse of dougla identity, in order to exhibit their plural, hyphenated and multiple hybrid identity. This term was proposed by Indo-Fijian women who are artefact of multiple migration. Indo-Fijian women writers are of the view that their identity is not one monolithic identity which could be categorized in traditional definitions. They have, not one core permanent self, but many selves. Their selves and their identities are not fixed, but persistently shifting and are in process to shift further, as the boundaries between themselves and others, and between the different parts of themselves are negotiated. One can clearly observe a hybrid and plural consciousness of identity within the literature of women authors of old Indian diaspora, women authors from old Indian diaspora have been on move, and have attained the status of multifarious individuals, whose identities are the product of multiple encounter with multiple society culture and

languages, these encounters have given birth to a newer form of identity discourse that multiple migrant women writers use in their literature. Dougla is a word used in Caribbean old Indian diaspora, it is a Hindi word for someone whose blood is impure, a bastard (The origin and the context in which the word was used had a negative connotation but women authors of Indian diaspora from Caribbean have used this word in a positive connotation.). The discourse of dougla identity came on fore due to the fear of cultural assimilation of Indian diaspora in Creole culture and not retaining anything of its past. Douglas have been referred as half breed people who are ethnic bastards in their host countries.

This community has been subjected to a particular historical quietening in the dogmatic sphere, as douglas are reminds to a community of its breach and disobedience to its erstwhile taboo, the mingling of black and Indian bloodstream. Douglas have been a subject to disparagement, estrangement, muddle and social denunciation. Shalini Puri argues that, “the figure of dougla could provide a vocabulary for figuring disallowed Indian identities; furthermore they could offer ways for reframing the problematic of black-Indian party politics, and race and gender relations” (Puri in Mehta, 2004, p. 14). Further Rhoda Reddock, views that Douglas are an example of a “marginalized multicultural group that has not benefited from its mixed ancestry” (Reddock in Mehta, 2004, p.15). Dougla discourse is important to a feminist engagement because of the discourse of the rupture of *Kala Pani*, meta-narrative, which according to Hindu scriptures barred crossings of ocean, which women crossed and attained a sense of relative empowerment.

Kala Pani, discourse invoked for a to quote : “disruption of neatly aligned, state determined, racial categorizations and hierarchies that institute and sustain various levels of discrimination by initiating a search for common ground, an initiative that has been hinted at by dougla feminist negotiation” (Mehta, 2004, p. 5). Invisible within the discourse of *Kala Pani*, the arbitration of dougla hybridity quite fits in, it symbolises the recognition of multiple turbulent transatlantic crossings of women from generation to generation. The crossings here as depowered the male counterpart in both the context of *Kala Pani* and dougla discourse it brought a sense of relative autonomy to women. dougla feminist engagements ask for the peculiarities of experiences of women and the equitable representation of these women being the subject of global migration discourse.

The short story collection of Shani Mootoo elucidates about similar kind of hybrid and bastardized identity that her characters attributes them with, the consciousness of unsettledness and root-less-ness and multiple temporariness and multiple loyalties form the theme of this collection of *Out on Main Street*. The short story collection *Out on Main Street*, on surface is the story of successful independent women migrants but when one digs deeper into the psyche of characters, complexity of their life and struggle to fight emotional conflicts, dilemma and isolation comes onto fore. Their writings explicate how women in multiple migration negotiate with multiple identities. How there are multiple layers of identity that complicates life of women of Indian diaspora in multiple migration. The dilemma of being a woman, a diaspora and the dilemma of multiple belonging, the novel like Espinet’s *The Swinging Bridge* deals with the life of multiple migrant women from Indian diaspora and it debates about the continuous impasse and dilemma of a women who are dangling between multiple nationalities, multiple loyalties,

multiple doubts, multiple gender, socio-political and cultural roles. She has to play the independent, free spirited and the responsible and submissive at the same time. Like Mona in *The Swinging Bridge*, another character Sushila from the story “Sushila’s Bhakti” and the unnamed narrator from the titled story are suffering with multiple conflicts and identity issues, these characters are living under perpetual dilemma of playing multiple roles at one time.

The unnamed narrator not only confronts violence from Canadians but also is ridiculed for being a hybrid who doesn’t form the perfect whole of Indian diaspora identity, this could be seen in these line, when the narrator disheartened by the hostility of an Indian shop owner talks about it to her lover Janet, to quote, Mootoo (1993):

“ Yuh know, one time a fella from India who living up here call me a bastardized Indian because I didn’t know Hindi. And now look at dis, nah! De thing is: all a we in Trinidad is cultural bastards, Janet, all a we. Toutes bagailles! Chinese people, Black people, White people. Syrian. Lebanese. I looking forward to de day I find out dat place inside me where I am nothing else but Trinidadian, whatever dat could turn out to be” (p.51-52).

Here one can observe the situation of multiple migrant community from Indian diaspora, how people who do not adhere to the grand narratives are treated and made to feel rootless. Her story wants to convey that the awareness of the idea how identity is not one just there rather it is create every day and, how an individual attains different identities in various phases of his/ her life through different experiences and how the identity keeps on evolving in new form of identities with newer experiences with time but

how at the same time these identities are not received by traditionalist and conservatives that often creates such situations. *Further "Sushila's Bhakti" elucidates about multiple individuality and multiple responsibility with people who have multiple roots.*

The story conferences about different kinds of alienation and root-less-ness that women from old indentured diaspora comes across as migrants, it exhibits the life of a woman who is subject of multiple migrations. Sushila carries responsibilities of generations of migration, her character demonstrates the accommodation of people who voyage through multiple root-less-ness. Sushila's restless of her identity and her pining to find her root her conflict to reach to the point of her origin to know her root illustrates that how uprooted migrant communities seek for permanence in an ever moving space of migration and diaspora.

Shani Mootoo describes about the experience of a multiple migrant woman, who has different class and colour and carries a baggage of multiple uprooted-ness and complex history. Sushila spectacles that how an individual faces paranoia and alienation and emotional loss in different worlds where identity is expected to be a pure and sacred entity. She is a professional artist who uses various colours to feel her sense of rootedness, the excessive use of the colour saffron in her art that reminds her of her days in Trinidad when she used to pint her hand with henna, provides her a sense of belonging. Her several attempts to find a connectedness to herself go astray despite making millions of attempts by her art and psychological conflicts. Sushila finally understands that she doesn't belong to any traditional definition of identity hence she ultimately understands that she doesn't need to belong to somewhere. Here one could observe that the author Shani Mootoo is again advocating the micro/mini narrative and favouring the destruction

of meta-narratives that fail to understand and integrate difference of various identities. To quote:

“Mootoo seems to be advocating using the tools of a multi-cultural identity to transcend the need to be rigidly defined. The message is implicit: that the search can be its own reward, and that it can be devoid of heartache. Ultimately, Sushila realizes that her identity need not conform to any documented or storied history—that it only need be her story”⁸² (p.1).

One of continuous and recurring theme that one observes into the writings of multiple migrant Indian women is the theme of anxiety related to their identity, the act of multiple migration and multiple crossings also signifies their mental state in which this group of women feel that whatever identity they have is not satisfactory.

The contestations in the field of multiple migration and multiple identity have been debated from centuries with the migration of diaspora communities. Their voyage, struggle and settlement brought multiple splits in their personality. As a result of that multiple migrant are straddling, conflicting and waddling between the multiple selves with each move in their life which they were taking either voluntary or forced. Multiple migrant communities are acquiring a new kinds of identity and it is their highly complex identity that has led the present theoreticians and scholars to revisit the present existing theories and definitions.

The writings illustrate the negotiations and mediations of a community that feels highly uprooted, uncomfortable, un-accommodated in multiple shifting communities. Multiple migrant community also comes into conflict with indigenous populace of their host countries who, are firmly rooted and flaunt the nationalistic agenda of loyalty and

⁸²<https://novelniche.net/2010/08/04/mainstreet/>. Date of access 5th January 2017.

purity especially in the case of Indo-African diaspora and Indo-Caribbean diaspora. Both of the aforementioned writings provides a mirror into the psyche of multiple migrant community women and demonstrates that how firstly multiple migrant diaspora are not aware about their differences but are made to feel conscious and is often questioned about their “exact belonging”, in diaspora space, this question often arises when the multiple migrant community is made aware about its identity in the co-existence of the other kinds of identities.

The question of multiple migration of women, and various forms of violence that women goes through as diaspora subjects have been strongly criticised and raised into the writings of Ramabai Espinet and Shani Mootoo, these women authors have not only uncovered and aggrieved the historically nurtured patriarchal space of multiple-migrant Indian diaspora community but have successfully constructed a space for negotiation of female experiences from multiple migrant diaspora community.

Thus, for diasporic women writers, writings and literature becomes an essential tool to rewrite the history of patriarchy, oppression on gendered lines. The writings of Ramabai Espinet and Shani Mootoo, elucidates issues of buried violence and historical silencing of women from old Indian diaspora. Multiple migrant women are seeking for similar kind of ambition to achieve settlement and independence as women as their great-grandmother did when they endeavoured hard to reach to settlement in order to re-invent and create a life for their own. Multiple migrant women writers associate them with their great grandmother who lived and had gone through similar circumstances, as women in multiple migrations, feeling of uprooted and displaced in similar manner as their great-grandmother felt when they crossed oceans and left their home land.

Women from multiple migrant community often derives allusion from the lives of their great grandmothers, multiple migrant women feel an association and similarity of experience with their great grandmothers, the early immigrants. Their great grandmother were oppressed under miserable circumstances, and were fighting multiple layers of patriarchal marginalization that was subjugating them, but in spite of various hegemonic powers trying suppress them these women showed a spirit of resistance and fought a battle against the system which was trying to rule them, similarly multiple migrant women writers confronts various form of discrimination and marginalization from host communities, from homelands and the patriarchal ideologues that surrounds and tries to control every sphere of their life.

