DIASPORIC OBSESSIONS IN JHUMPA LAHIRI AND MARGARET WILSON: A CRITICAL STUDY

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By

MR. BINDA SAH

Regn. No. 432/2011

(w. e. f. 12-06-2009)

Under the Supervision of

DR. NIGAMANANDA DAS

Department of English

School of Humanities and Education

Nagaland University, Kohima Campus

Meriema, Kohima, Nagaland - 797001

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-DECLARATION-

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled *Diasporic Obsessions in Jhumpa Lahiri and Margaret Wilson: A Critical Study* is a record of bonafide research done by me under the supervision of Dr. Nigamananda Das, in the Department of English, Nagaland University, Kohima Campus during the period of 2009-2012 and that it has not been submitted either in full or in part to any other university or institute for the award of any other degree, diploma and title.

Dated the 5th July 2012

Kohima

Mr. Binda Sah

Regn. No. 432/2011

(w. e. f. 12-06-2009)

Countersigned by

HEAD SUPERVISOR

Nagaland University

Dr. Nigamananda Das
MA (Utkal), PGCTE, PGDTE (CIEFL)
M.Phil (Madurai) Ph.D (Utkal)
Assistant Professor

Department of English
Nagaland University
Kohima - 797001,Nagaland – India

Mobile: 09436608904
Email: nndas69@yahoo.co.in

-CERTIFICATE-

This is to certify that the thesis entitled *Diasporic Obsessions in Jhumpa Lahiri and Margaret Wilson: A Critical Study* is a bonafide record of research work done by Mr. Binda Sah (Regn. No. 432/2011), Department of English, Nagaland University, Campus –Kohima during 2009-12. Submitted to the Nagaland University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, this thesis has not previously formed the basis for the award of any other degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or other title and that the thesis represents independent and original work on the part of the candidate under my guidance. This is again certified that the candidate as a part time scholar has fulfilled the criteria mentioned in the University Ordinance-OC-4 for submission of the thesis.

The 5th of July 2012
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SUPERVISOR

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PREFACE

"Where is your home?" – This question has been asked to me umpteen times particularly by new acquaintances. Most of the people appear to be doubting Thomas to my answer, i.e., Tezpur, and recently North Lakhimpur as I am settled here having a house of my own. They immediately ask "Where is your original home?", and to clear their doubt I am often compelled to utter I belong to Bihari community. After I joined North Lakhimpur College in 2005, one day I was invited by my neighbour, a Bihari family for lunch. For the last fifty year this family has been in North Lakhimpur having a dignified and cordial relation with the broader Assamese society. But during the lunch, there was no trace of local culinary, everything that was served to me, even the T.V. channel, was someway connected to North India. After the lunch I was stunned with the oft-asked question with one addition, "Where is your home in Bihar?" I could not give an appropriate answer but the question has always been in the back of my mind. It is this question and my inability to give appropriate answer made me to ponder over the idea of "home". My emotional and cerebral musing drives me to the field of Diaspora study.

The selection of topic was done after long deliberations on Diaspora and writers writing in diaspora. Jhumpa Lahiri was already in my mind as I had already gone through most of her works. But my motive was to find out whether diaspora reality is subject to the subjugated migrants or it is also found among the upper hand migrants. And my guide

suggested Margaret Wilson, an early 20th century American Missionary writer in India. Jhumpa Lahiri and Margaret Wilson were selected for study with a view to find out the differences between the diasporic feelings of an American in India and Indians in America.

As regard to the selection of texts, I have discussed all the works of Lahiri as they are replete with elements of diaspora. The elements of diaspora are not present in all the works of Wilson. The diasporic part of her life is connected to her short stay in India (1904-1910) and her expression of Indian experiences in form of a novel entitled *Daughters of India* and a few stories under the broad title *Tales of a Polygamous City* published separately in the magazine *The Atlantic Monthly*. My discussion in this thesis is restricted to three works of Lahiri (*Interpreter of Maladies*, *The Namesake* and *Unaccustomed Earth*) and two works of Wilson (*Daughters of India* and *Tales of a Polygamous City*) as they are imbued with the elements of diaspora and fit for a comparative study.

The thesis is conceived in six chapters along with a bibliography. The first chapter is "Introduction" in which I have discussed the emergence of Diaspora as a field of academic study. The chapter also includes brief biography of the chosen writers and the introduction of the texts under study and ends up with the discussion of diaspora and humanistic concerns in them.

The second chapter entitled "Dynamics of Diasporic Realities" deals with certain crucial elements of diaspora such as the concept of home, loss, marginalization, isolation

etc. and discusses the treatment of diaspora in Lahiri and Wilson in two separate heads and ends up with a comparative analysis of diasporic concerns in Lahiri and Wilson.

The third chapter entitled "The Matrix of Multicultural Concerns" treats multicultural elements in Lahiri and Wilson. After a brief discussion of the concept of multiculturalism and its relation to diaspora, the chapter comparatively analyses the treatment of multiculturalism by Lahiri and Wilson in their select works.

The fourth chapter entitled "Myriad Modes of Sexuality, Ecology, Pain and Ambition" is conceived in three segments: Treatment of Sexuality, Treatment of Ecology and Metaphors of Pain and Ambition. Each segment deals with the conceptual ground of the terms and their application in the texts under study.

The fifth chapter entitled, "The World of Subaltern" is an effort to study the social footings of diaspora in host land. After the theoretical discussion of the term "subaltern", the chapter veers towards the analysis of subaltern elements in Lahiri and Wilson and sums up with the comparison of their treatment.

The sixth chapter is "Conclusion" in which I have succinctly presented the main ideas of the previous chapters to facilitate the final comparison of Lahiri and Wilson as diasporic writers. This chapter makes an assertion that both Lahiri and Wilson have treated the elements of diaspora with respect to their time and circumstances and the differences in their treatment are not of kind but of degree.

Binda Sah

CONTENTS

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

Oh, East is East, and West is West,
and never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great
Judgment Seat;
But there is neither East nor West, Border,
nor Breed, nor Birth,
When two strong men stand face to face,
Though they come from the ends of the earth!

Rudyard Kipling, "The Ballad of East and West" (1889)
(www.poetryloverspage.com)

Rudyard Kipling's "The Ballad of East and West" presents the nineteenth century incompatibility of the East and the West. While composing this poem, he hardly expected the interaction between the East and the West to be so astonishingly vigorous in the following century, or that once this interaction set in, it would never cease. In fact, the contact between East and West, even though inscribed by innumerable invasions, occupations, colonizations and incidents of suppression and resistance that led in many cases to cultural extermination and the loss of human life, did not portend an end to but rather a spanning of the world: continents connected, languages translated, races mixed, and differences obscured. This phenomenon encouraged migration of various types, and for various reasons which in turn gave birth to a specific group of people living in migration/exile called Diaspora.

The notion of nationals and migrants are at the centre of contemporary Post-colonial literature; the two are often juxtaposed to illuminate the perennial trauma of being uprooted on the part of migrants. The essence of being uprooted is broadly dealt by a coterie of literature called Diasporic Writing which deals with the obsessions of migrants with their original home; an obsession which problematizes their exact role and position in the adopted land. Even the diasporic writers conceive the setting of their work in their original country, such as, much of the writing by Indian expatriates is still set in India, though many of them have lost their link with India centuries ago. It may be because distance allows one to see the country for what she truly is. Such thoughts often emerge while traversing the diasporic writings, particularly by the Indians. Whether the earliest Indian expatriates like Dean Mahomed or the recent like Meera Syal, Rohinton Mistry, Bharati Mukherjee, Salman Rushdie, Abraham Verghese, Amitav Ghosh, Anita Desai, V. S. Naipaul, Jhumpa Lahiri, Sunetra Gupta and many more, the diasporic obsession is at the centre of their writings.

Realization of the causes of the diasporic obsessions stipulates a lot of deliberation on various concepts[1] allied to diaspora and the latter's relation to obsessions. Diaspora has been much discussed and written, almost every facet of it being explored, there remains least to query on its validity in the literary arena. In fact, no contemporary postcolonial literature can shy away from its ubiquity. However, before traversing ahead, it is worthwhile to ponder on some of the quintessential truth of diaspora.

'Diaspora', as a term, carried a very specific import in the past. But in contemporary settings, it has inherited expanded meanings for being able to evoke past

narratives in new contexts. It is both iconic and deconstructive. Originally, it was referred to either the dispersion of Jews from their original homeland over 2000 years ago or (less commonly) perhaps to the centuries-old dispersion of Armenians from their original and then fragmented homeland. The Jewish Diaspora, in particular, was considered the primary paradigm of diaspora experience.

The word 'diaspora' originates from ancient Greek verb *diaspeiro* (*dia* means 'across' and *speiro* means to 'sow' or 'scatter') which refers to a scattering or sowing of seeds over a wide area. For the ancient Greeks, according to Robin Cohen, the term was used to describe the colonization of Asia Minor and the Mediterranean in the Archaic period 800–600 BCE, referring not to those dispersed by colonization and imperial conquest but to the vanguards of empire who migrated in order to assimilate the conquered territory to the culture and practice of the conquering power (Cohen 2). In Western culture, however, the notion of diaspora has its earliest origins in religious discourse, with the evocation of catastrophic exile in the *Old Testament*: "If you do not observe and fulfill all the law … the Lord will scatter you among all peoples from one end of the earth to the other … Among these nations you will find no peace …" (Cohen 1).

The word 'diaspora' first occurs in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint. Yet the Greek usage of 'diaspora' was not a translation of the Hebrew word *gola* or *galut*, which, in modern Hebrew, refers to the Jewish Diaspora, or the place of Jews' existence outside Israel. The Hebrew word for 'exile' (*gola, galut*) was instead translated as 'captivity', and 'diaspora' referred to the divine punishment of dispersal.

Thus, the uses and meaning of ‘diaspora’ in the Septuagint are to be understood not in a historical sense, but as the divine punishment that would be inflicted on those who did not abide by God’s commandments – that is, to be dispersed throughout the world. This imparts ‘diaspora’ theological import and deprives it from being historical. However, it seems to acquire historical import after the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE, when the Jewish priests interpreted their exile from the Holy Land as the fulfillment of the divine punishment mentioned in Deuteronomy. It was at this point that ‘diaspora’ became synonymous with ‘exile’ or ‘galut’, describing the state and the space of dispersal as well as the population of the dispersed, and it is this latter meaning that has come to dominate the usage of the term in the contemporary settings.

It is imperative to take cognizance of the various transformations of ‘diaspora’ from its original meaning. Before the mid-twentieth century, ‘diaspora’ was originally a common (indefinite) noun that was later singularized as a religious proper noun, particularly limited to Jews, Catholics, and, later, Protestants. However, after World War II, another major transformation occurred when the term entered in the social sciences, acquiring the vocabulary of politics and media, in a wider, secular way, shifting from much specific use to that of general one. Throughout its history, the word ‘diaspora’ has got diverse meanings. However, they do not replace one another, rather coexist simultaneously. According to Braziel and Mannur the meanings and theorizations of diaspora should not be divorced from historical and cultural specificity; contemporary diasporic movement is not so much a “postmodern turn from history” but “a nomadic

turn in which the very parameters of specific historical moments are embodied and – as diaspora itself suggests – are scattered and regrouped into new points of becoming" (3).

The large scale migration throughout the world since the mid-twentieth century has influenced the use of the term 'diaspora'. In particular, movements of mass migration due to crises of war and natural disasters, political asylum seekers and the re-configuration of nation-states in the post-Cold War era, together with the revolution in global communications, have contributed to new patterns of migration that include formations of diaspora communities. Edward Said claims that the state of exile has become a "potent, even enriching motif of modern culture" (173). It is the scale of this movement that is distinctive to our times, as Said observes:

> Our age – with its modern warfare, imperialism, and the quasi-theological ambitions of totalitarian rulers – is indeed the age of the refugee, the displaced person, mass immigration. (174)

According to Said refugees are a political creation of the twentieth century, implying large numbers of people displaced from their homes and needing international attention, while the word "exile" implies the solitary and spiritual state of the outsider. Living as an exile is living with difference. It is not a rejection or loss of the natal 'home', but a depth of connection to it, that justifies the exile's identity. Said opines, "What is true of all exile is not that home and love of home are lost, but that loss is inherent in the very existence of both" (185).

Khachig Tölölyan, editor of the journal *Diaspora*, has written that dispersed communities that were once called exile groups, overseas communities, ethnic and racial

minorities, etc., have since the late 1960s been re-named as diasporas. He argues that various theorizations and discourses around the notion of diaspora have contributed to the transformation, or renaming, of communities as diasporas: the growth in diaspora formations is thus not only due to migration or to the re-configuring of ethnicity, transnationalism and globalization, but to

> rapid and major changes in discourse that have both responded to and reciprocally shaped the impulse to re-name various forms of dispersion and to attribute new, 'diasporic' meanings and values to them. (Tölölyan 3)

Moreover, fluid adaptations and expansions of 'diaspora' can be found within interdisciplinary and populist uses of the word, for example, the gay diaspora, the white diaspora, the liberal diaspora, the terrorist diaspora. This is not limited to descriptions of race or culture or a community group. Rogers Brubaker refers to the wide and varied, academic and populist, use of the word as a dispersion of the actual meaning of the term, a "diaspora" diaspora; "as the term has proliferated, its meaning has been stretched to accommodate the various intellectual, cultural and political agendas in the service of which it has been enlisted"(1). For Brubaker, the term is in danger of becoming ineffective, losing its power of discrimination, when it applies to any population that is described as dispersed: "The universalisation of diaspora, paradoxically, means the disappearance of diaspora" (3). Brubaker himself advocates an expansion of the category of diaspora by suggesting it be regarded not as an ethnically bounded entity, "an ethnodemographic or ethnocultural fact," but in terms of "diasporic stances, projects, claims, idioms, practices, and so on" (13).

In academics, the term ‘diaspora’ is topical. Before the 1980s, we find very few quotations of this concept for the fact that before the 1960s, immigrant groups were generally expected to shed their ethnic identity and assimilate to local norms. And those groups which were thought unable to do so were not admitted, such as, Chinese to Canada, Non- Whites to Australia, etc. However, during the 1970s, when assimilation theory[2] and other theories based on the same meaning of integration models demonstrated their fallibility, the notion of diaspora gained ground progressively to describe the migrants groups, particularly those groups which maintain their ethnic tradition with strong feeling of collectiveness. This enabled the term ‘diaspora’ to widen into a definable concept during the 1980s. However, very soon, some authors like Alain Medam and James Clifford articulated their disinterest in the concept because in academic researches the concept was applied mostly to describe phenomena characterized by dispersion of a population originated from one nation-state in several host countries. Hence, there originated academic clamour for further theorization of the concept.

The diaspora debate over the past decade has experienced two extreme positions: the first is that it refers to the specific migration of Jews, which occurred under very unique historical circumstances; while the other is that it is applied to all cases of migration and settlement beyond the borders of native nation-states, irrespective of the migration circumstances. A diaspora refers to a particular kind of migration. Most scholars would agree that at least a few of the following characteristics are crucial to describe a diaspora:

(1) Dispersal from an original homeland to two or more countries. The causes for the dispersal may vary from traumatic experiences, as was the case with the Jews, or the African slaves, to the search for work, or the pursuit of a trade or other ambitions.

(2) There must be a collective – often idealized – memory/myth of the homeland. In some cases, there is a commitment to creating and/or maintaining this homeland, as is the case with some Sikhs and their efforts to create an independent Khalisthan, or the Jews and their relation to Israel.

(3) A myth of returning to one's homeland (be it now or in the future, temporary or permanent). This myth is grounded in a strong ethnic consciousness of migrants abroad, which may have prevented them from assimilating in the local society.

(4) There is a sense of empathy and solidarity with similar groups elsewhere in the world and/or with events and groups in the homeland. Diaspora, then, is a contemporary term used to describe practically any population considered 'deterritorialised' or 'transnational', whose cultural origins are said to have arisen in a nation other than the one in which they currently reside, and whose social, economic, and political networks cross nation-state borders and, indeed, span the entire globe. According to Vertovec, for instance, intellectuals and activists from within these populations increasingly use this term, emphasising that the 'Diasporic language' appears to be replacing or at least supplementing, minority discourse.

As the diaspora concept has matured, alternative definitions, different approaches, and new suggestions for more research are emerging. Steven Vertovec (1999) proposes

three meanings of Diaspora: as a social form; as a type of consciousness, and as a mode of cultural production. The diaspora as a 'social form' refers to the process of becoming scattered. It draws on the Jewish model, and it looks at how social ties were cemented, at the process of maintaining a collective identity, at the institutionalizing networks, and at the social and economic strategies as a transnational group. In addition, it focuses on their political orientations, their inability – or unwillingness – to be accepted by the 'host society'. Especially now, where communication and transportation are relatively easy and inexpensive, the diaspora as a social form may be characterised as a 'triangular relationship' between (a) the 'globally' dispersed, yet strongly transnational organised group (b) the territorial states where groups reside, and (c) the Indian State or imagined homeland.

The diaspora as a type of consciousness emphasizes the variety of experiences, a state of mind, and a sense of identity. This is described as dual or paradoxical nature. This nature has various connotations. First, it refers to the experience of discrimination and exclusion, and at the same time, the positive identification with the highly-praised historical heritage of the Indian civilisation. Second, the awareness of multi-locality, the notion of belonging 'here and there' as well as sharing the same 'roots' and 'routes': the awareness of the ability to make a connection here and there, making the bridge between the local and the global. Third, double consciousness creates a 'triple consciousness', that is, the awareness of the double consciousness and being able to use it instrumentally. In addition to the identification with the host society, and the homeland, there is the identification with the locality, especially in the discourse of multiculturality. Indians in Southall, London include the awareness of being 'Southallian', emphasising their multi-

racial character, within the discourse of the multi-cultural character of their local environment.

The diaspora as a mode of cultural production emphasises the currents of cultural objects, images, and meanings back and forth, and the way these transcend, creolise, and change according to the wishes of the customers and artists. It refers to the production and reproduction of transnational social and cultural phenomena. Here, the position of youth in diaspora is highlighted. They are socialized in cross-currents of different cultural fields and form an interesting market for 'diasporic cultural goods'. Moreover, they are the ones who receive and transform these new ideas and developments. Furthermore, it is clear that modern media are used to reformulate and translate the cultural traditions of the Indian diaspora. The popularity of episodes from the *Ramayanan* or the *Mahabharata* among the migrants has led to new ideas regarding Indian culture. The Indian diaspora has also found its way into the virtual existence of the Internet, with its numerous discussion lists, find one another through school pictures sites and transnational marriage agents.

Diaspora is a loaded term that brings to mind various contested ideas and images. It can be a positive site for the affirmation of an identity, or, conversely, a negative site of fears of losing that identity. Significantly, it signals "an engagement with matrix of diversity: of cultures, languages, histories, people, place, times (Kuortti 3). In contemporary academic discourses, it captures various phenomena that are widespread in the many discourses dedicated to "current transnational globalization: borders,

migrations, "illegal" immigration, repatriation, exile, refuges, assimilation, multiculturalism, hybridity" (Kuortti 3).

