

I. Concept of Spatio-Cultural Roots

This research work focuses on Afro-American writer Alex Haley's historical novel *Roots* (1976). It fetched him the National Book Award in the year of its publication, and the Pulitzer Prize as well as the Spingarn Medal in 1977. *Roots* was made into a hugely popular television miniseries by the American Broadcasting Company (ABC), which garnered enormous ratings and became an overnight sensation. This novel attempts to uncover the traumatic experience of African diasporas and problem of making identity in the alien land America, which is far away from their homeland, Africa. As identity is inextricably bound up with the notion of location, Haley himself and his characters face crisis in their identities due to dislocation that was the outcome of colonialism. Hence, this research attempts to analyze that the African exiles, including Haley himself, are always a victim of displacement caused by slavery which took away their names i.e recognition thereby provoking these diasporas to go ahead in search of their land as well as cultural roots.

Slavery as an institutionalized system encourages the plantation owners in South America to promote their business by importing a huge number of African slaves from different parts of Africa. As a result, many blacks like Kunta Kinte are abducted from Africa and are put into slavery in the new land that is quite strange, foreign, and alien for them. They feel dislocated in America. Kunta, the main character in *Roots* as the real victim of slavery, makes several attempts to return back to Juffure, the Gambia but fails every time. The new land not only puts him into slavery by snatching from his hsomeland, but imposes an English name "Toby" upon him ignoring his African name also. This serious attack upon his identity brings about a realization in Kunta that he lacks the African culture which could define him. Simultaneous losses of location and culture happen to become the visible inspiration

for him and his children to translate their opaque desires into concrete activities. Bitter experiences of displacement are the results of isolation that they feel among the people who follow different culture. Such tremendous gap between the Islamic and the Christian cultures becomes the prime cause of struggles which the characters take up for their recognizable existence that is possible only by escaping from the foreign land. The dire requirement of lost space and culture remains always in the centre of these characters' activities. This research paper deliberates on everlasting desire of dislocated characters to trace the cultural roots, the struggle for the purpose, the unfortunate consequences which invite continuous failure and their compulsion to remain nostalgic forever.

Nostalgia remains unavoidably in the heart of these diasporic characters once they fail to re-establish their cultural values which are always a lack in the foreign land. They are confused by the culture which is imposed upon them. National identity, which is itself a rudimentary reality for them, is insufficient to cover all plural identities that exist within a nation. After all, the loss of cultural roots and failure to retrace them drives the characters into such a helpless state that they have no way out except they can get nostalgia of their past. They are bound to take shelter in their imagination which draws their utopian Africa into them imaginarily though not in reality. So, the effort to recreate the home and re-establish their culture results in utter desperation as they fail to materialize their attempts. Consequently, they are always haunted by the sense of homelessness, belongingness and isolation. These characters, ultimately, get comfort in fictionalizing and fantasizing their memories even though they fail to grasp the actual definition of themselves.

This research paper aims at paying greater consideration to Haley's preoccupation with the issue of exile, a source of his writing. Haley emphasizes more

to his African ancestors who were compelled to be exiled from their homeland. He brings into light the value of their aboriginal Muslim culture that they cannot exercise in the United States where the Christian culture overshadows all others. Amid the contest, the less dominant African culture nearly loses its distinctness. Loss of both place and culture worries the African exiles in America. Their identities, cultural values and practices all get restricted in the foreign land. They fail to completely assimilate themselves with the Christian culture and realize the need of spatial as well as cultural anchorage for their recognition. Lack prevails among the characters throughout—lack of home, family, culture and identity. The lack of cultural roots tortures them more. These characters physically dislocated once and forever cannot come out of the trauma of loss. Haunted by the loss of home and culture, they attempt to find its resolution. No concrete achievement they grasp rather a resigned state compels them to find a temporary comfort in everlasting imagination of their homeland and roots. Moreover, these dislocated characters or diasporas thread the exiled experiences which exist among them in the form of bits and fragments in order to fictionalize their desires as Haley does in *Roots*.

Space and culture remain as the precursor of people's identities. Or people are recognized on the basis of their origination from where they come and culture which shapes all of their activities as per its assumption. Culture includes the concepts like knowledge, religion, language, foods, costumes etc. that vary along with the change in location. In this sense, place and culture are interdependent to each other. Any kind of change, be it voluntary or forcible, in people's location causes unavoidable changes in their culture as the African slaves have to face it in the United States. When they are influenced by new culture and its traditions, the need of original culture becomes a fact.

Roots reflects the plights of displaced blacks who are cut-off from their location, Africa and her Muslim culture. They realize that the loss of their place and culture is the reason they are dominated by the whites in America. As a result, white people snatch their names or recognition by tagging Christian terms upon them. Kunta Kinte, the chief character, gets half of his right foot cut but nobody helps him in the alien land. This situation pushes him to think of relocating himself in Africa, his home land. Furthermore, when they are overshadowed with all the Christian traditions as in wedding ceremony, baptism and fooding, feeling of retracing their cultural roots becomes prevalent among them.

Simultaneous losses of place and culture compel the blacks to think of their fixed identity. They lack such recognition in America where practices of Muslim culture are restricted. Dominant culture sidelines their cultural interests. White people misrepresent the blacks as homeless people who live in the woods from where they were captivated. Such kind of ill-treatment by the whites forces these Africans to desire for their location, Africa. Consequently, they struggle to accomplish their purpose but fail. This failure to retrace the spatial roots — the place of their origination Old Mali and their homeland the Gambia — inspires them to retrace the cultural roots. Once these characters' desire to grasp the long lost space as well as culture does not come into effect, they are bound to search comforts in reminiscences and imaginations.

Eventhough this novel has been measured from different perspectives, the tenet of this research is exclusively postcolonial. Different critics' claim it as a work of historical fiction loaded more with facts; a portrayal of slavery and its consequences; a voice of male oriented tendency that silences the women voices or an outcome of genealogical interest do not touch the concern of dislocation on the part of

African slaves. However, this research aims to show Haley's location in the diaspora and the traumas of alienation there. The focal point of the present study is to textualize how a diasporic writer blends characters' off-home experiences and their internal desires to grasp their long last land as well as cultural roots. It also exhibits how these characters abandoned by their own traditions feel "homeless" and worst of all, "rootless" triggered by the experiences like displacement, alienation, exile and diaspora. As a consequence, the loss of home and cultural ties remain as the precursor of pain and suffering on the part of these characters who despite the struggles fail to relocate themselves among their own people and culture.

The present research attempts to materialize the hypothesis — *Roots* textualizes the African diasporas' desire for their spatial as well as cultural roots. To delineate these characters' situation in the alien land, America, it circles around the issues like culture, identity, location, dislocation, alienation, exile etc. that are bound up with the concept of diaspora. It analyses how differing locations have differing cultures which clash and grapple in the course of influencing the other. It also attempts to mirror the feeling of exile or alienation which result from dislocation or say "placelessness." The discussion of exile and their everlasting wish to return back to their location becomes the precursor of diasporic subjectivity. It brings into light the value of African i.e. Islamic culture among the slaves in America and their thorough tension to overcome that cultural loss.

It displays the pathos of Afro-Americans who lack their land, culture and their identity in the United States. This study uncovers the naked reality of the then slaves who are compelled to remain silent even when their existence is questioned. It sorts out how nostalgia of the past becomes the only compensation of spatial and cultural loss. After all, it analyses the history of slavery, its consequences in resulting

diasporas, their struggle to trace their culture back, failure of attempts and nostalgia of their stable as well as their comfortable past that owns the very roots which only can identify them.

Finally, people are defined and identified by their respective culture. Culture not only provides people with their identities, but it provides a kind of protection or safety to them also. Therefore, culture cannot be separated from human existence. Or absence of original culture brings crisis in the life of the people. Difference in contesting cultures is the source for formulating identity as well as social authority among people. Thus, culture becomes a battleground for survival. Cultural contests can be traced in the present postcolonial scenario where culture of exiles or diasporas are resisting the over domination of dominant culture. Since loss of one's own culture is the precursor of loss in recognition, its assertion and preservation has become a must to these people who are displaced from their homeland. As culture is expressed through traditions, migrants, expatriates or exiles are trying to reassert their identity through the same. In present America, African diasporas' activities in order to grasp their long lost cultural support are, as in *Roots*, encouraged by the similar wish to guarantee their cultural presence i.e. identity there. The present multicultural world is the real witness of various diasporas who attempt to create their location through writing as Haley searches for it in the *Roots*.

II. Cultural Perspective of Relocation

Culture

“Culture” is derived from the Latin word “cultura” that denotes a process connected to crops, that is, cultivation. Later, it encompassed the cultivation of ideas and spirit in human beings; it has subsequently been applied to link with customs, arts, beliefs, way of life, social organization of a particular country or group and acts of cultivating the soul. In other words, culture consists of the things like society, religion, history, geography etc which we tend to love or protect. Thus, culture as an accumulated knowledge, is passed on from generation to generation. Each generation, hence, studies the way people live and have lived through culture. It is the fabric of meaning into which human beings search for their identity by interpreting their experiences they are involved in and guide their actions. In this regard, Homi K. Bhabha views culture “as a strategy of survival” (438). Therefore, culture can’t be separated from human existence and in the absence or loss of which, the life itself falls prey of crisis. Moreover, a leading social critic Raymond Williams is in the view that “culture is the whole way of living of a people” (qtd. in Graff and Robbins 421). It indicates that culture is inclusive of people and their surrounding that comprises of the ways people live, the way they experience the situation and the way they uplift their statues by cultivating themselves with all sorts of knowledge. Culture surprisingly gives individuals identity accumulated with society, religion, history, language, geography etc.

As society, history, geography, religion etc are the determinant factors of any culture, cultures vary accordingly. Such various forms of cultures that contrast to each other get contested and it results in changes in any culture either being influenced by or by influencing the other. Sometimes these changes turn to be so catastrophic that

the less dominant culture has equal risk of losing its typicality. This type of crisis can be witnessed especially in the culture of colonized country or in the culture of diasporas, exiles or dislocated ones during the colonial period.

With the emergence of postcolonial criticism, culture has become the most contested space and the most debatable issue among the scholars chiefly of the third world. They formulate their critical revisions around the issue of cultural difference, social authority, identity and political discrimination in order to reveal the antagonistic and ambivalent moments. Postcolonial project seeks to explore the social pathologies the loss of meaning, conditions of unequal and uneven life. “Postcolonial criticism – as the perspectives of minorities and of third world countries – bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order” (Bhabha 437). Thus, culture reaches out to create a symbolic textuality, to give the alienating everybody as aura of selfhood, a premise of pleasure. In this regard, Bhabha further writes:

Culture, as a strategy of survival, is both transnational and translational. It is translational because contemporary postcolonial discourses are rooted to specific histories of cultural displacement whether they are of slavery and indenture or of migration [. . .] culture is translational because such spatial histories of displacement – now accompanied by the territorial ambition of “global” media technologies make the question of how culture signifies or what is signified by culture, a rather complex issue. (438)

So, in the cultural contest, the process of cultural translation is stimulated by translational factor of culture. The translational dimension of cultural transformation –

migration, diaspora, displacement, exile, and relocation make the process of cultural translation a complex form of signification. The postcolonial perspective resists the attempt at holistic forms of social explanation. It forces recognition of the more complex cultural and political boundaries that exist, on the corner of often opposed political sphere – First world and Third world. It insists that cultural and political identities are constructed through a process of alteration.

