INTRODUCTION

The term diaspora comes from the words dia meaning “away” and speirein meaning “scatter” or “sow.” Connotatively, diaspora has been defined variedly. Initially applied to refer to the dispersal of Jews outside Israel, the term diaspora as per the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary now applies to “the movement of people from any nation or group away from their own country” (Hornby, 347). A distinction is often made between the two, i.e., Diaspora with “D” in the upper case and diaspora with “d” in the lower case: the former stands for dislocation of Jews and the latter stands for cross-cultural displacement in a very general sense. The term diaspora is also sometimes used to connote the evolution of human civilisation all over the world. The origination of the primitive human and subsequent dispersal to establish human societies in different parts of the world signifies diaspora and the diasporic condition.

In the conventional sense, diaspora signifies a homogeneous entity of geographically displaced people such as indentured labourers or slaves basically under the Empire and often referred to as exiled or expatriates. This standard term also includes the descendants of these expatriates under its ambit. Bill Aschcroft et al. refer to it as “voluntary or forcible movements of the people from their homelands into new regions” (Ashcroft, 1999, 68-70). According to another source, the term diaspora refers to a journey across civilisations. Vijay Mishra in the introduction of his article entitled “Diasporas” labels post-war South Asian, Chinese, Arab and Korean communities settled in Britain, Europe, America, Canada and Australia as diaspora. What is evident from the above definitions is that diaspora must involve dislocation in terms of a significant crossing of territorial borders, i.e., movement from one’s own country into another. But such literal definitions that identify diaspora solely as physical migration, only half explain the ramifications of diaspora. In fact, the term has not one but multiple implications beyond the literal. Now that diaspora is becoming a significant force on the global scene, the term is being approached from new slants, more importantly symbolic ones. Major metaphoric dimensions are applied to its study, more so, related to experience of unsettlement rather than of dislocation and relocation. It is no longer looked upon as a mere demographic shifting but rather greater emphasis is laid on the implications of such a shift. The crossing of borders is significant in terms of cultural changes that it entails, as well as the transformations that the dislocated self undergoes from within and without. The discourse of the diaspora entails so many aspects, such as loss of homeland and longing for it, alienation in new land, fixities, sacrifices, adversities, compromises and redefining identity; therefore it needs to be approached from different stances. And post-nationalism is often seen as the poetics of space against time. Thus, there is an evident shift of interest from the physical to psychological and cultural nuances of diaspora. In the thesis, the term diaspora has been used as a marker of movement across cultures and the dislocation such movement causes.