Hence from the above discussions, it could be concluded that the identities and gender becomes one of the significant areas of inquiry in the context of multiple migration, The concern of this area of study is to exhibit the position of women in multiple migration discourse where women are subject to a 'nowherian' self, in-between-ness, placeless-ness in their identity, which is a symbol of their historical exclusion. Their history which excluded women, which forgot their melancholy, despair and their surviving spirit seems to be a cruel history governed by male chauvinistic historians, most of the multiple migrant authors have been trying to uncover those pages of history that swathed them under deep ground. It further demonstrates that there have been various efforts on parts of theoreticians to further theorize the term identity. They have attempted to reconsider well accepted definitions and further made an effort of look into it for further modifications and alterations. And it is due to these recent endeavours by the theoreticians and scholars that many marginalized groups found their voices in broader

space of identity. Women from multiple migrant Indian diaspora are one of those marginalized groups who are slowly and gradually reclaiming their identity. Multiple migrant women are uprooted from their history, their literature display a sense of rootlessness that multiple migrant women confronts that ultimately forms their multiple identities, that are results of complex history and multiple cultural, political and social negotiations. Multiple migrant women from old Indian diaspora with their vibrant present due to their works, theories and discussion are being able to create a space for their experiences and lives, which is finally opening up a space for dialogue amid the identity discourses which subverted identity of the 'other' gender in area of diaspora studies.

In the globalised world of today where migration has become one of the most important parts of an individual, be it internal or external. In today's world migration is an intrinsic part of an individual's life. The more an individual migrates the more it becomes prone to up-rootedness. When one conferences about multiple migrations which is the case with writer like Ramabai Espinet and Shani Mootoo, the writings of these authors often revolve around memories of multiple homes, multiple histories and an invisible presence of restlessness and un-accommodation into the unconsciousness of the women who are part of these migrations. The life that multiple-migration offers to multiple migrant women is life full of intervening questions regarding their identity which often makes one to move towards the postmodernist discourse of identity where one celebrate, multiplicity, hybridity and plurality of identity.

Multiple migrant women from Indian diaspora whose personality is split and have been subjected to various kinds of marginalization from outside and within have not just accepted the violence inflicted upon them but like their ancestors from the previous

generations, they have fought and battled to maintain their identity amid extreme opposite circumstances which are unfriendly and hostile to them. These circumstances bring weak moments sometimes in lives of these women but slowly and gradually the inherent independence and the spirit of defiance that they have inherited from their daring great grandmother guides them and provides within them a spirit of resistance to attain an individual identity in spite of unfavourable circumstances. Various examples and instances of movements and revolutions led by women in diaspora show that women are breaking the barriers of patriarchal shackles and are moving beyond traditional anticipated roles. The spirit of resistance comes when you feel that the pressure to suppress your existence is too weighty and stifling and finally you are borne with the courage to fight it back, this could be easily observed in the sphere of multiple migration and identity of women. When we clearly see experiences of multiple migration and its accommodation into the writings of these authors, the experience of multiple migration has made inscriptions of these women novelists more effective and unlike traditional writings one can find different experiences of reading and understanding a community that brings in novel insights from different cultures and communities who go through numerous experiences as a result of centuries of shifting of identities.

This form of lettering displays a resistance of this community towards the broader community which expected a homogenous role from people who originates from a particular community. This kind of writings with their complex history and displacements show different kinds of history and how numerous historical processes have constructed a person and what sort of process of the history an individual is a result of. Thus, through their writings and linguistic complexity these women writers show their readers their

complex personality as agents of multiple diaspora and their experiences as women from multiple diaspora community. Their writings stretch an understanding and awareness to the idea of how identity is not one just there rather it is created every day and, how an individual, community or a nation attains different identities at various phases of his/ her life through different experiences, and how the identity keeps on evolving in new form of identities with newer experiences with time. And how with time identities of a group or community begin to gain a collective identity that again problematizes the concept of individual differences. Thus in my opinion identity of a group or an individual is subjective, susceptible of change and alterations thus, one must be open to be receptive to changes and alterations. Multiple migrant women writers have a very different technique of articulation and their writings bring out a South-Asian diasporic identity very different from the South-Asian identity perceived in general and this identity not only brings out a different perspective in the identity discourse of South-Asian community but also it defies the singularly attributes attached to the identity of South- Asian women. The stories by these writers bring a very different and unique perspective on the lives of multiple migrant Indian diasporic women, to quote: “the diverse and relative terms upon which even their feminist position are constructed, terms which nuance, if not challenge, their status as “immigrant” or “minority” writers or indeed their positions as “subaltern” women” (Pirbhai, in Cynthia, 2004, p. 397).

The attitude of both, the homes, and the hosts are very different for multiple migrant communities, because multiple migrant community does not form the perfect whole of the society rather it glimpses the ruptures, breaks, omissions in systematic patterning of a society be it host or diaspora . Multiple migrant community not only

creates a new diaspora within Diasporas but also it brings a new kind of diaspora on the fore, which is often marginalized and oppressed in the meta-discourse of migration, transnational and diaspora studies.

To conclude, one can further illustrate that the writings of multiple migrant women authors describe about vivid diversity and cross-cultural dynamics of Indian diaspora community, the writings of these women writers describe about historical conditionings of diaspora communities, and their literature focus on rewriting of history of diasporic Indian women. Their writings are inclusive about ideological positioning of present diaspora communities and it endeavours to create new identities in its plural hybrid cultural milieu. Writings of multiple migrant women authors correspondingly debate about multiple positioning of women and numerous memories that create the identity of these diaspora women, the writings of these writers often traces history of the life of women in indenture and these are explicated via multiple memories, which are often is filled with historical agony, and memory of lacerations, violence, aggression, trauma, exile, anxiety, multiple homes and multiple hosts. The above mentioned feelings are intrinsic part of the theme of the writings of multiple migrant women authors. Multiple Migrant writers have shown the life of women at different stages of migrations with their movements as migrants.

Chapter: 7

Analysing & Understanding Indian Diasporic feministic

Literature

Indian diaspora as a discipline or field of study was particularly undermined as an area of scholarship for a century. Research and studies were carried out on many issues of historical importance, for instance, slavery, displacement of Jews and migration of Mexicans, Filipinos and Chinese etc. Amid all these studies, the history, experiences and negotiations of Indian diaspora, especially the old indentured diaspora, was left out or given the impression that it was of no historical or academic importance. It is very recently, nearly a few decades back, that scholars of postcolonial studies began to explore various peripheral, marginalized histories and voices and it was during those attempts that Indian diaspora found its expression into academic province.

References of Indian diaspora and its experiences established its principal exposure in recent development that happened in postcolonial writings, which not only challenged the old aged notion of perceiving and understanding the universalization of work of art, but also posed serious questions to literary canon that considered the art as a thing of timeless significance. The traditionalist, conservative Eurocentric school of thought argued that a work of art is timeless, and thus, interrogating, and questioning the authority or artistic value of a work of art is beyond question. Nevertheless, this authoritarian position of art was interviewed, catechised by several theoreticians from postmodern and postcolonial studies who spoke in favour of disruption of authoritarian position of Eurocentric voices that left out the voices of marginalized communities and

refrained from integrating it into grand narratives. This school of thought advocated mini-narratives that would inculcate ruptures and peripheries and substitute the one grand centre of authority. Postmodernist and postcolonial school of thought questioned the existing notions which were central to the debate; the question of purity, of identity, the question of one centre around which a lot of peripheries revolved. Postmodernist and postcolonial school of thought deconstructed the notion of centre and periphery questioning the literary works of great historical and timeless significance. When one looks into the central works of English literature it is explicit that the writings by English writers are not only inherently racist but also these writings have internalised those aspects of race and colonization and has given it a natural colouring so that it appears regular to the people and gradually takes the shape of a natural phenomenon.

Postcolonial criticism is analogous to cultural studies, but it presupposes an exclusive point of view on literature and politics that deserves a separate dialogue. Distinctively, post-colonial critics are more driven towards literature produced as an outcome of colonial hegemony and have been writing, discussing or portraying the position of those who were colonized. Post-colonial theory deals with various issues of power, religion, culture and gender relations but in the context of the Indian diaspora, theoreticians have given extremely limited attention to old Indian diasporic feministic writings and to their issues and negotiations and how these factors are affecting the identity discourses of contemporary society.

The indentured experience of Indian diaspora has created a new Indian community who, migrated from Indian continent centuries before. The new evolved community does not only consist of old Indian customs, traditions and life style but it has

also mingled the culture, mode, tradition and environment of host community and thus, has given a new outlook to its community. One can certainly not disremember the murky bygone trials and tribulations that Indian diaspora had to go through during indenture days. There were many more hardships in indenture apart from the life in plantation, one can't forget the dehumanizing, cattle like situation in sea voyage that devoured many on the way, this version of indenture created another horrific reminiscence in mind of the community, which now shares a common memory and history of horror and traumatic past. Indian diaspora during indenture had also witnessed the demise of many unknown members whose skeletons were still lying buried, burned, and scattered in the lands where they strove hard to rise above the misery and horror that were inflicted on them.

In spite of desolation, despair, unfavourable and hostile circumstances, diaspora community during indenture survived and with its hard work, flourished and prospered during this time. Once the period of indenture ended, one can observe that there was the birth of a powerful first generation of Indian diaspora in plantation colonies. This generation survived on communal bonding and interdependence on each other; one can effortlessly comprehend a solid community connection. In its different plantation colonies Indian diaspora constructed a separate Indian village, for instance an Indian inland into the interiors of East-Africa, Caribbean, Mauritius and Fiji etc. Indian diaspora emerged out to be a flourishing community in the host lands rising up with its own occupations such as small scale businesses of shop keeping, farming, cattle rearing, vegetable cultivation etc. made the community to rely on its own and also provided its distinct identity and uniqueness in host country. However, this period of prosperity and affluence didn't last for long.

During the post-indenture period, Indian diaspora faced resilient hurl from hosts who became too hostile to Indians that it ultimately steered to adverse circumstances and tough statuses for this community. In this regime Indian diaspora confronted hostile knockback from its host community in form of extermination, penitentiary, heavy taxation and worst of all re-migration or displacement of Indian diaspora. That gave birth to a novel Indian diasporic communities of multiple migrants in various countries like Canada, New Zealand, America and many parts of Europe. However, the entire re-migration that took place from various plantation colonies was not forced displacement. There were also migrations from old Indian diaspora communities that were voluntary in nature with the aim of finding new hopes and opportunities.

