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Diasporic and Transnational Encounters in Manik Datar's "Point of No Return" and Suneeta Peres da Costa's "Dreamless"

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I

In the present day globalized world, the signification of the terms 'diaspora' and 'transnationalism' has been proliferated to accommodate various issues related to migration and cross-border experiences concerning diverse disciplines like history, anthropology, sociology, literature, economics as well as interdisciplinary fields like international relations, gender studies, race and ethnicity studies, media and communications and culture studies. Both the terms focus on the phenomenon related to migration of people and capital across borders resulting from both coercive and voluntary factors. William Safran observes that through the ages 'diaspora' has been used in its specific sense of origin, i.e "the exile of the Jews from their historic homeland and their dispersion throughout many lands" but in the present context the words 'diaspora' and 'diaspora community' are used as "metaphoric designations for several categories of people—expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants, and ethnic and racial minorities"[1]. Sporadic references to the terms 'diaspora' and 'transnationalism' have been traced earlier but a veritable explosion of interest in issues related to these terms came to the fore in the late 1980s.

Diaspora Studies reflects on the binaries of here and there, homeland and hostland, memory and forgetting, nostalgia and betrayal. Diasporic communities "blend their cultures and gain access to global travel a new mode of shuttling between old and new places and a more complex range of international movements became sufficiently normative for scholars to seek analytical tools more useful than the older dualities[2]. Diaspora Studies not only deals with how the diasporic subjects adapt to their transnational condition but also analyzes how dominant host communities are influenced and sometimes affected by the immigrants.

Although 'diaspora' and 'transnationalism' are interrelated critical concepts, there lies nuanced differences between them. Whereas 'diaspora' focuses on the individual / collective experiences of human subjects, 'transnationalism' is more concerned with capital and commercial networks across

borders. Steven Vertovec observes that 'transnationalism' refers to "sustained linkages and ongoing exchanges among non-state actors based across national borders—business, non-government organizations, and individuals sharing the same interests"[3]. The term came to prominence in the context of labour migration from economically less developed countries to the developed ones and later also applied to political refugees fleeing the violence and instability of their homeland. Thomas Faist and Basak Bilecen underline that "the high levels of immigration, the new locales of settlement, reshaped ethno-cultural mixes, changes in the nature of capitalist economies in a new (post-) industrial epoch"[4]. Transnationalism has paved the way towards globalism and cosmopolitanism but on the contrary it reinforces nationalism. It refers to the "Janus face of cross-border processes and conditions which may foster long-distance nationalism"[5]. Global movements of people and products across borders in the aftermath of the World War II have opened up 'transnational spaces' of mobility and exchange. Deb Narayan Bandyopadhyay and Paul Sharrad have pointed out: "Transnational spaces are those locations which have their meaning in accommodating, producing and containing flows of ideas, goods, data and people within, across and between geographical, cultural, institutional and political constructs bounded by nations"[6]. They further observe: "The transnational appears as both a factual reality of social formations and people's experiences in time and as a desideratum of critical practice—to prevent the homogenizing and fixing of identity, culture, political space into totalitarian unities, utopian or dystopic"[7]. Literary texts are also treated in transnational discourse as they "become part of the transnational circulation of *product* in global publishing and educational combines"[8]. In the context of Indian-Australian transnational encounters, Paul Sharrad remarks: "With the opening up of the Indian economy to globalized capital, and the burgeoning new English-speaking middle class, new publishers are springing up, including local branches of the major multi-nationals. This, and the recognition of its diaspora as valuable members of the national community, has resulted in a greater internationalizing of the Indian book market"[9].

Formation of identity is a problematic issue in the context of diaspora and transnationalism. The diasporic experience has put the cultural identity of a person into question. As Stuart Hall claims that 'cultural identity' is "a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'". It is not 'eternally fixed' but is "subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power"[10]. Diasporic subjects are exposed to the dominant mainstream culture of the hostland. The first generation diaspora undergo a cultural shock while acculturating in the new land. They become the victims of perpetual 'otherness', especially for their skin colour and pronunciation of the foreign language. Though the second generation diaspora are more flexible in adapting to the mainstream culture of the hostland, yet the demarcation related to skin colour persists. The terms 'diaspora' and 'transnationalism' are continually acquiring new connotations. With the changing dimensions, the issue of identity and the idea of citizenship are constantly being modified in the globalized multicultural world. Development of modern technologies related to transport and communications, especially telecommunications has reduced distance, mobilized migration and has almost dissolved the physical sense of border in the virtual world.