In any society, certain cultural forms dominate over others just as certain ideas are more influential than others. The form of this cultural leadership is identified as hegemony as Antonio Gramsci says. It is rather the result of cultural hegemony at work that gives Orientalism the durability and strength in Edward Said's view. Such cultural hegemony is reflected much in European and American idea about the orient, themselves reiterating their superiority over non-western backwardness. In such cases, culture becomes as much as uncomfortable, disturbing practice of survival. This situation is linked to the power relation prevailing in a society or among the societies. The study of cultural practice in relation to their link to the power relation within, between or among the communities has paved the way for cultural studies.

Culture is inextricably bound up with the notion of identity. Associating culture with identity and with nation, Said writes; “In time, culture comes to be associated, often aggressively, with the nation or the state, differentiating ‘us’ from ‘them’ almost always with some degree of xenophobia”(Culture XIII). In this sense, culture is a source of identity, and rather a combative theatre where various political and ideological reasons engage one another. Besides being a placid area, culture can even be a battleground for identity and survival. Different cultures have differing concepts in discourses like family, education, religion, law and language. The influence of such discursive formation within cultures are immense structuring power

and influence, attitudes, beliefs and identity. In this context, Neil Campbell and Alasdair Kean write:

This is precisely the contested terrain into which cultural studies goes in order to debate these issues of and assumptions about identity, gender, class, family, education, ethnicity, religion and technology. In doing so, it reveals how power and ideology work to legitimate social inequalities, but it also explores how forms of resistance emerge as part of this complex cultural contest. (13)

As culture is the basis of identity, the clashes between and among the dominant and resisting cultures are usual as, for instance, seen between white culture and black culture especially in America. Along with the emergence of dominant discourses in culture, resistant counter-discourses which struggle to be heard in the cultural arena and attempt to alter the received and dominant modes of expression and definition also emerge so as to preserve their recognition or identity.

Identity and Identity Crisis

Identity is the crucial issue in the contemporary study of culture that leads to the study of ethnicity, class, gender, race, and so on. Perceived within the domain of cultural studies, identities are not the concrete things having fixed or stable existence. Rather, they are discursive constructions or the product of discourses. In other words, identities are constituted, made rather than found, by representations.

Identity becomes a burning issue when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt or uncertainty. In the age of globalization, migration rate has altered the relations between western and other cultures by taking the sense of identity of individuals, across or in-between the national border. The identities of the people in new land are therefore fluid or

consciously delimited or almost lost in these days. Various factors such as nation, religion, language, ideology, cultural expression are under negotiation. Displacement and disposition that migrants are subjected to, bring them into an uncertain position, the agony of which increases when all efforts of assimilation are prevented. Caught up in cultural limbo, the migrants lose not only their native place but also their native identity.

Fueled by politics of ethnicity amongst others, identity emerged as the central theme of cultural studies in the 1990s. Such political struggles have been high concerns intimately connected to the politics of identity. As identity is an essence, it can be signified through signs of tastes, beliefs, attitudes, lifestyle, religion etc. So, identity is concerned with sameness and difference. Unlike essentialist assumption that identity exists as a universal and timeless core, contemporary cultural theory views it in relation with the concepts like 'difference', 'representation', 'hybridity', 'diaspora' and 'migration'. Therefore, such identities, as discursive constitutions, get changed in their meaning according to time, place and usage.

The globalization has caused intermingling of identities, leading to the hybridity of cultural identities. When the culture is hybridized and identity is under erasure, a conception of home is a requirement that transcends traditional ways by which identity is analytically classified and defined according to locality, ethnicity, nationality. In such situation, homeland becomes the main remembrance for the immigrants, exiles or diasporas. In this regard, Stuart Hall views:

Cultural identity is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'... and belongs to the future as much as to the past... not something that already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture . . . fixed in

some essential part, but subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. (qtd. in Campbell and Kean 15-16)

In this way, once identity falls victim of the play of history and power, the notion of homelessness becomes the permanent setting in the mind of the immigrants. Their identity falls between the trap of new world and their previous home. The culture becomes, totally different between the migrants and the permanent inhabitants thereby creating an unbridgeable gap. Moreover, as homeless mind is quite hard to bear, there is widespread nostalgia for a condition of being at home in society, with oneself and with the universe: for homes of the past were socially homogeneous, communal, peaceful, safe and secure. Hence, being at home and being homeless turn out to be at the heart of identity.

To define oneself or to speak for oneself in the new land is fundamental in order to assert their identity. For the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited moving from silence into speech is a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible. This act of talking back is no more gesture of empty words but is the expression of moving from object to subject. The process of attempting themselves to assert their presences, is remarked by Campbell and Kean in these words:

Both stare at their own culture and assert their difference, whilst positioning themselves alongside the often more dominant voices of white mainstream culture. These repositories of individual memories taken together create a collective communal memory that represents a black countercultural identity [. . .] that this identity is not something our oppressors forced upon us, it is a cultural and ethnic awareness we have collectively constructed for ourselves over hundreds of years.

This identity is a cultural umbilical cord connecting us with Africa.

(74-75)

Thus, identity is never a peaceful acquisition. It is claimed as a guarantee against a threat of annihilation that can be figured by another identity or by erasing of identities. Throwing light on the complexity and volatile nature of identity African writer Appiah writes:

Identities are complex and multiple and grow out of history of changing responses to economic, political and cultural forces, almost always in opposition to other identities [. . .] they flourish despite our ‘misrecognition’ of their origin, despite their roots in myths and in lies.

(227)

Since to assert one’s own identity is problematic in the foreign land, group or diasporic identity seems to work only when it is seen by its members as natural as real adding their consent to solidarity regarding the culture. People feel comfortable with their identities and endorse them, for identities seem to offer the best hope of advancing the goals. Since identities are relative, there is equal prospect of over domination of one culture over the other which may result in crisis in identity as Rushdie laments in his phrase “borne across the world, of being in but not entirely of the west” (17).

People forward their identities as a matter of cultural practices and claim their presence. The concern of identity becomes more crucial in such situation when the identity itself is in question. Until their culture provides them with stable identity, people nearly disregard the notion of identity or the concern remains opaque. Along with the change in the habitation, when their culture is influenced by the dominant competing culture, people's identities are in the ebb thereby giving rise to new

identities and fragmenting the subjectivity. Thereafter 'crisis' in identity is seen as a part of wider process of change that dislocates the central structure and their hitherto stable social process. In this context, Hall claims: "Modern identities are being de-centered, that is dislocated or fragmented" (274). Such situation that compels the dislocated people to disown their original land, home, culture and worst of all, their identities leads to the state of utter desperation. Highlighting the experience in feeling of identity-crisis, Rushdie writes, "it reminds me that it's my present that is foreign, and that the past is home, albeit a lost home in a lost city in the mist of lost time" (9).

The question of identity is not a minor issue as its crisis reflects the loss of stable sense of 'self' which is also called the dislocation or decentering of the subject. Thus, identity only becomes a topical issue when crisis befalls it, when something fixed, stable or coherent is dislocated by the experience of uncertainty. The state of uncertainty leads ultimately to a state of emptiness thereby posing questions upon existence itself. Representing displaced or the diaspora or those who have bitter experience of loss of their identity, Rushdie further writes:

To be an Indian writer in this society is to face, everyday, problems of definition. What does it mean to be 'Indian' outside India? How can cultures be preserved without being ossified? [. . .] What are the consequences, both spiritual and practical, of refusing to make concessions to western ideas and practices? What are the consequences of embracing those ideas and practices and turning away from the ones that come here with us? These questions are all a single existential question. How are we to live in the world? (18)

Moreover, the modern concept and practice of globalization among the sectors like politics, economy, technology, culture has played the chief role in migration. In the

past, colonization, slavery, or banishment would have been the sole reason of it i.e. migration. Be it voluntary or mandatory, migration has unquestionably been proven as displacement on the part of the migrants. Such situation has caused a bitter reality of identity-crisis among the people. In this regard, Afro-American writer James Baldwin writes:

It comes as a great shock to discover that the country which is your birth place and to which you owe your life and identity has not in its whole system of reality, evolved any place for you [. . .] I was taught in American history books that Africa had no history and neither did I. I was a savage about whom the least said the better [. . .] you belonged to where white people put you. (qtd. in Campbell and Kean 76)

Hence, Baldwin attempts to translate his experience of being homeless which leads him to realize crisis in identity.

The “crisis” of identity is felt when the cultures are hybridized, are cut across and intersect natural frontiers and when people have been dispersed forever or temporarily from their homelands. They bear upon the dominant culture but yet they seek the traces of their own culture, tradition, language or histories by which they were shaped. The feeling of alienation unavoidably haunts them. Their newly emergent hybridized identity never gives them the sense of unity, stability or comfort. Besides this, such identities are forever under question. Worst of all, they themselves can’t believe and adapt those identities as their own. Then the actual ‘crisis’ befalls them and it remains at the heart of their ambivalent structure. Similar experiences can be traced in the writings of the contemporary writers who are far away from their homeland. Among the most notable of such, Afro-American writer Alex Haley is the one who expresses his and his people’s nostalgia for original homeland, the Africa,

that can hoist them from the culturally exiled present state. The utter nostalgia for their homeland as reflected in the *Roots*, is for their cultural anchorage that only can define them as what they are and who they are.

Location, Dislocation and Displacement

The concept of place or location may differ in different societies. This can be affected by specific political as well as literary effects apart from its etymological meaning of particular space, position, area or land. This place is not merely a visual construct, a measurable space or even a topographical system but an existing location of one's own being. Making remarks on the concept of place, Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra Point out that “the place in aboriginal culture, rather than existing as a visual construct, is a kind of ground of being” (Ashcroft *Reader* 792). In this sense, place is embedded in cultural history, in legend and in language of specific areas. But the concept of place or location in original sense has been disrupted from the materiality and commodification of a colonizing power of globalization. At present, effective protection of one's place is radically disabled when the new system that is inclusive of culture, myths, language and history becomes the dominant one. By this it becomes clear that place or location means more than the land. And invention of colonial power may ridicule a sense of place in different ways: by imposing a feeling of displacement in those who have moved to colonies; by alienating large populations of colonized people through forced migration, slavery or indenture and by disturbing the representation of place in the colony imposing their own language. Hence, the theory of place does simply separate the place named and described in language but rather indicates in some sense as Ashcroft puts it, “a place is language, something in constant flux, a discourse” (*Key* 182). In this way, concept of location has, now, become a ground for politics for the colonizers who themselves politicize their own

location too by settling their people down in the colonized land or by hybridizing their culture, language, legend and blood with that of the colonized ones. Analyzing the postcolonial scenario in relation to the politics of location, Frankenberg and Mani write:

We would argue that the notion of postcolonial is best understood in context of a rigorous politics of location, of a rigorous conjuncturalism. There are moments and spaces in which subjects are driven to grasp their positioning and subjecthood as 'postcolonial', yet there are other contexts in which, to use the term as the organizing principle of one's analysis is precisely to fail to grasp the specificity of the location or the moment." (Mongia 362)

Therefore, rather than connecting the meaning of location to particular locale, it becomes appropriate to describe place as a constant metaphor of difference-in-postcolonial writing-a continual reminder of ambivalence and separation but yet never ending mixing of the colonizer and the colonized.