The 4th, 5th, and 6th, chapters of this thesis has explored, three diverse phases of Indentured experience, that trace the life history of indentured women and their negotiations. The first phase describes about the plantation life in detail by providing illustrations. The chapter demonstrates testimonies and narrative of indentured labourers which are compiled in the form of literature, such as biographies and autobiographies, short stories, songs, fictions, poems etc. Further chapter 5th and 6th provides chronicle of the next generations with their sentiment of accommodation and belonging.

First section describes about the indenture experiences and life of labourers. It exhibits the life in indenture labour system in general and further moves to demonstrate the experiences of Indentured women labourers in particular. The historical silencing of women by writers like V.S. Naipaul and others is one of the paramount specimen of inherent gendered predispositions that administered the life of Indian society, life was exceedingly grim for indentured but it was furthermore demanding for women. Women

were more vulnerable to abuses because they were fewer in number, less paid and working in home and outside as well. Women were vulnerable to sexual violence due to huge disparity in gender ratio where men outnumbered women.

Chapters 4th, 5th, and 6th have specified three successive stages of the life of Indian diaspora women, their life in indenture, in post-indenture and in contemporary social sphere. The negotiations with various roles that women have been assigned, and how women have been attributed with multiple roles and with each role how they have acquired newer and shifting identities. The three chapters exhibit that how right from the advent of indenture to the present day women of Indian diaspora community have gone through several altitudes of scuffle, coercion, subjugation, and hegemonic gendering to establish them as the 'other'.

Brij V. Lal (1989) with respect to migration of women in the history of Indian migration opines that "Migration was not a new or unknown phenomenon for Indian women; thousands had moved to other parts of India...in search of employment, either on their own or in the company of their male relatives"⁸³ (p.165-66). The new pattern about this migration was that it was forcing them to move beyond their home and geographical territory. It was a contractual bond that was full of qualms and beyond their understanding as they were mostly unschooled commonalities that were travelling to novel, mysterious lands. The destinations were unrecognised names, it was a journey into the unexpected circumstances, and the mental trauma of indentured labourers can't be underestimated.

⁸³ Brij V. Lal's "Kunti's Cry: Indentured Women on Fiji Plantations" in *Women in Colonial India: Essays on Survival, Work and the State*, edited by J Krishna murty (Delhi Oxford University Press, 1989), 165-166.

Mariam Pirbhai (2012) in her “Recasting Jahaji- Bhain” states that: “The broad and complex range of women’s experiences during and after indentureship defies post-colonial and Eurocentric epistemologies that have generally straight-jacketed the female subaltern in a stereotypical shroud of passivity, victimhood and socio-religious conformity...and the inescapable fact of gender disparity render these women doubt marginalized...within an already oppressive system” (p. 28-29).

Women were beleaguered by a different form of patriarchy in plantation system, it was a mixture of creole, colonial and inherent patriarchy with a tint of racial prejudice. The multifaceted circle of patriarchy made life of indentured women helplessly powerless. They were given an illusion of multiple choices but ironically indentured women were often entrapped into multiple subjugation. Moutoussamy’s *Le Kooli’demorne Cabri*, communicates one such anecdote where the protagonist is made to feel that she is empowered, whereas ironically that empowerment brings her into a different kind of marginalization. *Le Kooli’demorne Cabri*, is the narrative a woman named Tadjana. Tadjana is an attractive woman and since her childhood she has been subjected to various patriarchies at home, she is married to a man, for whom she has no infatuation. Tadjana’s marriage is a symbol of a typically abusive marriage where women are assaulted and treated like a door mat and they are expected to submit to these kinds of violence as it seemed natural for women to accept violence as a part of their life. Trapped into her unfortunate marriage, Tadjana finds solace and love out of her wedlock where, she falls in love with the nephew of her plantation owner, and she breaks away from her married life, and finally achieves independence from her ultra-abusive arranged marriage. (Mahabir et.al. 2013)

Even though she escapes from her abusive domestic relationship and departs for good but the person she loves fails to provide her with the position of authority or power. She is further marginalized in her new life but in a different way. She is relegated to the position of a concubine, who was defined to be a savage woman, unworthy for being the part of a British household. Thus, the savage girl was denied institutionalised marriage and the legal position of a wife in the master's household.

The first generation of indenturedship was hard for women as they were few in number and their male counterparts were outnumbering them, and due to overwhelming majority of men indentured women went through multifarious arrangements of oppression and discrimination. Indentured women were marginalized by their own men from India then there were colonizers who victimized women in various ways which included treating indentured women with disrespect.

Women were treated with inherent gendered biases that entailed that oriental women were sexual objects, and a subject of their master's sexual fantasies, as from their nature oriental women are morally dispossessed. The plantation owners and white workers in plantation treated indentured women as sexual objects. Indentured women were similarly sexually abused and harassed by their Indian men too. Besides sexual harassments women were harassed economically by being paid scanty wages. Even when women worked similar to men and performed double or triple tasks, they were still subject to unequal wages for their daily toil. Most of the indentured women were single migrants, there was tendency among the men from both the home and the host communities to look down upon them by pronouncing them to be sexual perverts and morally corrupt, and considering them to be objects of various patriarchal prejudices.

Violence upon the body and the emotion of women was an inevitable feature of indentured plantation society. There were certain moments where extreme fierceness and violence turned certain women psychologically unstable. One such example can be observed in Ramabai Espinet's *The Swinging Bridge* where, a character named Baboonie is insane, but in the entire context of the novel her madness is symbolic; a symbol of ultra-exploitability of women in the history of indenture. Baboonie is a victim of assorted violence which is abusive and brutal to the extent that it could drive women into insanity. In the novel, Baboonie resides in a crummy hut. She is mentally unstable and has been socially ostracised and is often found to be singing stanzas from Tulasidas's *Ramayana* that she relates with her situation; the banishment, the feeling of abandonment and purgation of sin by suffering. The stanzas from Tulasidas's *Ramayana* are mechanisms of solace for Baboonie in the dark nights of cruelty and oppression. According to Ramabai Espinet, Baboonie is a consequence of psychological and physical violence that a woman goes through as a result of extreme oppression. Another method of violence that women face in its extreme form could be perceived in the character of Sunnariya from Peggy Mohan's *Jahajin*. Sunnariya, who is first abused by the plantation owner then married and forced in a relationship which does not bring anything to her life that she anticipated for. Ultimately Sunnariya forces herself to resort to her mother-in-law's company for solace and subsequently the bond of sisterhood that Sunnariya forms with her mother-in-law ultimately bargains a petite peace for Sunnariya.

Another character that can be mentioned here is Gainer, the protagonist of Ramabai Espinet's *The Swinging Bridge*. Gainer, a vibrant chutney singer⁸⁴ was forced to stifle her ambitions of singing chutney because it was considered sexual and lewd in nature. Her manuscript of chutney was burnt and destroyed by her husband because he assumed that it would bring shame upon his family. This act of violence symbolises an assault and a coercion which is physical as well as psychological in nature. The act of imposing restriction on Gainer changed the entire personality of Gainer, once a popular singer and passionate artist was restricted within the four walls of patriarchy of Joshua's home. Gainer became silent and no enthusiasm was left in her life. She was often sensed to be working in household with a suppressed self. Gainer lost her identity to domesticity, she crossed Atlantic for a life that was beyond the domesticity but after temporary freedom Gainer was enforced to submitting to patriarchy.

Women in Indian diaspora were often relegated to a marginal position, and that position made patriarchy so comfortable that it was difficult for women in diaspora to challenge the authority of men and of the entire power structure. Although circumstances were hostile, difficult and unfriendly for women in indenture, but it were not invincible when women decided to resist the inherent gender biases inflicted upon them. Women in indenture went through tough resistance movements, and through the movements they began to attain the position of power. Slowly and gradually, Indian women who migrated to new lands with new hope, aspirations, and the dream of a life away from the constraint of traditional patriarchy, attained relative autonomy. Thus, indentured women could be

⁸⁴ In Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Jamaica, and Suriname, Chutney soca music is a crossover style of music incorporating Soca elements and Hindi-English, Hinglish, Bhojpuri lyrics, Chutney music, with Indian instruments such as the dholak and dhantal.

regarded as the symbol of resistance and defiance who dared to move beyond the religious boundary of *Kala Pani*⁸⁵. There were women who enjoyed sexual liberty and chose their way of life but they had to pay cumbersome prices for it, in form of wife murder, wife beating, killing and suicide out of sexual jealousy and many other kinds of violence were inflicted upon them.

The second generation of women in old Indian diaspora had a strong sense of self and understanding of their part in the broader discourse of plantation society. They were subject to a different kind of patriarchy, which was busy in invoking its old India and expected women to play the roles which their mothers and grandmothers fought hard to abandon. This happened due to the law brought by British planters who made a rule for permanent settlement for the indentured labour which said that after the expiration of the tenure of Indenture period. If workers were interested they could re-indenture themselves and can get permanent settlement in some colonies and in those colonies these settlements were given on lease for a specific number of years⁸⁶. This act of British government gave indentured labourers a hope to earn more money and settle back in their host land which instigated a grand⁸⁷ necessity to invoke their ancestral culture and

⁸⁵ Here I have used the term *Kala Pani* in reference to a particular discourse in which male migrant already feel that they have lost their Hinduness, by crossing the black water (*Kala Pani*), and also felt that their purity is further getting downgraded by travelling with women who were according to their men *Rand*, infidel, widow, and whose moral conduct were the core issue of their discussion. In this whole discourse women had very little agency but due to the crossings they became relatively autonomous individuals as they were already considered an omen, inauspicious and considered to be an outcast, these women were already living a *Kala -Pani* in their home land thus crossing the *kala Pani* did not make a difference in terms of subjugation rather it brought a sense of freedom and agency.

⁸⁶ In case of Caribbean the indenture labourers were given the choice of permanent settlement but in case of Fiji, they were given land on lease, the validity of which was for 100 years which caused hazards in life of indentured people after abolition of indenture and expiration of lease, the lands were taken back by the host government and migrant were forced to go out of the country.

⁸⁷ The word Grand here has been used ironically to show how trivial it is to think that only women are to be give the responsibility to savior a culture or tradition and it doesn't matter if they want it or not they are either forced

tradition. The invocation to Indian patriarchy corroded whatsoever limited autonomy that indentured women had in plantation community. In traditional society women had stratified roles to play which were highly gendered in nature and didn't provided women much scope to freedom.