II

Though the socio-cultural encounters between the two former colonies and present nations, India and Australia began in the late eighteenth century with the settlers, there have been too few contributions to the 'Indian-Australian' literary landscape. But the scene has significantly changed from the early twentieth century with writers of Indian origin living in Australia and giving voice to their diasporic and transnational experiences. In the early period of Indian settlement in Australia, Indians went to Australia as contracted labours in the sugarcane plantation and vegetable farms. People, mostly from Kashmir and the Punjab province of pre-independent India settled in the 'bush country' as small traders of cattle or

merchant of textiles. As the early immigrants were generally less literate, the few texts archived are either permission-seeking letters to the colonial government of India or complaints to the government regarding some discriminatory measures. Some travel writings by Indian travellers to Australia have also been recorded during this period. As Paul Sharrad and Meeta Chaterjee Padmanabhan note that Fazulbhoy Vikram recorded some accounts of his travels in Australia in the 1880s, Christian convert N. L. Doss went to Australia as a missionary and published his impressions returning to India in 1888 and T. N. Mukharji recorded his experiences during organizing some displays of Indian material culture in Calcutta and Melbourne in the 1880s. Mena Abdullah's collection of stories titled *Time of the Peacock* (1965) was the first recorded literary work to be published in Australia by a writer of Indian origin[11].

Until the 1970s, the relation between India and Australia was negotiated by the policies and perspectives derived from the British Empire. As a 'white settler' colony, Australia was deeply anxious to maintain its elite standard and introduced 'The White Australia Policy' to check the influx of cheap labour from other countries. This Restriction Act was repealed in 1947 (significantly the year of Indian Independence too) which resulted in the 'privileged entry' of the Anglo-Indians to Australia for their 'shared colonial culture'. The cultural negotiation between India and Australia was shaped by the teasing out of the connections arising from the mutual subordination to the British Empire. As Deb Narayan Bandyopadhyay records, "Till 1989, India had been a 'blind spot' in the sphere of Australian democracy". In the 1950s-60s Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's alignment with China and Australia's sympathetic stand in favour of Pakistan regarding the Kashmir issue led to a tensed relationship between the two countries. The first cultural agreement between the two countries was signed in 1971 as an outcome of the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's visit to Australia in 1968. The bonding grew stronger through the close relationship between Rajiv Gandhi and Bob Hawke[12]. On the other hand, as Paul Sharrad notes: "During the seventies and eighties there was a discernible 'turn to Asia' in Australian writing, predating PM Keating's shift in foreign policy but following on from our involvement in the Vietnam War and the counter-culture movement's engagement with 'the East' and Third World liberation causes in general"[13]. Courses on Commonwealth Literature or Third World Writing, incorporating writings from Africa, the Caribbean, Southeast Asia and India were introduced in the Australian universities. At the same time, the study of Australian literature in the Indian academia was also officially introduced during the 1970s with critics like C. D. Narasimhaiah, S. Nagarajan, P. Lal, S.R. Srinivasa Iyengar and others taking pioneering roles. Two celebrated anthologies should be mentioned in this context. Harper Collins India published an anthology of mostly White Australians writing about India in *Of Sadhus and Spinners: Australian Encounters with India* (edited by Bruce Bennett et al, 2009) and Orient Blackswan published its counterpart, *Of Indian Origin: Writings from Australia* (edited by Paul Sharrad and Meeta Chatterjee Padmanabhan, 2018)—a collection of writings by Australians of Indian heritage. Despite the intermittent frantic and strident attempts of the racists to restore the 'White Australia Policy' which is evinced in incidents like the series of attacks on Indian students in Melbourne and Sydney ('curry bashing') which gave birth to huge repercussions, the present day Australian society is multi-layered. In this context, Alejandra Moreno Alvarez observes:

> […] Australia has never been a cultural monolith, nor the location of an
> immutable and monochromatic society. It is rather, a discursive construction
> in which incessant contestations of meanings are taking place. It is the land of
> the Indigenous population, of colonists, settlers, but also of countless migrants of European and Asian descent, including asylum seekers (mainly from Iraq, Afganistan and Sri Lanka) and international students[14].

From 1970 onwards there was a huge influx of South Asian immigrants in Australia. During that time and later, writers of Indian origin living in Australia like Mena Abdullah, Meeta Chatterjee, Manik Datar, Suneeta Peres da Costa et al gave voice to various diasporic and transnational issues in their writings. These writers "negotiate their spatial identities within the g/local and continue to construe the past and the present"[15]. In this context, Amit Sarwal comments:

> As situated within a range of imagined and real notions or locations, Indian
> Diaspora in Australia embodies a set of (dis)connections between place, culture and identity. This complex relationship or linkages between facts of geographical location—homeland or hostland— and notions of imagined or metaphorical geographies is thus addressed by spatial and sensory locations[16].