In simple sense, dislocation means disruption or displacement from the usual place or location. It is a kind of lack of fitness when one leaves native location and moves to the unknown one. To specify its meaning, dislocation in Heidegger's terms *unheimlich* or *unheimlichkeit* literally denote 'unhousedness' or 'not-at-houseness'. To analyze it in broader scale, dislocation covers a socio-cultural phenomenon that is the outcome of transportation from one country to another by slavery or exile or imprisonment or migration. It is the consequence of willing or unwilling movement from a known to an unknown location.

In the past, dislocation was an outcome of slavery and indentured labor. Slavery, as an institution, was the sole of American economy. As a result, people from

South Africa and other places were forcefully dislocated in an unknown place. But modern society has become a witness of a number of dislocations or diasporas that have resulted from both voluntary and forcible movements. Hence, the term has turned to be a result of imperialism or global occupation. Ashcroft and others define it as a term:

For both the occasion of displacement that occurs as a result of imperial occupation and the experience associated with this event. The phenomenon may be a result of transportation from one country to another by slavery or imprisonment, by invasion and settlement, a consequence of willing or unwilling movement from a known to an unknown location. The term is used to describe the experience of those who have willingly moved from the imperial 'Home' to the colonial margin, but it affects all those who, as a result of colonialism, have been placed in a location that, because of colonial **hegemonic** practices, needs, in a sense, to be reinvented in language, in narrative and in myth. (73)

Therefore, present days have become the true witness of double way dislocation, both of the colonized and the colonizer ones, imperialists and the slaves, settlers and the exiles. Dislocation has, thus, become an obvious fact and it compels the dislocated people or diasporas to invent new linguistic terms to express their presence in the unknown place. As dislocation has become a structure in the modern world, it can be extended even to include the psychological displacement that results from the cultural disruption as in Haley's *Roots*. Consequently, dislocation has been structured as a never-ending process in Ernesto Laclau whom Hall quotes as: "A dislocated structure is one whose culture is displaced and replaced by another but by a plurality of power

centers, and the societies have no centre, no single articulating and organizing principle. It is constantly being decentered or dislocated by force outside itself" (*The Question 278*).

Hence, displacement is caused by the decline of old identities. It gives rise to new identities and fragments in modern individual.

Displacement results from different consequences. Anyway, dislocation or displacement is a crucial feature of post-colonial discourse. It is also a feature of all invaded colonies where indigeneous or original cultures are often literally dislocated i.e. moved off their territory. It is placed into a hierarchy that sets their culture aside and ignores its values thereby placing favor upon practices of colonizing culture. Elaborating the post-colonial reality about displacement rather than fixed place, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin write:

Place in postcolonial societies is a complex interaction of language, history and environment. It is characterized firstly by sense of displacement in those who have moved to the colonies or the more widespread sense of displacement from 'imported language, of a gap between the 'experienced' environment and descriptions the language provides, and secondly by a sense of immense investment of culture in the construction of place. (*Reader 391*)

As a necessity, dislocated people or the diasporas are bound to invent new terms in new lands. The necessity of dislocation does indeed become the mother of invention. As a result, the disruptive and disorienting experience of dislocation becomes a primary influence on the regenerative energies in post-colonial culture. The rustling restructuring generates new and powerful forms of culture, that are able to bring the possibility of renewal and regeneration.

In the process of dislocation and regeneration, all diasporic communities formed by forced or voluntary migration may be affected as dislocation gives rise to many differences between the diaspora and the native citizens. Apart from such differences, displacement invites a necessity or even a chance for the displaced ones to establish new identity in an alien land by drawing competing cultures, races and languages into a hybrid thread. Ultimately hybrid situation makes people live interdependently not only by losing originality but by adding something novel in their culture, language, race and identity also.

Exile

Exile is yet another term much discussed or talked about in postcolonial theory and discourse. Simply speaking, exile means the state of being sent to live in another country that is not one's own, especially for political reasons or as a punishment. It suggests a detachment from local spaces. Moreover, it has been deployed as a concept beyond simply a forced removal from a given physical location. Thus, exile can be individuals as well as groups of people banished to distant strange lands forming various diasporas. Though some critics draw distinction between the idea of exiles and expatriates basing upon their involuntary constraints and voluntary acts, nowadays, the concept or the metaphor of exile has covered a broader phenomenon that is inclusive of all diasporas. Exile has become a terrible experience in present world as it is always unbearable on the part of the exiles. Edward Said depicts the plight of exiles as:

Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience.

It is the unbearable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted. And while it is true that literature and history

contain heroic, romantic, glorious even triumphant episodes in an exile's life, there are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement. The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever.

(Reflections on Exile 73)

Exile is a state of alienation, the pain of which is never compensated in the new land. The severance between the home and the body remains a precursor of sadness that can never be overcome by means of any comforts. This situation hastens the exiles to seek or to invent their new identity by practicing different adventurous episodes, but sadly that turns merely to be a balm over an unbearable wound. Hence, exiles are always at loss on the part of their originality, culture or identity though they can make abundance of materialistic achievements.

The condition of exile involves the idea of a separation and distancing from either a literal homeland or from a cultural and ethnic origin. The present situation of increment in diasporic peoples throughout the world has posed crucial question 'where is the place of home for such groups? Is home for them to be their birth place, or is the displaced cultural community into which the person is born, or the nation where this diasporic community is located? Throwing light on the discontinuous state of being of the exiles and their lifelong desires to grasp their cut-off roots, land and their past Said further writes:

Because exile [. . .] is fundamentally a discontinuous state of being. Exiles are cut off from their roots, their land, their past. [. . .] Exiles feel therefore, an urgent need to reconstitute their broken lives, usually by choosing to see themselves as part of triumphant ideology or a restored people. The crucial thing is that a state of an exile free from

this triumphant ideology – designed to reassemble as exile’s broken history into a new whole-is virtually unbearable, and virtually impossible to today’s world. (177)

Fragmentation and discontinuity of self have become the fate of present day exiles or diasporas. One does not need to be physically removed from the homeland in order to be exiled. Exile can take place in different cultural spaces especially through processes like colonization and modernization. However, discussion on exile remains unfulfilled without discussing nationalism. Nationalism is an assertion of belonging in and to a place, a people, a heritage. It affirms the home created by a community of language, culture and customs; and by doing so, it fends off exile, fights to prevent its ravages. According to Said, the interplay between “nationalism” and “exile” is like “Hegel’s dialectic of servant and master opposite informing and constituting each other’s” (*Reflections* 176). But in a very acute sense, nationalisms are about groups while as exile is a solitude experienced outside the group: the deprivations felt at not being with others in the communal habitation.

Exiles are always haunted by the sense of lose and are always in pain and suffering in one hand, and on the other hand, they are misbehaved, insulted and are provided with low level of facilities in different governmental sectors too. Since they are treated biasfully even by the native people and the government where they have been exiled, the exiles experience the bitter living as that of prisoners. To delineate the sense of uncertainties and ambiguities of assimilation among exiles, David Punter sketches an instance from Hanif Kuseishi’s *The Black Album*:

The college was a cramped Victorian building, an old secondary school, twenty minutes walk away. It was sixty percent black and Asian with an ineffective library and no sport facilities. Its reputation

was less in the academic area but more for gang rivalries, drugs, thieving and political violence. It was said that reunions were held in Wandsworth prison. (161)

To sum up, exile is never the state of being satisfied, placid or secure. It is a mind of winter in which the experience of summer and autumn as much as that of spring are nearby but never obtainable. Their fate is to be nostalgic about their roots, their past or their homeland and to create imaginary space to place themselves, of course, though temporarily as the characters do in Haley's *Roots*.

Diaspora and Diasporic Discourse

Diaspora is the movement of people from any nation or group away to other countries. Originally applied to the condition of the Jewish people living outside Palestine, diaspora has been extended to cover a range of different cultural and ethnic groups that are held together by shared cultural or religious commitments. With the development of postcolonial theory, the term is used to describe a dynamic network of communities without the stabilizing allusion to a original homeland or essential identity. To live in diaspora is to experience the trauma of exile, migration, displacement, and rootlessness. Diasporas or displaced people live as minority group haunted by a sense of loss. In this regard, Rushdie argues, "I've been in minority group all my life-a member of an Indian Muslim family in Bombay, then of a Mohajir-migrant-family in Pakistan and now a British Asian" (4). Diasporas, carrying multiple and hybrid identities with themselves, are compelled to create an imaginary homeland in search of their stable identities. The situation of diasporas can refer to territorial dislocation, forced either as slavery or as voluntary migration. It is a sort of dispersion or scattering of people away from their original land be it on the part of

colonizers or the colonized. Regarding colonization as a central fact of dislocation for creating diasporic community around the world, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin write:

Diasporas, the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homeland into new regions, is a central historical fact of colonization. Colonialism itself was a radically diasporic movement involving the temporary or permanent dispersion and settlement of European over the entire world. (*Key 69*)

The movement of peoples from known location to unknown location in the colonial era created a sense of dislocation and alienation because they could not fit themselves in new environment and culture.

An instance of growth in diasporas can be cited from agricultural colonies settled by Europeans in south America where the Africans were brought involuntarily to fulfill a large scale demand for labor. The practices of slavery and indenture, thus, resulted in world wide colonial diasporas who are fated to experience the everlasting sense of unhomeliness. Similar is the case with African diasporas in Latin America and the Caribbean, Indian diasporas in Caribbean Asian as well as Caribbean diaspora in England. In this sense, colonialism is taken as the perverse instigator of a new politics of unhomeliness. Quoting Bhabha, Leela Gandhi writes, “Colonialism is said to engender the unhomeliness – that is the condition of exiles, territorial and cross-cultural initiation” (*Postcolonial Theory* 132). As a result, diaspora, a condition of homelessness, has become the characteristic feature of a number of displaced writers like Rushdie, Naipaul, Haley etc.

In the diaspora, migrants suppress their ethnicity in the name of opportunity initially, then assimilate their cultural distinctness in the new world and invent a tentative identity like African American, Asian American and such. Their identities

are at once plural and transnational. Such plural identities turn out to be merely partial which can't content them. They fall into the abyss of everlasting nostalgia of their land, culture and identity. They want to locate themselves among their people in their homeland yet it remains rather a mere imagination, for they can't access to it. James Clifford quotes Roger Rouse in this regard, "... their most important kin and friends are as likely to be living hundreds or thousands of miles away as immediately around them" (303). This situation makes the diasporas usually presuppose longer distance and a separation more like exile: a constitutive taboo on return, or its postponement to a remote future. As Clifford further states they, never able to bridge the gap and overcome the sense of loss, form longings and memories. Thanks to the modern technologies of transportation and communication, the dispersed people, once separated from homeland by vast oceans and political barriers, find themselves in border relation with the old country. Yet they remain disconnected or displaced from their culture. Eventually diasporas embrace the discontinuous or the decentered identities as their own keeping their longing and memory of their location deep inside. In this context, Clifford says:

Transnational connections linking diasporas need not be articulated primarily through a real or symbolic homeland. [. . .]