The understanding of the definition of 'diaspora' will be explicit from the table[3] cited below which contains classifications of diaspora population:

Safran, 1991	Safran, 1991	Cohen, 1997	Vortovec, 1999	Butler, 2001
1. dispersal to two or more locations. 2. collective mythology of homeland 3. alienation from host land 4. idealization of return to homeland 5. ongoing relationship with homeland	Triadic relationship (Social Spheres) 1 .the dispersed group who have some form of collective identity or process of identification. 2. the contexts and nation-states in which these groups reside 3. the nation-states to which an affiliation is maintained through a series of social economic, and cultural ties	Diaspora as a mode of categorization 1. dispersal and scattering 2.collective trauma 3. cultural flowering 4. a troubled relationship with majority 5. a sense of community transcending national frontiers 6. promoting return movement Different forms of diaspora: 1. victim 2. labour 3. trade 4. culture	Three meanings of diaspora: 1. diaspora as social form 2. diaspora as a type of consciousness 3. diaspora as a mode of cultural production	1. after dispersal a minimum of two destinations 2. there must be some relationship to an actual or imagined home land 3. self-awareness of group identity 4. existence over at least two generations

The table presents views of different writers on diaspora, along with the essential properties that go into the making of diaspora. The opinions of four writers; Safran, Cohen, Vortevec and Butler present the very essence of diaspora in its different manifestations. In fact, every facet and condition of diaspora has been encapsulated in the table cited above.

Thus, at present, the scope of diaspora has widened despite its obvious raising of questions regarding the definitions of 'home' and 'nation'. Schizophrenia and/or nostalgia and contra-acculturation motifs are often the preoccupations of Diasporic writers as they seek to locate themselves in new cultures. It becomes imperative to question the nature of their relationship with the country of their origin and to examine the different strategies they adopt in order to negotiate the cultural space of the countries of their adoption. This thesis addresses these and many more questions perceptively and critically with reference to the works of the most promising contemporary writer Jhumpa Lahiri (an Indian in America) and the colonial writer Margaret Wilson (an American in India).

I have taken up the comparison of colonial and postcolonial writers to evince the historicity of diaspora, particularly to strike juxtaposition between the "colonial diaspora" and "post/neocolonial diaspora"[4]. Colonialism in India contributed a lot in the creation of Indian diaspora. The forced migration of Indians in form of indenture labour in the 19th century and the willing choice of educated Englishmen and missionaries to serve in India at the same time created two way traffic of diaspora. Significantly, be it forced or chosen, the motive was the betterment of life. However, the change of natural, social and cultural environment brought adverse impact which eventually influenced the psyche and attitude

of people living in diaspora. It is such impact and influence which is the major thrust of the undertaken research.

Moreover, I have taken up women writers for the study because the diasporic writing as an experience of displacement owes a lot to the contribution of women; in fact, displacement seems to be synonymous to them as they have to shift their location as per the demand of their relation – they have different place to live as a daughter, as a wife, and sometime as a mother. For this, women writing in diaspora problematize exile by contrasting the physical exile they have always suffered. This brings a touch of trauma while traversing through the works produced by the psyche of women living in diaspora and writing in diaspora.

Jhumpa Lahiri was born in London to Bengali parents in 1967. As a child, Lahiri moved with her parents to Rhode Island where she spent her adolescence. Lahiri went on to attend Barnard College, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in English and later attending Boston University. It was here Lahiri attained Master's Degrees in English, Creative Writing, and Comparative Studies in Literature and the Arts as well as a Ph. D in Renaissance Studies. Lahiri also worked for a short time teaching creative writing at Boston University and the Rhode Island School of Design. As a writer she is renowned for her *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), *The Namesake* (2003) and *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008). Jhumpa Lahiri received the Pulitzer Prize in 2000 for *Interpreter of Maladies.* She has also won PEN/Hemingway Award, O. Henry Prize and Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award (The world's largest prize for short story collection) for her *Unaccustomed Earth* in 2008. In January of 2001, she married the deputy editor of

Time Latin America, Alberto Vourvoulias-Bush, and at present residing in Brooklyn, New York with her husband and two children.

Lahiri has travelled extensively to India and has experienced the effects of colonialism as well as the issues of the diaspora. She feels strong ties to her parents' homeland as well as the United States and England. Growing up with ties to all three countries created in Lahiri a sense of homelessness and an inability to feel accepted. Lahiri explains this as an inheritance of her parents' ties to India:

> It's hard to have parents who consider another place "home"-even after living abroad for 30 years, India is home for them. We were always looking back so I never felt fully at home here. There's nobody in this whole country that we're related to. India was different - our extended family offered real connections. I didn't grow up there, I wasn't a part of things. We visited often but we didn't have a home. We were clutching at a world that was never fully with us. (Interviewed by Vibhuti Patel in *Newsweek International*, 20-09-99: 1)

Moreover, at a press conference in Calcutta in January of 2001, Lahiri described this absence of belonging: “No country is my motherland. I always find myself in exile in whichever country I travel to, that's why I was tempted to write something about those living their lives in exile” (2). This idea of exile runs consistently throughout Lahiri's Pulitzer Prize winning book *Interpreter of Maladies*, and other books *The Namesake*, and *Unaccustomed Earth*.

Margaret Wilson was born on 16th January 1882 in Traer, Iowa. She grew up on a farm and attended the University of Chicago where she received degrees in 1903 and 1904. She, then, became a missionary in the service of the United Presbyterian Church of North America. When she was assigned to the Panjab region of India in 1904, she

worked at a girl's school and at a hospital. She returned to the U. S. in 1910 because of illness and resigned from her position in 1916. She spent the year 1912 – 13 at the divinity school of the University of Chicago. Thereafter she taught for five years at West Pullman High School. Throughout these years she cared for her invalid father and published her short stories in a variety of magazines like *Atlantic Monthly* and *Asia*.

In 1923, Wilson married George Doughlas Turner, a Scotsman whom she had met in India nineteen years earlier. After her marriage, she shifted to England and settled there for good, and died on 6th October 1973. Her important works are *The Able McLaughlins* (1923), *The Kenworthys* (1925), *The Painted Room* (1926), sequel to *The Kenworthys*, *Daughters of India* (1928), *Trousers of Taffeta* (1929), *The Valiant Wife* (1933), *Law and the McLaughlins* (1937), and the collection of short stories entitled *The Tales of a Polygamous City*. Margaret Wilson, like Jhumpa Lahiri, also received Pulitzer Prize for her first work in 1924.

No doubt, Margaret Wilson has a sizeable contribution to the English literature, but in the undertaken research only her *Daughters of India* and the collection of short stories entitled *Tales of a Polygamous City* have been extensively treated for they bring her to the coterie of writers and persons who write away from their home. Significantly, they will facilitate a comparative study of the two undertaken writers as they are based on India.

Tales of a Polygamous City is consisted of eight stories; six were published in *Atlantic Monthly* under the pseudonym An Elderly Spinster between 1917 and 1921, and two were published under her real name in *Asia* in 1921. The eight stories are "Taffeta

Trousers", "A Woman of Recourse", "God's Little Joke", "The Story of Sapphire", "A Mother", "Waste: The Story of a Sweet Little Girl", "Speaking of Careers, and "The Gift of God". "Taffeta Trousers" is about the life of an American woman who is in India for missionary work. Despite living all her life in India, and being accustomed to Indian surrounding, it is interesting to note that she longs for her home in America. "A Woman of Recourse" presents a picture of the colonial Indian woman. Their concerns are well conveyed through the Pardah party hosted by the narrator. "God's Little Joke" is a poignant narration of the suffering of Furkhanda who voluntarily opts for asceticism for the expiation of her sin caused by the suicide of her brother. "Waste: The Story of a Sweet Little Girl is a study of woman sexuality presented through the character of a sweet little girl Ayshan, married to an elderly married man; she is seen sexually engaged with her step-son-in-law without fear and regret. "A Mother" is again a pathetic narration of the woman subalternity which presents a woeful life of Aziz, a fifteen years widow. Her mother's comment sums up the essence of the story, "Our joy was great – until my daughter was born" (229). "The Story of Sapphire" is also a touching story of a young woman Sapphir, who sacrifices her conjugal life for the bliss of her little sister Flower. All the stories deal with female protagonists and their experiences are presented through an American woman eye, however, the narrator also makes comparison between America and India time and again.

Daughters of India is republished by OUP India in a series of 'forgotten novels' edited by Australian academic Ralph Crane. It is set in India and draws on her own experiences as a missionary in Punjab between 1904 and 1910 and explores the relationship between the two main American characters, Davida Baillie, a missionary

teacher (and thinly-veiled portrait of Wilson herself), and John Ramsey, her superior in the mission in Aiyanianwala, their work with the Christian and Moslem communities from the Flowery Basti, and the breaking up of a kidnapping ring in the nearby village of Pir Khanwala. The novel is of particular interest to the postcolonial reader because it offers a broader perspective on the sociology of India in the early twentieth century than can be found in most Anglo-Indian (Raj) missionary novels of the time. Moreover, as an American and a missionary, Wilson was located on the margins of the Anglo-Indian society, a position which is reflected in the fresh perspective she offers on the imperial experience.

Wilson creates her narrative around a female character which encompasses in its sweep, as it unfurls, the essence of human existence. The deep sense of humanity and human values pervades through Wilson's *Daughters of India* which expresses the miserable plight of Indian underprivileged during the British Imperialism. On this historical backdrop, Wilson, through an omniscient narrator, presents an American missionary, Davida Baillie, and the novel manifests her experience of human suffering. Davida's inner urge to do some meaningful for the health, hygiene, and education of the downtrodden minorities of Aiyanianwala reveals the very humanistic concerns of the protagonist and the writer as well.

Wilson' willful decision to work as missionary (though she left later on) is the testimony of her life and art being influenced by humanism. Significantly, she modeled Davida after herself whereby adding an autobiographical touch to the novel. In this sense it can be said that the feelings, trauma, anxiety and also pleasure of serving other

experienced by Davida is virtually that of Wilson's. Significantly, the novel casts light on the most significant human value, i.e. *sacrifice* motivated by deep love. It is deep love for humanity that has inspired Davida to go for serving humanity through missionary work. However, while working in India, time and again, her heart pangs for Ferguson, her boyfriend who died long ago. Her love for him was so true and deep that she decided to remain celibate, though now she feels for John Ramsey, her senior missionary co-worker. However, their feeling for one another is devoid of any sexual undertone, it is purely spiritual and humanistic in concern and purpose.

As artists both Wilson and Lahiri create a linear narrative and deliberately avoid the use of figurative devices. The narrative appears to be straight, and frank, rather than intricate and metaphoric. The beginning of *Daughters of India* truthfully substantiates it,

> On a Saturday morning in December, two women far from the land of their nativity had sat down together for a Persian lesson. The unique instructor was sixty-five and Bengali, darker than most women of Brahmin descent, and though years have softened her face, the lordliness of her priestly ancestors still shone forth from it. She taught Sanskrit or Panjabi, as the occasion arose, Gurmukhi or English, Hindi, or Hindustani, and now and then she gave helping hand to someone bemired in Arabic. (3)

The narrative of Jhumpa Lahiri, like Wilson, also concentrates on the human values couched through simple and straightforward narration. But her concern is beyond time and space. Her first work *Interpreter of Maladies* is a collection of "stories of Boston, Bengal and Beyond" which suggests her universal concern. In fact, all her works are universal in selection of characters, events and also space. Her characters are globe-trotter, her events are the constituents of daily life, and her space is the entire Earth.

Jhumpa Lahiri is a "new consciousness (in Indian writings) articulating and emphasizing the impermanence of values, inherent emotions, and philosophical echoes" (Kamara 123), and it is in this emphasis lies the humanism of Lahiri. All the stories in *Interpreter of Maladies* reflect on some human values. "A Temporary Matter" records the process of restoration of faith in conjugal life of Sukumar and Shobha after a long emotional chasm caused by circumstances. "When Mr. Pirzada came to Dine" epitomizes universal brotherhood along with secular rationality and social solidarity. The sense of universal social solidarity also runs through "An Interpreter of Maladies" in which Mrs. Das, an Indian American, seeks solace and remedy from Mr. Kapasi, an Indian, for her infidelity. "A Real Durwan" casts light on the existential crisis of an aged woman, Boori Ma who voluntarily serves as a watchman in a multi-storied building in Calcutta for the sake of survival. But only compassion for her comes from Mr. and Mrs. Dalal who protect her from the selfish design of the inmates of the building. "Sexy" emphasizes that only the awareness of righteousness can kill the animal and irrational within man. Miranda realizes this and breaks her affair with Dev, a married Indian. "Mrs. Sen's" is an exposition of a typical Indian woman's effort to acclimatize with the unfamiliar American surroundings. Human beings are faced with the necessity of adjusting with the unknown, and the difficulties associated with it are well couched in "Mrs. Sen's". "The blessed House" reveals that it is the duty of every man to detect his limitation and atone for the deficiency of human life and surroundings. The value of togetherness is well explored in Twinkle-Sanjeev relation, which insists on interpersonal dependence as key to marital concord. "The Treatment of Bibi Haldar" presents the value of interpersonal relations within society when it fails within family. The central character Bibi Haldar is

marooned by her family for her abnormality, but the society adheres with her and this provides "sublimation of a wretched soul of 'a convulsing girl' to the state of blessedness" (Kamara 125). And the last story "The Third and Final Continent" presents, through a first person narrative, a bewildering journey of mankind. A man from India (Asia) pursues his studies in England (Europe), and his job carries him to America (USA). The narrator and his wife, Mala, succeed in making a dignified life adjusting and adopting the cultures of three continents while deciding to adhere to their own culture. Nevertheless, despite his success, the narrator bewilders at the end of the story regarding his journey of life,

> … there are times I am bewildered I am bewildered by each mile I have traveled, each meal I have eaten, each person I have known, each room in which I have slept. As ordinary as it all appears, there are times when it is beyond my imagination. (198)

Her first novel *The Namesake* is also about the journey of life in which the central character Ashoke with his newly wedded wife Ashima, starts his life at MIT, and the novel unfurls with Ashima's concern and anxiety of bearing children away from home, without the supporting hand of elders, their children's struggle to cope with the American norms, and also the parents' anxiety to make their children keep their own culture. However, the humanistic aspect of the novel lies in its association with Nikolai Gogol's story "The Overcoat" which was instrumental in saving Ashoke's life in a train accident. Ashoke's naming of his son as Gogol is a constant reminder of his suffering which is suggested when he tries to make Gogol understand the significance of reading the story "The Overcoat": "We all came out of Gogol's overcoat" (78). It implies that human

existence and human sufferings are complementary to one another and the realization and reflection of it in the novel makes it and the novelist a true humanist.

Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth* is a collection of eight stories grouped in two sections. Each of the five stories in the book's first section is self-contained. In "Hell-Heaven," the assimilated Bengali-American narrator considers how little thought she once gave to her mother's sacrifices as she reconstructs the tormenting, unrequited passion her young mother had for a graduate student during the narrator's childhood. In "Only Goodness," an older sister learns a sharp lesson about the limits of her responsibility to a self-destructive younger brother. "A Choice of Accommodations" shows a shift in power dynamics between a Bengali-American husband and his workaholic Anglo wife during a weekend away from their kids — at the wedding of the husband's prep-school crush. And the American graduate student at the center of "Nobody's Business" pines for his Bengali-American roommate, a graduate-school dropout who entertains no romantic feelings for him, spurns the polite advances of "prospective grooms" from the global Bengali singles circuit and considers herself engaged to a selfish, foul-tempered Egyptian historian.

Lahiri's final three stories, grouped together as "Hema and Kaushik," explore the overlapping histories of the title characters, a girl and boy from two Bengali immigrant families, set during significant moments of their lives. "Once in a Lifetime" begins in 1974, the year Kaushik Choudhuri and his parents leave Cambridge and return to India. Seven years later, when the Choudhuris return to Massachusetts, Hema's parents are perplexed to find that Bombay had made them more American than Cambridge had. The

next story, "Year's End," visits Kaushik during his senior year at Swarthmore as he wrestles with the news of his father's remarriage and meets his father's new wife and stepdaughters. The final story, "Going Ashore," begins with Hema, now a Latin professor at Wellesley, spending a few months in Rome before entering into an arranged marriage with a parent-approved Hindu Punjabi man named Navin. Hema likes Navin's traditionalism and respect: "It touched her to be treated, at 37, like a teenaged girl" (297). The couple plan to settle in Massachusetts. But in Rome, Hema runs across Kaushik, now a world-roving war photographer. As a photographer, his origins are irrelevant, but quite relevant to Hema. Hema's amorous sojourn with Kaushik in Rome despite her engagement with Navin is her effort to have the permanent company of Kaushik. But Kaushik's lack of commitment puts Hema in dilemma as to whom to choose; the romantic (Kaushik) who has no home outside of memory or the realist (Navin) who wants to make a home where his wife chooses to live. Such dilemma of choice is true to human existence. Hema chooses Navin and treasures the memory of Kaushik in the corner of her heart. Kaushik willfully chooses to be wanderer and is finally washed away by Tsunami in Khao Lake, Thailand.

Both Lahiri and Wilson present different facets of human existence, particularly the human effort to continue with the journey of making life meaningful even in adverse circumstances, and this makes them true humanists. The characters like Mrs. Sen, Ashima, Ruma, and Hema of Lahiri, and Davida, John Ramsey of Wilson are all engaged in making human life meaningful both at personal and social levels. And in their effort a sense of humanity emerges which strengthens the effort of creating a world of their own in an alien land.

Notes:

1. Concepts of home, nationality, culture, multiculturalism, hybridist, assimilation, acculturation, theorization, subalternity etc. are closely linked with the concept of diaspora.

2. Assimilation theories are derived from assumptions supported by empirical studies to explain the varied processes and paths that immigrants have undertaken to incorporate into the mainstream of the destination country. Several assimilation theories have evolved since the mid-nineteenth century as immigration to the United States gained scale. Anglo-conformity dominated much of the second half of the nineteenth century, when the majority of the immigrant stock were from northwestern Europe. The advent of rapid industrialization of the labor force around the turn of the twentieth century produced fertile ground for the emergence of the process theory and melting pot theory when sources of immigrants expanded to all over Europe and beyond. Ensuing theories of segmented labor market and multiculturalism took shape in the latter half of the twentieth century. As leading theoretical perspectives in contemporary times and in contention with earlier assimilation theories, they dominate the study of immigrants and influence social policies that address immigrant issues. Recognizing immigrants' proactive role, the new theories highlight the different incorporation strategies immigrants have employed in response to the mainstream political and socioeconomic conditions while taking comfort in their transplanted ancestral cultural traditions.

3. The table is borrowed from "Geographies of Diaspora: A Review" by Michael Rios and Naomi Adiv (2010; 3) adopted from Kalra, Kaur, and Hutnyk, 2005.