The second generation of indentured women, although descended from early indentured women, the daughters of protesting mothers and ancestors who reinvented a life for themselves in the strict system of patriarchy within plantations. However, life became challenging for second generation of women who had to work at home and in the fields too along with abiding by the rigid rules laid by various patriarchies. Unlike their ancestors, second generation of indentured women women were mostly confined within the four walls of home and the axiom of their mobility was majorly limited to the area of hearth and kitchen.

Tomorrow is Another Day (1994) is one such fictional work centred on the lives of second generation Indian women in post-indenture, narrated from the perspective of women and about women. The titled fiction explicates the life of Indo-Guyanese women and their negotiation with orthodox struggle and survival. It describes the life of women amid strict racial and patriarchal structures during the reign of Forbes Burnham. In the novel the character Jagru derives inspiration from his mother, a highly active figure in the plantation towards the women resistance. To quote, Shewcharan (1994):

“She worked hard all her life, bringing him up single-handedly after his father had died. He knew that her back still ached with the constant bending she had done in the canefields and her hands were scarred from handling the long stalks.

with these responsibilities or they are assumed to be ready to receive these roles bestowed upon them from inherent patriarchal ideologues.

When he has made his mother retire from the fields, he had promised her comfort and told her she would never have to work again” (p. 58).

But despite his privileges as a man,, he fails to abide by his promises and towards the end of his rough days it was his mother Kunti who rescues him. She not only plays the role of a problem solver but also exhibit a spirit of power and resistance against the agencies and forces which try to suppress her, and many other women like her. She also provides assistance to Adee, who was in desperate need of social, psychological and material help. Kunti provides her what the males of her community failed to provide. This deeply embedded activism can be traced from plantation history, in which the early women showed the courage and spirit of independence and freedom and bestowed it to their subsequent generations of women. Here, act of Kunti displays how women transcended the space of domestic and outside and how they changed the definition of male-centric and female-centric spaces, exterior and interior and embedded attributed roles assigned to each sex.

Tomorrow is Another Day serves to show an active participation of women in both domestic and public spheres. It illustrates how women in plantations not only participated in labour production and acquired a prominent space within male space but also actively controlled the domestic sphere which already was their own accepted sphere. Kunti’s deed of helping Adee; an African woman, symbolizes the inclusion of a creolized culture that Indian community was negotiating with. The toil and cane cutting of women on the plantation is not only the emblem of autonomy and freedom that they acquired it also symbolises their duel result as empowerment and struggle. The empowerment comes with women being the agent of their own life and a decision maker

and the sole care taker of their own self and in certain cases individual care taker of their family. To quote Brinda Mehta (2004):

“The working women is thus, an active co-worker in the fight for economic survival, struggling for equal participation in mainstream production and thereby disrupting any false notion about her dependence on her male partner” (p. 143).

Further, Ramabai Espinet, in her, “Epistemology of Cane”, argues to quote:

“I want to begin by asserting that within the Chorus of voices modulating the discourse on cane – its history, politics, sociology, culture and literature – one voice is notably absent. It is the voice of the female cane cutter of Indian extraction in the Caribbean context. And because that voice has not been present, speaking out the depth of her personal history, the experience of what woman has been denied” (p.143).

The act of cane cutting and working hard in the field symbolizes the perseverance of women towards achieving a greater degree of autonomy even if it comes at the cost of hard work and toil. The act of Kunti’s chopping of cane and her instinct of resistance demonstrates the rising of the idea of agency that women exercised in plantation in the early years. Kunti’s devotion and dedication towards labour and the vigour she exhibits in confronting the vicissitudes of work on the plantation develops her into a symbol of labour and the spirit of struggle to attain what is lawfully hers. Further the novel *The last English Plantation* by Janice Sheinebourne (1988) deals with the similar theme. The protagonist June is raised by her biological mother but is influenced and tutored by Nani Dharamdai. She is a figure of struggle and resistance and she has an active consciousness

of her past as a cane cutter which brings in her the emotions of sisterhood and survival. This novel focuses on the cultural consciousness of one's own tradition and history and an understanding of one's own identity. Nani is a figure of a matriarch like Kunti. Both provide solace to the community when needed and control the domestic and public sphere of their community. They raise the consciousness of one's own past in the community. Nani infuses a consciousness among the women of her own community who understand the worth of their existence and develop an understanding of their identity as independent women, for instance, the character Marian, is an example of female power and force which threatens the power structure of the men of her community and also challenges the male dominated spheres including workplace and life outside home. This happens when Mariam awakens and understand the importance of economic self-sufficiency and emerges out to be sole bread winner of the family.

She becomes a person who would not yield to conventional gender roles and how ideal Hindu women are expected to be. Free spirited women like Kunti, Mariam, Nani existed in deeply and highly controlled structure of plantation and reverted the gender roles. They also challenged the gender roles existing in contemporary Indo-Caribbean plantation life. They were all single mothers and free agents and their social unconventionality not only enhanced their individual growth but they also became more out spoken and independent.

The second generation women in spite of being the workers in plantation or being women who were already subverted and ostracized into different layers of patriarchy, had a very strong sense of history and memory and a strong sense of belongingness to the land that they are living in. The second generation of women seem be the ones who have

embraced the feminist sphere to be their powerful zone and made it to an area of operation exclusively for women; the Kitchen sphere where the women together performed and exercised their power.

The women in second generation had the autonomy and freedom to negotiate, make choices and take their own decisions. The second generation of women in the discourse of post indenture feminist fictions, theories and discussion have received minute attention. They have been highly marginalized in the study of diaspora feminism. These women have a different version of negotiations that diaspora women went through during post-indenture era, their resistance and tale of struggle needs more critical enquiry.

Whereas in third or successive generation, women encountered a different life, which was a curious mix of empowerment and de-powering, the experiences and struggles of development, the experience of memory and accommodation, clash of multiple cultures and multiple gendered spheres made the life of multiple migrant Indian diasporic women more complex. The women from third generation or fourth generation are the women who have experienced multiple lives via migrations and multiple relocations or dislocations. These women have a very different experience to chronicle entailing vicissitudes memories of homes and hosts.

The women from Indian indenture who have experienced multiple migrations can also be classified as women who faced double diaspora. They are the representatives of double diaspora within Indian diaspora. The women who represent double diaspora or multiple migrations are the participants of a new world that has grown from the ravishes of the old Indian diaspora, a world in which gender, power relations and identities have questioned each and every existing theories of identity, migration and displacement. The

gender relations and identities are the biggest factors that multiple migrations have brought to the fore through the writers who belong to or associate themselves with multiple migrations.

Multiple migrant women conferences about their identity as outcome of ruptured histories and cultures; the identities which are shifting and are not specific to one self but selves. This community of theoreticians consider them to be waddling in a 'nowherian' position who have multiple selves and identities; their identity is fragmented and their works portray the position of their fragmented selves. This community associates itself with position of Trishanku⁸⁸ and consider them to be neither here nor there and hung in between a space which is neither Indian nor host or associated to the new locations of migration. The state in which multiple migrants find themselves is the state of belonging to nowhere; an in-between position, an identity which is beyond the conventional perception of identity.

The multiple migrant women claim that moving beyond is the need of present theoretical schools, that include moving beyond the conventional approach and transcending the boundaries of thought. The habit that we have to fit in, is one of the reasons why we search for theoretical schools to fit in our thought, the habit of either here or there, the expectation to belong to either this or that, the myth to have an identity of either this space or that space. Whereas in the context of multiple migrations, identity is highly malleable and it is a shifting signifier to something which is on the move like the multiple migration, and multiple migrant communities which are always mobile and stirring.

⁸⁸Trishanku is a character from *Vishnu Purana*, he is a character who at the time of churning of oceans, cheated and was cut into two pieces by God Vishnu from his wheel, and was cursed and due to that curse he was hung between heaven and earth, thus he is in-between neither in sky nor in earth.

At this moment one must transcend oneself beyond the definitions of identities and reach in a moment of transit where space and time travels to create intricate figures of discrepancy and identity, past and present, within or on the outer surface, integration or segregation, inclusion or exclusion. Multiple migrant women writes and theoreticians have asked traditional theoreticians and writers to budge away from the single definition of gender or feminism. It argues that we have been trained to look at everything in an organised way to understand and analyse, but the kinds of question that multiple migrant women pose are difficult to answer if one has internalized the traditional definitions, theories and discussions. They are of the view that Identity is a complex area of study and when a group of people have shifting identities it becomes even more difficult to attain a uniform definition.

Traditionally the discourse of migration and settlement raises the question of identity and migration in very contorted definitions, while the need of contemporary era is to raise the question of race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation, and one need to give importance to the issues which are theoretically innovative, and politically critical and vital. One must be trained to look and think beyond, there is a need to question and interrogate and what is original need not be standard but it must be given importance. The In-between space transcends the singular terrain of defining the identity and self as a singular identity, but the new in-between space provides a new contestation for identity; it offers various spaces to create, assert, initiate and act to be different and question the idea and the definition of society.

The existing society is the result of complex social structures that gave birth to intricate relations of different individuals who are parts of various changes that are happening in the society and also the individuals who created new identities by shedding certain traits of their former personalities and accepted intricacies to be vital and an inseparable part of the personality in contemporary society. The immediate need in present society is to create a community which must be beyond the conventional idea of communities. The identity of nation and its subjects to be loyal to one's nation has created a lot trouble for migrant communities who are subject to more than one nation or multiple nations and when they are citizens of a community their loyalty is always questioned and brought under scrutiny.

Often migrant communities are suspected, disbelieved, and brought under various levels of discrimination and exclusions. These loyalties are questioned on various grounds of nationality, religion, race, gender, political affiliations etc. But it has created furore and anxiety among the migrant communities who have been vilified and subjected to violent assaults by host communities. The host often develops antagonistic insolence towards migrant communities assuming them to be a threat to their nation. In such circumstances, there is a need to develop an open, tolerant and friendly community which must negotiate with its subjects, and train its citizen to have the experience of nationless feeling, the community and society which must move beyond the discourse of nation and loyalty.