Decentered, lateral connections may be as important as there formed around a teleology of origin/return. And a shared, ongoing history of displacement, suffering, adaptation or resistance may be as important as the projection of a specific origin. (306)

Hence, the projection of specific land is always manifested in the practices and experiences of diasporas. Peoples whose sense of identity is centrally defined by collective histories of displacement and violence, loss cannot be cured by merging

into a new national community. This is true especially when they are the victims of ongoing structural prejudice. Whatever their ideologies of purity, diasporic cultural forms can never be such. They are deployed in transnational networks built from multiple attachments, and they encode practices of accommodation with, as well as resistance to, host countries and their norms.

Diaspora discourse articulates or blends together both roots and routes to construct alternative public spheres, forms of community consciousness and solidarity that maintain identifications outside the national time/space in order to live inside, with a difference. For instance, black diasporic culture currently being articulated in postcolonial America is concerned to struggle for different ways: to be American and something else complexly related to Africa. Thus, the term diaspora is a signifier both of transnational movement and of political struggles to define the local, as distinctive community, in historical contexts of displacement. Besides such struggles, diasporic cultures may be structured around a tension between return and deferral. Clifford takes this concern not as a separatist movement, but as an admixture in their prior identities that is projected in remembering and desiring. He further states:

This strong difference, this sense of being a “people” with historical roots and destinies outside the time/space of the host nation, is not separatist. Whatever their eschatological longing, diaspora communities are “not-here” to stay. Diaspora cultures thus mediate, in a lived tension, the experience of separation and entanglement of living here and remembering/desiring another place. (311)

Diasporic position, as a mediation between at least two cultures, attempts to create a situation of inbetweenness between the two cultures: of the origin and of the present.

Such mediation approves to the relationship critically considering both the culture of previous home and of presence. The diasporic writers and other diasporas thus, neither totally forget the origin nor fully accept the present, always being two parts or the torn parts. Their situation turns to be contradictory one which Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan calls, “the diasporic location is the space of the hyphen that tries to coordinate, within an evolving relationship, the identity politics of one’s place of origin with that of one’s present home” (XIII). Diasporic subjectivity is thus necessarily double: acknowledging the imperative of an earlier elsewhere in an active and critical relationship with the cultural politics of one’s present home. The construction of cultural hybridity that is characterized by a sort of dominating relationship becomes the focal point for the writers in diaspora. These writers are in the forms of mediators. Making remarks upon the issue of location from poststructuralist perspective Radhakrishnan further adds:

The state of location is informed by a rich and contradictory logic [. . .] Meanings and political possibilities are assumed as a mode of subjection to a particular location, and as such, they are strongly determined by definition, locations are perspectival and not global, limited and not infinite, produced and not free or natural. (136)

Diaspora consciousness is thus constituted both positively and negatively. It is constituted negatively by the experiences of discrimination, exclusion, loss, marginality and exile. The characters have a sense of politico-cultural loss. The diasporic location means no harmonious representation. The location is also one of painful area. Though locations are perspectival and finite, dislocation causes problems on the part of the exiles in that it brings changes in their culture and identity along with the location.

A diaspora self requires a different historicity and a different sense of duration within its new location that is neither home nor 'not home.' Thus there is the hyphenated identity in diaspora. Beside this, diaspora consciousness is produced positively through identification with world historical, cultural/political forces. It is also about feeling global. Diaspora consciousness lives loss and hope as defining tension. Radhakrishnan asserts diasporic situation as an opportunity:

The diaspora is an excellent opportunity to think through some of these vexed questions: solidarity and criticism, belonging and distance, insides spaces and outsides spaces, identity as invention and identity as natural location-subject-positionality and the politics of representation, rootedness and rootlessness. (213)

Imperial power, which was the outcome of colonial expansion, caused displacement on the part of the colonizers as well as the colonized one resulting it in cultural diasporas.

During colonization, the creation of new transcultural forms produced hybridity in contact zones. Contact zone refers to the space of colonial encounters, the space in which people geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relation, usually involving condition of coercion, radical inequality and intractable conflict. Contact zone is an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunction and whose trajectories now intersect. Therefore, the condition of diasporas is interactive and transcultural. It treats the relations among colonizers and colonized not in terms of separateness of apartheid, but in terms of copresence, interaction, understanding and practice yet often within radically asymmetrical relations of power. Mary Louise Pratt elaborates the situation as:

Inter-cultural text and its tragic history exemplify the possibilities and perils of writing in what I like to call “contact zones”, social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and of subordination like colonialism, slavery or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today. (4)

After all, diasporic discourses presuppose the existence of group of peoples who can retain a collective sense of identity. As the diasporas are expatriate minority communities, they are dispersed from an original center to peripheral places. They see the ancestral home as a place of eventual return; they maintain a memory, a vision or myth about their original homeland, for they believe that their host country cannot accept them fully. They are compelled to embrace a history of dispersal enriching themselves with nostalgia of their land, myth and culture. They are always alienated in the foreign land yet their wish for eventual return to the original homeland never dies out. Sense of hope and hopelessness, home and homelessness, struggle to assert their original identity but to fall into the abyss of double and plural recognition, to be nostalgic of their history and to create an imaginary homeland in their writings and yet to possess a collective identity among other scattered or unhoused off-landers are some defining characteristics of diasporas.

III. A Desire for Spatio-Cultural Roots is Haley's *Roots*

Roots focuses on the lives of African slaves and their descendents living in America where they feel alien and displaced due to cultural differences. As the exiled subjects, these characters in *Roots* are treated as objects and are weary of the ill-behaviour of the whites whom the slaves call "toubobs." Their experience as alienated people in the alien land brings them an awareness of the need of cultural support to be identifiable in the multicultural America. They realize the lack of their native land and their original African culture which would have consoled as well as identified them among the white Americans. However, the necessity of their own cultural roots in the foreign land can not be fulfilled, for they have already left it far behind in their homeland Africa. Such experience of cultural loss becomes the reason of their pain and anxiety which they can not overcome. Thus, their recognition is engulfed in the web of contesting cultural battlegrounds. They face such unavoidable consequence that there is little prospect of retracing their roots as well as repositioning themselves in their origin land. Therefore, they are compelled to live a kind of hopeless life, thereby becoming nostalgic of their culture; imagining the African landscape and fantasizing their African cultural rituals that may have been taking place there. All in all, they become diasporas living an off-home life.

Alex Haley, being himself a diasporic subject, presents the rather inexpressible sentiments and experiences of his people in *Roots* which is developed so as to expose the situation of African displaced people in America, to witness the cultural contests thereby American culture dominating the African one, to record the plight of African exiles always being defeated in the struggle of identity assertion, and to assert their everlasting longing for roots, both spatial and cultural. As a root-seeker, Haley blends history of Africa, slavery-ridden America, and his Afro-American family which

always desired for Africa and her cultural icons even living an exiled life in America. His story floats between Africa and America where he successfully examines the cultural change, its consequences and the ties that keep off-landers linked to their homeland. Haley interprets the pains and sufferings of such diasporas- dislocation, displacement, identity crisis, alienation. For these displaced people and their children, the challenges of exile, loneliness, alienation, the question of their identity, knowledge of and longing for the lost world are more distressing. Worst of all, their strong ties with both present location and their country of origin becomes the prime cause in the question of identity. Moreover, identity is in crises in the exiled state where domination and dictation of the white people and their culture nearly erase the black peoples' recognition.

As the story develops, Kunta Kinte, the chief character is abducted away with other black people by a group of the white people "toubob," from Africa and is forcefully loaded to a ship bound to "Naples". Amidst the pains and screams of chained people, Kunta identifies some voices that have somewhat linkage to his *Mandinka* tribe. These terrorized naked captives can recognize other African people due to the signs or marks that are culturally identifiable. Among other white people and their strange voices, cultural identity becomes a means to console them by assuring themselves of their ties in the alien situation. Kunta gets chance to look at his Wolof chainmate for the first time and finds some Gambian sign in him:

[. . .] the Wolof had that tribes classic facial features and he was very black of colour. [. . .] Amid the commotion, they had time to stare also at the other's nakedness. From the different facial features, tribal tattoos, and scarification marks, Kunta could tell that some were

Foulah, Jola, Serere and wolof but most were *Mandinkas* - and there were some he could not be sure of. (179-80)

Kunta and the Wolof discuss their different villages, their experiences among their families and the villagers and their customs. More and more captives are introduced to them who are unaware of their whereabouts and the destination where they are being taken. Some of them hope for the chance for return but others defy it claiming that the people once captivated by the "toububs" had no such prospect of getting back.

Irritated by the pains inflicted by the white people upon them, some of them feel that the "toubub" should be attacked and killed. It is their spatial as well as cultural linkage that blends them together thereby separating themselves from the "strange" white people. They have the sense of oneness and unity that an old man focuses, "Hear me! though we're of different tribes and tongues, remember that we are the same people ! We must be as one village, together in this place !" (188). Hence these people form their distinct world even inside the ship by separating the white from them and by ignoring them. These who are from Africa and speak in African tongue are recognized as one but the whites who neither adapt African culture nor know their language are alienated. Their identity is associated with desire - desire for recognition, association, and protection. When they feel that their identities are elusive, they construct them under cultural circumstances.

Haley draws culture to become the chief determiner of one's identity. His forefather's Muslim cultures like name giving ceremony, manhood training, playing drums in special occasions and celebrations, praying to Allah, offering sacrifices to please the god of rain etc are the means that Kunta is enriched with. Kunta's birth in the Kinte clan is taken as a matter of tribal pride. On the eighth day of his birth, the name giving ceremony begins when the *jaliba*, the drummer, beats his drums. Then

alimano, the priest turns to the infant and prays entreating Allah to grant him long life, success in bringing credit and pride to his family and to his tribe. Omoro, Kunta's father, walks before the assembled people to give the chosen name to the baby, "moving to his wife's side, he lifted up the infant, and, as well watched, whispered three times into his son's ear the name he had chosen for him" (13). This ceremony grants the infant his identity in his tribe. Without such cultural practice, no child is approved as a member in the Muslim *Mandinka* tribe.

Moreover, the ordeal of manhood training is the gateway for the boys to enter into manhood. The boys who fail in the training cannot become good hunters to guard the village and they have to be insulted. To achieve the identity of man, the boys are culturally compelled to take up that necessity. As per the Gambian Muslim culture, Kunta also undergoes a phase of training by walking a long distance with a heavy load. Kunta has a bitter experience yet he endures it only in that after its completion, he will be identified as a man:

His blistered feet, and his legs, and his back and his neck all began to hurt again this third day on the trail - in fact his whole body seemed to be one dull ache - but he pretended that manhood training had already begun and that he would be that last boy to betray his pain. When he stepped on a sharp thorn just before midday, Kunta bravely bit his lip to avoid crying out. (85)

Kunta has fear that he may be the one to deceive his family and his tribe if he retreats without completing the training. He is frightened even to assert his pain in that his recognition as a man would be at stake. Rather, he has to pretend as if he were all right. This cultural practice is a must for their identity in the Juffure, the Gambia.