4. By colonial diaspora I mean those groups of people who spent their life away from home to fulfill the broader scheme of colonialism. Colonial diaspora constitutes of both the colonizer and the colonized; the colonizer had to move from colonies to colonies whereas the colonized were taken from colonies to colonies by the colonizer to fulfill the demand of cheap labour or bondage labour. This journey from colonies to colonies created similar kind of anguish for both the colonizer and the colonized. In fact, both come under the rubric of colonial diaspora for the entire colonial discourse is incomplete without the presence of the both. I also place the missionaries during the colonial phase under the colonial diaspora for they underwent the similar kind of experiences like the other two. By the post/neocolonial diaspora I refer to the immigration of people on the wake of globalization or market economy.

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CHAPTER - II

DYNAMICS OF DIASPORIC REALITIES

We
the migratory birds
are here this season
thinking
we'll fly back to our home
for sure.
Does anyone know
which invisible cage imprisons us?
And the flight begins to die slowly
in our wings.

Surjeet Kalsey[1], "Migratory Birds" (1982)
(www.surjeetkalsey.wordpress.com)

Surjit Kalsey's "Migratory Birds" faithfully records the uncertainty inherent in diasporic existence and realities. The immigrants arrive in their new found land with high aspirations. Bidding farewell to their friends and family, they travel far distances and finally arrive at their destination – the new land of milk and honey. This new land, for the immigrants, holds a higher standard of living, plenty of work and many opportunities. Compared to the standard of living in their homeland, life in this new capitalist haven seems to be fantastic. Ghosh's description of England to Ashoke in the train journey in *The Namesake* bears testimony to it:

> Ghosh spoke reverently of England. The sparkling, empty streets, the polished black cars, the rows of gleaming white horses, he said, were like a dream. Trains departed and arrived according to schedule … (15)

However, everything does not occur as per the aspirations of immigrants. Even under the best circumstances, immigrating to a new country can be a harrowing experience. Life in diaspora is often more difficult than previously anticipated. Despite much preparedness, immigrants can, inevitably, encounter things that can catch them by surprise. Bewilderment, confusion and eventually, disappointment can set in when reality meets fantasy— when the envisioned dream of life in the "promised land" and the day-to-day reality of life in the new host country do not match. This diasporic reality finds ample expression in the stories: “Mrs. Sen’s” in which Mrs. Sen tries wholeheartedly to adjust with the American life style while babysitting Eliot, “The Blessed House” in which Sanjeev and Twinkle make a painful effort to accommodate in a Christianity haunted house, though Twinkle is inquisitively exciting about the christian flovour of the house, and “The Third and Final Continent” in which a young Bengali bachelor strives to seek accommodation while working at MIT.

Diasporic realities are problematic realities[2] thanks to their associations with diverse psycho-social phenomena. In fact, any discourse on the life of migrants must be viewed socially and psychologically, and the diaspora is not exception to it. Here, I would like to dwell upon certain issues that contribute in the making of diasporic realities.

Sense of Loss:

It is natural to have tremendous feelings of loss after traveling hundreds of miles and separating from one's family, home and culture. Even if the migrant is excited about emigrating and even if the situation at home was unfavourable, there is still an

accompanying sense of loss felt by the migrant— and loss always requires adequate mourning. No doubt, letting go of the past and moving into the future can be an exciting adventure, but underneath the "adrenaline high" lies a great deal of sadness and physiological stress. It is said that change always produces stress in one's life even when the changes occurring are positive ones. Therefore, the emigration experience feels particularly overwhelming because there is change and concomitant stress in nearly every aspect of one's life— geographic, economic, social and cultural. Feelings may run the gamut of both high and low extremes, all in the course of a single day. The migrants may feel joy at their new found opportunities but their joy is continually punctured by loneliness for loved ones back home. Sometimes they also feel a sense of guilt that they are in a better place than those left behind.

Isolation:

Isolation is an essential part of Diasporas' life. A condition universal to any immigrant experience, it may be seen as one of the defining factors of living in exile. Isolation is a two-fold problem, and can be felt as isolation from other immigrants, and/or isolation from the native population in the host country. The degree of isolation migrants experience in Diaspora depends upon the immigrant status— those awaiting verdicts on asylum cases, those with temporary status and those who have no legal documentation are likely to feel a greater degree of isolation from the rest of the population than those who possess permanent legal status. Legal and permanent status affords one a sense of belonging and makes it easier to begin the process of laying down physical and psychological roots to the host country. For those without legal documentation, isolation

will exist indefinitely and will be one of the foremost elements of their life in Diaspora, affecting all of their decisions and actions as long as they reside in the host country.

Marginalization:

While isolation is an experience usually felt by the individual migrant, marginalization is felt by the entire sub-population of migrants. As a group, foreigners are often marginalized— pushed to the fringes of society, where they remain, unaccepted by the native majority. Marginalization can also turn into discrimination and structuralized racism, whereby the migrant group is prevented from assimilating into, or advancing within, the host country. Both individual isolation and group marginalization can produce acute feelings of loneliness, which in turn enter into a cycle of grief and loss. Feelings of grief can trigger feelings of loneliness, which then lead to a sense of isolation. Moreover, the cycle is self-perpetuating and any element within it can trigger the other two elements.

Culture shock:

Culture shock refers to the feelings of alienation and estrangement that accompany the process of learning to adapt to a new host culture. Even if one's destination country speaks the same language that the immigrant is accustomed to, people in the new country will speak that language using different accents, dialects, euphemism and idioms. They will use unique body language or gestures and will behave in ways that the migrant is not accustomed to. Different cultures operate using different underlying normative assumptions. As a result, trying to adapt to a new culture one can feel as if one

is trying to learn the rules of an invisible system with no accompanying guidebook or manual— a frustrating and often bewildering experience.

Home:

At the centre of every diasporic feeling lies the notion of 'home'. Home: its conception, its loss, its re-possession and longing for its restoration etc., is the axis on which the entire discourse of diaspora revolves. It "figures prominently in the psychic imaginary of diasporas" (Mishra 70). Home is a very complex and multivalent concept. What is home for one may be homelessness for another. For most people, migrant or local, home is where they are themselves, where they are at home and where their heart is and not where only their feet are. Home is not just a building, a geographical location, a region, a religion, a nation, a culture, or spiritual or imaginative refuge. It may be none of these, one of these, some of these, or all of these. It has Derridean indeterminateness[3], numerous interpenetrating categories, various involvements, overlaps and slippages. It is home that determines one's identity, defines and redefines one's belonging and endeavours to answer the question that Sura P. Rath has to struggle with it in his "home(s) Abroad: Diasporic Identities in Third Space",

> "Where then is my home?" I struggle daily in the town called Shreveport in the bible- belt south of the United States: I teach there; I live there; I write about people who live there. It is my present. But my mind has been shaped by four other places – Cuttak, Bhubaneswar, New Orleans, and College Station – each of which can lay its claim as the home base of my psyche, hence, my home. Above all, however, it is Balugaon, that clammy, dingy fish-smelling sultry town on Chilka lake where I sometimes return when I sing or dream of home. (20)

Homeland means being rooted in something or some place and a person may be rooted in numerous things and several places. A person may live in a town/city/village but not feel at home if he is not rooted in caste, creed, ideology, politics or physical features of the place. One may or may not be aware of homeland while living in it. According to Peter van der Veer, "those who do not think of themselves as Indians before migration become Indians in diaspora" (7). Home may be a memory or memory of memory (for a Trinidadian Indian in England) or just a memory (for a Guyanese of Indian origin). It may exist only in imagination as Rushdie points out,

> But if we do look back, we must also do so in 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, India of the mind (10).

The notion of 'home' is much more complex. We cannot talk about one singular 'home' in diaspora; what mainly characterizes diaspora is the multiplicity of 'homes' and the 'multiple belongings', as the following quote indicates:

> The notion of diaspora can represent a multiple, plurilocal, constructed location of home, thus avoiding ideas of fixity, boundedness, and nostalgic exclusivity traditionally implied by the word home. (Walters, intro xvi)

The link between diasporas and countries of origin is usually marked with ambivalence and psychological anxieties; basically because the diasporic subject is torn-between two different 'homes'[4].

'Home' and 'abroad' are mingled in diaspora, 'home' can be 'abroad' and vice versa; they are not necessarily fixed geographical points. There is a tension between "where are you at?" and "where are you from?" Sometimes, to feel 'at home' while they are in the 'host country', diaspora people create their own space. Chinatown is an example of a Chinese minority in London; a very important place for the Chinese population which creates a familiar space and makes them feel 'home'. It is important in terms of creating a sense of belonging.

The diasporas are without/beyond borders and live a life of 'in-between' condition which results ultimately in their loss/quest of 'Identity'. They live in a land of nowhere resulting from their attempt to overcome cultural issues and negotiate diverse racial identities. The conflict between rootedness, continue a tie to their past, and uprootedness, living in the present, disrupts their lives. However, this is more acute in case of the first generation migrants. The second generation migrants, influenced by the notions of globalization and transnationalism, attempt to locate and stabilize their identities in the new territories through a process of acculturation. Thus, diaspora is closely linked with the concept of 'home', 'space', 'identity', 'migration', 'hybridity', 'transnationalism' and 'transculturalism'. All these concepts are found in diasporic writings depending on the nature of immigrants.

Diaspora and Jhumpa Lahiri:

Jhumpa Lahiri has depicted some of the problems engendered by the experience of migrancy and diaspora such as displacement, rootlessness, fragmentation, discrimination, marginalization, identity crisis, identity formation, acculturation,

contracculturation and also 'transnationality'. Her *Interpreter of Maladies* is an authentic example of displacement and rootlessness because most of the characters are first generation migrants. The diasporic experience of displacement, rootlessness, isolation, discrimination, and marginalization is well couched in the stories "Mrs. Sen's", "Sexy" and "The Real Durwan". Mrs. Sen who baby sits Eliot, an eleven year old American boy, at her own apartment is often questioned of her origin and background by his mother. The American mother scorns her mannerism and food that she serves her as a mark of Indian hospitality. This hurts her many a time and makes her restless, though she knows that her relatives in India "think I live the life of a queen …" (125). Similarly, Dixits in "Sexy" are mocked at by their American neighbours and their children are called "the Dixits dog shit" (95) by the American children. However, it is not only in America that the Indian migrants undergo such humiliating and discriminatory experiences, the diasporas experience such treatment in every dominant culture or in other nations. The predicament of Boori Ma in "The Real Durwan" substantiates it. She is a low caste Bangladeshi Bengali who is sent to Calcutta after partition. But she is left to the mercy of other. She earns her meager livelihood by doing small household works and sleeps under the stair of a big building. To seek a change from her routine, Boori Ma sometimes visits other houses in the afternoon. No doubt, she is welcome there and sometimes "cracked in (of tea) was passed to her direction" (76) but "knowing not to sit on the furniture, she crouched, instead, in doorways and hallways and observed gestures and manners in the same way a person tends to watch traffic in a foreign city" (76). Thus, she remains a foreigner, "the other" not knowing which country or community is hers. Her dilemma is that she can neither go back across the border which was once her home nor is she given

a space in this new country which is politically declared to be her for being Bengali. Thus, she belongs to no country, neither here nor there.

In the story "When Mr. Pirzada came to Dine", Mr. Pirzada is an East Pakistani national who is on a Government scholarship to study the deciduous trees of New Zealand. He deeply misses his wife and daughters, and while taking dinner with Lilia's parents he keeps his pocket watch "set to local time in Dacca, eleven hours ahead …on his folded paper napkin on the coffee table" (30). This shows that the first generation migrants face cultural dilemma and try hard to retain their cultural identity and practices in their faiths, values, costumes, food and behaviour. According to John McLeod these "beliefs, traditions, customs, behaviours and values" along with their "possessions and belongings" are carried by migrants with them when they arrive in new places (211). Mr. and Mrs. Sen, Mr. Pirzada, Dixits, Lilia's parents, endeavour to adhere to their cultural values and mannerism, and any conflict with it or their concept of "home" seems to disturb them.

However, among the second generation migrants we witness waning emotional ties with past or "home" as in case of Shukumar and Shoba in "A Temporary Matter" and Sanjeev and Twinkle in "This Blessed House". They are quite alienated from Indian culture and values; they stick to American life style. Moreover, their marital relations are also disturbed and seem to be crumbling. The cultural alienation of the second generation diasporas is well couched in the story "An Interpreter of Maladies" in which Mr. and Mrs. Das (American born Indians) are on journey to their home (parents' home). They are quite strangers to the Indian culture and mannerism, and they learn about India only

through “the paperback tour book” (44) or through Mr. Kapasi’s description of India to them while showing them the Konark Temple in Orissa. For being born and brought up in America, they face an unbridgeable cultural chasm in India which makes them displaced in their parents’ motherland. They do not feel at home in the surrounding of Konark Temple and want to go back soon. This reveals that Lahiri endeavours to present the shifting concept of ‘home’ and ‘displacement’ in the successive generations of people living in diaspora.

The Namesake explores the conflicts of both the first and second generation Indian immigrants covering a time period from the late 1960s to the early twenty-first century in the United States. The characters are middle class Bengalis, well versed in both Indian and British education. They bring with them enough cultural associations to recreate their “imagined political community,” with the first generation protagonists constantly recalling their birth country with longing and occasional visits to India (Anderson 6).

The story commences with Ashoke Ganguli, who, as a young Indian student ponders over to pursue his further education in the United States. His return to India from the United States for an Indian wife, Ashima, follows a second generation that turns into the hyphenated Indian Americans with a dual culture, or the ABCD—“American Born Confused Deshi” (118). Here “Deshi” means simply Indian and desh is India (118). Gogol is an exemplary ABCD who cannot answer the question, “where are you from?” (118). For him the notion of home is very complicated. He is baffled to answer whether he is from India or the United States. However, Gogol does not think of India as his

country or “desh”, he sees himself as purely American— unhyphenated Indian American. Though Gogol considers himself an American, he is brought up between two diametrically different cultures, similar to Bhabha’s “in-between space” (10) where people can, to a certain extent, move and negotiate within their worlds. He is both Indian and American. He belongs to Indian parents on a different geographical space than India and is acculturated as an Indian at home. But outside the home, he is an American. He thinks of India as a “foreign country far away from home, both physically and psychologically” (118). He struggles to reconcile his dual cultures. On the one hand, he is fascinated with the free and happy lifestyles of his American girlfriend, Maxine; on the other he feels a sense of obligation towards his parents. Like that of every immigrant child, Gogol’s real challenge is to secure an identity in the midst of differences.

Under the influence of American lifestyle, Gogol strives to distance himself from his parents and embrace an American identity. He spends “his nights with Maxine, sleeping under the same roof as her parents, a thing Ashima refuses to admit to her Bengali friends” (166). His identity is strongly identified with cultures that play a crucial role in the formation of modern immigrant identity which is “de-centered” (Hall 1999: 274). A culture is, as Vijay Prasad defines, “a living set of social relations,” rather than a “timeless trait” (112). It is not a fixed site of meaning, or simply “common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provides us, as one people" with stable unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning” (Hall 1994: 393). Prasad’s and Hall’s ideas on culture are important to understand the modern cultural identity of Lahiri’s characters. In fact, her characters attempt to form a multiplicity of identities in a process of cultural formation. Their cultural identity formation includes pieces of cultural

inheritance to incorporate into their lives as Americans, which is similar to Hall's idea of "being" and "becoming" of cultural identity (Hall 1989: 70).

However, Hall's idea of being and becoming is complicated by Lahiri's focus on the tension between past and present in *The Namesake*. For instance, Gogol dwells between the worlds of past and present. No doubt, he endeavours to escape from the past by denouncing his cultural roots and changing his name, he is somehow attached to his roots. He is uncomfortable with his name that has so many connections with his past. Moreover, he can not comprehend the significance of the name Gogol that his parents chose for him. His name also creates embarrassment for him as he is teased by his friends and his name is mispronounced by his teachers. As a result, when he turns eighteen, he goes into a Massachusetts courtroom and asks the judge to change his name, providing as his reason that he "hates the name Gogol" (79). Gogol changes his name for he believes that by switching his name to Nikhil he would get rid of his past. But his parents' continue to call him by his original name, and their adherence with the name Gogol symbolizes that a simple name change does not alter the fabric of a person. It is a symbol of something that he learns later through his father that his name Gogol is connected to his father's past life. Ashoke tells Gogol the story of the train mishap that he had encountered twenty-eight years ago, in October 1961 which "had nearly taken his life, and the book that had saved him, and about the year afterward, when he'd been unable to move" (123).

Through the story of his father and the train accident, Gogol learns that the significance of his name is so strongly associated with his father's unforgettable past that

he cannot escape so easily. Ashoke survived the accident because he was reading Gogol's "The Overcoat" when the accident occurred near two hundred and nine kilometers away from Calcutta "killing the passengers in their sleep" (17). Gogol realizes how his life has been interwoven between the past and present. However, although Gogol is living in the in-between space and struggling to balance the two different worlds, he still longs to escape from his cultural roots and venture into his U.S. girlfriend's life.

Gogol's inclination towards the life style of Maxine and her parents suggests that the immigrant children are fascinated to adopt the American lifestyle. Gogol's plunge into his girlfriend's life is an indication of a second generation immigrant child's realization that an identity far from their own cultural roots is a necessity to live happily in the multicultural United States. It is Gogol's ability to understand the difference between the lives of his parents and Maxine's that prompts him to desire Maxine's lifestyle. He is surprised to find the warm welcome from Maxine's parents. At the dinner table, he is impressed with their style which reveals his comparison of his parents with Maxine's:

> A bowl of small, round, roasted red potatoes is passed around, and afterward a salad. They eat appreciatively, commenting on the tenderness of the meat, the freshness of the beans. His own mother would never have served so few dishes to a guest. She would have kept her eyes trained on Maxine's plate, insisting she have seconds and then thirds. The table would have been lined with a row of serving bowls so that people could help themselves; but Lydia pays no attention to Gogol's plate, she makes no announcement indicating that there is more. (133)

Gogol experiences a sense of freedom and independence even in the dinner table at Maxine's house. Insisting someone empty the plate or requesting to eat more, which is a

common practice in Indian culture, is something that irritates Gogol. On the contrary, he finds no obligation to eat more at Maxine's house. Thus, though the passage is simply a description of a dinner table, Lahiri's use of delicate language reveals a sense of freedom at the American dinner table. It is this freedom and individualism that instigate Gogol to opt for American way of life.

Before meeting Maxine's parents, American table manners are not the part of his life, "this sort of talk at mealtimes, to the indulgent ritual of the lingering meal, and the pleasant aftermath of bottle and crumbs and empty glasses that clutter the table" (134). This meeting makes him love the food Maxine and her parents eat; "the polenta and risotto, the bouillabaisse and osso buco, the meat baked in parchment paper" (137). Not only Gogol's affection for Maxine suggests his adoption of interracial dating and love, but also the adoption of most of the American demeanour because for him "to know her and love her is to know and love all of these things" (137). In fact, Gogol's love for her is an outcome of his strong desire for everything she possesses— the individual lifestyle of Maxine who has "no sense of obligation," and "unlike his parents her parents pressure her to do nothing, and yet she lives faithfully, happily, at their side" (138). In other words, Gogol's cultural identity formation is highly affected by what Prasad calls "a set of social relations" within the society he lives in (112). Gogol's position emphasizes the necessity of the formation of a transnational identity which requires negotiation of the cultural borderlands between the United States and India.