The Indian diaspora in Australia caught 'in-between' their hyphenated identity as Indian-Australian constantly yearns for a return to their roots which is often not viable for the incentives offered by the hostland. As a remedy, they try to reconstruct their ancestral homeland in the 'alien' land by taking resort to myths, legends and ritualistic observances. In this process, "how they recreate their Indian identity under diasporic conditions through recreation, continuation, maintenance and nurturing of their social and cultural uniqueness"[17] are reflected in the writings of the present generation Indian-Australian writers.

III

Manik Datar was born in 1953 in a Marathi-speaking family in Calcutta (present Kolkata). She moved to London and then Australia, where she lived in Darwin and Alice Springs before settling in Canberra. Though well-versed in four languages—Marathi, Bengali, Hindi and English, she writes in Marathi and English. Her work explores themes related to home, dislocation and resettlement. Datar's short story "Point of No Return" was originally published in *Voices*, volume 5, issue 4, in 1995. The story captures the anxiety, melancholy and nostalgia of the protagonist who has newly arrived in Australia by sojourning from one hemisphere to the other. The first-person narrator of this story who has spent just three weeks in the new country undergoes an emotional shock in the foreign land. The story begins with the narrator's conversation with a tailor designer in Canberra who regrets that fashion comes 'six months later to Australia': "Fashion is starting in America and when it is hot season in America it is cold season in Australia"[18]. The story revolves around the narrator's journey down memory lane during his paddling on in a boat on a lake in Canberra on a Sunday. He reminisces how he became famous as if like Tendulkar among his neighbours and relations when the documents came from his maternal uncle ('Bodomama'), a present resident of Australia who sponsored his nephew to this country. The reference to the Indian cricketer Sachin Tendulkar is noteworthy as cricket forms a major part in the relation between India and Australia. The alienation generated by dislocation has so severely affected the narrator that he feels himself 'as significant as a microbe' when he realizes that "there is not one individual amongst all the 18 million people who would care if I capsize"[19]. When the narrator decided to move on to Australia, his relatives and neighbours gave him lots of advice but nobody told him how to spend a holiday in a new land. He reflects: "I am to learn to earn. I am to save and return. Yet no one warns how I am to spend Sunday when time itself splits open like a chasm beneath my feet"[20]. Caught in-between metropolitan Calcutta and Canberra, the narrator craves for the familiar in his surroundings. The Canberrans who have gathered in the lakeshore and engage themselves in various recreations to spend their holiday remind the narrator of the fishermen at Mazerhat in Calcutta. His wandering gaze fixes on dark faces to locate somebody familiar. He develops an urge to name all things around him—birds, plants, foodstuffs—in Bengali because in the naming of them in his native language he could testify their reality. He is

constantly haunted by the memories of his homeland and cannot accept the circumstances of the hostland. In the 'diasporic space', "a before and later haunt the migrant present and local memoryscapes differ from and contend with the mental scapes" of new immigrants[21].

Australia does not rate high as a foreign destination to the Indians. When the narrator informed the news of his migrating to Australia, his office colleague at Calcutta, Mr Dutta asked "Are there people there?" trying to mean "Are there our people, Bengali people, there?"[22] Another acquaintance Sankarbabu while perusing the tourist brochure on Canberra, remarked: "A bush capital, eh? An oxymoron, my dear fellow"[23]. The hapless narrator had to sacrifice his love for an unhappy coincidence related to an Indian immigrant in Australia. His would-be father-in-law called off the marriage being influenced by the account of an Indian immigrant in Australia who divorced his wife living in the homeland with their two children. The narrator's would-be bride Rita was married to a successful banker in Oman. A negative response towards Australia results in the breakup of their relationship. The forsaken lover envisions Rita, "her beautiful black hair centre-parted, filled with red *shindur* of a bride" [24] among the happy-go-lucky Canberrans gathered around the lake. The dream of the narrator of specializing in architectural conservation and making contacts with the UN for receiving heritage funding was shattered to pieces when he finds himself serving the customers in his maternal uncle's restaurant. He is ashamed to think himself as a *chai-pani-wallah*, a 'tea boy'. While waiting on the tables of the restaurant, polishing his shoes or navigating through the new city with a map, he realizes his "life as a palimpsest"[25]. Yearning for the familiar, he frantically searches for Bangla speakers among the cluster of Punjabis, Hindi speakers, Maharashtrians and Tamilians in the Indian cultural programmes and is reminded of his Bodomama's advice: "You really must stop thinking in terms of Bengali and non-Bengali. Many of our people don't mix in general functions, but I suggest you don't limit yourself to Bengalis alone"[26]. This remark provides evidence than the Indian diaspora in Australia is coming out of 'ghetto' and mingling in the multicultural society. The jingoistic melody of the Hindi song *Mera juta hai Japani* ("my shoes are Japanese") performed by a ten-year-old boy in the Indian cultural festival touches the narrator deeply when the lyrics end in "yet my heart remains Indian"[27]. A common symptom in the writings of the Indian diaspora is their nostalgia for old Hindi film songs.