The narrator brings another cultural practice of learning Arabic reading and writing into the light which is proven to be a dire necessity for any Muslim child to be identified as such. Kunta learns reading and writing under the *arafang*, the teacher's supervision. Reciting certain verses from Koran which they would be expected to memorize and doing whatever the *arafang* demanded to is mandatory for the boys to identify themselves as third *kafo*. The boys are taught about their origin and the forefathers by whom they themselves are recognized now. Their graduation ceremony takes place amidst the guardians who are eager to see their children to be identified as senior boys. Only after the completion of exam, they are named as the third *kafo*:

"What was the profession of your forefathers Kunta Kinte?" he asked.

"Hundreds of rains ago in the land of Mali," Kunta confidently replied,

"the Kinte men were blacksmiths, and their women were makers of pots and weavers of cloth." [. . .] Standing up, he read aloud a verse from the Koran's, last page [. . .] these boys were new of third kafo.

(99)

To draw recognition among the people, Kunta has to have good knowledge of his culture, religion and his forefathers from whom he has got "Kinte," the family name. Moreover, he must follow the tradition as well as profession of the ancestors so as to position himself into *Mandinka* tribe and to carry its name with him. Their culture remains in the center of his identity. His devotion to his culture of playing drums on special occasion brings him to the jungle and is captivated by the slave traders so as to take him across the sea and displace him in the alien land making Kunta and his descendants struggle forever.

Along with the change in his location, he has to face the changes in culture.

His struggle to escape away from the captivity or from the exile proves futile on his

part when he is forcefully thrown into the foreign land, America. Thereafter the feeling of dislocation always irritates him, his inside urges him to relocate himself into his own culture thereby making contribution to his family, tribe and his religion. But unfortunately, he is unable to retrace the loss. Even his existence or his identity is engulfed in the new land- exile or dislocation.

The feeling of displacement begins to bother Kunta when he is brought to the foreign/alien land whose traditions and cultures are strange and new to him. He senses the lack of his African traditions in the white men's land. He doesn't hear the sound of drums, he can't pray to Allah among the people there and he has no chance to associate himself with the styles of white people who valorize their Christian traditions only. Afterall, he lacks African-ness there. Kunta is bound to recall his own tradition that has been lost but the absence of it inflicts always a sort of lack in him. He is puzzled to see the differences between African and American ways of living. Remembrance of Africa becomes a destiny for him what the narrator expresses as, "And Kunta had been reminded of Africa in the way that black women here wore their hair tied up with strings into very tight plaits" (243). The difference between the ways African and American women tended their hair reminds him that he is away from his tradition and his place. The way African women decorated their plaits with colourful beads was identifiable to him but not this style of using strings. Thus, his physical dislocation in Virginia from west African country Gambia turns out to be a real displacement of his culture and his psyche.

Kunta is eager to hear the drums that are beaten during different celebrations in Africa but he never prospects to hear such sounds in Virginia. His intention of placing himself among identifiable traditions is always at loss. Hence he is not identified rather is sold to slavery thereby seizing his African identity and placing an

English name upon him. Moreover, the "toubob" forbid these African people to carry out their cultural activities there. The restriction of such activities is a kind of blockade upon their identity that Kunta feels:

One thing he did not hear, it occurred to him, and had not heard since he left Africa, was the sounds of drums. The "toubob" probably did not allow these black people to have any drums; that had to be the reason. But why? was it because [. . .] the rhythm of the drums would drive wrestlers to their greatest feats of strength? Or how the hypnotic beat could send warriors into a frenzy against their enemies? (243)

The "toubobs" are fearful that the sounds of drum, recognizable to all black Africans, may instigate them to fight unitedly against their cruelty inflicted upon the blacks in the name of slavery. This instance brings the value of identity and culture into light in that the sounds which the blacks have heard throughout their living becomes a way of people's being identified and unified among themselves. But along with the change in their physical land, white people primarily restrict such activities creating, ironically, an awareness of crisis in their identity among these displaced people.

The real crisis in identity befalls Kunta after his foot is chopped off by John Waller during his struggle to escape from there and is sold to John's brother doctor Waller. Kunta's stay at Massa Waller's house in Virginia during his recovery is a bit comfortable. But after sometimes, he is renamed as "Toby" by the Massa for his convenience. He now feels a real sense of dislocation where nobody bothers him to ask his name and value his identity. It is only Kunta who makes exposure of his angry face to those who call him "Toby". It becomes really so painful to Kunta that the change of his name in the new land has made fun of his identity, his family's identity, and his tribal identity. The bitter experience of displacement that causes loss of his

own recognition he feels when, "Abruptly the black one began jabbing at Kunta's chest with his finger, then exclaiming, "you - you Toby!" (232). He can not understand it but later he infers that it is a new name given to him by Massa, the Master. His wish to assert himself as "Kunta Kinte", his original identity, is not fulfilled since it is the alien tongue he can not speak in. This unbelievable attack on and erasure of his identity makes Kunta nearly lose his self control and pour his floody rage upon that black man but he retreats. He feels he wanted to shout, "I am Kunta Kinte, first son of Omoro, who is the son of the holy man Kairaba Kunta Kinte!" (232). The more he feels difference with these white people and the other black ones, the more sense of alienation haunts him.

The need of home, family, and affection becomes a reality for him. Recollection of the lost locale and tradition becomes a compensation of cultural necessity. Alienated, differentiated, and homeless Kunta loses himself among the reminiscences of his past:

In his loneliness, Kunta began talking to himself, most often in imaginary conversation with his family. He would talk to them mostly in his mind, but sometimes aloud. "Fa," he would say, "these black ones are not like us. Their bones, their blood, their fingers, their hands, their feet are not their own. They live and breathe not for themselves but for the "toubobs." Nor do they own anything at all, not even their own children. They are fed and nursed and bred for others." (254)

The plight of blacks, both African and others who are forced into slavery, is reflected in that they have nothing to own, nothing to possess not even their children and their own bodies. Their identity is the play thing of their master; it can be changed or erased. The lack of home and location of identity pushes themselves into such critical

state in which they even have to lose their bones and blood, hands and feet as Kunta has such an experience. They are made to live for labor and profit in the plantations not for themselves. They are made to marry not for affection but for the good breeding which results in multiplication of master's income. The newly born slave-children are to carry their Massa's last name as if they did not have their own family, tribe or cultural thread. Their linkage to the tribe is cut off by imposing the relative master's name upon the slaves.

Kunta is startled to think that his little daughter named "Kizzy" which is related to a Kinte ancestor has to carry "Waller" but not "Kinte" as her last name only because they have been displaced in the foreign land. Had they been in Juffure, his daughter would have carried "Kinte" as her tribal name becoming a recognizable member of same clan. But here in Virginia, they have to have mixed or fluid or half identity as "Kizzy Waller" in which the first name comes from the African tribe, while as the last one comes from the master's Christian name. The crisis in fixed cultural identity is imposed by the Massa once he opens the Bible and writes her name as "Kizzy Waller" thereby making admixture or by hybridizing her identity:

He only commented that it was an odd name. [. . .] Massa Waller opened the large black Bible that he kept locked in a case in the drawing room, turned to a page devoted to plantation records, dipped his pen in the inkwell, and wrote in fine black script: "Kizzy Waller, born September 12, 1790." (368-69)

Hence, the issue of identity is prevalent throughout the novel as it depicts mostly the experience of African people displaced in America and also of the other blacks who are thrown into slavery. When "Josephus", the gardener in Massa Waller's house dies, all the black servants and the master gather to pray for the departed soul. Nobody

knows the real name of the gardener there, it is the master who calls him "Josephus" and prays for him by calling the very name. It is Kunta, who is given an English name "Toby" and who is deprived of his African identity, to feel sorrow to the dead gardener who lived an identityless life, never to be known to himself.

Though he was born in the African family, Kunta believed, he hardly had knowledge about his name and his tribe. Rather, he had to take the Christian name that was given by his master. The pathos of black people in the United States is more concerned to what they are, who they are and where they are from. The result of slave trade and slavery as a system ends with different individuals who lose everything - their home, their culture, their children, their identity. They carry names which are foreign, they stay in alien land and they are known to others as per the occupation they carry out for their Massa as it happens to the gardener:

Through his sorrow, Kunta was surprised to hear that the old gardener had been called "Josephus." He wondered that the gardener's true name had been - the name of his African forefathers - and to what tribe they had belonged. He wondered if the gardener himself had known. More likely he had died as he had lived - without ever learning who he really was. (382)

The loss of one's locality, culture and name turns to be an issue of little concern for those who have little knowledge of their origin, culture, locale and identity. The gardener lives as well as dies unidentified as from where he had come, to whom he was born, to which culture he was brought up. As he lived an isolated life away from his tribal tradition and culture such lack could not identify him in the exiled state, dislocation - Virginia.

Kunta himself has to face crisis in his identity or crisis in his culture as his wife, native black woman, Bell insists on following the Christian ritual of cleansing Kizzy's sins by dipping her into the water. He can't stop it and is compelled to watch the ritual in which a preacher cleanses the children's so called sins by praying to Jesus and by dipping the baby into the water. He is alienated from other Christian slaves. He feels the bitter sense of displacement where his own culture of praying to Allah and whispering the name into the baby's ear by the father is ignored. Worst of all, Kunta is ignored and treated as a strange man by his wife when he tries to stop Kizzy from such ritual. Bell says reverently to the preacher, "it's awright, reveren'. Dat's jes' my African husban'. He don't understand. I 'splain to him later. You go 'head" (39). This incident draws Kunta into reality that he is totally alone, different and separate from all in Virginia where his cultural practices are always a lack. Such situations push him back to be nostalgic of his country Juffure, where all of the members knew and respected him as a member of reverent Kinte clan. The differences between the locations and cultures create an everlasting gap between the native people in America and the African slaves there. Their plight to be sold from one plantation to another invites changes in their names i.e. in their identity that remains always partial or fluid.

Kizzy Waller is sold to Tom Lea, new Massa in North Carolina causing trouble in her identity along with the change in her location. Her dislocation from Virginia, where she was born and her parents live, results in change in her last name as she has to carry "Lea", her master's name now. She is traumatized by this reality and exclaims in protest, "My name is Kizzy Waller" (459). But to claim one's own true identity in alien land is worthless as it turns futile on the slave's part. Other slaves are used to taking the Massa's name as their own. Miss Malizy, Massa Lea's cook,

tries to console Kizzy by describing the reality that all slaves are compelled to take his name as theirs:

"Don't take on so, honey!" [. . .] "you sho' knows niggers takes whoever's dey Massa's name. Nigger names don't make no difference nohow, jes' Sum'pn to call 'em." Kizzy said, "My pappy real name is Kunta Kinte. He a African. "You don't say!" Miss Malizy appeared aback. " I'se heard my great grand daddy was one them Africans too! [...]. But my mammy never said his name." Miss Malizy paused. "you know yo' mammy, too?" " 'Co'se I does. My mammy name Bell. (459)

Whatever the family name, it does not help them to identity themselves. Niggers' name are taken no different than something to call them. Such names given by their masters don't carry their cultural as well as tribal value. Like Kizzy, Malizy's case is similar who is also born to African parents but she never knows who her father is. She is identified after the name of the master she is sold to. She is little expectant of Kizzy's knowing of her mother's name. It clarifies that blacks are neither identified by their mothers' names too. It is the consequence of their selling from one plantation to another time and again. Hence, the result of change in location is reflected in the change of their identity.