According to Bhabha the in-between space of the cultural borderland is a place of transformation and change where fixed and essential identities are deconstructed. For this

reason, he asserts that "the borderline work of culture demands an encounter with "newness" that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation" (10). Bhabha argues that such borderline culture innovates the performance of present by renewing the past, "refiguring it as a contingent in-between space" (10). Looking from the perspective of Bhabha's notion of borderline culture, Lahiri's characters can be seen dwelling between different cultures and engaging in transcultural conversations. The interaction between her characters and the host groups slowly opens up the space for cultural transformation that characterizes the in-between as a third element, an amalgam of two cultural entities that create a third after the original two have been altered. One of the important techniques that Lahiri uses in the novel to liberate her characters from the narrowed confinement of national boundaries is her contrast between the initial and latter attitudes and behaviour of the characters. In the beginning Lahiri's characters are seen holding strictly to their cultural roots. But later they go through changes in their demeanour.

In *The Namesake*, the cultural transformation does not occur at once. It occurs in a process that makes the characters form their identities as hybrid and transnational. This process, for example, can be seen in Ashima by contrasting her character in different stages of her life in the United States. When she first comes to the United States, she feels completely lonely in the foreign land. She is shocked to find people who live detached from one another. When the time comes to give birth to her first child, she is "terrified to raise a child in a country where she is related to no one, where she knows so little, where life seems so tentative and spare" (6). She remembers her home country where most of the relatives and elders gather for blessings when a baby is born. In contrast, she finds no

one surrounding her and her child in the United States except "Nandis and Dr. Gupta, who are only the substitutes for the people who really ought to be surrounding them" (24). This is a common experience of immigrants unaccustomed to new cultures of the new land. Ashima does not have any other choice but to study her son and pity him for "she has never known of a person entering the world so alone, so deprived" (25).

In order to cope up with her loneliness, at least temporarily, Ashima practices Indian cultural values at her new home in Boston. She preserves the Indian food recipes, the Indian dress, the sari which is a key example of the maintenance of cultural identity that Indians are so proud of. She clings to her six-meter dress until the end, challenging even the coldest temperature of Massachusetts. The bindi, that usually adorns the forehead of an Indian married woman, is another cultural possession that Ashima adheres to daily. She cooks Indian foods "combining Rice Crispies and Planters peanuts and chopped red onion in a bowl; she adds salt, lemon juice, thin slices of green chili pepper, wishing there were mustard oil to pour into the mix" (1). She prefers to read "a tattered copy of *Desh* magazine" printed in her mother tongue (7). She does not even say her husband's name, a practice in South Asia, particularly in Nepal and India. Usually husbands are called with the name of the first child plus "father"—for example, Gogol's father. Ashima does not call her husband Gogol's father, but never utters his first name:

> Like a kiss or caress in a Hindi movie, a husband's name is something intimate and therefore unspoken, cleverly patched over. And so, instead of saying Ashoke's name, she utters the interrogative that has come to replace it, which translates roughly as "Are you listening to me? (2)

Like Ashima, Moushumi's mother is also a typical example of an Indian wife. A traditional woman in India does not hold a job, but remains a homemaker. She is almost ignorant of the outer world. Similarly, although Moushumi's mother lived abroad for thirty-two years, in England and now in the United States, she

> does not know how to drive a car, does not have a job, and does not know the difference between a checking account and a savings account. And yet she is a perfectly intelligent woman, was an honors student in philology at Presidency College before she was married off at twenty-two. (247)

By juxtaposing the immigrants' initial experiences and practices in the United States with their latter adoption and immersion into the U.S. culture, Lahiri suggests the transient nature of identity, pushing the characters towards inhabiting transnational space on U.S. soil. As Lahiri's immigrant characters live in the liminal space by attempting to adhere to the old values and negating U.S. culture, something new begins to emerge. In this regard, their immigrant experience reflects what Bhabha suggests:

> The negating activity is, indeed, the intervention of the beyond that establishes a boundary; a bridge, where presencing begins because it captures something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world. (13)

Bhabha's concern about cross-cultural initiations[5] is particularly evident in Ashima. Although she resists U.S. culture in the beginning, later she starts to adopt it. A sense of relocation replaces her earlier feelings of homelessness in the United States.

There is a stage wise development of diaspora in the works of Lahiri. While she presents displacement, nostalgia and identity crisis in *Interpreter of Maladies* and generational differences of diasporic community in *The Namesake*, she adopts a broader perspective on diaspora and exhorts the diasporic community to endeavour to locate

themselves in an alien land in her work *Unaccustomed Earth*. Her quotation from Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Custom House,*

> Human nature will not flourish, any more than a potato, if it be planted and replanted, for too long a series of generations, in the same worn out soil. My children have had other birthplaces, and, so far as their fortunes may be within my control, shall strike their roots into unaccustomed earth. (vii)

sums up her entire diasporic concern in *Unaccustomed Earth*, i.e. life grows well in a new place, and, so, the diasporic community must change its perspective on host nation and go for acculturation or assimilation.

Unaccustomed Earth is divided into two sections. The first part consists of different experiences of diasporic Indians, and the second section entitled "Hema and Kaushik" is three inter-connected stories of two young second generation diasporic Indians who converge at a point of time and develop a kind of love and understanding with each other but have to depart with each other tragically in the end.

The title story "Unaccustomed Earth", weaving the fabric of a father-daughter relation, casts light on the extent of solitude the characters experience in the process of executing their relational duty. The story commences with the prospect of the visit of Ruma's father to her home at Seattle. Her mother being dead and the only brother settled in Australia, she feels that the visit of her father will be an additional burden on her as he is retired and has dispensed with every possession that he had:

> Ruma feared that her father would become a responsibility, an added demand, continuously present in a way she was no longer used to. It would mean an end to the family she'd created on her own: herself and Adam and Akash, and the

> second child that would come in January, conceived just before the move. She couldn't imagine tending to her father as her mother had, serving the meals her mother used to prepare. Still, not offering him a place in her home made her feel worse. (7)

The similar dilemma continues when Ruma engages in telephonic discourse with her husband, Adam, on the visit of her father:

> "I can't imagine my father living here," she said.
>
> "Then don't ask him to"
>
> "I think the visit is his way of suggesting it"
>
> "Then ask"
>
> "And if he says yes?"
>
> "Then he moves in with us"
>
> "Should I ask?"
>
> She heard Adam breathing patiently through his nose. "We've been over this a million times, Rum. It's your call. He's your dad". (25)

Ruma's dilemma is the outcome of her upbringing. Children acquire the sense of filial duty from their family set-up, and the second generation diasporas, like Ruma, are removed from the concern for the aged members, the concern that binds the family in India. The modern western family is basically nucleus, and, hence, isolates the elders; every one constitutes a family in himself / herself. It is the influence of such Western family pattern that puts Ruma in dilemma despite her Indian origin. Her father himself admits this aspect of her nature to Mrs. Bagchi:

> Now that he was on his own, acquaintances sometimes asked if he planned to move in with Ruma. Even Mrs. Bagchi mentioned the idea. But he pointed out that Ruma hadn't been raised with that sense of duty. She led own life, had made her own decisions, married an American boy. He didn't expect her to take him in, and really, he couldn't blame her. For what had he done, when his own father was dying, when his mother was left behind? By then Ruma and Romi were teenagers. There was no question of his eighty-year-old widowed mother moving to Pennsylvania. He had let his siblings look after her until she, too, eventually died. (29)

However, very soon Ruma realizes that her father turns out to be a great help, rather than a burden. Her father's living pattern has built on the anvil of self sustenance, and prefers to do everything himself, and this habit of him keeps him engaged. For a retired and aged soul, engagement is necessary to shun off loneliness:

> After finishing with the dishes he dried them and then scrubbed and dried the inside of the sink, removing the food particles from the drainer. He put the leftovers always in the refrigerator, tied up the trash bag and put in into the large barrel he'd noticed in the driveway, made sure the doors were locked. He sat for a while at the kitchen table, fiddling with a saucepan whose handle— he'd noticed while washing it— was wobbly. He searched in the drawers for a screwdriver and, not finding one, accomplished the task with the tip of a steak knife. When he was finished he poked his head into Akash's room and found both the boy and Ruma asleep. (27)

Moreover, she recollects the past life and its joys merely with the presence of her father. She notices how her son, Akash, mingles with her father, and both together become a reservoir of family satiety for her. Her father too engages in reminiscences of her wife as Ruma now resembles her a lot:

> For several minutes he stood in the doorway. Something about his daughter's appearance had changed; she now resembled his wife so strongly that he could not bear to look at her directly. That first glimpse of her earlier, standing on the lawn with Akash, had nearly taken his breath away. Her face was older now, as his wife's had been, and the hair was beginning to turn gray at her temples in the same way, twisted with an elastic band into a loose knot. And the features, haunting now that his wife was gone— the identical shape and shade of the eyes, the dimple on the left side when they smiled. (27-28)

Significantly, in course of her father's stay at Seattle, Ruma gets accustomed to her father. In fact, she had never been so closer to him before her marriage with Adam. While having conversation with her father when the latter is engaged in gardening, it is obvious that she wants him to stay with her, quite contrary to her initial response:

> "If I lived here I would sleep out here in the summers," her father said presently. "I would put out a cot."
>
> "You can, you know".
>
> "What?"
>
> "Sleep out here. We have an air mattress."
>
> "I am only talking. I am comfortable where I am"
>
> "But", he continued, "if I could, I would build a porch like this for myself".
>
> "Why don't you?"
>
> "The condo would not allow it. It would have been nice in the old house". (45)

The mentioning of the 'old house' sends her in tormenting flash-back which reveals how much Ruma misses the milieu of her parental old house. Her recollection of how her mother used to manage the household work, and the way she departed to her

heavenly abode instills in her a deeper sense of filial duty, however tinged with her own selfish desire. In the scene where she asks her father to stay with her, one can easily feel that her father is no way interested in staying back which pains her much as she herself finds it difficult to bear the solitariness of her domestic life:

> "It is a good place, Ruma. But this is your home, not mine."
>
> She had expected resistance, so kept talking. "You can have the whole downstairs. You can still go on your trips whenever you like. We won't stand in your way. What do you say, Akash," she called out. "Should, Dadu live with us in here? Would you like that?
>
> Akash began jumping up and down in the pool, squirting water from a plastic dolphin, nodding his head.
>
> "I know it would be a big move," Ruma continued. "But it would be good for you. For all of us." By now she was crying. Her father did not step toward her to comfort her. He was silent, waiting for the moment to pass.
>
> "I don't want to be a burden," he said after a while
>
> "You wouldn't. You'd be a help. You don't have to make up your mind now. Just promise you'll think about it."
>
> He lifted his head and looked at her, a brief sad look that seemed finally to take her in, and nodded. (52-53)

The loneliness of Ruma is well comprehended by her father as he finds her in the position of her wife. His wife has also experienced the pang of managing the family alone in an alien land and has suffered deeper solitude. Like her mother, Ruma, though acquainted with American life-style, is not exception to the solitude of life, and so craves to have her father with her. Her father himself admits this:

> He knew that it was not for his sake that his daughter was asking him to live here. It was for hers. She needed him, as he'd never felt she'd needed him before, apart from the obvious of things he provided her in the course of his life. And because of this the offer upset him more. A part of him, the part of him that would never cease to be a father, felt obligated to accept. But it was not what he wanted. Being here for a week, however pleasant, had only confirmed the fact. He did not want to be part of another family, part of the mess, the feuds, the demands, the energy of it. He did not want to live in the margins of this daughter's life, in the shadow of her marriage. He didn't want to live again in an enormous house that would only fill up with things over the years, as the children grew, all the things he'd recently gotten rid of all the books and papers and clothes and objects one felt compelled to possess, to save. Life grew and grew until a certain point. The point he had reached now. (53)

At the level of relation, both Ruma and her father are intrinsically selfish. Her father has been escapist right from the beginning as far as the execution of his filial duty is concerned. To build his life and career abroad, he ignored the need of his aged parents in India, and, ironically, he is left in the similar circumstances, though self-chosen. Even this choice of her father is motivated by his deep-rooted selfishness and desire not to be entangled further in the maze of family relation. He has turned into a kind of solitary wanderer, an *aghori;* a person who denounces all relations and lives a life of wanderer. In case of Ruma's father, no doubt, the denouncement of committed relation is inspired by the desire of uncommitted relation. It is this uncommitted relation that characterizes diasporic existence in its entirety and extremity, apart from instilling a sense of isolation. For any kind of association, commitment is imperative; the lack of it results in the breakdown of even the most intimate relation. Her father's choice of Mrs. Bagchi in stead of her is, in fact, an expression of his desire to be uncommitted, free from any kind of bondage; the bondage that makes us suffer. Thus, in "Unaccustomed Earth" we

witness that the characters are lonely at the heart of their heart which accounts for much of their suffering. However, here we also witness the transfer from physical alienation to that of the metaphysical one in order to attain untainted, uncommitted bliss and liberty.

The note of alienation continues to run throughout Lahiri's "Hell-Heaven" which seems to be a saga of broken hearts. The important women characters: the narrator, her mother and Deborah are presented in such circumstances where they feel alienated in relation to their men. At the centre of the story lies the incompatible relation of the narrator's parents, Shyamal and Aparna, resulting in the alienating feelings of Aparna. The narrator herself admits this,

> My father was a lover of silence and solitude. He had married my mother to placate his parents; they were willing to accept his desertion as long as he had a wife. He was wedded to his work, his research, and he existed in a shell that neither my mother nor I could penetrate. Conversation was a chore for him; it required an effort he preferred to expend at the lab. He disliked excess in anything, voiced no cravings or needs apart from the frugal elements of his daily routine: cereal and tea in the morning, a cup of tea after he got home, and two different vegetable dishes every night with dinner. He did not eat with the reckless appetite of Pranab Kaku. My father has a survivor's mentality. From time to time, he liked to remark, in mixed company and often with no relevant provocation, that starving Russians under Stalin had resorted to eating the glue off the back of their wallpaper. One might think that he would have felt slightly jealous, or at the least suspicious, about the regularity of Pranab Kaku's visits and the effect they had on my mother's behavior and mood. But my guess is that my father was grateful to Pranab Kaku for the companionship he provided, freed from the sense of responsibility he must have felt for forcing her to leave India, and relieved, perhaps, to see her happy for change. (65-66)

Aparna finds a source to get rid of her tedious and monotonous domestic life in Pranab, and their intimacy grows to such an extent that they might have been taken for husband wife, "Wherever we went, any stranger would have naturally assumed that Pranab Kaku was my father, that my mother was his wife" (66-67). However, the entry of Deborah, an American, in the life of Pranab fetches a jealously bitter touch in Pranab-Aparna episode which enhances to such an extent that Aparna feels a sea of change in Pranab brought out by Deborah, "He used to be so different. I don't understand how a person can change so suddenly. It's just hell-heaven, the difference." (68)

Aparna turns more bitter and isolated after Pranab-Deborah wedlock as she starts viewing anything American to be unethical deducing from the experience of Deborah – Pranab relation where the latter denounces his family, the family which has cherished a lot of expectation from him. Significantly, she conflicts the Indian social values with the new and changing values that she dwells amid and suffers excruciatingly. Her daughter, the narrator, with her biological growth, adjusts with her American social milieu contrary to her advice. To avoid her irritation, or any confrontation, the narrator conceals many facts about her life from her mother, particularly her experience with boy friends and alcoholic indulgence. Aparna turns so isolated and at times frustrated that she appears to be a grudging or complaining soul:

> When my mother complained to him about how much she hated life in the suburbs and how lonely she felt, he said nothing to placate her. 'If you are so unhappy, go back to Calcutta,' he would offer, making it clear that their separation would not affect him one way or the other. (76)

Moreover, the narrator also adopted her father's method of avoiding Aparna whereby 'isolating her doubly',

> When she screamed at me for talking too long on the telephone, or for staying too long in my room, I learned to scream back, telling her that she was pathetic, that she knew nothing about me, and it was clear to us both that I had stopped needing her, definitively and abruptly, just as Pranab Kaku had. (76-77)

Aparna, thus, has none to call her own who can genuinely provide her company and counsel. That she means nothing to her husband is quite evident from the outset, and the one whom she has loved secretly and deeply also denounces her, apart from her own blood, that is the narrator, Usha. She is, in fact, a perfect example of the victim of the fragmented pattern of diasporic relation and existence. Deborah, like Aparna, also suffers the pang of alienation caused by her inability to understand her husband despite their long conjugal life. Aparna has always feared the fact that someday Deborah will go out of Pranab's life in preference of an American man, which is a common conception among the most Indians about the Americans. However, it is Pranab who divorces Deborah despite their two children, and marries a Bengali woman, leaving Deborah at lurch to look after the kids. Here, we witness the dirty facet of materialistic attitude as aftermath the globalization. The confluence of various cultural and social values under the aegis of globalization, unfortunately, transfers man to the level where individual materialistic concern matters more than anything else. Pranab is a typical global materialistic man who denounces his parents to procure the youthful love of Deborah, and when she loses her youthful luster he denounces her too in order to get another woman of his community. Here, too, we witness a lack of committed relation as in "Unaccustomed Earth". Pranab is, by nature, flirtiest and fluid in his relation, however,

those who come in his contact are sober and committed. Both Aparna and Deborah are connected in the parallel game of destiny which leaves them to suffer the pang of alienation throughout their lives.

Alienation in diaspric realities is mostly the artifact of conflicting personalities. Since the personalities are shaped by socio-cultural values and the immediate milieu, conflict of values, overt or covert, might be regarded as the root of alienation. In the contemporary global society, everything is tested on the anvil of production and reproduction. It is the productive and reproductive aspect of an object or entity that determines its value and utility. And relationship is not impervious to this paradigm. Such paradigm of globalized world coupled with de-centered, de-rooted, and displaced realities of diasporas that accounts for incomprehensible and abysmal alienation of diasporic existence is couched in the above discussion of relation and circumstances of characters in the story "Unaccustomed Earth" and "Hell-Heaven".

In the story "Hell-Heaven" Aparna and her husband represent the first generation diaspora. They are quite conservative in their attitude. The story mainly focuses on gendered diasporic experience of Aparna who spends her time preparing Bengali food and recalling her memories of Indian films, etc. The sub-plot of Pranab –Deborah affair presents the process of acculturation in which Pranab is initiated; he shifts his home from Indian areas and marries an American lady. However, this process also reveals how two distinct cultures overlap, intersect, and intermesh with each other resulting in the break of relation as in Pranab –Deborah affair.