The narrator, a fish out of water, tries hard to accommodate himself in his new habitat and in this process realizes—"Canberra seduces"[28]. In the process of acculturation, he learns that "brown faces, too, can lie"[29]. He is shocked at the superficial, make-belief attitudes of the young generation of Indians brought up in Australia. He realizes that "belonging comes with incremental dues paid over years"[30]. Feeling dejected, he turns to the Australians and introspects: "Are Australian youth told by their families to forsake their land for another? [. . .] What tales of Yesu Christo did they listen to on their grandparents' knees? What had they carried for lunch in their tiffin boxes?"[31] To situate himself in the new location, he decides to make friends with the white Australians but initially this attempt also fails as he cannot overcome the cultural gap. Skin colour becomes a significant trope in diasporic experience. Even after staying for a considerable period in the foreign land, when the diasporic people become a part of the social structure of the hostland, they often face various kinds of harassment due to their skin colour.

Towards the end of the story, while passing by a construction site near the Family Court in Canberra, the narrator marks a boy "rolling a hunk of loose cobbled road-metal along the pavement", manoeuvring it to his family's kitchen, "a windbreak for his mother's mud stove"[32]. This image reminds the narrator of his boyhood days in Calcutta and he breaks down in a cathartic cry: "Suddenly, ambition-duty-pleasure-loneliness whirl in dissonance and grip my mind, tearing it apart like a tornado. Fear, like the lightning, bolts across my mind, and confusion thunders. At first I sob. Then, like the monsoon which rips open the Calcutta sky, my heart, too, cracks and a deluge gushes down my face"[33]. He confesses to

himself: "I am in hiding"[34]. The inner explosion of the narrator is dramatically externalized when he throws bricks at the glass of the Family Court, an emblem of the government building in the national capital.

Manik Datar in this short story captures the Indian way of life in Australia and how the immigrants try to recreate India in the 'alien' land by taking resort to myths, legends and ritualistic observances. At the outset of the story when the tailor designer compares the fashion of Australia with that of America, he raises his hand in a gesture of reassurance which appears to the narrator as a "palm like Ganesha"[35]. The black swan that glides by in the lake where the narrator was paddling on his boat reminds him of "*Hansa*, Goddess Saraswati's emblem"[36]. Before coming to Australia, when his childhood friend Ranjan told him that he would not return, his words emblazoned the life-path of the narrator "like a curse from an ancient rishi"[37]. While paddling on in the Canberran lake, the narrator's introspective realization is also expressed with a reference to Hindu mythology: "My paddles churn the lake like the great mythological churning of the oceans which brought forth the celestial ambrosia"[38]. Ironically, instead of the divine 'ambrosia', he brings up 'resentment'. Literary echoes and reworking of myths and legends create an 'intertextual space' in which cultural transformations can be effected.

The perspective towards migration changes with the change of generations. When the narrator's maternal uncle sailed for Australia in 1969, the family considered him unpatriotic for leaving the country and irreligious for not attending his father's death anniversary ceremony. They regretted this issue as a case of 'brain drain'. But when twenty –five years later that same uncle offered to sponsor the narrator to Australia, the family supported him wholeheartedly and gave several instances from relations and acquaintances who had settled in foreign countries. Frustratingly, among the references to Chicago, Leeds and other glittering cities of the West, there was no mention of Australia.

Datar's "Point of No Return" is saturated with references to Bengali way of life as lived in Calcutta, the hub of Bengali culture. During his moments of frustration in the new land, the narrator reflects on the happenings in their *pada*, i.e, their street in metropolitan Calcutta. He visualizes his 'Ma' (mother) and 'Baba' (Father) going to their ancestral home in the village and visiting Jadudada there. Thus the past reels on "like a silent movie"[39] on the back of his eyelids. He reveals: "Like a serial addict beached on the low tide of imagination I pine at what must now remain an episode unfinished"[40]. His imagination touches on the High Court at Calcutta and the National Library in Belvedere Street which was the Viceregal Palace during the colonial rule in India and Lord Curzon's ballroom has presently become the Public Reading Room of the Library. "The bricks and mortar of the Raj"[41] scattered throughout Calcutta provide sustenance to his imagination. Memory plays a significant role in diasporic experience.