Kizzy feels distressed when her son is born due to her master's forceful relationship with her. She thinks of ideal names "Kunta" or "Kinte" to be given to the mixed blood so as to keep her familial identity alive through her son, but her right to possess the child or her culture is made parody of by the master. The master names the child as George, the name which he selects after the name of a hard working labor and he says, "Call him George - that's after the hardest - working nigger I ever saw" (464).

Hence, their names are of no value to themselves and to the tradition but are given just to suit the master's interest. After all, their identities are commodified; they are dehumanized and made the tool for labor. However, the love and protection to their identities and roots remains deep into the heart which Kizzy recalls as her father Kunta had said:

Well, she had found out - and there seemed to limit to the anguish whites were capable of wreaking upon black people. But the worst thing they did, Kunta had said, was to keep them ignorant of who they are, to keep them from fully human. [. . .] Kizzy decided that however base her baby's origins, however light his color, whatever name the Massa forced upon him, he would never regard him as other than the grandson of an African. (465)

Whosoever politicizes their identity, the African slaves like Kizzy are always aware of their roots, culture, and their location where they have been descended from. They have deep respect for their homeland be it only an imagination on the part of these exiles or be it opaque in the white people's land. Though the trauma of dislocation always chases them, these displaced slaves are devoted to protect their cultural identity, for they have good realization of the requirement of their culture in order to give a recognizable existence anywhere.

George Lea, later nicknamed as "Chicken George" because of his profession of rearing chickens for "cock fighting" for the massa, is yet another instance who bears change in his fluid identity. He was first named as "George" in Massa's interest and is now parodied as "Chicken Geroge" only because of his occupation in the chicken - farm but not because of his cultural change. There is no space for cultural or familial value in his newly given name. It is rather an outcome of white man's

politicization of his identity. George is bothered when uncle Mingo, an old chicken farm-hand, dies an unidentified death. The slaves in the Lea plantation have very little knowledge of his origin, for Mingo never said anything to them. Possibly he was snatched a child from his yet unknown parents and he himself remained unidentified of his roots or origin as many slaves are fated to. George ponders over his identity after Mingo's ill-managed burial which Kizzy says, "so jes' rolled him up in two sheets" (561). Mingo neither was recognized as someone of any lineage while he lived nor was granted a decent burial. This consequence leads George to think of him as, "Where was uncle Mingo from before Massa Lea brought him and who had been his family or had he a wife or children somewhere?" (562). The displaced Mingo remains unrecognized even with George, the closest person in the world to Mingo.

Displacement or exile causes troubles not only on the part of black people but to the white men also. Being out of one's own land is always disturbing or is to be a thing to be insulted. During one cockfighting, one Englishman called Eric Russell, who is invited by United States game cockers, has to face a great insult in America. The shift from his English location to North Carolina proves to be a matter of defeat in his prestige even though his cocks fight brilliantly and win the game. When he enters the pit, instead of granting him a warm welcome as expected by the referee, the derisive laughter only spreads there:

The referee had begun dashing back and forth, furiously waving his arms, shouting, "Gentlemen! please!" But the wisecracks become more cutting.

"Where is his red coat at?" . . . "Do he fight foxes, too?" . . . "Naw, too slow, waddle like a possum!" . . . "More like a bullfrog !" . . . "He look to me like a blood hound!" (600)

One's own identity becomes a matter of parody once they are away from their homeland, their people and their culture. The Englishman is also no exception of this reality. They call him fox or bullfrog or a bloody hound thereby making fun of his identity and by tagging plural derogatory names upon him. As experienced or endured by black slaves, he also has to face crisis in his stable identity as Eric Russell.

George Lea's family headed by his son Tom, a skilled blacksmith, moves to Henning, Tennessee after the Civil War as a free people now. This generation which has adapted American tongue, American Christian culture and American ways of living is quite different from their African ancestor Kunta. They have tried their best to assimilate themselves among other Americans in order to grasp an independent identity. But the alien or foreign land never takes them as true Americans. They are still destined to feel exiled in Tennessee when they have to endure threats and insults imposed by the white people. When Tom figures to open a blacksmith shop in Tennessee, three white men come and command, "Well boy," the second man went on, "no need of wasting time, we'll get right to the point. You can blacksmith, that's fine. But if you want to do it in this town, you'll have to work for a white man that owns the shop. Had you figured on that?" (688).

When Tom asserts his identity as a free American in the new land, they threaten him of some impending risk upon his family. By this, Tom's conviction of his family as a rightful American citizen is punctured. His belief that the United States is his land which provides him security by giving him an identity blurs at once. He feels that his contribution to this land brings the return of everlasting insult. His intimacy with the land, its culture, its tradition and its religion proves wrong. The simple conviction of "my location" turns rather to be a dislocation or an exile which the resigned Tom hopelessly expresses as, "If I can't own what I do wid my own lands, den dis ain't no

place for us" (688). This realization of displacement, homelessness or of exile becomes crucial fact even to Tom's grand children who think themselves as Americans. Alex Haley, one of the grand children of his great-grand father Tom in one of his visits to his African village Juffure, has to listen to an old *Mandinka* tongue say that they think those black Americans in America are the exiles:

His eyes piercing into mine, seeming to feel I should understand his *Mandinka*, he expressed what they had all decided [. . .] and the translations came: "We have been told by the forefathers that there are many of us from this place who are in exile in that place called America." (718)

This is how these exiled people have to live a plural life thereby becoming both African and American. The land where they have been exiled never trusts them to grant full identity. As a consequence, they are compelled to struggle to relocate themselves back to their own land and culture. They take up struggle as a necessity to find their origins or roots which only can define them.

Since the characters fail to locate and assimilate themselves into white American culture, the longing for African culture and tradition becomes a crucial reality between them. The lack of cultural anchorage is visualized in the characters off-home existence. They come up with struggle in order to trace their lost homeland as well as its original cultural roots. Such struggle is characterized by their resistance to the new land's traditions that have no space among the black slaves. The main character Kunta Kinte, who is brought to United States and is put into slavery, makes massive use of his physical strength to run away from "toubob's" land. He shows hatred to the new land's tradition - religion, food, culture etc.

Kunta's resistance to white men's food is an example of his hatred towards those people, their land and their culture when chained along with his other shacklemates in the ship. Kunta prefers death to food which the narrator puts as, "each time the food had come, Kunta had clamped his jaws shut, preferring to starve to death" (172). For him life in alienland with alien food and culture is worse than the death itself. Moreover, he feels that to be away from his own family and home is similar to death. The more days he passes with the foreign people, the more he feels that it is the time to fight with the "toubob." The black captives in the ship plan to attack the white people in order to keep themselves free from exile. Their thought of revenge against those slave traders is further strengthened by the reminiscence of their home, family and culture. Irritated by the white people's cruelty, Wolof, Kunta's shacklemate attacks a "toubob" violently what the narrator explains as:

Whirling, he saw the fierce tattooed Wolof in the act of snatching a metal stick from a toubob. Swinging it like a club, he sent the toubob's brains spraying onto the deck; [. . .] it was done so swiftly that the Wolof, bellowing in rage, was clubbing his fifth toubob when the flash of a long knife lopped of his head cleanly at the shoulders. (194)

Kunta witnesses the sacrifice Wolof made for his freedom from the "toubob." He also thinks of taking revenge upon the white people but he falls terribly sick due to the several whips the "toubob" lash on him. This terrible situation causes so pain in Kunta that recollection of his home and his tribal significance is unavoidable.

Between his screams he unbelievably utters his father's and grandfather's names as well as his Muslim God Mohammad, "Omor-omar the second caliph, third after Mohammad the prophet! Kairaba - Kairaba means peace!" (203). The nostalgia of his family and his people chases Kunta throughout the painful journey. The more

he is taken away from his village Juflure, the more the picture of his family becomes apparent. Recollection of his village, his customs and his family brings him an unbearable pain which he tries to avoid but it is out of question. Grief stricken Kunta tries to forget the pains inflicted upon him just by visualizing this lost family - father, mother and brothers.

Imagination of his homeland for consolation, however, turns out to be a reality to torture him even more. The narrator exhibits the bitter experience of a homeless and exiled Kunta in these lines:

Each of them - Omoro, Binta, Lamin, Suwadu, Madi - was a stone in his heart. It tortured him to think that he had caused them grief. Finally he would wrench his mind away to something else, but it wouldn't help. His thoughts would always drift to something like the drum he had going to make for himself. (206)

Kunta's mind is full of such reminiscences which bring all of his past experiences at once as in a collage. Such recurring nostalgia of his land and its imagination from the foreign land drives Kunta to strongly refute the alien culture and escape from the captivity.

After Kunta is sold into slavery in Maryland, the place quite far away from his homeland Gambia, it is really difficult for him to escape. But when he feels that the time favors him, he makes an attempt at once. From his master John Waller's house, he escapes away through the thorny bushes even without taking little care about himself. He feels the pleasure of wild freedom though for a short period. But he is instantly caught by using dogs. He later finds himself in a hut after he comes back to consciousness which he had lost due to terrible torture the white master inflicted upon him. Regular singing of African songs in nearby huts pushes him back to think of his

own village. By this, Kunta experiences the feeling of a real African in the “toubob - land.” He feels how the homeless people have similar experiences of nostalgia and more respect to their tradition in the alien land. Placelessness urges him to locate into the African songs thereby making him, "feel more African than he ever felt in his own village" (230). Kunta finds special closeness to his lost country as he remembers an old man say, "each day's new sun will remind us that it rose in our Africa, which is the navel of the earth" (230). It drives him to think all of Juffure, and of how he had never realized more than now how very deeply he loves his village.

Kunta vows to live an African, but never to give in to the whitemen's food and race. He disgusts their food what he calls "filthy pork" and has hatred towards the white people and whose skin he compares with that of swine. "The swine's skin was the colour of a toubob" (237), Kunta, hence, keeps himself separate from them in that there is a tremendous gap between African and American culture. Kunta's determination "never to become like them" (239), is the outcome of his deep rooted love for his tradition or his tribal roots. He feels pleasure to see a black old man play some instrument by using his wand, for such occasions remind him of his cultural music that would be played in his homeland. The following lines show this:

The old man who prayed at night then took up some kind of musical instrument with strings running down its length— it reminded Kunta of the ancient *Kora* from his own homeland— and began to make some odd music on it by jerking some kind of wand back and forth across the strings. (247)

Such incidents help kunta to reflect upon his past which is itself a collection of similar experiences he had experienced in his homeland, Juffure. He feels the need of cultural

belongingness that is possible only in his homeland. Therefore, Kunta takes up several struggles to escape from the white men's land.