But in the story "A Choice of Accommodations" the relationship between Amit (Indian) and his wife Megan (American) survives thanks to their effort to accommodate and adjust in their life. They name their daughters Maya and Monika, an Indian identity despite their fully American appearance. Amit was bothered by the fact "that his father and mother have passed nothing, physically to their children. "Are they yours? People sometimes ask him when he was alone with them" (94). Here, the racial and physical subjectivities are juxtaposed with social and cultural identity.

Of the three connected stories of second segment, the first story "Once in a life Time" presents two contradictory attitudes of diasporic people; traditional diaspora i.e. the migrants who are still nostalgic of their countries, cherish memories of their homeland and desire to preserve them, and the others who are transplants and relocate themselves in a foreign land. Hema's family and the Choudhuries develop intimacy due to their common origin, but Choudhuries after their remigration to America show a different outlook in their attitude. Mrs. Choudhury smokes and takes rest all the time while Hema's mother works in kitchen preparing food for them. Hema appreciates open mindedness, broad outlook and lavish style of the Choudhuries. Throughout the story she makes a comparison between the two contrasting diasporic families and feels attracted toward Kaushik, the only son of the Choudhuries, though he appears quite indifferent to her.

The second inter- connected story is after the death of Kaushik's mother and his father's remarriage to a Bengali widow with two daughters. The story reveals how Kaushik fails to adjust with his father's new family as he could not tolerate some other

women occupying his mother's place. However, later on he painfully tries to obliterate the memory of his mother. The act of burial of all signs of his mother's memory signifies his preparedness for a transnational citizen. His deterritorialized self is constructed to help him to adjust wherever he may go. The title of the story "Year's End" symbolically represents disconnectedness with one kind of ethnic identity, ethnicity and mindset, and ushering into a new broader notion of culture and identity.

In the last story "Going Ashore" both the characters Hema and Kaushik are 'glocalizate' citizen; they are comfortable in every corner of the world, and could relate to host land's culture as well as their native culture. Kaushik has all the traits and characteristics of a transnational citizen. When he goes to Rome "Like the Mexicans and Guatemalans, the Salvadorans were never sure what to make of Kaushik, not the soldiers who patrolled the streets with guns nearly as big as their bodies, not the children who posed eagerly for pictures when they saw him with his camera" (303). Such confusion pertaining to the identity of Kaushik makes him truly transnational and renders him a hybridized identity. He wants to be different, that in ten minutes he can be on his way to anywhere in the world. During his trip to Khao Lake, Thyland, while having a conversation with a Swedish tourist, Henrik, Kaushik suggests that he has never belonged to any place:

> "But you are an Indian, no? (Henrik asks)
>
> "Yes"
>
> "You live in India?"
>
> "I do not live anywhere at the moment. I am about to move to Hong Kong" (320)

Being a photojournalist, Kaushik travels round the world, and feels an outsider in his own home in Massachusetts, where his father's new family has supplanted memories of his dead mother. In fact, he is a hybrid human being in a hybrid country.

Diaspora and Margaret Wilson:

Diasporic concern in Margaret Wilson's *Daughter of India* is related to Davida's experience as a missionary which is virtually the experience of Wilson herself[6]. In the very first chapter Davida is seen feeling India to be her own home, typical of a diaspora's effort to acculturation.

> …sitting there among the hungry children watching their evening bread being baked, sitting there observing the firelight on their little brown faces, something has risen and cried within her – again and again it had happened – 'You *belong* here! You have always lived in India! This is home!' (14)

The sense of belonging which is emphasized in the above lines is quintessential in every diasporic discourse. It is such sense of Davida that temporarily makes her think of renting "a little clay house in the city" (15) so that she could have the touch of real India. Moreover, her philanthropic act of giving her own pillows to Begum to soothe her aching ear is a testimony of her solidarity to the poor Indians.

As stated before in this chapter, migrants often encounter adverse circumstances in alien land, and so is in the case of the protagonist of *Daughters of India.* The situation of host land determines much of the activities and aspirations of the migrants. The socio-economic condition of India and Indians during the British Raj cast deeper influence upon the missionaries working in India, and this is well couched in the novel,

> All their (missionaries') first romantic zeal, all their hope and sentimental love, was turned quickly into pain when they had begun to look upon the wretchedness of India. That five hundred dollars of yearly salary that had seemed at home a joke, began, in the poverty of that place, to seem a cruel, alienating fortune. .. (15)

Moreover, the climatic condition of the place also comes in way of the migrants, particularly the food associated with the climatic condition of the place. Consequently, those living in diaspora have to exercise certain restraints as felt by Wilson herself,

> 'You have to be very careful of your diet in this climate', their experienced seniors had warned them. But of some of that group of enthusiasts suffered still from early experiments with stinging peppers and unleavened bread… (15)

However, like a first generation diaspora, Davida is not devoid of nostalgic feelings of her own country. Time and again she resorts to the comparison of American and Indian way of viewing the things. She recollects of taking part in the voting of Presidential election and feels quite happy:

> It had been the first time she had ever voted for President … she had seen the ballot, Harding, and Cox, and Debs. Debs was like him – like her foolish lover – Debs had said that while anyone in the land has oppressed, he was oppressed. While anyone was poor, he was poor. So she had voted for Debs! (22)

Her reason behind voting Debs exhibits her humanistic attitude which in turn enables her to adjust with the inclement rural Indian environment.

Despite her obvious effort to be one with the Indian, Davida's American appearance and apparel makes her alien, often like a member of circus for the Indian children. She says, "'See here! I'm not a circus!' And he had fallen back blankly,

murmuring, 'Well, what *are* you, then?"(27). Most of the diasporas irrespective of time and space, caste and creed, race and religion encounter such situation and question in the host land.

As typical of diasporic existence, Davida has her own sense of insecurity; fear of being physically and sexually assaulted, and this sense is whetted by the response of the locals towards her celibacy,

> She (Davida) was still young, she looked younger than she was, and she was full of vitality. Prayer hadn't thinned her nose. Fasting wouldn't have shortened her eyelashes. The non-Christian community conjectured about her cynically still. Here she was now, living alone since the First Lady's departure, and in the next bunglow a white man was living alone who kept his wife in a foreign land, for the sake of children's education – he said. Davida was never allowed to forget her unmarried position. Whenever she would take her departure from a Moslem house in the city, some mighty mother-in-law was sure to rise up and send her way with prayer. 'God be thy thick veil', she would pray. 'God shield thee from all men's eyes. (56)

Davida's association with the Pariahs of Flowery Basti makes her realize certain basic differences between India and America, though they are suggested, "Women in that village were not interested in the mention of possible exotic and alluring sins which so charms the Americans. There was nothing left exotic to them" (34). In fact *Daughters of India* presents a good depiction of the plight of Indian women during the British Imperialism. Davida's experience of abject condition of women and gender discrimination makes her juxtapose the Indian women with their American counterparts,

> Then Davida would have to recall and describe her coeducational childhood. 'We went to school with boys. Our faces were unveiled, quite bare. Our heads were

> bare. Our arms were bare. Our necks were bare. Sometimes our feet were bare. If by accident we had appeared naked before them, conventions would have expected them to turn their backs till we had passed. We sat in classes with men. We played games with men. We sung with men. We danced with men. We didn't always behave well. The men didn't always behave well. But the point was, we were all *expected* to behave well in those circumstances. Our conventions were based upon the supposition some males can look upon the face of some females without lusting after them. But here' (in India), she would add sometimes, 'all society is regulated by the supposition that no man can look upon any woman without lusting after her, not even his daughter-in-law'. (57)

Significantly, Margaret Wilson presents a migrant's outlook of a host nation. The entire novel seems to be a commentary of the socio-cultural and economic reality of colonial India through the eyes of a migrant. That India is a religious country is evinced in the line, "whenever two Indians meet, there is a religious meeting" (42). It is the religious sentiments that have shaped many of the events in the novel. In fact, the entire novel is conceived in the backdrop of conversion of the poor pariahs of rural Indians to Christianity, and in the process of missionary act the experience of Davida brings a diasporic touch to the novel.

The migrants' description of host nation runs through every story of Wilson's *Tales of a Polygamous City*. The diasporic concern gets infused in the narrative texture and surfaces while portraying the scenes that arouse nostalgic memory of home, apart from moment when the narrator realizes the inherent differences in hers and the host land's ethics, morality, attitude and socio- cultural values. To cite an example, the story "Taffeta Trousers" will be more appropriate as in this story the female American narrator, after living all her life in India as a missionary, engages in nostalgic recollection of her American home at her old age, and realizes that she is without a home:

> Sometimes I would exchange a year of those dawns that come up like thunder for one of the well-bred sunrises at home. Sometimes I have shut my eyes to our great trees, which stress their branches upward yearningly and send them down caressingly . . . Sometimes driven by this longings for sights that my eyes were born for, I have gone home, and for a while have loved my native land as only exiles can, consciously loving for months the sweet pressure of home air against my face, of which American skins are unconscious, worshiping the greenness of grass that American eyes never see. But always, doubtless because my judgment is warped by the force and passion of our city, even my palate has been dulled by curries, I grow tired, much to my disappointment, of the keen-minded, charming women of my own country. This is perhaps, because their easy, liberty filled way of living is too easy, the pattern of life too monotonous; from the base to the rim only laughing loves . . . I got the habit, when I was young, of living where *Endurance in the crowning quality/ And patience all the passion of great soul.* Many women get at life at home. I unfortunately never did. (723)

A typical diasporic longing for home and frustration of the same is well conveyed in the quoted lines which results in the narrator's occupying an in-between space or to speak in the words of Uma Parmeswaran living a 'trishanku' identity.

Diasporic obsessions in Margaret Wilson, unlike Jhumpa Lahiri, are not linked with the pursuit of ambitions. Wilson's entire experience in India reveals her general concern to do something stupendous for the upliftment of downtrodden Indians. Most of her characters are missionary workers who, beneath their religious activities, carry out a wider plan to spread the European enlightenment. By the time Wilson was staying in India, the country was beset by nationalistic movements on the one hand, and the crying need for the social reformation on all fronts felt by the working missionaries. The colonial India, in a way, suffered more for her inherent malaises than by the seeming exploitation of the colonialists.

The condition of life depicted in *Daughters of India* and in *Tales of a Polygamous City* truthfully presents the quality of life lived by the then Indians. It is the quality of life, and the need to better it necessitated the movement of population. The movement of Indian population abroad during the 19th century, which constitutes the earliest Indian diaspora, was no doubt motivated by the necessity of making life better. However, the movements of European population at lower scale, unlike Indian, no doubt inspired by the motive of colonial expansion, commercial entrepreneurship, religious preaching, its existing living standard was already better. Therefore, the diasporic feeling of a white in India and of an Indian in Europe or West can not be judged by applying same yardstick.

While Indian diaspora suffers sub-ordinate status in West despite its magnificent contribution in escalating the economy of the host land apart from contributing in uplifting the society and its literature, the white diaspora in India enjoys the superior status. Be it Davida of *Daughters of India* or narrators of the stories included in *Tales of a Polygamous City*, or any other white characters – every one enjoys the dignity of colonial "Sahib". This brings a sharp contrast between the colonial diaspora of Wilson and the post-colonial diaspora of Lahiri. The colonial diaspora of Wilson is a part of Christian scheme of establishing one religion on the earth. In the process of materializing this scheme, every sorrow and suffering is a service to humanity. It is this sense of service that makes the White suffer in an inclement tropical climate with equally hostile surrounding. No doubt, the characters of Lahiri suffer the same inclement climate and live in somewhat similar hostile surrounding; their suffering is the cause of their own ambition. Whether it is Ashoke or Ashima of *The Namesake* or Mrs. Sen, Mr. Pirzada, Shoba and Sukumar, Sanjeev and Twinkle from stories in *Interpreter of Maladies* or

Ruma, Pranab , Kaushik and Hema from stories in *Unaccustomed Earth* – every one is living his/her own struggling life, a purely personal life devoid of any wider human concern. However, Lahiri cannot be blamed for this lack because her characters are individuals living in an ambience of rat-race competition and in a society which is absolutely capitalistic and materialistic. Wilson's characters, in a way, suffer from stereotype Christian missionary's concern of living a truthful, chaste life at the cost of individual human desires. Davida and the narrators of the stories of *The Tales of a Polygamous City* find themselves torn between the fulfillment of their individual desire and their missionary pursuit. Davida has to sacrifice her desire to love and to be loved to remain a chaste missionary and to be holy in the eyes of the poor Indian Pariahs.

Moreover, the inherent urge to adhere to the superior status of White man in colonial country contributes a lot in the suffering of the colonial diaspora like that of Davida's. No doubt Davida mixes up with the poor newly converted Christians of the Flowery Basti, the divide between the colonizer and the colonized is well reflected in the novel *Daughters of India*. She and the poor Pariah women are not equal, though her Christian morality compels her for the same. It is also true that she strives in every possible way to mitigate the sorrows of Pariahs as she willfully renders her only pillow to ear-aching Begum, the wife of her village pastor. Despite her apparent humanistic service, she is not able to uplift the life of Pariahs due to her own limitations. Quite often she feels for them, but her such feelings do not prevent her from feeling different while living amid the Pariahs. Consequently, like a typical diaspora, there exists a sense of alienation and isolation even in colonial diaspora which is well expressed in the quotation cited earlier from the story "Taffeta Trousers". Thus, both colonial and post-colonial

diasporas are in the same gondola as regard to their feelings of isolation while living away from home.

Significantly, both Lahiri and Wilson have got female as their protagonist. Going through their works it appears that they are virtually present on the pages of their writings. Lahiri reflects on the issues of women both as nationals and migrants. The anxiety that a woman goes through while making her family, and how the anxiety turns into a nightmare once she is placed in an alien ambience is well explored in the portrayal of Ashima in *The Namesake*. In the works of Wilson, a female migrant narrator decides the narrative texture to reflect on the socio-cultural peculiarities of the host land. However, the narrator, like a diasporic character, gets nostalgic about her own homeland while experiencing the strange Indian temperament and attitude. Significantly, she unfurls a multitude of social malaises (from her perspective) present in the Indian society of the time.

Notes:

1. Surjeet Kalsey was born in India. She relocated to Canada in 1974, and currently lives in British Columbia. Kalsey is a poet and short story writer, editor, translator, and counselor. With most of her writings appearing in Indian and Canadian publications, readers can easily venture out and explore the diversity of Surjeet Kalsey's works.
2. Diasporic realities are problematic in the sense that they are characterized by multiplicities and to some extent indeterminacy. A diaspora’s preference for

two or more cultures makes him belong to none resulting in problematic identity.

3. The spatial location of home is very difficult to determine for its locational multiplicity and hence has Derridean Indeterminateness, i.e. location is indefinitely shifted.
4. Diasporas are torn between home in host land and home in own land.
5. 'Cross-cultural initiations' refers to the willing acceptance of other culture's idiosyncrasies. These initiations assist the diasporas to relocate themselves in the host country.
6. Margaret Wilson herself lived for around six years (1904-10) in the Panjab Province of the then India and much of the facts about India and Indians expressed in her works are based on her experiences as a missionary. This also provides an autobiographical touch to her works.

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1 "Taffeta Trousers". *The Atlantic Monthly*. December 1917. pp. 721-30 (obtained from Hathi Trust Digital Library: http://babel.hathitrust.org).

2 "A Woman of Resource". *The Atlantic Monthly*. January 1918. pp. 43-49 (obtained from Hathi Trust Digital Library: http://babel.hathitrust.org).

3 "God's Little Joke". *The Atlantic Monthly*. May 1918. pp. 43-49 (obtained from Hathi Trust Digital Library: http://babel.hathitrust.org).

4 "The Story of Sapphire". *The Atlantic Monthly*. October 1918. pp. 467-74 (obtained from Hathi Trust Digital Library: http://babel.hathitrust.org).

5 "A Mother". *The Atlantic Monthly*. February 1919. pp. 228-234 (obtained from Hathi Trust Digital Library: http://babel.hathitrust.org).

6 "Waste: The Story of a Sweet Little Girl". *The Atlantic Monthly*. February 1921. pp. 180-188 (obtained from Hathi Trust Digital Library: http://babel.hathitrust.org).

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CHAPTER-III

THE MATRIX OF MULTICULTURAL CONCERN

> Because they don't grow it in Lancashire, you know ... Where does it come from? Ceylon-Sri Lanka, India. That is the outside history that is inside the history of the English. There is no English history without that other history ... People like me [says Hall] who came to England in the 1950s [from the Caribbean] have been there for centuries ... I am the sugar at the bottom of the English cup of tea. I am the sweet tooth, the sugar plantations that rotted generations of English children's teeth. There are thousands of others besides me that are ... the cup of tea itself (Hall, 1991, pp. 48-9).

Hall in the quoted excerpt seems to focus on the very essence of multiculturalism, i.e. the proper way of responding to cultural and religious diversity. Only toleration of group differences is not adequate for achieving social equality for the members of minority groups; recognition and positive accommodation of group differences are required through group-differentiated rights[1]. Some group-differentiated rights are held by individual members of minority groups, as in the case of individuals who are granted exemptions from generally applicable laws in virtue of their religious beliefs or individuals who seek language accommodations in schools or in voting. Other group-differentiated rights are held by the group qua group rather by its members severally; such rights are properly called group rights, as in the case of indigenous groups and minority nations, who claim the right of self-determination. In the latter respect, multiculturalism is closely allied with nationalism.

Multiculturalism is closely associated with “identity politics,” “the politics of difference,” and “the politics of recognition,”[2] all of which share a commitment to

revaluing disrespected identities and changing dominant patterns of representation and communication that marginalize certain groups. Multiculturalism is also a matter of economic interests and political power; it demands remedies to economic and political disadvantages that people suffer as a result of their minority status.

Multiculturalists take for granted that it is “culture” and “cultural groups” that are to be recognized and accommodated. Yet multicultural claims include a wide range of claims involving religion, language, ethnicity, nationality, and race. Culture is a notoriously overbroad concept, and all of these categories have been subsumed by or equated with the concept of culture. Language and religion are at the heart of many claims for cultural accommodation by immigrants. The key claim made by minority nations is for self-government rights. Race has a more limited role in multicultural discourse. Antiracism and multiculturalism are distinct but related ideas: the former highlights “victimization and resistance” whereas the latter highlights “cultural life, cultural expression, achievements, and the like” (Blum 14). Claims for recognition in the context of multicultural education are demands not just for recognition of aspects of a group's actual culture (e.g. African American art and literature) but also for the history of group subordination and its concomitant experience.

A culture is shaped in relation to itself and also by its relation to others, and their internal and external pluralities presuppose and reinforce each other. A culture cannot appreciate the value of others unless it appreciates the plurality within it; the converse is just as true. Closed cultures cannot and do not wish or need to talk to each other. Since each defines its identity in terms of its differences from others or what it is not, it feels

threatened by them and seeks to safeguard its integrity by resisting their influences and even avoiding all contacts with them. A culture cannot be at ease with differences outside it unless it is at ease with its own internal differences. A dialogue between cultures requires that each should be willing to open itself up to the influence of and learn from others, and this presupposes that it is self-critical and willing and able to engage in a dialogue with itself.