Homi K Bhabha in his book *Location of Culture* (1994) gives the concept of Hybridity in which he says that an individual attains hybridity when he is a subject of

more than two identities, these identities often negotiate with each other and in that negotiations the individual encounters a state of hybridity where s/he is neither here nor there, s/he doesn't stay pure rather s/he becomes the hybrid version of multiple cultural negotiations and associations. When one discusses about nation and loyalty and nationalism, the individuals who are living in the state of hybridity often become the subjects of interrogation. To quote:

“Colonial hybridity is not a problem of genealogy or identity between two different cultures which can be resolved as an issue of cultural relativism. Hybridity is a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other ‘denied’ knowledge enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority- its rule of recognition”⁸⁹ (p. 162).

Thus, writings, theories and discussion in the domain of multiple migration and multiple belonging scholarship is often centred to the conflicts and dilemma that one confronts and encounter as a subject of various migration and identity. The individual experience of protagonists in fiction and the writings explicate how belonging to multiple migrations creates the typical postmodernist identity⁹⁰ in an individual. Thus, writings of multiple migrant women writers explicates the situation and issues that women encounter as a product of multiple migration. Ramabai Espinet in her Fiction *The Swinging Bridge* conferences about complex identity that she has as a women, who has always been on move and have gone through migrations, she articulates: “We are not south Asians in a

⁸⁹ Bhabha, Homi. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge. 162.

⁹⁰ The discourse of Postmodernist Identity is highly celebrated in contemporary; it talks about identity as a shifting signifier which is not stagnant but always moving and shifting.

true sense of word we are peculiar hybrid, our cultural world more pronounced than most children of India outside its shores. We, for the most part speak no language but European tongue: English, French or Dutch in its standard form as well as the peculiar version of Creole” (In Mishra, 2006, p.130).

Further Shani Mootoo, in her short story collection *Out on Main Street* in the titled story conferences about the discrimination that women went through in multiple migration setting, she discusses about the experiences of two multiple migrant women who are Indian from origin but born and brought up in Trinidad and migrated further to Canada. The women are made to feel like an outcaste in an Indian sweet shop, people there began to frown upon the unnamed narrator and her girlfriend Janet. The shop represents a space where various alliances cohabit, it is a space that is supposed to provide apt attention to every voice but unfortunately some voices are more special than the others. Few voices dominate the shared spaces and provide an illusion to the others, the subaltern voices to have a sense of equal share in the discursive space. And in the case of the present narratives the discourse of voice is dominated by the first generation Indians who marginalize multiple migrant women for not constituting the category of dominant voices. The multiple marginalized women are discriminated and marginalized for being a part of a different category of Indian diaspora. They are not only marginalized by white Canadians for looking like Indian, but also discriminated by the first generation Indian migrants. The first generation of migrants from India pronounce that it is only the fresh migrants who represent the India, and it is only the first generation of new migrants who are real Indians, the protagonist in the story says, to quote Mootoo (1993):

“Cultural Bastards, Janet, cultural bastards, that is what we is. Yuh know, one time a fella from India who living Up here called me a Bastardized Indian because I don’t Know Hindi, and Now look at dis, nah! De thing is: all, We in Trinidad is cultural bastards, Janet, all a we...I Looking forward to de day I find out dat place inside me Where I am nothing else but Trinidadian whatever dat, Could turn out to be”(p. 51-52).

Here, one can observe a sense of rootlessness and in-between ness that migrants face where their identity becomes highly malleable and shifting. Merle Collins argues in favour of migratory writings she opines:

“If writings constitute a politics/poetics of existence then it should be reflective of the complexities, disjunctions and affirmations of “Migratory Subjectivities”⁹¹ moulded by the intricacies of race, class, nationhood and gender. It should embrace a particular strategy of transformational discursive transgression to refashion the world from multiple perspectives that deconstruct colonial and patriarchal world views” (Collin in Mehta, 2004, p. 83).

Thus, Indian Indentured feminist study must be provided a literary space that supports and favours and also promotes various histories about indentured community which have been successfully hidden by the prevalent Eurocentric dominant histories. Writings of multiple migrant diasporic Indian women are countering the dialogues which have silenced their history and have eclipsed their identities. In the first phase, during first generation, the violence was both on physical and psychological level and women

⁹¹ Bell Hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge, 1994. 11

had to go through extreme form of violence due to existing pre-conceived notions that women who migrated to plantation did not have social reputation (that was constructed by patriarchy) in India. Therefore when women reached to plantation, they were received with resentment and disinclination. Indentured Indian men treated women with revulsion and contempt. The plantation system which was inimical to everyone in general was extremely hostile towards women in particular. Women labourers were paid unequally even if they performed tasks equal to men. They were treated as subordinates by plantation owners and were also sexually assaulted by their masters and none of them could complain, as in most of the cases the owners were given warning or in some cases their narratives were not even believed to be true.

These women were facing extreme forms of harassment and marginalization from men of their community as well as from masters. However, there was a spirit of hope for a life of independence and a spirit of resistance amidst indentured women that kept them going. In spite of various levels of discrimination and violence women spoke out and fought for their rights in plantation. Indentured women can undoubtedly be pronounced as the prime spirit of resistance. Indentured women could also be pronounced as the first generation of Indian women to become decision makers and masters of their own fate. They successfully fought to maintain their position in plantation systems. They did not easily give up as they had already tasted the syrup of freedom and independence. They were not ready to bargain until it was really worth. While during the second phase in case of second generation of women, patriarchies were operating in a different format. Women were made to feel that it was sole responsibility of women to save their cultural and religious identity. In addition to the Indian patriarchies that govern lives of indentured

women, during post-indenture regime women were further surrounded by patriarchies that were upshots of colonial hegemonic practices from British masters who preached Victorianism. Furthermore women were governed by patriarchies that came in Indian community as a result of cultural encounters and reciprocation with indigenous creole population.

Successively in the third or subsequent phases where I am concentrating on women who are subject of multiple migration. In third generation or fourth generation women came under multiple scrutiny of several patriarchies because of their position as multiple migrants. In this phase women were governed by multifaceted patriarchal ideologues of race and gender. Due to multiple migrations, women faced extreme forms of discrimination, due to their multiple affiliation, and gender they were further looked down upon. Similar Experiences of negotiations and multiple marginalization could be observed in diasporic women authors from various other communities representing the voices of marginalization and subversion. Paula Marshall, a multiple migrant woman from African descent discusses about experiences of multiple migrant African women living in United States of America. Davis (1994) reviews Marshall and describes, to quote:

“Afro-Barbadian-American writer Paula Marshall in “The Making of a Writer: From Poets in the Kitchen”, “Marshall transforms the dynamics of the space of culinary practice which is kitchen and recreates a new space in kitchen in which women were promoted to create various artistic skills, that, to quote, “transforms the dynamics of kitchen from a site of daily drudgery into a creative poetry

workshop, in which she becomes the apprentice of the kitchen table poets, represented by her mother and her mother's friends. Using the Kitchen table as a creative drawing board, these women reconfigure their triple marginalization as foreign-born-black working class immigrant women in the United States into patterns of creative assertiveness, through everyday colloquialisms that give meaning to their immigrant existence: And their talk was a refuse. They really never ceased being baffled and overwhelmed by America- its vastness, complexity and power" (p.7).

Further kinds of negotiations can be observed in Davis's argument, where she discusses about multiple crossings of African women. Davis opines that black women's writings need a new interpretation in existing society. To quote Davis (1994):

"Black women's writings ...should be read as a series of boundary crossings and not a fixed geographically, ethnically or nationally bound category of writing. In cross-cultural, transnational, translocal, diasporic perspectives, this reworking of the grounds of "black Women's Writing" redefine identity away from exclusion and marginality" (p. 30).

Further Davies argues that writing within the politics of reclaiming as a key to establishing a foundational identity politics based on contestation, negotiation and the eventual transformation of outdated literary and theoretical paradigms of representation. (Davis, 1994). In context of African multiple migration and Identity, Dominick La Capra in his book *The Bounds of Race: Perspectives on Hegemony and Resistance*, (1991) delivers a subtle scrutiny of the capricious position of racial ideologies and traces the

interaction between hegemonic constriction and the stratagem of resistance to them. He argues in the introduction to this volume, that considering the belongings of that ideology and its intricate associations with issues of class and gender is one of the most extreme challenges to present-day modes of thought.

Attitude of Homes and Hosts Lands towards Multiple Migrant Diaspora Communities:

The attitude of both communities home and host are identically different for multiple migrant communities, because it does not form the perfect whole of the society rather it glimpses ruptures, breaks, omissions in systematic patterning of society. This community exhibits the lacuna underlying beneath the structure of multiple patriarchies of home and host that do not offers a space of negations for multiplicity. Multiple migrant community not only creates a new diaspora within Diasporas but also brings a new kind of diaspora to forefront, which is often marginalized and oppressed in the meta-discourse of migration, transnational and diaspora studies. Migration is a continuous process and the human social structure is evolved with different pattern of migrations right from the antiquity to the present era. People often acquire status of being aboriginals once they stay in land for a considerable period of time. The long sojourners with passage of time begins to pronounce themselves as nationals of that particular land.

As nationals, the aboriginals, begin to play hosts for immigrant communities, the long aboding history of aboriginals provides them with a sense that a particular piece of land or territory is inherited by them, hence they have the sole autonomy to reside in that land. In addition to such concept of belonging and autonomy, aboriginals of a nation

gradually internalize the idea that whosoever is immigrating to their proclaimed land must need their permission to abide in that specific land. As a result we have multiple rules and regulations in contemporary societies. Regarding immigration and migration. In such scenario migrants are not welcomed because there is always a fear of losing the power over the land and resources due to increase in numbers. Thus, often the encounter between migrants and hosts take forms of xenophobia in the host community which sometimes turn into mass conflicts, examples of this kind could be observed in the coup of Fiji, where Indians were restricted in certain parts of Africa, racial attacks on Indian students in Australia, the murder of Indian women for spotting *Kumkum* on their foreheads in Canada, and recently the murder of a turbaned man and shooting of a Telugu software engineer in the United States of America.