Kunta thinks of utilizing the second opportunity of escape and waits for favourable time. Still feeling pain in his recently cuff-removed feet, he is not afraid of anything else except those merciless "toubob." Taking a dim hope of revisiting his village and comforting his hitherto pain-stricken homeless body as well as his mind, Kunta slips away at night. But this attempt also proves fatal on his part. Instead of bringing him the sweet reward of home, the struggle invites him a numbness on his consciousness once Samson, the Massa's driver, sends him a massive blow on his head. The narrator explains this situation:

And that night, after the others had gone to bed and all had become still, Kunta limped outside and stole away once again. Crossing the field in the opposite direction from the one he had fled across the last time, he headed toward what he knew was wider, deeper forest on the other side. [. . .] He lay still with his heart pounding as he heard [. . .] Samson cursing and shouting "Toby! Toby!" [. . .] Gasping for breath Samson tied Kunta's wrists tightly together with a rope [. . .]. (248 - 49)

The dire consequences of failure in his struggle to escape away from slavery make Kunta nearly hopeless. Nevertheless, he doesn't surrender to the white men's system. His succeeding attempt of escape also turns to be adverse in bringing success to him.

In his fourth attempt of struggle or escape, Kunta invites an everlasting result that is reflected on his right foot. After his capture, the slave catchers chop off half of his foot thereby making him physically unfit to carry out such escape attempts again. The consequences of his struggle against the white men's institutionalized system called slavery leave him a bitter fact that he is doomed only to figure an imaginary

Africa from United States and never to make physical attempts for further struggle. Already destined to be merely nostalgic about his homeland, Kunta lives a resigned life which happens to be an outcome of the painful experience that is inflicted upon him during his last struggle for escape. The situation is clarified in the given lines:

The bleeding "toubob" picked up the ax. Kunta was screaming and thrashing as the ax flashed up, then down so fast – severing skin, tendons, muscles, bone – that Kunta heard the ax thud into the trunk as the shock of it sent the agony deep into his brain. As the explosion of pain bolted through him, Kunta's upper body spasmed [. . .] as bright red blood jetted from the stump as he plunged into blackness. (264)

As a result of this brutal attack upon Kunta's limbs, he is compelled to be displaced forever. To his dismay, he finds himself again displaced from John Waller's house. Later he knows that John's brother doctor Waller had bought him from John. At Massa Waller's, Kunta befriends with an old fiddler. Though, he is forcefully placed in the white men's land, he can not assimilate with their culture like food. He can't take up liquor as the fiddler does rather he thinks of his African food called *couscous*. As the fiddler enters into Kunta's room, he, "instantly smelled the liquor on his breath" (285). He is repelled by the smell which has no space in his African culture.

Differences between Christian culture and African Muslim culture are frequently present in different activities as found in wedding tradition. The African-born Kunta becomes the real victim of these cultural discrepancies which instantly draw him back to the similar traditions that were held in Juffure. Kunta's marriage with Bell, the Massa's cook, as per the Christian tradition is an instance which valorizes the alien culture thereby making Kunta follow them as it is. Kunta feels

terrified in that he has deceived Allah by jumping over the broomstick. He is also ashamed to kiss Bell in the public and thinks that it has ridiculed the African tradition. He hopes that he would be forgiven for what he is doing that whatever words are spoken to pagan god. Kunta is lost among reminiscences as it is impossible for him to embrace his cultural roots that he has left far back. Still the longing to grasp those traditions is reflected in these lines:

Kunta felt as if he were suffocating. In his mind was flashing how marriages were conducted in his Juffure. He could see the dancers, hear the praise singers and the prayers and the talking drums relaying the glad tidings to other villagers. (348)

Even though Kunta has assimilated himself with Christian culture by jumping over the broom and by kissing his wife among the people, he is respectful to his own culture.

American born black woman Bell, as his wife, becomes a hindrance for Kunta to frequently think of his African culture. Nevertheless, Kunta vows to plant his own culture and tradition in the child that is yet to be born. His mind flashes back to those days when he was a significant member in Kinte clan as well as for Omoro and Binta, his parents. He determines to secure his would-be born man child from the “toubob” in order to keep his cultural roots alive down to succeeding generations. His wish to father a son and teach him, "to be a true man, no matter what trials and hazards that might involve in the land of the “toubob” (360), is an example of reverence to his roots which he has come up of.

African thought of paying little attention to the girl children still occupies Kunta's mind. Same as the people in Juffure believed girls to be reared and married off, Kunta in Virginia, after nearly twenty three years, thinks similar. He thinks, "girl

children simply ate food until they grew big enough to marry and go away" (360). These girls married to someone else have to carry their husbands' names thereby ignoring their roots from where they came. This fact drives Kunta to desire for a man child only in that, "it was the man child who carried on his family's name and reputation" (360). Bitter severance from his family and homeland; his attempt for struggle to escape away from dislocation; frequent attack upon his identity and culture; his failure to develop a stable recognition by adapting alien culture be aware him to realize the fact that it is his culture and its tradition that can only define him. Hence, he plans to sow his tradition and culture in the new child.

Even though girl child is born, Kunta remains devoted to pass the African tradition in her. Ignoring Bell who clings to give the child a Christian name, he insists on searching for a tribal name which he finds in "Kizzy" after the name of an African ancestor. He is proud that he has honored certain traditions and has followed naming procedures that are permitted only to the father. Under the moon and stars, he raises the baby from the blanket and whispers in *Mandinka*, his tribe three times into her tiny ear, "Your name is Kizzy. Your name is Kizzy. Your name is Kizzy" (365). Kunta feels Africa pumping in his veins – and flowing from him into the child the flesh of him and Bell. He passes the culture which he believes and speaks aloud to the child in *Mandinka*, "Behold, the only thing greater than yourself !" (366). Adding devotion to his culture, he makes a present that is a beautiful *Mandinka* doll out of pine wood rubbed and polished with linseed oil and lampblack and presents it to Kizzy on her second birthday.

Failure to relocate himself among the Africans in his homeland leads Kunta to search comfort through imagination of his lost world. Unknowingly, he finds himself deeply attached with reminiscences that spring up in his mind when he thinks of his

land and its culture. Africa pumps through his veins as he recalls his original tongue and African traditions. He attempts to draw Africa into his fictional or imaginary world by modeling a *Mandinka* doll once he realizes that it is the only compensation of the loss. In this respect, Rushdie views that it is the bitter reality of exiles or expatriates to fantasize the lost locale when they fail to reclaim it. These lines reflect his how such people as well as displaced writers find solace in imaginary homelands as recurring failures overshadow their attempts to retrace the lost place:

It may be that writers in my position, exiles or emigrants, or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back [. . .]. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge— which gives rise to profound uncertainties— that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands [. . .]. (10)

In this sense, the desires to reclaim the lost world on the part of the exiles like Kunta remains merely as dreams. Similar is the case with Kunta as he fictionalizes Africa and her Muslim culture from the alien land, America. Realizing that Africa is no more his location now, he determines to plant African traditions in Kizzy.

Kizzy's learning of the rhyme, "Peter, Peter, punkin eater" (409), from Christian children troubles Kunta in the sense that the foreign land has spoilt his blood by restricting her from Koranic verses. He gets nostalgic of his young days when he along with his *kafos*, or friends, had recited some verses from the Koran which would sound very beautiful. Reminiscence of such verses urges him to recite those lines to Kizzy but he can't do, for he realizes that the alien culture has more space in Kizzy

than the African one. He rather recalls his roots which began from Mali and commences to tell about it along which his history how he was brought to strange country called Virginia. These lines exhibit this:

"Dey brung us here naked!" [. . .] "Even took our names away. Dem like you git borned here don't even know who they is! But you jes' much Kinte as I is! Don't never fo'git dat! Us'ns fo' fathers was traders travelers, holy men – all the way back hunnuds of rains into dat lan' call Ol' Mali! You understan' what I'm talking 'bout, chile?"

"Yes, Pappy." She said obediently [. . .] picking up a stick smoothing a place in the dirt between them, he scratched some characters in Arabic. "Dat my name – Kun-ta Kin-te", he said, tracing the characters slowly with his fingers. She stared, fascinated. "Pappy, now do my name." He did. She laughed. "Dat say Kizzy?" He nodded. "Would you learn me to write like you does?" Kizzy asked.

"Wouldn't be fitting," said Kunta sternly.

"Why not?" She sounded hurt.

"In Africa, only boys learns how to read an' write. Girls ain't got no use fer it – over here, neither." (410)

This is how Kunta transmits his culture and its roots in the child. He also tells her about their original land, Mali from where his ancestors came to Juffure. He teaches her some Arabic writing and traditions that are prevalent in Muslim culture. Here, Kunta succeeds in drawing his mixed blood child, Kizzy's attention to his culture. Kizzy's fascination to Arabic letters and her wish to learn them is a visible instance of a liking to that culture which she is away from. Interest to learn the language and

become happy to see her name translated in Arabic letters is an example of her wish to place herself into that culture which she is yet to trace.

As a grown up woman and the mother to her mulatto child George, Kizzy is anxious that the child is not dark as she is. It tortures her to hear that George asks, "How come I ain't black like you is, Mammy?" (473). It pushes Kizzy back to recall the incidents how she was sold off from Massa Waller's house. Frequent queries placed to her by George like, "Who is my pappy? Why I never see him? Where he is?" (473) etc provide her appropriate chances to teach him about their roots. Ignoring the fact that master Lea is George's father, Kizzy gets nostalgic about Kunta Kinte along with some traditions he had told about and draws her child's attention to the similar tradition of transmitting tribal history.

Kizzy shows deep respect to their oral tradition of passing tribal information to the new generation as Kunta himself had learned it from the Gambian *griots*, the story tellers, and also from Nya Boto, an old woman. She dreams of enriching the child with all the Gambian information plus tradition that she has learnt from her father Kunta. Recalling her father's story and the African songs he had sung for her when she was a child, Kizzy teaches George about his roots in these lines:

"He tall an' black as de night, didn't hardly never smile." She offered finally, "He b'longst to you same as me", 'cept you calls him Gran' pappy!" Telling him that his gran' pappy had come on a ship from Africa, "to a place my mammy said dey calls "Naplis," she said that a brother of Massa Waller had brought him to a plantation in Spotsylvania country, but he tried to escape and when he kept on running 'way, dey chopped off half his foot.

[. . .] "Boy, I wish you could o' heard 'im singin'. Some o' dem African songs to me when we be riddin' in the Massa's buggy, an' I was a li'l gal, right roun' the age you is now."

[. . .] "Yo' gran' pappy like to tell me things in de African tongue. Like he call a fiddle a *ko*, Or he call a river *Kamby Bolongo*, whole lotsa different words like dat."

[. . .] "*Ko!*" She said abruptly. "Can you say that?"

"*Ko*," said George.

"All right, you so smart." *Kamby Bolongo!*"

George repeated perfectly at the first time. (473-74)

In this way, recollection of their roots, African culture, words, tradition etc becomes a means to heal their wounds of isolation, alienation and dislocation. These characters cherish such Africanness in the foreign land and pass the same tradition to the children of new generation.