The diasporic writers try to reconnect with their homeland through the use of native language and often incorporate words and phrases from their native languages in their English writings to provide a taste of familiarity. In this regard, Datar is no exception. Though born in a Marathi-speaking family, she grew up in Calcutta and consequently her writings are soaked in Bengali ethos and culture. The way the narrator and his bosom friend Ranjan cycled through every laneway in Calcutta appeared to him as if "searching for that special Durga-puja festival spirit in everyday life"[42]. Ranjan's hurt pride at the narrator's decision of moving to Australia is incorporated in the text in Bengali followed by the English rendering—" '*Besh korechheesh, jahchhiz je. Ja. Tui aar aashbi na.*' Very good. Go. But you will not come back"[43]. The instances of code-mixing and code-switching are noteworthy. The incorporation of the Bengali words (sometimes the original Sanskrit) like *hansa*, *karya*, *shindur*, *pada*, Urdu words like *talaaq* and Hindi words and sentences like *chai-pani-wallah*, *Mera juta hai Japani* provides evidence that the text has truly become a multicultural site.

Datar's short story captures the experience of dislocation, modulated by a nostalgic craving for the familiar of the recently migrated narrator who is caught in-between his hyphenated identity. Regarding identity formation in the context of diaspora, Amit Sarwal observes: "Migration, diaspora and exile offer diverse and complex environments for the renegotiation of social and cultural identities. These phenomenon have become everyday experience in our contemporary society in relation to cultural markers and intellectual negotiations taking place between individuals and nations"[44]. The protagonist of Datar's story during his compromises and acceptance in order to relocate himself in the new land constantly refers to his homeland. Standing at the 'point of no return' he casts a longing lingering look behind to his glorious days of the past.

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IV

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Suneeta Peres da Costa is a reputed Indian-Austalian writer who was born in 1976 in Sydney to parents from Goa, India. She went to New York as a Fulbright Scholar and received an MFA in writing. Her short story "Dreamless" is taken from *Fire and Shadow, HEAT 1: New Series* (2001) published by Giramondo. Part autobiography, this story deals with the trauma of the diasporic protagonist and can be treated as a writer's notebook. The female protagonist as well as the narrator of "Dreamless" who had left her 'antipodean home' and migrated to a 'new city' which was located not only in another country but also in another continent was completely baffled by her dislocation. She conceived that her world had been "turned upside down because these two continents were also in different hemispheres" which gave her the feeling "like Alice, as I fell into my albeit much more desolate abyss of sleep each night"[45]. Literally at that time she was reading the copy of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* which she bought in the street to the broker's office in the new city. Arriving in this new city she had to lodge herself in an apartment on illegal lease as she did not possess "an adequate 'credit history'" and found that "reality could be darker than Dostoyevskian realism"[46]. The narrator who had written a book dealing with the issue of 'madness' just before her arriving to the new country , was herself on the threshold of mental derangement resulting from estrangement and alienation. She was suffering from sleeplessness being "weary with a vague feeling of disgruntlement"[47]. She compared her situation with the famous Caribbean writer Jean Rhys who had been an 'insomniac', 'alcoholic' but a 'prolific' writer. With "very little money and many debts" she had to spend her evenings on her "tattered, perforated sofa bed" or see her "angry wounded face reflected in the blurry bathroom mirror"[48] in her new apartment. Though her migration was voluntary, her frustration made her to utter: "I enjoyed the feeling that no one outdid me in my estrangement, that no one surpassed me in my alienation"[49]. Future stood before her as an unfathomable void. Taking cue from Rainer Maria Rilke's novel *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, she opined-- "The frequent discontinuities of the prose seemed suggestive of my metaphysical state" but finally came to the point, "Rilke's prose was not perfect, my predicament was not perfect"[50].

Migrating to the new country located in the other hemisphere of the world, the protagonist had to undergo several kinds of bafflement and bewilderment due to cultural barriers. Even to procure the basic necessities of daily life, she was befooled and duped. In the new place, temperature was calculated in 'Fahrenheit' of which she had no idea. The supermarket appeared labyrinthine to her and she forgot the logical location of things there. She was in difficulty to locate a 'trolley' because it was called a 'shopping cart' there and found her amidst "sighs of frustration and head-shaking confusion" of the people around her. After a frantic search for several items in the supermarket she understood: "[...] because coffee for me meant Vittoria, and juice Sunburst and shampoo Pears, I immediately felt cheated by the fact that they weren't there; I imagined at once that the new and unfamiliar product names contained ersatz commercial goods, that I was being set up or duped"[51]. In order to open a bank account and to buy an answering

machine she had to face such harassment that she commented that her situation resembled Kafka's K in *The Castle*, a stranger who was continuously delayed and denied entry on various grounds.

The narrator could not cope up with the new situation in the foreign land and her utter frustration led her towards depression and resultant insomnia. She could not sleep; as a result could not dream and consequently could not write. Her explanation of dreamlessness in the context of spatio-temporal annihilation and relating it to the process of writing is remarkable:

> I could not dream and therefore I could not write: it took me a long time to make this deduction, but when I did I could see that good writing emerges from a sort of darkness; it requires an annihilation of space, an annihilation of time and these annihilations have their phantasmagoric corollary in the dream which casts light on what the mind diurnally conceals[52].