What I might call a multiculturalist perspective is composed of the creative interplay of three important and complementary insights – namely the cultural embeddedness of human beings, the inescapability and desirability of cultural plurality, and the plural and multicultural constitution of each culture. This is well conveyed in the statement of Hall cited in the beginning of this chapter. When we view the world from its vantage point, our attitudes to ourselves and others undergo profound changes. All claims that a particular institution or way of thinking or living is perfect, the best, or necessitated by human nature itself appear incoherent and even bizarre, for it goes against our well-considered conviction that all ways of thought and life are inherently limited and cannot embody the full range of the richness, complexity and grandeur of human existence.

It is possible to understand the move from national to transnational in literary and cultural studies by looking at recent changes in the field of multiculturalism. The concept of liberal multiculturalism[3] that continues to define much of the academy today can be traced to the late 1960s and the early 1970s when proponents of cultural pluralism[4] challenged the melting pot hypothesis[5]. They claimed that, instead of melting into an undifferentiated nation, social groups maintained distinct ethnic identities to form a

nation of nations. Although the promoters of "liberal multiculturalism" were themselves driven by the idealism fueling the civil liberties movements of the sixties and seventies, the concept ultimately floundered on an essentialised notion of difference that approximated the idea of cultural relativism or pluralism. This concept of multiculturalism did not critically engage with issues of power and equity within and between different minority groups or between different ethnic groups and the dominant Caucasian culture. More recently, there have been demands for a critical multiculturalism[6] which refuses any kind of monolithic identity and embraces a more international model of cultural studies than the dominant Anglo-American version. In other words a critical multiculturalism focuses on the way multiple social positions are generated, stabilized, and displaced, and how culture must be read as a *complex* sign.

Multiculturalism suggests the coexistence of a number of different cultures. It does not recommend homogenization and conformity directly, nor does it encourage overtly different ethnic, religious, lingual or racial constituents of a particular society to denigrate or alienate each other to such an extent that the fragile balance of such a society is damaged or destroyed permanently. It lies at a transitional point between two hemispheres – East and West – and two segments of the world hierarchy – Third and First – or, the Indian subcontinents and the USA which may be found in most of the fictional worlds of Jhumpa Lahiri. India with her concept of unity in diversity and the USA as the melting pot of cultures and races coexist in her fiction.

In varying degrees, Lahiri explores 'Indianness' in all her stories, wherever they are set. Born to Bengali parents in London and raised in Rhode island, she is British by

birth, American by citizenship, and Indian by origin. Because of her multicultural upbringing, critics have many a time raised doubts regarding her culture–specific categorization, i.e., whether she is American or Asian-American or a diasporic post-colonial writer. No doubt she herself resists any such singular categorization, but in a very witty online essay "To Heaven Without Dying" she writes,

> Once made public: both my book and myself were immediately and copiously categorized. Take, for instance, the various ways I am described: as an American author, as an Indian American author, as a British born author, as an Anglo-Indian author, as an NRI (non-resident Indian) author, as an ABCD author (ABCD stands for American born confused "desi" – "desi" meaning Indian – and is an acronym coined by Indian nationals to describe culturally challenged second generation Indian raised in the U.S.). According to Indian academics, I've written something known as "diaspora Fiction": in the U.S., it is "immigrant fiction". … The fact that I am described in two ways or twenty is of no consequence: as it turns out, each of those label is accurate. I've always lived under the pressure to be bilingual, bicultural, at ease on either side of the Lahiri family map. (quoted in Anupama Chowdhury 15)

Significantly, in the works of Jhumpa Lahiri, the readers are constantly invited to cross over from India to the USA along with the characters. Against a panoramic background of journeys she blends typically Indian incidents with the American ones which present a study of two contrasting cultural patterns. In *Interpreter of Maladies*, out of nine stories, six are set in America having a multicultural ambience. Regarding response to the multicultural realities, there are marked differences between the first generation and the second generation migrants. The first generation migrants like Mr. Pirzada and Lilia's parents in "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine", Mr. and Mrs. Sen in "Mrs. Sen's" are not comfortable with their multicultural milieu and endeavour to adhere

to their original Indian culture which hampers their interaction with the host culture. The cultural interaction is imperative to achieve prosperity and pleasure if one is placed in an alien land. But this is sometimes kept at bay for fear of losing one's own original identity. In such circumstances the practice of liberal multiculturalism stands in good stead. Moreover, a lot depends on the individual decision/desire to interact/assimilate with others. Mr. Pirzada and Lilia's father are more obsessed with what happens in their homeland; they discussed the development of Indo-Pak War for the liberation of East-Pakistan (now Bangladesh). The fear of Lilia's father and Mr. Pirzada is quite obvious in the following lines when Lilia goes to participate in Halloween,

> "Don't go into any of the houses you don't know", my father warned. Mr. Pirzada knit his brows together. "Is there any danger?" "No, no," my mother assured him. "All the children will be out. It's a tradition." "Perhaps I should accompany them?" Mr. Pirzada suggested. He looked suddenly tired and small, standing there in his splayed, stockinged feet, and his eyes contained a panic… (38)

Similar kind of fear can be sensed in case of Mrs. Sen in the story "Mrs. Sen's" as she fears that nobody will come if she screams at the top of her voice from her apartment for help, and recalls that in India life is not so secluded. However, such feeling of fear and seclusion is not felt among the second generation migrants. They voluntarily endeavour to adjust and assimilate in their multicultural surroundings. Their life and living styles go with their American counterparts. Be it Shoba and Sukumar of "A Temporary Matter", Mr. and Mrs. Das of "An Interpreter of Maladies", Twinkle and Sanjeev of "This Blessed House", everyone has got multicultural touch right from their costume to character. However, they also exhibit their Indianness, particularly in their most personal moment.

Lahiri's depiction of Indian culture is not overstated or imperious which is evident from her *Interpreter of Maladies*. While she writes judiciously about the residents of India and America, she makes her most momentous endowment to contemporary American literature by capturing the flimsy balance between cultural choices and personal predilection of second generation South Asian Americans. Particularly, she expounds the necessary detachment between the originating culture of immigrant parents and the daily lives of their American born/raised children, an aspect of the second generation experience. In the story, "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine", she uses the viewpoint of a ten-year-old daughter of Indian émigré to accentuate the psychosomatic as well as the objective remoteness of the second generation from their parents' land and culture. In the background of 1971 Bangladesh political turmoil, the story depicts the evening visits of Mr. Pirzada, a Bangladeshi (then Pakistani) scholar studying in the States, to Lilia's home. Lilia's parents, living in a small university town in New England, had haunted his acquaintance,

> In search of compatriots, they used to trail their fingers, at the start of each new semester, through the columns of the university directory, circling surnames familiar to their part of the world. It was in this manner that they discovered Mr. Pirzada, and phoned him, and invited him to our home. (23)

As this method of making new acquaintances accentuates the cultural similarities of "South Asians" as a group, it is not astonishing that Lilia is confounded about Mr. Pirzada's nationality. She refers to him as "the Indian man" and corrected by her father about the differences between Indians and Pakistanis. Due to her distance from her parents' cultural root, she is not aware of the important historical and cultural precedents. She muses,

> It made no sense to me. Mr. Pirzada and my parents spoke the same language, laugh at the same jokes, looked more or less the same. They ate pickled mangoes with their meals, ate rice every night for supper with their hands. Like my parents, Mr. Pirzada took off his shoes before entering the room, chewed fennel seeds after meals as a digestive, drank no alcohol, for desert dipped austere biscuits in successive cups of tea. Nevertheless my father insisted that I understand the difference. (25)

Lilia's schooling in America does not grant her an understanding of world history and ethnicity, or any knowledge of her own South Asian inheritance. Her father is disappointed by her lack of information and questions what she learns at school. Lahiri exhibits her anxiety through the character of Lilia's father, the significance of appreciating the unity in diversity within the larger cultural group of South Asian people, a characteristic of her cultural heritage that Lilia has not yet adopted, living in a diaspora culture. However, unlike Lilia's father, her mother dismisses Lilia's need to know everything South Asian, saying "We live here now, she was born here" (26). She accepts the necessary detachment of the second generation from their cultural heritage, as they are actively forming their identities as American. Lahiri's depiction of the physical and psychological distance of the second generation from their roots owes a lot to her intercultural/multicultural experience.

Significantly, Lahiri uses children as a catalyst for giving intercultural or multicultural message. She draws on children in a number of stories to provide the readers with a more snooping insight, may be because she feels that her grown up characters might allocate into cultural dissimilarity and adjustment. In "Mrs. Sen's", "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine", and "Sexy", Lahiri's child is an onlooker, uncontaminated by the effects of the much discussed cultural bias, and brings maladies of

the native and immigrant groups to the scene with an ingenuousness. In these stories, different aspects of North American culture are revealed as hardly complete, the segregation between Hindu and Muslim South Asian as highly counterfeit, and extramarital affairs between men and women of different cultural backdrop as having lee en-rout for individual attractiveness and sensuality.

The story "Mrs. Sen's", which is about an immigrant woman who takes care of an eleven–year-old American boy in her residence after school, allows Lahiri to reflect her total consciousness of the immigrant world in concurrence to the essentials of an American childhood. The protagonist of "Mrs. Sen's" is born in India and still dresses in saris, applies vermillion on her forehead, and engages in recollection as a way to redemption. She represents those Indian immigrants who find themselves marooned in a country and a culture that is not their own but which anticipates conventionality from them. Mrs. Sen's firm denial and disinclination to learn driving seems to be a psychic contrivance of her conflict with the new world. While driving, looking at the traffic, her English falters and she, with a sense of incomprehension, says to Eliot, "Everyone, this people, too much in their world". Paradoxically, this is true of Mrs. Sen also as she contemplatively declares, "Everything is there" (she speaks of India) and her tragedy lies in the fact that she herself is no longer there. She yearns for her home and feels a deep sense of alienation and culture shock and lives in a kind of past-present situation. According to Bhabha, this past-present "becomes the part of necessity not the nostalgia of living" (10). Moreover, "Mrs. Sen's" unfolds another aspect where in spite of diverse cultures there is a perfect communion. When Eliot accompanies his mother to Mrs. Sen's house, he immediately sees and feels the cultural differences,

> Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Sen wore shoes . . . She wore a shimmering white sari patterned with orange paisleys, more suitable for an evening affair than for that quite, faintly drizzling august afternoon. (112)

Though different, Mrs. Sen does not seem to be the "other" to Eliot but,

> … it was his mother, Eliot had thought, in her cuffed, beige shorts and her rope-soled shoes, who looked odd. Her cropped hair, a shade similar to her shorts, seemed to lank and sensible, and in the room where all things were so carefully covered, her shaved knees and thighs too exposed. (112-113)

Mrs. Sen and Eliot develop a healthy companionship and she expresses her joy and loneliness and shares her Indian memories with great enthusiasm. She explains to him that by home she means Calcutta, not the room in which they are sitting, and informs him about the different Bengali traditions. Eliot is free from the 'exoticist' gaze and this facilitates the cross cultural interaction. Eliot's response to his mother's arrival each day to pick him up couches the comfort level he feels with Mrs. Sen even though he recognizes that her customs are different and rooted in India. However, after the car accident of Mrs. Sen, this communion comes to halt as Eliot's mother takes him away. Nevertheless, this leaves a message that in multicultural ambience meaningful communion can be possible only if there is genuine understanding, love and sympathy.

"Sexy" is the story which centres around a young Midwestern woman involved in an affair with a married Bengali man, Dev. The story, though speaks of Indian and Indian American characters, the protagonist is neither. In fact, it deals with a sort of exchange of the cultural gaze between Dev and Miranda where each returns the same "othering", exoticist gaze to other. When Miranda sees Dev for the first time, she observes "The man was tanned, with black hair that was visible on his knuckles" (86).

Later, she compares him with Dixits, the only Indian family living in her neighbourhood during her childhood. The abuses hurled on this immigrant family (Dog-shit) by the Americans show the humiliation that Indians sometimes face in that country because they are marginalized there. To Miranda, India is always a land of ethnicity, the "other". Even during her lovemaking with Dev, she "closed her eyes and saw deserts and elephant, and marble pavilions floating on lakes beneath a full moon" (96). She tries to know more about India perhaps because it inculcates in her a sense of curiosity a means of more passionate involvement with Dev. She walks all the way to Central Square, to an Indian restaurant, and orders a plate of "tandoori chicken". As she eats she "tries to memorize phrases printed at the bottom of the menu, for things like 'delicious', and 'water' and 'check, please' (96). She also learns the Bengali alphabet at the foreign language section of a nearby bookstore, even going "so far as to try to transcribe the Indian part of her name, "Mira into her Filofax" (97). Like Miranda's appreciation for him, Dev's attraction for her is based on her being different from the woman of her own community, of belonging to a different culture. He acknowledges that she is the "first woman I've known with legs this long" (89). Dev's appreciation of her is superficial without any real desire to get to know her (not externally but psychologically). At Mapparium, he asks her to stand at the opposite end of the bridge from him and whispers to her, "You're sexy" (91). However, her relationship with another Indian, Rohin, is completely free from this exoticising. When she stands before the little boy after putting on the dress of his choice, he calls her "sexy" (exactly the same words that Dev tells her) and later reveals to her innocently that it means "loving someone you do not know" (107). This forms the climax of the story and Miranda realizes the reciprocal colonization between her and Dev; he is

with her for her white skin and long legs, both of which are unfamiliar or "other" to his experience, and she is with him for his Indianness and his difference. Hence circumstances of cultural diversity or to say multicultural ambience forms the crux of this story.

The story "An Interpreter of Maladies" paints a sharp contrast between American and Indian society using the Indian setting. Mr. Kapasi notes that the Das family "looked Indian but dressed as foreigners did, the children in stiff, brightly covered clothing and caps with translucent visors' (44). In addition to his tour book, Mr. Das "had a sapphire blue visor, and was dressed in shorts, sneakers, and a T-shirt. The camera slung round his neck, with an impressive telephoto lens and numerous buttons and markings, was the only complicated thing he wore." (44). Mrs. Das's "shaved, largely bare legs" (43) and her attire gives her a typical "foreign" appearance. Even the cultural difference is perceptible in the ways they behave with each other. The family, in spite of their Bengali lineage and home at Asansol, fails to understand Bengali or Hindi. The family has totally adopted the American culture and Mr. Das "with an air of confidence" in response to Mr. Kapasi's question about their origins boasts that both he and his wife were "born and raised" in America (45). Except eating "jhalmuri" and "pakoras" they show no assimilation of the Indian culture. Mr. Kapasi closely observed the family throughout the tour, and finally feels that the family "looking like Indians" does not belong in or to India. Its connection to India is by heritage only, neither by language nor by customs and tradition, or cultural practices.

It is observed that Lahiri gives an accurate portrayal of the cultural crossover in short stories of "Interpreter of Maladies". The same cultural crossover runs through her novel *The Namesake* in which she strives to incarcerate the experiences and cultural impasse of 30 year struggle of the Ganguly family, for their amalgamation and absorption into an alien culture. Significantly, she concentrates on the concealed deposit of the consciousness and the internal confusion of the characters who find themselves ensnared in two cultures. The world in *The Namesake* is also purely multicultural like the world of *Interpreter of Maladies*. Here, again we witness differences between the perspective of first and second generation migrants towards their multicultural ambience. Ashoke and Ashima try hard to protect their children from being influenced by the American culture surrounding them all the time. Consequently, they make occasional visits to India with a view to keep in touch with their own people. But their children, Gogol and Sonia, the second generation American born migrants do not see any point in their such visit and feel awkward to see that their parents call India their home. Gogol thinks himself to be American and does not look forward to occasional visits to Calcutta or the annual pujo held at one of the local community halls where "they were required to throw marigold petals at a cardboard effigy of a goddess and eat bland vegetarian food" (64). To him it was never as interesting and lively as Christmas. His relation with Americans like Ruth, Maxine, Gerald, Lydia and others and his acceptance despite being Indian shows the multicultural concern in the novel. The multicultural impact on the life of characters in this novel can be seen at two levels, first from the point of view of the parents, Ashima and Ashoke, and second from that of the children Gogol and Sonia, the American born second generation Indian Americans.

The first generation migrants undergo a lot of hardship while interacting with the new alien culture and prefer to adhere to their root culture. In order to safeguard their culture the first generation migrants educate their children in the native language, literature and history and guide them about their religious customs, traditions, beliefs, food habits, and social mannerisms. Moreover, they also train them in the ways of the new land and its common traditions. In *The Namesake*, Ashima teaches Gogol to memorize a poem by Tagore and the names of gods embellishing the ten headed Durga. At the same time, every afternoon, before going to sleep, Ashima switches on the television and makes Gogol watch "Sesame street" and "The Electric Company" in order to make him accustomed to American way of speaking English.

Though immigrants struggle to adhere to their custom, they willy-nilly absorb the social and cultural behaviour of the host land. Initially, Ashoke does not like the celebration of Christmas and Thanksgiving, but, as Gogol recalls, "it was for him, for Sonia, that his parents had gone to the trouble of learning these customs" (286). Their own children are more Americanized than what they wish them to be. The children too, brushed up to be bilingual, envisage the cultural tight spots and dislocation. Though they sit in Pujas and other religious ceremonies, Gogol and Sonia, like the children of other Bengali families savour American food more than the Bengali dishes. The parents cannot compromise with their children's wishes. The Gangulys have to integrate the American culture for the sake of their children,

> They learn to roast turkeys … at thanksgiving, to nail a wreathe to their door in December, to wrap woollen scarves around snowman, to colour boiled eggs violet and pink at Easter for the sake of Gogol and Sonia … they celebrate with

> progressively increasing fanfare, the birth of Christ, an event the children look forward to far more than the worship of Durga and Saraswati. (64)

However, Americanized Indian offspring very often collide with their parents when their life style goes absolutely contradictory to their Indian parents' outlook. When Gogol dates with his girlfriend Ruth, his parents are a bit panicky, because they know many Bengalis in the US who have married American women, but their marriages have led to divorce. It is almost an accepted fact in the US that the first marriage generally fails in a year's time and the second marriage consistently gets on. Ruth is living with her father and step mother, her mother might have taken another man. For the American it is a way of life, but if such a thing happens to the Indians living abroad, they do get concerned. Even dating is not a serious affair between the Americanized Indian children. Gogol dates American women more than once. His living together with Maxine disturbs Ashima and she refuses to admit it before her Bengali friends. She ponders to which course her life has been moving. Having been deprived of the companionship of her own parents under the excuse of moving to the States, "her children's independence, their need to keep distance from her, is something she will never understand" (166). When her children do not come back home even for holidays, she thinks, "she has given birth to vagabonds" (167). Only an archetypal middle class mother knows how hurting it is to learn that her children acquire American ways, which are totally contradictory to her social and religious values and observations. Ashima feels the gulf in her heart when Gogol declares,

> I am going to spend a couple of weeks in Newhampshire. Oh. Why do you want to go there, of all places? What's the difference between Newhampshire and here? … I'm going with a girl I'm seeing. Her parents have a place there. (145)

Though she says nothing for a while, he knows what her mother is thinking, that he is willing to go on vacation with someone else's parents but not see his own. Ashima's situation is inevitable for diasporas, particularly for first generation thanks to the multicultural attitude of their children and in particular distaste for their root culture.