Be it any country or locality, conflict of migrants and hosts is an inevitable part and parcel of their experience. Even within a country we see conflicts within migrants of different states, which often lead to dispute and violence, for instance, the attacks on migrants from U.P. and Bihar in Mumbai. In such cases matters are often criticized and often national unity is hailed but when such incidents occur on international level, it generally becomes problematic to wrestle with. It requires dedicated socio-economic and political determinations to tackle such situations. In such environment international relations of countries are often at stake, for instance: conflict between the Indian and the Australian community (various racial attacks on Indian students), relationship between Bangladesh and India, (due to various conflicts and illegal migration in Assam and other North-Eastern part). The aforesaid conflicts have raised multiple tensions between international relations of India with above mentioned countries.

Migrant communities seek help from either the homeland or the host land, when they encounter subjugation, conflict and marginalization. However, the present thesis concentrates to address the conflict and multiple encounters of a different migrant community (multiple migrants) which does not have singular homeland or single host land to seek help from. This group of migrant have always been on move from one nation to another, and has least awareness about the homeland or the host land. Multiple migrant community has assortment of multiple homes and hosts therefore it has a problematic concept of the idea of homeland, in addition to that it further has no clue of which home to accept and which to abandon. In environment of social injustice, multiple migrant community has no helping hand to seek help from, when required. For multiple migrant community the place of natal, the place of adolescence and the place of settlement, everything subsists in a 'nowherian' position. The 'nowherian' of this diaspora community transports them under an ambivalent position, that brings an category where this migrant community does not only address the diversity in migrant communities rather it creates a super-diversity⁹²discourse in Vertovec and Cohen's term.

Multiple migrant communities has been living away from their genealogical home from centuries and have been living in alienation since time immemorial. Nevertheless, that homeland, still plays an imperative marker in the life of multiple migrant communities. Multiple migrants are seen as Indians by host communities because of their inherited racial attributes such as skin colour. Even after centuries of isolation from the land of origin of their ancestors, the multiple migrant community is still anticipated to showcase the conventional roles attached to them. There have been

⁹²<http://www.mmg.mpg.de/research/all-projects/super-diversity-south-africa/> for illustration visit the website. Accessed date 23/06/2015

multiple instances where multiple migrant community has not demonstrated any association from its ancestral identity. For multiple migrant community the ancestral land is a place where their great grandmothers/ fathers have migrated from. Ancestral homeland is a place where they trace their roots from, apart from such disinterested accounts, multiple migrant community exhibit seldom sentimental affection to their ancestral roots.

Keeping such disinterested emotional quotient, the multiple migrant community is expected to adhere to certain Indian culture and tradition. The expected roles that multiple migrant community is asked to justify are alien to them and they have barely any idea of such culture and tradition. However when one extends such cultural expectations into the life of multiple migrant women, it becomes even more problematic. Multiple migrant women from Indian diaspora are living in lands away from patriarchal obligations of their ancestral land, however, an altered version of patriarchy from ancestral land still operates with the axiomatic of their home. The original concepts however, have been contaminated with other kinds of patriarchies. Multiple migrant women who have physical appearance as Indian are expected to justify the typical traditional roles that they are assumed to be bestowed with, in conventional terms. Multiple migrant women are expected to play traditional roles as first generation of newly Indian women. Migrant women had a different life as women, they were born in communities where only a feigned concept of India existed. India didn't have much role to play in their lives when they were growing up, and suddenly in multiple migrant space, they are expected to play roles as Indian women.

The life of multiple migrant women is poles apart than the life of first generation of the Indian Women in diaspora. The first generation of Indian women are observed as meek, docile, passive and hesitant which in itself is problematic and exclusionary way of looking at a particular community and a particular gender. For the first generation of Indian women, India is their homeland and they assert and flaunt their Indian Identity. While multiple migrant community has no association with anything that is Indian except few ancestral, altered versions of Indianness.

In spite of having entirely dissimilar cultural, traditional and socio-political experiences, multiple migrant women are recognised with identity of conservative brown women, representing homogenous religion, and culture the way, the first generation of Indian women represent their Indian the identity as brown women. However, such categorization of Indian brown women itself is problematic because India as a country comprises of multiple religions, cultures, languages and ethnicities that exhibit diverse identities.

When one conferences about Indian diaspora and existing diversity in it. One often identify ethnic, cultural, religious, linguistic geographical and caste diversities forming an integral part of this community. However, on international forum Indian diaspora is marked by its majoritarian identity as a group of populace that practices Hinduism. Therefore host community habitually expects a traditional Hindu to be fitting into the definition of Indian, and in this way repeatedly other religious and cultural communities from India are interrogated, and examined. Identity is a core issue to Indian diaspora community in its entirety, however, it is further more challenging for multiple migrant diasporic Indian communities to maintain their identity in such social and

political environment. Multiple migrant population has only a psychosomatic awareness that they have Indian root, and there are high possibilities that they have any physical connection with the motherland of their ancestors.

Further, with the passage of time, connections of this community have weakened with India and the India that they keep with them is an abstract and metaphorical term. Most of multiple migrant diasporic Indian communities are following Christianity due to 'mission civilisatrice' (civilising mission) of the Christian missionaries and thus, their religious identity is already compromised together with their cultural and ethnic identity due to their existence in multiple cultures and communities. Likewise, for the first generation, homeland is a place where they have been born and brought up while in the case of multiple migrants, it is Trinidad & Tobago, Guyana etc. which they consider as their home land. However, in their host land Indian diaspora is made to remember their status as immigrants. Therefore, there is no sense of permanence that could be observed to be existing in this community. Literature which discusses on such issues often displays that characters have addressed themselves as immigrants and settlers from other countries who have been subjects of multiple accommodations and shifting.

The unaccommodated selves and shifting of identities is the result of multiple exclusion that multiple migrant community has encountered. The country to which they called their homeland never received them as its citizen therefore they remained in a minority position. Further the lands where the multiple migrant populace migrated do not recognize the difference and diversities that are part of their identity, hence multiple migrant felt ostracised. Multiple migrants consider themselves as Indians by epistemic origin, but there exposure makes them, the citizen of the world consisting super-diversity

within them. Due to massive diversity and hybridity in their selves, multiple migrants not only transcends the discourse of identity but also interrogates the entire theory, concept and idea of Identity. Meena Alexander (2002), discusses about the African and Caribbean Identity. She mentions about migrations and situation of identity with respect to communities that are highly mobile. She argues:

“Where black/African-Caribbean identities have become defined as fluid, fragmented, negotiated and creative, Asian identities have been defined – in opposition – as static, bounded, internally homogenous and externally impenetrable [...]. ‘Difference’ in this case, then, is imagined in cultural absolutes and oppositions, less an engagement with the other than the reification of irreducible and antipathetic ‘Others’. The dilemmas of these two versions of ‘difference’ are most clearly apparent in relation to youth: where African-Caribbean youth cultures are seen as moving outwards, into mainstream cultures, transforming and transgressing ideas of integral British cultural identity, Asian youth cultures, if acknowledged any existence outside the black hole of ‘community’ identity, are seen as mysterious, incomprehensible to ‘outsiders’ and exclusive” (p. 558).

Further, Shani Mootoo, in her short story collection *Out on Main Street*, illustrates about negotiations and confrontations that exist midst multiple migrant Indian diaspora. *Out on Main Street* exhibits multifaceted conflicts and confrontations that exists within India diaspora. In the narrative of story multiple migrant community of Indian diaspora is observed to be representing a caricature of Indian diaspora in an altered version which is neither Indian nor Canadian or American etc. it demonstrates a different kind of hierarchy

and domination that works within Indian diaspora where one community is trying to establish power over the other. Shani Mootoo in *Out on Main Street* addresses the similar issue of hegemonic domination of the new Indian diaspora over the old multiple migrant Indian diaspora. The titled story in the book reflects the conflict of this kind and the multiple dilemmas of migration, displacement and un-accommodation within multiple migrant communities. Though the collection of the story raises and addresses many issues of sexuality, gender oppression, linguistic hegemony and domination of newer Diaspora over multiple migrant Indian diaspora, but mainly it addresses the gender oppression of the multiple migrant community women in the multiple migration spheres.

The story is set in Canada, and relates to experiences of a lesbian couple, Janet and her partner. Janet wants to go out and eat sweets at the Indian sweet shop, but scared of the humiliation that she might face when she goes inside that sweet shop, due to her differences from the new Indian diaspora. She is not able to pronounce the names of Indian sweets correctly which makes her as an object of laughter in the newer Indian diaspora community. She feels that she is the diasporic 'other'. Janet, in the story, is too conscious of her differences that she is reluctant to go out on the main street and buy sweets, but her craving plays an important role in the whole scene. She, practices hard to get the name of the sweets correctly before entering into the shop, and in spite of her numerous attempts to pronounce the names correctly, fails to do so, and thus, as expected, she becomes the object of laughter and humiliation;

Here one observes the linguistic hegemony of newer diaspora over old. It demonstrates how newer diaspora is trying to establish its power over multiple migrant diaspora, the linguistic anxiety experienced by unnamed narrator could be observed in

her paranoid behaviour. Her restlessness and paranoia could be interpreted as a result of her personal multiple hybrid self, her personal anxiety and up-rootedness which she faces in her personality, and her everyday encounter with the host community and newer Indian diaspora. She is already uprooted and she becomes more conscious of it when she confronts the people around her who compel her to illustrate her identity and indirectly put her under the burden of authenticity. Other example of the attitude of hostility and conflict could be seen in the act of the gendered comments poured on the unnamed narrator and her girlfriend Janet. The unnamed narrator is not comfortable with homogenization of sexual preferences. The unnamed narrator is a lesbian, when the narrator meets her lesbian friends at sweet shop and when they begin to discuss about their love life, it attracts the gaze of homophobic heterogeneous people who stare at their act of hugging each other. This instance is another form of violence against women, where women are not given social acceptance if seen beyond their traditional roles. The roles as homogenous entity who, safeguard the tradition and culture of the community and, if disparity exists in this representation, they are often subject to gaze and verbal abuse.

The above debates on women from each generation of old Indian diaspora, and their experiences as women in various historical junctures illustrate a different experience of women in Indian diaspora. The debate on identity of women in Indian diaspora is often limited with various shortcomings such as over simplification of the experience of women. Thus, one can conclude by keeping the above debates in mind that identity is not permanent; it is ever changing and keeps evolving with every action and every turn of events that people go through. The quest for identity of women from indentured Indian

diaspora can serve as an interesting case study. Their identities are complex and multiple and with the multiplicity of movement this community of women have attained multifarious identities on many occasions. Therefore, the shifting of identities is an embedded part of this community of women and they seem to have embraced it as a natural phenomenon to their persona, except certain moments when their identities are shaped more into political compartments when, hosts or homelands compel multiple migrant women to follow or adhere to metanarrative.