In this traumatic situation she was reminded of the writer Janet Frame who dealt with schizophrenia and other psychiatric disorders and played with the concepts of 'life-in-death' and 'death-in-life' in her novel *Yellow Flowers in the Antipodean Room*. The narrator concludes this episode with her realization: "[…] my own world, my waking world, would have had a huge hole in it too"[53].

Though the age in which Peres da Costa's protagonist is trying to situate herself is the age of 'digital diaspora' in which revolution in telecommunication and resultant speedy network system has almost annihilated the physical sense of border, yet the utter loneliness of the protagonist insisted her to think that the thirteen hours distance in the time zone between her present location and the place from which she migrated, "seemed like all the time in the world" to her: "I could understand time—after all, time is the vector by which an insomniac measures her abnormality—but it was as if I had been flung into another galaxy in which, besides gobbling his fledgling children, Cronus had wolfed down space itself"[54]. Peres da Costa's treatment of the spatio-temporal dimension in the context of cross-border movements is noteworthy. In this context, Deb Narayan Bandyopadhyay and Paul Sharrad's observation is highly relevant: "Time lag also infuses transnational experience when people begin shuttling to and fro between current residence/s and birthplaces"[55].

A symptomatic feature of diasporic texts is nostalgia for the homeland. The protagonist of "Dreamless" is no exception. Her hostland was crowded with people who were "dreadfully alone and empty" and the city was "full of piercing contradictions"[56]. In the midst of these hopeless situations, she recalled the memory of a friend from whom she had become estranged just before leaving her homeland. That woman had presented the protagonist a book of poems by a famous poet of her present hostland as a farewell gift. She repented the lost friendship and decided to call her friend over the telephone. The friend who was a social worker advised the protagonist to visit a psychoanalyst to overcome her depression. Half-jokingly the friend remarked that the city to which the protagonist had migrated to was "the world's psychotherapeutic capital"[57]. But the grotesque reality was that at that time she had no money to consult a psychoanalyst.

In "Dreamless", Suneeta Peres da Costa not only captures the diasporic and transnational experience of her protagonist but also focuses on the experiences of several immigrants through the eyes of the protagonist. When the protagonist was able to buy a bed for her apartment, the two men who were assigned the task of delivery, were also immigrants. Coincidentally, both of them came from the same town in the hinterland of Venezuela, a small town where everyone knew everyone but surprisingly these two men came to know themselves arriving in that new city. The protagonist came to this place for better academic opportunities whereas these two men came for better living opportunities. As they lack the required qualifications, they had to make their living by moving furniture. When the protagonist

introduced herself as a writer to them, they started a debate regarding "whether it was possible to write without a home, how the writing about one's home is often distorted both there and away from it"[58].

The narrator who was suffering from sleeplessness and consequent dreamlessness was able to dream again when she started a live-in relation with a man who was 'exiled' from his war-devastated homeland. This man had been a political correspondent before he left his homeland, "a country that manufactured large-scale horror by way of a war with the people of a territory it had long ago annexed"[59]. He had lost his family when he was young. By nature this man was a polar opposite to the narrator. While she used to suffer from sleeplessness, he was always sleepy as if under the influence of any soporific. Initially the narrator had to struggle hard to understand the language in which her lover spoke because "the language he spoke was an ancient one, guttural, full of fricatives"[60]. This psychologically devastated man used to have nightmarish dreams in his sleep but surprisingly enough, the narrator used to have 'odd pleasant dreams' while sleeping beside him. This man had an infatuation for graffiti because "graffiti amounted to an *effacement* of meaning, that the graffiti was anarchic precisely because it refused to be remembered"[61]. He hated testimonies and memorials because those reminded him of his loss and sufferings in his homeland. The narrator too had 'necrophilic predilections' and had interest in Dead Sea scrolls and cuneiform. The book *Alice in Wonderland* acted as a missing link between these two persons, a voluntary immigrant and a coercive exile. In this context, the narrator writes: "[…] a book that we had both read as children, he in the city that had been his home and from which he had exiled himself because there was too much hate, too much incivility, too little peace. I had read *Alice in Wonderland* in my home too, a place unravaged by war but a place that nonetheless caused me anxiety when I thought about it"[62]. These two persons from two different cultural backgrounds realized that language barrier could be overcome by emotion and fellow feeling. But unfortunately there was a breakup in their relation just before the narrator was going to a different city to promote her book.

The final section of the story deals with the protagonist's experiences in the village in which her father was born. Again there is a cross-border journey. On a holiday trip she went to the village which during the time of her father's birth "was part of Portugal"[63]. But when her father was a young man, this village along with myriads of other villages in the territory were "'integrated' with the larger sub-continental land-mass that adjoined it"[64]. But this integration did not create many ripples in the minds of the people living there. The narrator's father was an interpreter of the Portuguese language though neither Portuguese nor English were his native tongues. She ironically comments, "[…] it was by trading in these two languages—English and Portuguese, languages which had been used by colonial administrators centuries before to subjugate my father's ancestors—that my father had made his living"[65]. This issue can be interpreted from the perspective of Homi K Bhabha's notion of 'mimicry'.