George's third son, Tom Murray whose family settles in Tennessee after the Civil War, and his other children are endowed with the similar history of their roots-spatial and cultural. Their feeling of exile and isolation haunts them forever even until 1970s, some two hundred years after their ancestor Kunta was displaced in the United States. America remains always an alien, foreign and others' land for these children of an African exile. Similar tension of exile as felt by Kunta himself haunts his great-great grand children in United States. It remains always a new and strange land, its people always alien to these Africans and the tradition always a rudimentary reality. They find no way out from this bitter fact and are bound to take a shelter into their own culture which exists partially in the fragments of their activities. Thus, the desire

to trace back their land and culture or their roots becomes a destiny for these off-landers.

George Lea, grandson of Kunta Kinte, takes up the cultural responsibility honestly and devotes himself in telling his children their roots. Being nostalgic of how he would be interested in the story his mother Kizzy told him, George plants in Virgin, his son, the desire for cultural roots. Following the oral tradition which his grandfather passed onto Kizzy from whom he had learnt, George takes the infant and speaks about their African roots in grand tones:

"Listen here, boy! Gwine tell you 'bout yo' great granddaddy. He were a African dat say he name Kunta Kinte! He call a guitar a *Ko* an' a river *Kamby Bolongo* an' lot mo' things wid African names.[. . .] "An' he jumped de broom wid de big-house cook name Miss Bell, an' dey had a li'l ol' gal-an' there she is, yo' gran' mammy grinning at you right there!" (540)

It exemplifies how these slaves are restricted from talking and practicing their culture before the white men. They are quite interested in their roots, yet they have no way of preserving them. It is only through passing it from old ones to the young children, they can preserve it. In this respect critic Jason Berry writes:

They maintain a semblance of racial identity in the plantation culture a profound oral tradition arose among the slaves, an extension of the tradition maintained by the highly specialized African *griots*, who are literally oral historians, traveling from village to village. As *Roots* demonstrates, many uprooted slaves were unaware of their ancestry, and the oral tradition which developed was the sole fortress against the

repressive measures of the planters who beat those who tried to preserve their roots. (313)

Similarly, the desire for their cultural roots is prevalent in the other characters be them old or young ones. Children who recall what their parents tell them and recite them by showing special interest in the lessons are the real preserver of their culture to keep it safely and deliver it to coming generations. This trend highlights how these children can not be happy with the white men's culture, their language, and their customs.

African names, stories and histories sound beautiful to these slaves' children though without knowing what the significance it has to call *Ko* to a guitar, *Kamby Bolongo*, to a river and so on. It is perhaps the result of their parents' frequent recitations of such names and history which are only theirs. Matilda, George's wife, is astonished to find her son Uriah very respectfully repeating the African sounds. She beams with satisfaction in that her child has shown interest in his culture or in his roots. The following lines show this:

When Matilda came hurrying nervously into the cabin, wondering what on earth had happened to Uriah, she found him dutifully repeating such sounds as "Kunta Kinte", and "*Ko*" and "*Kamby Bolongo*." And Matilda decided that she had the time to sit down [. . .] as Chicken George told their rapt grandson the story of how his African great-great gran'daddy had said he was not far from his village. (656)

Matilda is relieved by this. Her worry of the children becoming unaware of their roots is baseless. She finds that they are true to their parents, their grandparents and their roots of origin. Now, she visions a secure future in her children who she hopes will keep their tradition as well as their names alive to pass it down to her grand children.

Similar desires can be sketched among the new and new generation until Haley, the novelist, who himself makes a journey back to Juffure and stays there though for a few days.

The narrator recalls how there had been debates between Cynthia, Tom's daughter and Bertha, Cynthia's daughter over the recurring issue of slavery. Bertha, Healey's mother feels ashamed of talking and hearing about the anecdotes that exclusively relate to slavery. There would be friction between the mother and the daughter as Cynthia repeatedly opened up the subjects of slavery with the visitors. This instance which brings gap between Cynthia and Bertha is the outcome of reluctance Bertha shows towards her roots that is slavery. Bertha's wish to separate herself from past becomes problematic for mother Cynthia who believes that no one should forget their original roots which they have come up of. She feels there is no existence without such roots. The narrator presents it in these lines:

It was the talk, I knew, that always had generated my only memories of any open friction between Mama and Grandma. Grandma would get on that subject sometimes without her older women summer guests there, and Mama always before long would abruptly snap something like, "Oh, Maw, I wish you'd stop all that old-timey slavery stuff, it's entirely embarrassing!" Grandma would snap back, "If you don't care who and where you come from, Well, I does!" (704)

Such traditions of passing the history of their roots to the children as Haley hears from his grand mother Cynthia, pushes him back to Africa, Juffure, where he finds the true account of his lineage.

The desire to locate themselves in their culture and homeland gets fulfilled with Haley who devotes himself to search for his family history in court records, legal deeds, family books and in national archives. Alan Crawford writes:

[. . .] Haley became fascinated with his family history and sifting through court records, family Bibles, legal deeds, and shipping logs, allowed himself eventually to be led back to Africa. There, in the village of Juffure, he listened to a wizened griot whose narrative at last made reference to "the African" himself, "the eldest of these four sons, Kunta, who went away from his village to chop wood [. . .] and was never seen again! (279)

The unfulfilled desire of tracing back their cultural roots on his ancestors' part becomes a motivator for the diasporic subject Haley. He as a free citizen is able to translate the displaced slaves' desire into reality by taking patience in searching for his roots.

Haley is the representative of all African diasporas who are still longing for their recognition that is defined by their own culture. Haley, as the narrator, quotes his cousin Georgia say, "You go 'head, boy!" "Yo' sweet grandma an' all of 'em – dey up dere watchin' you!" (711). Critic Nancy Shute believes that sixty percent of Americans are interested in their genealogy or their roots and people are interested in family history be it they are away from their home land. It is now possible for the root-seekers to prove their family history but the desire to know about one's history is an old phenomenon. Nancy writes that, "Of course people have been interested in family history as long as there have been families. Today, people every where are researching family history" (76). Though, Haley is able to grasp his long lost culture,

he has difficulty in adjusting with his own culture. It is a painful reality of the diasporas.

Haley's visit to Juffure, his homeland and listening to the old *griots*, the oral historians, is comfortable just for a moment. Haley finds himself different from his own African people in the sense that he has brown complexion as a hybrid production. He is cold with shame that is the result of his impurity. He can't position himself emotionally among the black Africans. He feels insecure, uncertain and restless that he writes:

Rocked emotionally, my eyes downward as we tend to do when we're uncertain, insecure, and my glance fell upon my own hands' black complexion. This time more quickly than before and even harder another gale-force hit me: I felt myself some variety of a hybrid [. . .]. I felt some how impure among the pure [. . .]. (717)

Haley's plight as a homeless, placeless and isolated diaspora further worsens when he realizes that Juffure itself can not hold him as a child who has no access to his own culture and tradition.

Eventhough Haley participates in a black culture when a woman comes to him with a baby and gestures saying, "Take it!" (720) and he takes the babies one after the other from the surrounding women, it makes no sense to him. To know this, he has to consult a Harvard University professor, Dr. Jerome Bruner, who clarifies that he was participating in one of the oldest ceremonies of human kind called, "*The laying on of hands!*" Bruner further explains that they were telling Haley, "Through this flesh, which is us, we are you, and you are us!" (720). As a diasporic subject, Haley has to remain isolated though among his own people. However, Haley's shameful experience

on his part helps him produce *Roots* that traces and documents the fictional history of Afro-American cultural roots. A'Lelia Bundles comments:

By tracing seven generations of his own family to the Gambian village of Juffure, Haley had turned whatever lingering shame black Americans felt about Africa into pride. His story had challenged many white American's long held belief that black were intellectually inferior with no history or culture worth recognizing. (13)

Haley's contribution in recording his family history or his roots, thus, has become a balm for the black Americans who still lack location, identity and culture. Plight of being homeless with no recognition of their own is translated in *Roots*. Haley himself has become an example of diasporic subject who being homeless feels isolated in America. He desires to find out his spatial as well as cultural roots and succeeds. Yet he remains pathetic, for he can't adjust himself among the original African cultures.

He finds a clear division in himself when the hybridized Haley has difficulty among the Gambian Africans as well as the white Americans. As a brown-coloured man, he has no space both among the whites and the blacks. He remains still a half man divided in self, in culture, in color and in identity. Though his desires are translated into reality, he carries still an isolated, divided and plural but partial identity. His living in Tennessee, America, reflects his plight as a diasporic subject yet to live a diaspora hereafter.

IV. Conclusion

Alex Haley's *Roots* textualizes the conflict of diasporic subjects who physically belong to America but mentally long for their African roots. The characters face problems when they realize that their own selves are divided between Africa and America parallelizing the division in their location. Tennessee and Juffure as the microcosms of America and Africa overlap and sometimes dominate each other thereby creating a problem upon their identity. Haley, himself as a diasporic subject, maintains a balance between the Christian and African cultures by acknowledging the values and traditions of Juffure in a critical relationship with Tennessee, which politicizes their position. Tennessee, which is home for the displaced Africans, becomes a space of in-betweenness where African and American cultures contest. Due to everlasting sense of homelessness, even though living in Tennessee for years, Haley is bound to seek his roots that lie far away in Juffure, Africa. *Roots* brings these diasporas' ancestors like Kunta Kinte and his children into light so as to exhibit how they also sought roots in the new land through traditions like food, marriage, names, culture etc.

Haley's characters are mostly haunted by questions like who they are and where they belong. Their realization in loss of a stable identity along with the loss of location or space is the result of cultural ties. They feel, thus, isolated in United States. Lack of cultural anchorage confuses them in the process of creating their identity. Consequently, nostalgia of their comfortable past is unavoidable when they feel alienated in alien land. The identity of these exiled characters in the new land keeps them in-between, neither in the new world nor in their previous land. The activities as a homeless people derive from a sense of loss — a loss of the fixed homeland and an absolute as well as unified cultural values.

Roots turns out to be an expression of African diasporic discourse. The characters are troubled by the reality of distant belongingness where they realize gap between their psychological space and physical space. They realize that their identities are politicized thereby tagging them plural but partial recognition. Haley's displaced characters reflect the legacy of slavery which misrepresented them as rootless subjects. These characters, as torn between their root culture and the acquired one, are seeking their roots and native land even though they live in materially prosperous country. Their superficial happiness and satisfaction is always punctured by the loss which they are doomed to keep inside.

Haley's *Roots* succeeds in exploring the pains and suffering of African diasporas in the United States. These characters displaced in the alien land cannot come out of such trauma as they are torn between their physicality and sentiments. They have no solution to cultural loss. As a result, eternal nostalgia for their spatial as well as cultural roots has become a bitter reality for them. Rather they attempt to associate with their tribal food, words, costume and rituals which remain in fragments among the diasporas. As a remedy for the loss and alienation, the displaced people or exiles are bound to garland their cultural experiences creating an imaginary world where they can find a tentative positionality as Haley does in *Roots*.

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