Conclusion

The earth in its entirety is inhabited by innumerable societies and individuals having diverse identities. These identities are of various kinds, for instance; the identities of gender, sexuality, class, caste, ethnicity and race. Together with its variety of people, it has various social, political, cultural, religious, and traditional metamorphoses. Without understanding differences and physiology of existence of each and every human being, their circumstances, socio-politico-cultural differences, their gender and sexual orientations, some communities which clutches certain privileges (economic, geographical, somatic) try to dominate and rule others, who are born under certain unfortunate circumstances. And with passage of time, this domination, exploitation, subversion and subjugation becomes a normal and accepted phenomenon amid communities. The naturalization and internalization of subjugation of one over the other forms the ideologues of power structure, which provides intertwined domination-subjugation scenario that ultimately depowers the second category. In such scenario domination of powerless by powerful appears too ordinary that it begins to be perceived as regular, ordinary and a conventional phenomenon.

One such powerless communities whose powerlessness and associated discrimination seems natural to us is the domination of women by men. Various authoritative structures which makes it natural for the society to consent that women are fated to live a certain kind of life and are meant to be governed by men, and keeping these conventional norms at mind, individuals are often conditioned to perceive such norms as social or cultural covenant. With passage of time the conventional roles are too

much ingrained into one's psyche that imposed gendered roles on women with inherent gendered prejudices begins to look like an embedded part and parcel of women's social and cultural identity. But with emergence of numerous atrocities on women by multifarious patriarchies, the natural and accepted position of women began to be interrogated, questioned and challenged. In some case these assigned roles and ideologies were challenged by women, and in other instances, various complexities that were emerged due to gendered segregation, enforced societies to question, revisit and alter the gendered norms. The ostensible standard, accepted clichés ultimately paved a mode for the foundation of feminist scholarship which examined and questioned these clichés and gendered ghettoization of the 'other' sex, based on sexist assumptions. The gendered segregation of women raised a lot of furor in feminist scholarship; the deliberation of women as a weaker sex, the description of women into oversimplified negotiations, the mediation of women as non-important experiences were cross-examined. As a result of such efforts from feminist scholarships, slowly and gradually women acquired a voice that provided them with a position to speak for them. But with time women studies and feminist scholarship correspondingly became bourgeoisie in its approach and inclined towards generalizing the experiences of heterogeneous women as conjoint universal voices of entire women community.

Amid such simplified generalizations, women from marginalized communities sensed under-represented and invisible within the dominant discourse of feminism. Within the mainstream feminism, the subaltern women were constantly treated or described as inferior assemblage of women. The marginalization and historical invisibility of ostracised women henceforth left a comprehensive fissure in mainstream

feminist studies where history of women from minority communities did not receive the space of negotiation that it must have. Also the predominant discourse of naturalizing the exploitation and discrimination of women played an important role in suppressing the expressions of women from marginalized community, as women in relegated communities were observed to have no voices and opinions of their own. And it was due to such presumed, pre-conceived notions and women have been anguishing from centuries by various forms of patriarchal supremacy in various forms of physical, psychological and social cruelties.

Recent feminist or postcolonial feminist studies have decided to nurture the question of and existence of these marginalized women and their discourses. The recent feminist studies have endeavoured to bring to the centre the peripheral voices of ostracized clutches of women who were secreted beneath the dominant majoritarian voices of feminist scholarship. Therefore postcolonial feminism has uncovered many such veiled histories and has created a space in academia for their voices to be heard and understood. One such account of recovery is the recovery of the history of Indentured women, wherein Indian women were sent to several plantation of British, French and Dutch colonies to work as indentured labourers. Women indentured migrants from India have found extremely infrequent, insufficient and sporadic mention in the history or in the contemporaneous society of Indian diaspora, which is an imperative issue and is raised by contemporary feminists from Indian indentured women community.

Due to historical discriminations and relegation, the paroxysms, sting and resistance of women against inflicted spasms and wound has found absolutely no voices either in male-centred writings or in the predominant voices of mainstream feminism of

Indian diaspora. Women from this community have writhed the condition of historical dementia where they felt that there was a deliberate attempt from historians, authors and scholars to silence their history, lives, and their experiences as migrant women from a country such as India where women were buried under strict patriarchal rubrics. In spite of centuries of migration struggle and revolution, the position of women has remained more or less in constant stagnation. The position of women in migration discourse altered for sure but not as it altered for the men of their community; for women it altered only to a limited degree of difference from their previous position. But amid such strict and slow alteration one can easily observe the existence of fiery, revolutionary, resilient, robust and independent women who have made their way out even from vilest exploitative circumstances. And it is this spirit which is the need of the hour, not only for the women from old Indian diaspora but also universally the women must learn to live a life of freedom, respect, solace and not to yield to the patriarchal ideologues that depowers them and snatch their basic human rights to sojourn and blossom as human beings.

The present thesis brought forth one such issue of exploitation of women from old Indian diaspora, their negotiations from centuries with multiple forms of oppressions, be it psychological, social, political or physical. It illustrated how women from old Indian diaspora right from the inception of indentured labour system to the contemporary era are forced to abide by the patriarchal norms, sometimes through coercion and at others in subtle and disguised forms for instance women are made to abide by patriarchal customs in the name of the well-being of civil the society. Women are expected to sacrifice their ambitions and lives in order to adhere to the touchstone of being good women and forget about their own individual priorities and existence. Yet, despite of adherence and

sacrifices that women have been making on everyday basis, it is hardly observed to have borne any reward coming out of it. Rather in compensation for their sacrifices women are often witnessed to be fronting multifarious incidents of abuse, violence and sexual assaults in form of rape, eve teasing, brutal killing of adolescent girls on a very surface level, whereas within the domesticity as incentives to their sacrifices women are expected to bear with violence inflicted upon them by various patriarchies and by silently bearing with it, women must also exhibit them as epitome of good women. The concept of women being good, ideal and self-sacrificing operates invisibly towards strengthening the vicious circle of patriarchy by governing people via taking control over their psyche. This is one of the most central forms of oppression which operates upon women psychologically and make them to feel that these are natural trait embedded to the personality of a woman, to have naturally inherited and equipped with discursively constructed characteristics.

Keeping in mind the aforesaid idea, the present thesis elaborated on the lives of Indian indentured women whose lives were governed and dominated based on the sexist lines.

The present thesis analysed on various forms of violence that operated on indentured women, directly and indirectly, in Louis Althusser's term s ideological state apparatus, where Althusser argues that state apparatus are insidious mechanism through which the ruling power, repress, subjugate, and exploit the ruled ideologies. The governing ideology often are structured in such a way that the powerful discourses are made to appear accepted to the people and make them to internalize the governing mechanism and consider it to be a natural social phenomena; for instance- the ideological

oppression of women in Indian diaspora by imposing the notion of idea, good Hindu women. It demonstrates how women were governed under various discourses by converting various patriarchal ideologies into conventions. (Althusser, 1970)

The present thesis conferred about the history of Indentured labourers and, it analysed the underlying tone of gendered segregation of women from different histories of migration. It outlined various stages of migration that took place from India, from its commencement of old age migration from different provinces of India for trade and business purpose. The travel of gypsies from India to different parts of the world whose genealogy until very recently have been traced from India by recent historians and most importantly the migration of Indian Indentured labourers to different plantation colonies of British, French and Dutch masters. It further illustrated and provided an account of prominent history of migration of Indian women to various British, French and Dutch plantation colonies and accommodation and negotiation of women as 'other' gender in a different world. It further connected it with the phenomena of re-migration and multiple migrations of the women from old Indentured Indian community to different new communities and their shifting mediation with their identity.

Furthermore it discussed about the early historicity of the migration of women in various plantations. It exhibited the hostile and unfavourable circumstances in which women were treated as possessions and commodity. It described about the first generation of Indian indentured women and their anecdotes of migration, settlement and survival. Writers like Peggy Mohan and Gaiutra Bahadur communicated about this generation vibrantly and lucidly in their writings. The first generation provided a glimpse in the life of first generation of independent, unaccompanied women migrant, who were

mostly widows, disowned by their in-laws after the death of their husbands, besides the unaccompanied single migrant there were also accompanying wives and daughters, the dependent women. It discussed various insights into the lives of Indian women; a sane as well as a sinner version. It demonstrated how women and their lives were altered due to migration. In some cases the alterations were negative and in few instances women acquired a position of a decision maker and achieved a relative autonomy which was a distant dream to achieve in their own homelands. The situations of physical assault, murder and sexual exploitation of these women by various patriarchal forces can't be over looked. One can observe adequate illustrations of abuses, assaults that went unheard. Various instances of sexual assaults could be located in various colonial documents that are available in various archives. Beside that numerous literary narratives and women centred histories demonstrate instances of ultra-exploitability of indentured women. One such example is the protagonist Deeda, of Peggy Mohan's *Jahajin*, and Bahadur's great grandmother Sheojari. Women in early plantation exhibited extremely courageous spirit of resistance wherein in spite of various efforts by multiple patriarchies to subjugate, women choose a life of independence and freedom. Consecutively the thesis parleyed about the life of Second generation of Indian women in plantation. Some of them were born in India and migrated as children while others were born on plantations. These women had and have received least critical attention. Further the thesis discussed about the literature of Lakshmi Persaud and Shani Mootoo, *Butterfly in the Wind*, and *Cereus Blooms at Night*, except few second hand narratives in fictional writings, the second generation women from indentured community have found absolutely no voice.

The thesis demonstrated about the multiple accommodations and lives of women in plantations during post-indenture regime. It illustrated on how post-indenture Indian diaspora and women negotiated with multiple patriarchies. The aforementioned works of literature represent a baffled, tough and doleful life of women in post-indenture migrant colonies. Although women had attained certain autonomy in the new lands during early indentured period, but with the again the entire Indian diaspora civilization was administrated by inherent gendered predispositions and patriarchy. The position of women in post-indentured era, their mediation as agency and authority have extremely dearth of literature thus, it becomes difficult to conceptualize the negotiations of women in post-indentured era.