The diasporic narrator who used to carry an 'imaginary homeland' in her memory became nostalgic arriving at her ancestral village. It occupied "a mythic place" in her imagination with its "whitewashed gothic church" and its "green rice fields". Overwhelmed with a mixed feeling of elation and sadness, she realized that this place which had undergone several impostors, presently existed only in language: "the church built on the ruins of desecrated temples, the rice fields irrigated by landless aborigines—how else but by language could the violence and betrayal which was the history of the place of my father's birth be recalled?"[66]. She revealed that though she was not taught Portuguese but she had an intimation of *saudade*, a word taken from Portuguese folk culture which means "melancholy for lost things" and is often "confused with nostalgia". As the narrator interprets—"*Saudade* is a melancholy with no object, a melancholy whose object is the insufficiency of language itself and, in this sense, it does not lose much in translation"[67]. At this time the narrator was reading the novel *Requiem* by the Italian writer Antonio Tabucchi who writes in Portuguese because this language offers him "a posture of reflection and

mediation he cannot find in his native language"[68]. This stream of consciousness novel focuses on the mindscape of a somnambulist in Lisbon who walks back in time towards his own past and to the past of Portugal and in this process traverses the whole history of Europe in a state of wild reverie. Tabucchi's novel produced "an uncanny, revelatory inventory of the possibilities of knowing oneself in an adopted language" to the narrator. Taking cue from Tabucchi, she reflects: "For while language is not everything and is often nothing at all, it is all the same an entry point into the world without which we are dreamless, without which we are dispossessed"[69].

The story "Dreamless" ends with a perplexing problem of the protagonist. The post office of the country in which her father's birth place is presently located lost a certified letter of the consulate containing the passport of the country in which the protagonist was born and the visa enabling her to be in the country in which she now lived as well as the visa allowing her to travel to the village in which her father had been born. Technically, it was easy to obtain the passport and the visa in her father's place of birth but it was quite difficult to obtain the visa of the country in which she presently lived at such a short duration of time. She was completely flabbergasted and frantically ran to the two consulates several times. After much harassment, she "found a way to leave with the guarantee of returning, a guarantee that is always fantastic anyway"[70]. The passport and the visa become the signifier of the protagonist's identity and by losing them she realizes how significant they are. Before leaving her father's village, the narrator had a fantastic dream. She dreamt that she had come to this place with her estranged lover. While she was going to introduce him to the villagers, unfortunately she had forgotten his name and called him by a made-up name. The man took offence at it and sulked in the room where the family portraits hung. When she was able to recall his name and tried to make amends, the man did not forgive her. When the dream ended, the narrator woke up with a cry. She realized that her tears were for something else beyond the certified letter, but it was the first thing she remembered having lost. Taking resort to Freud's 'dream mechanism' she concludes: "'The dream is, as it were, centred elsewhere,' Freud writes. The recognition of the metaphoric displacement, of the condensation of my largest loss into the tangible-intangible 'certified letter', comes only now that I, too, am 'elsewhere'"[71]. She realized that whatever she had forgotten was gone forever and the recovery of that was as difficult as the recovery of the virtual pages which she used to lose every time when there was a 'blackout' in the village of her father's birth and where her 'battery-less laptop' was frequently shut down.

Peres da Costa's treatment of the issue of identity in her story "Dreamless" is significant as she captures the journey of her protagonist through spaces—from her 'antipodean home' to a 'new city' located in the other hemisphere and finally to the place of her father's birth. The protagonist is truly a transnational one. Peres da Costa focuses on issues like belongingness, inbetweenness, cosmopolitanism and planetarism. In the context of this story, Vertovec's observation is pertinent:

> New technologies, especially involving telecommunications, serve to connect such networks with increasing speed and efficiency. Transnationalism describes a condition in which, despite great distances and notwithstanding the presence of international borders (and all the laws, regulations and national narratives they represent), certain kinds of relationships have been globally intensified and now take place paradoxically in a planet-spanning yet common—however virtual—arena of activity[72].