Moreover, reverence for Indian and Indian culture is well expressed by the American characters like Maxine and her parents. No doubt their knowledge of India is gathered from books and magazines. Such reverence for India and Indian culture occur in Gogol after the death of his father. The death of his father is a turning point of his life. Now he understands the significance of every cultural act and rituals performed by his father and the pain associated with it. Consequently, he starts recognizing himself to be Indian despite his seeming Americanization; he appears Indian in private and American in public – a truly multicultural identity.

Significantly, Jhumpa Lahiri's works present a confluence of the Indian and the Western culture coming to terms with each other through her narratives. The complicated Indian nature and culture is presented with all its vitality in her narration in both Indian and American contexts. The West could be seen as presented with a sense of sentimentality by Lahiri. This is apparent in the epilogue to her short stories *Unaccustomed Earth* in which she suggests that there is a need for a change in the perspective of diaspora towards host culture. The adoption and acculturation can solve many problems of diaspora. The alien soil is not just a way for the materialistic progress, it can also nurture them mentally and they can find kinship and beauty in unexpected places as well.

Moreover, Lahiri adopts female point of view to present the life and characters in her stories. In *Unaccustomed Earth* and other stories where the female protagonists, including the author's first person narrative voice, Ruma, Boudi, Sudha, Sang, Hema, and Chitra present the blend of India and the West from their experiences. Significantly, the book casts light on the problems of second generation diaspora after their assimilation in the host culture. The different cultural perspective towards life creates chasm in their relationship with their parents and other relatives. Moreover, sometimes there is a desire to bridge the gaps and to arrive at certain compromises. Such act of assimilation and acculturation has given birth to a hybrid culture (or multicultural set up) where new hopes, new cultures, new identities have emerged out of this cultural interaction.

In *Unaccustomed Earth* most of the marriages are mixed or intercultural. In these marriages two persons of historical, social and cultural backgrounds share their experiences with each other and out of these shared experiences emerged a 'third space'. These marriages between Indian Bengali man/woman and American woman/man create a 'hybrid culture' a new form of culture where both of them negotiate at various fronts of life. These Bengali migrants are second generation diasporas and so have no adjustment problems with the food and dress code as most of them have already incorporated and adopted many of these cultural icons of the host country. Language is also not a hindrance between them. But their relationship with parents and siblings renews their cultural affiliations to the native country. In the title story Ruma and Adam enjoy the bliss of their intercultural marriage, but the visit of her father disturbs her as regard to her filial duty and individual liberty. In fact, the story presents double perspective. The father views the whole situation from his viewpoint, while daughter has a different attitude and

outlook for their relationship. Her upbringing in a new social and cultural set up, her education, her marriage to an American, all influence the formation of her identity and a role. She visualizes the whole situation from a different perspective. Her father's scheduled visit to her place after her mother's death puts her in dilemma whether she should ask him to stay with them like a responsible daughter as this means a responsibility, an added demand, apart from an end to the family she has created her own. On the other hand, if she does not ask him to stay with her that would make her feel guilty. She finds herself in a discrepant situation having constant confrontation between the native culture and the host country culture. If she locates herself in an American culture, then it is an individual freedom, but if she follows Indian culture, then her conscience does not allow her to do so. The father and daughter have never deep bonding as their relation is marked by differences in opinion. Moreover, her mother also had not liked some act of Ruma. When Ruma had married Adam, her mother commented, "You are ashamed of yourself, of being Indian, of being Indian that is the bottom line". (26)

No doubt, Ruma asks her father to move in with her family, but her decision was conditioned by her vested interest as in her father's company she finds her son Aakash more cultured, civilized, calmer, and cooler. He had developed a liking for Bengali food and language. Ruma's decision and behavior indicate an inherent desire and willingness of diaspora to accept the ethos of interculturalism. They want to teach their children the social and cultural values of both the countries. Their desire to negotiate at various social, historical and cultural spheres is the outcome of the globalization. Ruma's father strive to create a garden of various flowers in Ruma's house at Seattle,

> … her father pushed the shovel into the ground, hacking away at grass with a soft, forceful sound, wearing his baseball cap to protect his head from the sun. He worked steadily, pausing briefly at midday to a peanut butter and jelly sandwich with Akash … The next morning her father drove back to the nursery to get more things: a bale of peat moss, bags of mulch and composted manure. This time, in addition to the gardening supplies, he brought back an inflatable kiddie pool, in the form of a crocodile spouting water from its head … (43)

His act reinforces the theme of the entire book and indicates a possibility of diasporic people's establishment in global multicultural world. In fact his appearance and attitude at such old age gives an impression that he can be the citizen of anywhere, and establish a garden in any land he wishes to.

In *Unaccustomed Earth*, particularly in the second segment "Hema and Kaushik", Lahiri moves from multiculturalism to transculturalism. Since they move from one country to another country, they acquire a touch of different cultures in assimilating manner. In fact, they adopt different cultural point of view depending on their location.

Margaret Wilson's *Daughters of India* is basically a novel of missionary expedition in India, and much of the action has been unfurled through the experiences of the female protagonist Davida Baillie. It is through her experience in dealing with the converted Christians of Aiyenianwalla that much of the multicultural/multilingual elements have been disclosed. Multilingualism has been noticed in the very beginning of the novel, "she (Miss Bhose) has been talking Hindustani, as usual, and Davida, as usual, had been answering in English" (10). Multiculturalism in this novel is found in its very nascent stage; in fact it is cultural conflict, rather than cultural amalgamation, though effort is made to achieve it through religious conversion.

Significantly, *Daughters of India* casts light on the intercultural conflict of British Raj in India. In a way, this conflict was the design of the colonial government itself to serve its vested interest. In the novel, we witness diametrically two opposite faces of white morality in diaspora. The colonial white whose sole intention is to perpetuate Indian colonialism and the white missionary whose sole intention is to spread the light of Christianity over the dark world of Pariahs. No doubt, the colonial white had its own way of spreading the light of European Enlightenment among the Indian, but again with a vested interest of creating a group of educated Indian to serve them as revealed in the Minute of Macaulay[7]. Consequently, the colonial white could approach only the chosen Indians whereas the missionary white encompassed the entire Indians in its sweep of scheme. The difference between the approach and attitude of Davida and the police officer in the novel is a testimony to it. Interestingly, Davida being an American missionary feels herself to be quite different from the colonial white and speaks against the imperialist atrocities meted out to the Indians.

However, what is unfortunately painful for Davida is that she is also taken as imperialist white because of her physical similarity with the latter. In multicultural context, discrimination or differentiation on the basis of body colour is inevitable irrespective of time and space. This is so because the complexion of the body immediately creates a chasm in the cultural interaction. For any migrants, the colour of body is the first hindrance in their social assimilation which is further aggravated by the lack of knowledge about the custom, language, and landscape of the place. Consequently, they live a very restricted life or to speak technically a ‘ghettoed life’. The missionaries or the British imperialist as reflected in the novel have their specific area of living aloof

from the locals because of unanticipated threat from strangers/locals. Violence to migrants is quite expected in a host land. This violence is often caused by mistrust, fear and particularly by sense of insecurity. One day when John Ramsey, the colleague of Davida visits a village with the pastor, Jalal and does not return overnight, Jalal's wife Begum gets worried and reveals the fear and the imminent danger of unknown to Davida,

> You don't know these people, this land. Violence, horror, under every smile, there is here! Why are they so mysterious about it? I 've made inquiries about. They left Patilpura about five, I've found out. And look here. They sent word by a messenger to the *syce* to bring the trap to Patilpura, and when they meet it right out in the road, not near any village, and my husband was being carried on a bed because he couldn't walk even … (67)

Begum finds it difficult to understand the reason behind the physical assault on her husband, Jalal, and pressurizes Davida to ask John Ramsey. The reply of Davida to the demand of Begum casts light on the difference of cultural mannerism.

> You don't understand Begum. I can't go to the Sahib and ask him what he chooses not to tell. It isn't our foreign way. You know he would do everything for the pastor that is possible. And I won't interfere. I just won't. (68)

The cultural mannerism also leads to cultural conflict. Manners are not easy to acquire and discard. The manners of diaspora, particularly their body language and social values immediately set them apart from their local counterparts, for instance, Davida is immediately figured out among the downtrodden Pariahs women. In a multicultural set up, cultural assimilation and cultural confrontation go hand in hand. However, cultural confrontation is witnessed among the first generation migrants due to their inherent desire to adhere to the social values of their homeland.

An outstanding example of multiculturalism is witnessed in Wilson's story "A Woman of Resource" included in *Tales of a Polygamous City*. The Pardah party hosted by the narrator is arranged keeping in mind the requirement of the locals. Every care is taken to synchronize the culturally conditioned etiquettes of the invitees,

> The doctor and I were arranging groups of chair on the carpet spread on the tennis-court, an hour before the time appointed for the party, when the ladies from the home of the inspector arrived. Once inside the curtain across the door of the high screen we had erected, they began to lay aside their *burquas*. A burqua, benighted reader, is yards and yards of white long cloth gathered into a little embroidered cap that fits the head, falling like a great full cape over the whole body of the ground. It has two thick little lace medallions in front of the eyes. Hidden in such a garment, no woman can be distinguished from another. Alighting from their carriages at the gates, our guests were monotonous ghosts of blank discretion. Seeing them unveiled inside the screen, one could understand that such beauty would be dangerous to the over-susceptible gaze of the public. (46)

The way Wilson presents the description of the party, robes of the guests, and their manner reflects the keen observation and understanding of multicultural ambience. Her description of Inspector's wife and her attire authenticates her genuine interest in the local,

> After removing her outer veils, the inspector's wife came toward us, ahead of the others, wearing a white veil of something as thin and sheer as linen lawn, bordered in emerald green and gold an inch wide, the corner falling almost to her feet in the back; a very loose and full skirt – like garment called *kurta*, which came to her knees, cut at the neck like a kimono blouse, made of almond – colored silk embroidered at the wrists and neck in pink and gold; and shining white, very full divided- skirt-like garments which fit snugly at the ankles. These *suttens*, foreigners for want of a better word, disgustingly called trousers. Really they resembled trousers as much as my white net frock did. On her feet she wore

> little sandals with great soft red silk pompons. Gold showed through her veil at her throat and her ears. On her wrists were solid gold bracelets an inch thick. (46)

However, it is interesting to note that Wilson in very subtle, supple and impartial way reflects on the social institution of the contemporary India. Polygamy, particularly male, was the common code of conduct of the 19th century India, particularly in Muslim community. However, wives had their equal dignity and status. Wilson's description of the young co-wife of the Inspector's wife is a testimony to it:

> Her (Inspector's wife) co-wife wore a sea-green chiffon veil with a six inch border woven in real gold; a thin white lawn kurta, embroidered all over by hand in white, fastened in front by three gold studs on a jewel chain; suttens of green and blue changeable taffeta, with appliquéd gold polka-dots an inch in diameter; white satin French slippers. She had a band of flexible gold across her smooth black hair, and pink roses and jasmine flowers in her earrings; gold bracelets at her wrists. She was somewhat fairer than most of our guests, as far as a European. The lines from her eyebrows to her brown eyes and down on her blushed cheeks were the lines of a water lily. (46-47)

Significantly, to the Pardah Party, women from different community were invited. The arrival of Hindu ladies from the Dwan's home to the Pardah Party, and their description by the narrator, which is different from the description of the Inspector's wife, reveals Wilson's awareness of the multicultural society of India.

> … four Hindu ladies from the Dwan's home came in. The one to whom I spoke first was thin and fair, with a face too insolent to be beautiful. She wore three veils of chiffon, one above the other. The under one was rosy pink, the second one faintly salmon-colored, and the outer one mauve. This mystery of color fell about her head and shoulders with a charm which is not to be described to those who have not seen it. Her kurta was white silk, and her very full ungored skirt was changeable blue and pink taffeta faced with mauve, … Her sister wore an

> emerald green silk skirt with Benaras design in gold at foot and a half deep, a turquoise-blue silk kurta, a leaf green little velvet vest, and a *point d'esprit veil*. Her sister -in–law wore a full skirt of changeable orange and almond color, with a border of fine green, black, and pale blue lines, a cream-colored kurta, a black velvet vest, and a veil of flame-colored chiffon. The forth woman of that party wore a mulberry-colored skirt with a silver border, a white kurta, and a veil the color of the outer leaves of a Marechal Niel rose.(47)

The above description reveals the true picture of India; no doubt it is a bit exoticized. The description of the colour of Indian ladies and their equally colourful dress makes the narrative a cultural gaze of the west. In fact, East or India is more of an enigmatic, exotic sight where many cultures, ethnic colours interact. Such interaction, no doubt, sometimes creates tension, but in a festive mood the Indians appear in their total aura forgetting the tension of the cultural differences which seems to be enigmatically exotic to the western voyeuristic narrator.

Unity in diversity is what well characterizes the Indian culture, and it is the same values that scatter across the world with the scattering of the Indian population. In Lahiri's story; 'When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine', the Hindu Muslim cultural interaction is well conveyed through the relation between Mr. Pirzada (a Pakistani scholar) and the narrator's family. The young narrator is somewhat confounded on finding that both her parents and Mr. Pirzada speak the same language, practice the same mannerism and prefer the same meal, yet they belong to two different nations. Culture is not subject to any territorial demarcation. Nation and nationality is a political phenomenon which keeps on changing with the changes of politics and principles. Culture is beyond politics and national boundary. What constitute a culture is a time tested composite institutions of society like family, kinship, religious institution, faith and festivity. If people appear to be

similar in these entire aspects irrespective of their colour, caste, creed, nationality, they belong to the same culture. In fact, the foremost identity of men can be cultural and linguistic identity, and it is this identity that most of diasporas struggle to maintain while living away from home.

As mentioned above, in Margaret Wilson we find the first stage of multiculturalism, that is, cultural and linguistic interaction. She strives to present the multicultural colour of India without any tinge of cultural confrontation. No doubt, the hostility due to different culture is witnessed in the works of Wilson, the political situation and religious activities of the time are more responsible for it. In fact, Wilson designs a narrative in which India gets manifested in all its colour and social reality. Unlike Wilson, in Lahiri's works the multicultural violence and hostility is presented with a view to assert one's own cultural identity. Interestingly, within the broader cultural set up, discrimination is also practiced on the basis of sub-cultural differences. In Lahiri's story 'A Real Darwan' the protagonist, Boorima, is an aged Bangladeshi national and a victim of political strife. In broader perspective there is no difference between the Bengali culture of India and Bangladesh, still she is discriminated and not accepted by the Bengalis of India as local.

After going through multicultural elements in both Lahiri and Wilson, it seems that, in deeper perspective their concern is identical and whatever differences that one can notice are that of degrees and not of kinds. Significantly Wilson deals with the very genesis of multicultural milieu, that is, diversity of language and religion as witnessed in her *Daughters of India* and stories included in *Tales of a Polygamous City*. In Jhumpa

Lahiri, the multilingual set up is intensified at international level to expose the very human tendency to be different while being placed in context of diverse human cultures and domestic affairs. Her *Interpreter of Maladies*, in a way seems to convey this concern of hers as she rightly sub-titled it as stories of "Bengal, Boston, and Beyond". These three words sum up the very essence of Lahiri's multiculturalism, that is, human beings are destined to be born in one place, brought up in another and beget somewhere else. The human culture is beyond physical borders and one can voluntarily decide the place of one's dwelling, as exemplified by Ashima of *The Namesake* who lives the true meaning of her name, that is, without border; here, there, and everywhere.

Notes:

1. By group differentiated rights I mean those rights which enable the diasporic people to practise their cultural traits in the host land, such as, wearing turbans for the Shikh, beard and 'burquas' for the Muslims, saris and vermillion for the Hindus. Such rights immediately set them apart from their local counterparts.

2. In a genuine multicultural context, one's identity is made intact only through its proper recognition in terms of its difference from the other. As such the politics of difference and recognition naturally infuses in the politics of identity formation in multicultural context.

3. Liberal multiculturalism focuses on the cultural practices of ethnic minorities propagating tolerance, pride and the celebration of diversity. It mainly restricts to the area of education and arts, and is depoliticized.

4. Cultural pluralism is a term used when smaller groups within a larger society maintain their unique cultural identities, and their values and practices are accepted by the wider culture provided they are consistent with the laws and values of the wider society. Cultural pluralism is often confused with Multiculturalism. Multiculturalism lacks the requirement for a dominant culture. The important advocates of the cultural pluralist movement were Horace Kallen, Randolph Bourne, Louis Adamic, and Leonard Covello.

5. The melting pot theory rationalized the coercive essence of Americanization by proposing that this approach would hasten the process of immigrants adopting the American culture, and also fostered a number of less explicit agendas, such as eradicating radical ideologies in America. The melting pot has functioned as a smelting pot, where the immigrants' languages and cultures flowed away as dross. The remaining molten mass could then be quickly and effortlessly shaped and imprinted by the dominant culture without resistance.

6. Critical multiculturalism encompasses the whole society and is highly politicized. It propagates recognition, rights and living with difference. It sees race and racism as fundamental issues and attempts to multiculturalize all areas of government and society.

7. a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.

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CHAPTER-IV

MYRIAD MODES OF SEXUALITY, ECOLOGY, PAIN AND AMBITION

> … it is from those who have suffered the sentence of history – subjugation, domination, displacement – that we learn our most enduring lessons.
>
> (Homi K. Bhabha , 1992: 435-465)

Diasporic literature can not shy away from sexuality and ecology of a particular cultural space. Due to different sexuality and ecology of the host land, the migrants often feel at a loss regarding their continuity with their native culture or acculturation with the host culture. This results in myriads of pain and trauma of the migrants. However, their traumas are more linked with their ambition and its fulfillment.

Treatment of Sexuality:

An open and uninhibited debate over the issues of sex, sexual desire and sexuality has, indeed, been a daunting task, though there is no denying the fact that the recent literary and cultural theories[1] have dealt extensively with the construction of human sexuality. However, before traversing ahead in this arena, it is imperative to know what 'sex', 'sexuality' and 'sexual desires' are. These terms are characterized by definitional illusiveness and any attempt to place them in a fixed definitional framework would result

in their further illusiveness. Nevertheless, sex can be described as behavioural attitude of a person in the process of sexual encounter. 'Sexuality generally refers to a person's sexual proclivities, and the practices in which s/he accordingly engages' (Cavallaro 108). Further, Foucault's work

> proposes that sexuality is not simply the natural *expression* of some inner drive or desire. The discourses of sexuality concern the operation of power in human relationships as much as they govern the production of a personal identity. (Purvis 435)

Sex and sexual desire are inextricably linked with sexuality and any discourse on sexuality naturally becomes a discourse on sex and sexual desire. If we look back into history, we will find that the norms of sexuality change in every age. Whatever, the norms may be, they centre around the concept of 'pleasure'[2] and 'procreation'[3]. It is this duality of function; pleasure and procreation that broadens the scope of the study of sexuality for when we talk of procreation, the biological status of sex inevitably gets focused, and when we talk of sex as pleasure we can not shy away from the standard of morality that demarcates all our action and behaviour. This makes the study of sexuality complex.