Subsequently the thesis describes about the life of contemporary, third generation or fourth generation of diaspora women, who are living in multicultural societies and have experienced multiple migration. Women migrants from third or fourth generation have multiple memories of home and hosts as gendered subjects of migration. Multiple migrant women associate their identity with their great grandmothers, in some ways this generation of women connect themselves with their early indentured ancestors. The present thesis demonstrated the multifarious negotiations of multiple migrant women in the multicultural world. Writers such as Ramabai Espinet and Shani Mootoo communicated through their literature *The Swinging Bridge*, and *Out on Main Street* about multiple roots of women who find splits, ruptures, hybridity as integral part of their identity. Through their literature the women authors demonstrated multiple positionality of Indian diasporic women, who, despite of centuries of migration into western world confront exclusion, and 'nowherian' position. The thesis illustrated about multiple and

confused identities of women who have gone through several segments of migrations. This generation of women do not associate themselves more with Indian identity, rather they associate them with the indentured land from where they migrated as: Indo-Trinidadian, Indo-Guyanese, etc. women consider Trinidad to be more of their homeland than India. Multiple migrant communities has faint memory of Indian identity, Indian for them is the land from where their ancestors migrated long back. Literature from multiple migrant women would portray the memory of indentured land than India, but in multicultural societies where the multiple migrant front the first generation migrant Indian, their identity is often confronted and catechised due to their skin colour that they have inherited from their ancestors. In such circumstances multiple migrant women feel excluded from every possible associations, they neither feel Indian enough, not Trinidadian enough to pronounce their identity, thus, they often pronounce their identity to be hybrid, dougla and plural.

Further present thesis attempted to make an analysis of the condition of women in diaspora from three to four generations. Looking into various literature one could infer that women from old Indian diaspora had always lived under coercion. The gendered discrimination never seems to come to an end, be it early indenture, post-indenture of contemporary society. Although the method of oppression have altered in the early indentured it was more physical coercion that turned into cultural identity in post-indentured and at present in contemporary postcolonial society women are marginalized mostly on emotional level, the social expectation and multiple interrogation from hosts to homes concerning their identity brings women under psychological marginalization. Espinet and Mootoo have described about it vividly in their manuscripts when hosts

societies have expected gendered roles of their ancestral land from multiple migrant women.

The experiences of Indian women in diaspora from Indenture to present day society are very different from the experiences of women who are recently migrating from India, or women who have not migrated at all from their first host land. Indian women from old Indian diaspora played imperative role in labour force, although their labour was categorized to be less important than the labour of men. However, accessible testimonies, folktales, letters, petitions and statements made by Indian indentured women provides one with sufficient and substantial data that women worked hard on plantations and quality and quantity of work that women produced on plantation was no less than men. Not only in production of work force but rather Indian indentured women, in spite of heavy workload and oppressive patriarchies, have played a major role in maintaining the emotional and cultural linkages with the homeland. Various instances could be found recurring throughout the thesis in which it is demonstrated that women have maintained to perform religious rituals, various culinary experiments in their kitchen to keep the culinary agency that they brought from the home land alive. Women also created various feministic spaces which were only restricted to women the example of which is *Matikor*, a famous form of song in old Indian diaspora community. *Matikor* was extremely popular among Indian women in indentured who made it an integrated part of Indian identity in diaspora.

Women in indenture were assertive and bold to fight for their rights, they were not passive, meek or docile that they could be easily dominated, although women were forcefully suppressed in many plantation by various patriarchies sometimes by violence

and sometimes by sexist law. This is could be seen in many complaints that Indian indentured women lodged against the plantation owners who tried to exploit women. As indenture was substituted by slavery, often the owner was in habit to treat indentured women as slaves. According to several indentured scholars, there were massive efforts by colonizers to oppress Indentured women and treat them as their previous slaves but the reactions that indentured women gave to their oversimplified expectations were not what the colonizers anticipated. Indian indentured women time and again straight away complained against the violence. Various women also filed petitions against the colonizers for payment of lesser wage in exchange for their overburdened back breaking labour.

Although the position that Indian Indentured woman had in indentured society is often disputed among historians and scholars of diaspora studies. Indentured women have often been referred by multiple adjectives such as a group of 'sorry sisterhood' of Indian women who were duped and deceived into the journey unknown to them. Women from old Indian diaspora have also been termed to be a group of women who were social outcastes and had extremely marginalized position in the, then Indian social structure. These women have also been proposed to be coming from the lower castes of the Indian community. Also they were termed 'abandoned women', who were abandoned by their in-laws after the death of their husbands. These are few predominant narratives which are often weaved against the old Indian diaspora women but so far there have been various views and dispute on these prevalent notions . Intellectuals have not reached to a consensus on a uniform narrative about the facts regarding the actual position of women.

The above versions have been often refuted, rejected and questioned by diaspora scholars and especially by diaspora feminist historians and intellectuals. Neither of the versions is accurate and has been rejected by later historians, particularly feminist historians. There had been charges on indentured women that they were immoral and sexually pervert but later intellectuals have delivered Indian indentured women from the burden of immorality. The intellectuals are of the view that women in indentured strove hard to recreate and establish families and a stable and settled life in the plantation. They argue that it was the disproportionate sex ratio that affected the development of family in indentured society. The stable family and recreation of Indians began to take place in colonies only after the British government decided to bring into the provision of family migration. It was this rule that increased the number of Indian women in plantation. This increase in number of women in plantation colonies could be the reason behind the huge numbers of Indian families living presently in various countries where Indians worked as indentured labourers.

Indentured women were one of the main reasons for the development of Indian identity and culture in plantations. Various oral records and literature on indentured women illustrates that women played an important role in preserving their cultural and religious identities. Although there were hostile circumstances around these women but they were courageous and fearless. Women in indentures fought hard and confronted the colonial brutality with all their might.

The indentured women fought to reinvent a life in the plantations. They fought at every level to assert their identity as women, they fought against the planters and their oppressive law, they fought against the system which paid women unequal wages, and

the similar kind of fighting spirit could be observed in the next or the successive generation of women from indentured community. Women from successive generation of indentures associate themselves and their experience to their ancestors who are a symbol of feministic spirit and independence. The third generation women who have re-migrated from their host land consider their situation to be akin to that of their great grandmothers, who recreated their own identity. The experience of migration as women, the experience of hostility, the question of identity and the memories of homeland are a few key features that women who go through multiple migrations experience and it is similar in many respects to the experience of indentured women, their great grandmothers who migrated from India to the colonies.

Hence the present thesis provides a glimpse to the life of Indian women from old classical diaspora, who are often left out or suffer with under-representation or invisibility. It shows how women have negotiated with identities from generations to generation. The thesis explicates how the world of old diaspora and its present negotiation within academics is way different from the usual debate of diaspora.

The world of old Indian diaspora is complex, it is multi-dimensional and so are the negotiations of this community; not only its history but also its recent development as a diaspora community. But it is sheer blues and unfortunate that present scholarship on diaspora often fails to integrate the complex life of old Indian diaspora in present era and to show how the off springs of old Indian diaspora are mediating with their identities and it completely fails in the integration of the experience of women in recent times who are from old Indian diaspora. It is also disastrous that the international scholarship takes almost no interest in the life of old Indian diaspora; their life, history, identity, culture and

socio-economic life doesn't seem to grasp the attention of international scholarship on labour, migration and diaspora. Thus, it is important for the present scholarship to shift its attention towards the old Indian diaspora, its history, its developments and its present negotiations in all its complexities.

However, to conclude, it could be inferred that current thesis does not negate the problematic involved here with the term 'empowerment' in the context of migration or multiple migration or the concept of women being empowered as a migratory being. But here, the above mentioned writers are making an effort to give a tribute to the women who were and are alone, suppressed, tried or trying to make their path amid highly controlled multiple patriarchies. The thesis does not glorify indentured labour system or multiple migrations rather it attempts to show how different form of patriarchies control these women.

The discourse of migration, diaspora, and displacement is multi-polar as a field of study into academia. It is an interdisciplinary field of study. Although there have been researches and studies carried out in this field but so far this area of study has only attracted the attention of few disciplines like history, literature and sociology etc. Apart from the above mentioned multi-disciplinarity which is needed to be implemented in the discipline of diaspora studies; there is also a need for scholars and intellectual community to pay a heed towards the development of contemporary 3rd or 4th generation of diaspora.

One of the challenges that I faced as a researcher was to identify methodologies for such a discipline which is complex due to its multiplicity and complex nature as a discipline of study thus a research new and nuanced methodology is needed which must be able to comprise address multidisciplinary area of studies like diaspora. Multidisciplinary research methodology would be

helpful not only into the research of diaspora but also would cater to many interdisciplinary fields of study. Moving beyond the clichés of disciplinary restrictions multidisciplinary dimension would open more scope for innovative research. Thus, innovation in research methodology would bring various novel dimensions to study that would open up scope for innovative researches beyond the clutches of strict disciplinarily.

Thus, keeping in mind the above points, the present thesis made an attempt to understand and unveil the history of women resistance in indentured labour migration. It discussed about the shifting negotiations of identity of women from generation to generation. The present thesis illustrated the mediation of women in migration discourse from inception till the contemporary times. The thesis described that how women have not only been reconfiguring ways out from their misery but they have been creating a space for them to negotiate, the present thesis demonstrated that how with their act of resistance women in early phase of indenture acquired relative freedom.

I conclude my thesis by quoting an emotional poem composed by Mahadai Das, who provided voices to indentured women by inscribing innumerable poems about her indentured community, about her women ancestors, about her roots and identity as a woman who has indentured upbringing. In her Poem, “They Came in Ships”, she described about the life of indentured women, who were often marginalized and deliberately left out from historical narratives that were scripted by male authors, therefore she writes this poem as a tribute to her history, the present stanza describes about her deepest homage that she paid to the great grandmothers by commemorating about the early indentured women, Mahadai Das composed:

I alone am today alive.

I remember logies, barrackrooms, ranges;
nigga-yards. My grandmother worked in the field.

Honourable mention.

Creole gang, child labour.

Second prize.

I recall Lallabhagie, Leonora's strong children,
and Enmore, bitter, determined.

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