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Manik Datar's protagonist migrates from India to Australia whereas Peres da Costa's protagonist sojourns from her antipodean home to the place of her father's birth via a posh city of the West. Both the stories capture the protagonists' alienation, anxiety, frustration and trauma of dislocation on the one hand and nostalgia and craving for the homeland on the other hand. Despite challenges and struggles, the

experience of immigration opens up fresh possibilities. Regarding the importance of the Indian diaspora in Australia, Alvarez writes: "These people are many times drawn as a *Ficus benghalensis*, commonly known as the Indian banyan, Bengal fig or Indian fig. The roots of this tree propagate downwards as aerial roots. Once these roots reach the ground, they grow into woody trunks, which makes the original trunk blurred as all the scattered stems seem to be important"[73]. This botanical metaphor not only refers to the etymological meaning of 'diaspora', i.e dispersion or scattering but also focuses on how the Indian diaspora have become part of the Australian social order. The field of Diaspora and Transnational Studies will continue to expand in response to changing cultural circumstances and thinking. The dialogue between Indian and Australian literary studies would develop with the cross-cultural insights and new perspectives drawn from the increasing number of conferences, exchange visits and research projects organized and monitored by both the countries.

End Notes
1. Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies," 83.
2. Bandyopadhyay and Sharrad, *Transnational Spaces*, 7.
3. Vertovec, *Transnationalism*, 3.
4. Faist and Bilecen, Transnationalism-Updated," 4.
5. Faist and Bilecen, Transnationalism-Updated," 13.
6. Bandyopadhyay and Sharrad, *Transnational Spaces*, 1.
7. Bandyopadhyay and Sharrad, *Transnational Spaces*, 11.
8. Sharrad, "Les Murray in a Dhoti," 29.
9. Sharrad, "Les Murray in a Dhoti," 32-33.
10. Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," 225.
11. Sharrad and Padmanabhan, *Of Indian Origin*, 4.
12. Bandyodadhyay, "Selling Australian Literature in India," 25.
13. Sharrad, "Seen through other eyes," 2.
14. Alvarez, "From Cosmopolitanism to Planetary Conviviality," 84.
15. Alvarez, "From Cosmopolitanism to Planetary Conviviality," 85.
16. Sarwal, "Element of Romanticization," 154.
17. Sarwal, "Element of Romanticization," 155.
18. Datar, "Point of No Return," 58.
19. Datar, "Point of No Return," 59.
20. Datar, "Point of No Return," 59.
21. Bandyopadhyay and Sharrad, *Transnational Spaces*, 10.
22. Datar, "Point of No Return," 60.
23. Datar, "Point of No Return," 61.
24. Datar, "Point of No Return," 59.
25. Datar, "Point of No Return," 64.
26. Datar, "Point of No Return," 65.
27. Datar, "Point of No Return," 65.
28. Datar, "Point of No Return," 66.
29. Datar, "Point of No Return," 65.
30. Datar, "Point of No Return," 65.
31. Datar, "Point of No Return," 62.
32. Datar, "Point of No Return," 66.

33. Datar, "Point of No Return," 66-67.
34. Datar, "Point of No Return," 67.
35. Datar, "Point of No Return," 58.
36. Datar, "Point of No Return," 60.
37. Datar, "Point of No Return," 60.
38. Datar, "Point of No Return," 62.
39. Datar, "Point of No Return," 64.
40. Datar, "Point of No Return," 63.
41. Datar, "Point of No Return," 62.
42. Datar, "Point of No Return," 61.
43. Datar, "Point of No Return," 60.
44. Sarwal, "Element of Romanticization," 159.
45. Peres da Costa, "Dreamless," 121.
46. Peres da Costa, "Dreamless," 122.
47. Peres da Costa, "Dreamless," 123.
48. Peres da Costa, "Dreamless," 122.
49. Peres da Costa, "Dreamless," 124.
50. Peres da Costa, "Dreamless," 124.
51. Peres da Costa, "Dreamless," 125.
52. Peres da Costa, "Dreamless," 127.
53. Peres da Costa, "Dreamless," 128.
54. Peres da Costa, "Dreamless," 128.
55. Bandyopadhyay and Sharrad, *Transnational Spaces*, 10.
56. Peres da Costa, "Dreamless," 130.
57. Peres da Costa, "Dreamless," 130.
58. Peres da Costa, "Dreamless," 132.
59. Peres da Costa, "Dreamless," 135.
60. Peres da Costa, "Dreamless," 133.
61. Peres da Costa, "Dreamless," 133-34.
62. Peres da Costa, "Dreamless," 134.
63. Peres da Costa, "Dreamless," 136.
64. Peres da Costa, "Dreamless," 136.
65. Peres da Costa, "Dreamless," 136.
66. Peres da Costa, "Dreamless," 137.
67. Peres da Costa, "Dreamless," 137.
68. Peres da Costa, "Dreamless," 137.
69. Peres da Costa, "Dreamless," 137.
70. Peres da Costa, "Dreamless," 138.
71. Peres da Costa, "Dreamless," 138.
72. Vertovec, *Transnationalism*, 3.
73. Alvarez, "From Cosmopolitanism to Planetary Conviviality," 86.

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