The starting point for any study of sexuality is biology, which demonstrates the identity of male and female; their basic similarities, the continuity in their development. Far from falling into two discrete groups, male and female have the same body ground-plan and even the anatomical difference is more apparent than real. Neither the phallus nor the womb are organs of one sex only: the female phallus (the clitoris) is the biological equivalent of the male organ, and men possess a vestigial womb, whose existence they

may well ignore until it causes enlargement of the prostate gland in old age. It is said that in the beginning both man and woman were attached to one body, but for some reason they were, later on, separated. Ever since that separation both man and woman approach each other to meet their lost part. This can further be elucidated by citing the myth of the merging of 'Shiva-Shakti' who symbolize male and female respectively. Shiva, the male phallus, is not separated from Shakti (female), rather He is complement to the latter. Shakti stands for energy which needs to be activated to let energy flow in every corner of this universe, and Shiva is the energizer (activator of energy); it is this unification of energy and energizer that constitutes the essence of human sexuality.

Speaking of human sexuality, Ann Oakley writes that it is different in male and female. Along with the male's greater aggression in other fields, goes his aggression in the sphere of sexuality. The female sexuality is "supposed to lie in her receptiveness and this is not just a matter of her open vagina; it extends to the whole structure of feminine personality" (Oakley 100), which is subject to socio-cultural set up. In fact the entire human personality is conditioned by the socio-cultural milieu. To put in other words, human sexuality has three quintessential components; biological, cultural and psychological; it is the harmony among them that results in a healthy human sexuality. To what extent human sexuality finds expression in the stories of Jhumpa Lahiri requires an exploration of sexuality with reference to its aforesaid three components, and for this purpose her "Interpreter of Maladies", "Sexy" and "The Treatment of Bibi Haldar" appear suitable.

"Interpreter of Maladies", the title story of Lahiri's book published in 1999, was an immediate success for her choice of subject, keenness of observation and, above all her narrative technique. The story hovers around an Americanized Indian family's (the Das family) visit to the Sun-Temple at Konark and unfurls through a very business-like encounter between Mrs. Das and Mr. Kapasi, a tourist guide cum taxi driver, who works as an interpreter to a doctor. The main narrative, developed with the journey towards the temple, gives birth to some vital sub-narratives in the story that cast light over the inherent nature and domestic life of the characters. The very beginning of the story reveals the frivolous relationship of Mr. and Mrs. Das who are less concerned with the things that could affect their conjugal bond. However, behind this surface relation lie more serious issues. Mrs. Das has three children- Ronny, Bobby and Jina, but Bobby is not from Mr. Das. The revelation of this fact by Mrs. Das herself to Mr. Kapasi constitutes the very crux of Lahiri's narrative device which reflects on the natural relationship between a man and a woman, apart from any traditional or cultural bindings. As noticed by Mr. Kapasi, the relationship of Mr. and Mrs. Das lacks the required warmth of conjugal affair which is identical to his own. His job of interpreter has never been admired by his wife, and the same job appears romantic to Mrs. Das who does not seem romantic about her husband anyway. Consequently, "Mr. Kapasi feels, Mr. and Mrs. Das were a bad match, just as he and his wife were" (53). The concept of marriage was evolved to curb aberrant sexuality which requires compatibility of couples on both physical and mental grounds. The lack of compatibility of any kind leads to the frustration of sexuality which, in turn, occasions the collapse of marital bond, though superficially the couples continue to live together. And this is corroborated by Mr.

Kapasi's confession of his marital discord and his observation of the same in the case of Mr. and Mrs. Das.

The growing intimacy of Mrs. Das with Mr. Kapasi, particularly her behaviour, "though borders on flirtation" (Mathur 259), reveals a lot about human sexuality. Her use of words like "romantic" and "have a lot in common" (46) is for Mr. Kapasi "mildly intoxicating" (53) which is coupled with the sight of Mrs. Das's body-contours prominent in her tight-fitting dress, and goes into the head of Mr. Kapasi who is probably unused to such treatment by a beautiful lady. The inception of sexual drive in Mr. Kapasi towards Mrs. Das is natural and spontaneously serious as we find in the course of the journey, the story turning into a "private conversation" (54) between the two. Their privacy intensifies during the observation of naked statues at the temple which both of them enjoy. However, Mr. Kapasi's feelings at the sight of naked female statues reveal the reserved and passive sexuality of the Indian who view sex mostly as taboo,

> ….. it occurred to him, as he, too, gazed at the topless women, that he had never seen his own wife fully naked. Even when they had made love she kept the panels of her blouse hooked together, the string of her petticoat knotted around her waist. He had never admired the backs of his wife's legs the way he now admired those of Mrs. Das, walking as if for his benefit alone. He had, of course, seen plenty of bare limbs before, belonging to the American and European ladies who took his tours. But Mrs. Das was different. Unlike the other women, who had an interest only in the temple, and kept their noses buried in a guidebook, or their eyes behind the lens of a camera, Mrs. Das had taken an interest in him. (58)

Though Mr. Kapasi is sexually inclined towards Mrs. Das, he gets a shocking jolt when Mrs. Das shares her secret with him for which reason he could not understand. Mrs.

Das' revelation is not just the revelation of secret, it is the revelation of pain, and she expects a kind of remedy from Mr. Kapasi, "I've been in pain eight years. I was hoping you could help me feel better, say the right thing. Suggest some kind of remedy" (65). The anguish of Mrs. Das correlates to the anguish of mythological Kunti[4] of *The Mahabharata*, who undergoes a similar kind of poignant experience. Both these women are characterized by easy excitability and susceptibility to temptation. It is the temptation that compels Mrs. Das to have physical relation with the Punjabi friend of her husband, and Kunti to exercise her divine blessings of invoking the heavenly figures, though in her case female excitability is more prominent. The consequence of such kind of nature is more poignant in the case of Mrs. Das as she brings up the child and simultaneously fosters the secret, while Kunti suffers from the pain of bringing up the fruit of a sexual act considered illicit.

It is said that human beings are polygamous/polyandrous by nature; they are in no way different from other creatures in their practice of sex if they are liberated from shackles of social norms. The natural man[5] (like D.H. Lawrence) believes that man can be happy if he gives up his civilized notion of living. In fact, the practices of sex are much older than the practices of human society, and hence, the sexual encounters of Kunti and Mrs. Das can not be explained on the anvil of any social norms. As already mentioned at the outset of this chapter, sex has dual purpose of pleasure and procreation; but most societies accentuate the latter at the cost of the former resulting in the collapse of the so-called socialized practice of sex, i.e., marriage. Despite her two children from Mr. Das, Mrs. Das does not feel anything romantic about her husband and their marital sexuality. The nature of Mrs. Das reflects the inherent nature of female sexuality which

prefers 'romance' (romance leading to pleasure) in the act of sex more than the act itself. It is this romance and pleasure that are often found absent in marital sex leading to extra/pre-marital one. In this sense, Mr. Kapasi, and the friend of Mr. Das work as substitutes to fill up the vacuum in the life of Mrs. Das created by her husband regarding the romance in her life.

Lahiri's "Sexy" presents the cultural aspects of human sexuality by juxtaposing the relationship of a man and a woman belonging to two different cultures in an extra-marital affair. The story seems to emphasize how modern social life has become sex-centred, in which "genuine love and friendship have been largely usurped by sex" (Mathur, 261). The loose sexuality of the Americanized Indian libertine, Dev and Laxmi's cousin's husband has been juxtaposed with the tradition-bound domestic sexuality of Laxmi and her cousin. Laxmi's cousin's husband's adultery is beyond the comprehension of both Laxmi and her cousin; the former is infuriated and sharply reacts, "If I were her I'd fly straight to London and shoot them both" (97), while the latter spends most of her days in weeping. What could be the cause of the husband's adultery? Is it infatuation towards the blonde or the un-fulfillment in domestic sexuality? True answer is indeed difficult to get as we cannot deny the lechery of the husband for he is enamoured of the enchanting body of his blonde mistress. There is a crucial relationship between the 'body' and 'sex'; the former is the stimulant of the latter; physical attraction and sexual stimulation are inextricably linked— it is the lack of both these things that leads to the collapse of the marital bond of Laxmi's cousin. To what extent body is related to sexuality can well be explained by the different sexual encounters of the central character of the story, Miranda, a professional mistress selling her body. When the story

opens, Miranda is engaged with the Indian married man, Dev whose love towards the former is more of a sexual exploit than the love of the real sort. She realizes this throughout her conversation with Rohin, the only child of Laxmi's cousin who reveals the fact as to why his father left his mother, "He (Rohin's father) sat next to someone he didn't know, some one sexy, and now he loves her instead of my mother" (108). Rohin's appreciation of Miranda as 'sexy' and his definition of the term "loving someone you don't know" (107) jolts the very faith of Miranda in Dev. This compels her to flashback her sexual experience with Dev when the latter had whispered her name during love-making, calling her, "You're sexy" (91). The flashback contemplation assists her to realize the extent to which she has fallen when an Indian approaches her and enters her whimsically without concern for her predilection.

Miranda's sexual experience with Dev reveals a hypocritical male response to female sexuality, particularly in Indian context. In an orthodox society like India, marital sexuality is often imposed under traditional values; and the partner when exposed to the liberal sexuality of the West tends to play a dubious role, by pretending loyalty to the married partner, and at the same time committing adultery by indulging in extramarital sexuality. Any judgment on the nature of human sexuality is a matter of the values established in a society. In any case the conflict between Sex (Nature) and moral values (Culture) is explicitly noticeable in the sexual pursuits of Dev and Miranda.

Looking at the sexual experience of Miranda from a different perspective, we can trace a mythical dimension in her entire response to Dev's sexuality. There is Mira in Miranda; Mira who stands for the devotional paramour of Lord Krishna. But

unfortunately she can only be a paramour, and not the marital partner, and so can be Miranda. There is a vast chasm, between Dev and Miranda; the chasm created by the sense of 'otherness' as suggested by the meaning of sexy "loving someone you don't know" (107). That is to say, Dev and Miranda do not know each other and their sexual encounters can well be equated with the sexual encounter of animals to gratify their biological need, devoid of any emotional attachment. To speak in other words, they represent the chasm between the East and the West; both appear to be different and mysterious to each other, and, yet, equally attracted. The difference between the East and the West is not only cultural, but also physical and colour-related, i.e., Dark (East) and Fair (West); these two opposites feel magnetic enticement between them for their strangeness and otherness leading to their physical union as exemplified by Dev (East/Dark) and Miranda (West/Fair), but due to the cultural alienation we witness hindrance in the attainment of a total sexual assimilation. Hence, culture plays a pivotal role in the shaping of human sexuality, even though it is biologically determined.

In "The Treatment of Bibi Haldar" Jhumpa Lahiri presents a different picture of sex – different from its two objectives of pleasure and procreation. Through the portrayal of a hysterical character, apart from highlighting the atrocious attitude of Indian society, Lahiri seems to emphasize the role of sex in the healing of physical deformity and mental retardation. Although a long period of suffering, humiliation and indifferent attitude of the relatives has emaciated Bibi Haldar physically and mentally, the fire of sexuality burns as intensely in her as in any normal human being: "Each day she (Bibi) unloaded her countless privations upon us, until it became unendurably apparent that Bibi wanted a man" (160). Bibi herself admits, "who takes me to the cinema, the zoo garden, buys me

lime soda and cashews? Admit it, are these concerns of mine? I will never be cured, never married" (161). This shows that her cure is related to her marriage, or vice-versa, which is also claimed by her doctor "a marriage would cure her" (161). Consequently, the neighbourhood takes great pains to transform her into a perfect lady and find her a suitable match, which, however, does not materialize. The failure of getting a husband further deteriorates Bibi's condition who is eventually forsaken by her relatives after the death of their newly-born child, thought to be the impact of Bibi's illness, and is forced to live an abject life of misery on the top of the roof at the mercy of the flat holders. She is then discovered to have conceived to the great surprise of the occupants. However, this stigma turns out to be a blessing as it cures Bibi and enables her to live a normal life with her fatherless child.

The very name of Bibi is symbolic and can be translated as 'wife'; she has been a wife without marriage, and so she can have a man but not a husband, an attribute granted by marriage. The narrator herself comments that "Bibi wants a man" (160); this desire for a man in the case of Bibi is the iteration that, despite being a disabled, she is a natural woman and hence needs a natural man free from any social bindings who can gratify her sexual desire; the desire which is whetted by her lasting hysteria. It is said that for a patient of hysteria, sexual intercourse is a panacea, and so it seems in the case of Bibi. To speak in other words, sex in this story is used as purgation and sex as social stigma again raise the conflict between sex and culture, and they need to be distanced if the former is meant to be used clinically. We can not apply traditional moral values in our assessment of the sexuality of Bibi Haldar, and yet, we cannot shy away from the question of the legitimacy of her child. This complicates any pursuit of distancing sex from culture.

The purgation of Bibi Haldar can well be correlated with Kubuja of *The Mahabharata*. Like Bibi, Kubuja also suffers humiliation and indifference of people due to her physical deformity till she is cured by the touch of Lord Krishna. The metamorphosis of Kubuja into a fairy damsel is like Bibi's transformation into a normal lady. In both the cases touch plays a significant role; one is a divine touch while the other is a phallic touch— both aim to salvage the recipient from their respective maladies. This glorifies the status of sex and raises it from its constrictive image of taboo and baser instinct.

Myths[6] are dormant in the racial memory. They remain instinctual and get reflected in our activities and thoughts very often on their own. Jhumpa Lahiri has pondered on such influences. A second generation expatriate exile, aware of the matrices of real cultural beliefs and practices, her writings delve deep into the complex designs of living and experiencing the varied contours of sexuality.

The cultural perspective of human sexuality is dwelt upon in a very complex manner in the works of Margaret Wilson. In *Daughters of India*, striking contrast can be witnessed between the perspectives of Pariah women and Davida to sexuality. The word 'virgin' used by Pariah women to address Davida carries a sense of both wonder and humiliation. For Pariah women, it is a kind of astonishment to see a stunningly beautiful woman unmarried and without a mate. It is quite natural for them to get married in early adolescence and beget children while for Davida the same age is for play and learning. Sexuality in case of Pariah is practiced without understanding the true essence of issues like marriage associated with it. For Davida, sexuality means surrendering oneself to

someone one loves deeply. Her love is Ferguson and with his death her desire for sexual surrendering somewhat disappears. To love any other man does not come to her mind, though she is much admired by her male compatriots. She is painfully astonished to see the Pariah women changing their partner easily.

In the novel the character of Davida is sexually juxtaposed with the character of Taj, a young school teacher and a beautiful widow who suddenly disappears from the town. The story initially begins to unfold around Taj's disappearance, which is then followed by the disappearance of first Ramsey and later of Davida. By the end of the narrative, the novel makes clear the distinction between the attitudes to love/sex in the western world and India largely through the figures of Davida and Taj, and the reason behind their disappearance. Davida disappears in order to take care of a pregnant woman while Taj disappears to meet her lover and elope. In contrasting Davida as American, white and in love with memory and faithful to the past, and Taj as Indian, black, and in love with herself and the present, the novel reflects racial differences to the differing attitudes to love and sexuality. This contrast is well manifested in the narrative when Taj returns to the mission after her elopement and marriage and visits to Davida, who asks what she will do if her husband comes for her earlier than she expects,

> Taj smiled then. Or the memory of many little kisses hovered smiling on her red lips. She turned her face away …
>
> 'A woman's place ', she said, 'is in her home. In that case I would go home with him'.
>
> She went serenely away to Miss Bhose's, leaving Davida stricken again of an old passion – sick unto death, she felt. Life, of a sudden, was'nt good enough. It

> wasn't worthwhile. … I can't let her, that naughty little native sweeper, stir me up all through and through, again. What do I care if she marries? They marry every day. They love easily. Anybody will do for them. (161-162)

From the narrative, it appears that passion is, bodily–written on the lips or the naked body. However, it also immediately and sharply delineates the difference between Davida and Taj in

> racialized terms that also become classed terms (Taj is a school teacher and not a sweeper). Difference is written on the abject working class and racialized body rather than on the bourgeois white body. (Crane xiv)

Significantly, Margaret Wilson presents cultural sexuality in *Daughters of India* in terms of chastity and virginity. She writes,

> American reader must here consider the neglected fact that only civilizations which had been able someway to exact a high standard of celibate morality from their women joke about their accomplishment. The less chastity there is in any society, the higher seems its value to both sexes. The more comfortable men are about their mothers', their wives' and their sisters' abundant supply of it, the more they enjoy other women's convenient lack of it. Worship of virginity has perhaps grown up generally in societies prepared for it by satiety and corruption. India, fatally oversexed, burned to death ages ago emotionally by a lust unrestraint by religion and encouraged by climate– India lacks no elements of readiness to worship virginity. (54)

Consequently, Davida is forced right from the beginning to realize unhappily that in a country where men pursue beautiful, shinning, clean silver dollar, life is more invigorating, more diverting, more free and delightful to women than one in which men pursue desire. In such environment she finds almost intolerably tiresome and knows from experience that

> nothing annoys an ordinary unmarried Anglo-Saxon woman so much as the continually called a holy virgin– except, perhaps, its antithesis. The degree of your virginity, said Davida, is something decent people don't speculate about aloud. But here – in this place! (54)

Wilson's treatment of sexuality is a part of broader colonial sexuality[7] which maintained prostitution in healthy way to cater to sexual urges of the British soldiers. However, when the women lost their physical luster and got infected, they were dumped in some hospitals and charity centre to suffer and die. The dying sister is an apt example in this context. The dying sister is the outcome of the darkest side of colonial sexuality. The inter-cultural sexuality is marked with lust and licentiousness devoid of any warmth and love. For the White colonial, the Indian tropical sexuality is a noble experience and, to some extent, an exotic too. The sexual attraction towards "other" is a recurring motif in the stories of Lahiri and Wilson. However this interaction is the result of lust and love for experiencing different sexuality. The relation with Dev and Miranda in Lahiri's "Sexy", Pronab and Deborah in "Hell-Heaven" is a typical example of inter-cultural sexual attraction.

Margaret Wilson casts light on the inherent negativity of Indian Muslim sexuality which allows men to practice polygamy, even to the extent of marrying a girl younger to once's own daughter. Her story "Waste" is symbolically the story of the waste of the sexulity of innocent Ayshan, a little girl, who is married to an elderly person having a married daughter. The white narrator minutely observes the psycho-sexual changes occurring in Ayshan with the passage of time. As a child Ayshan is very frolic and interested in learning English, but her marriage nips her desire in bud. She spends her time at her in-laws house playing with her step children. However, a significant change

occurs in her when she attains sixteen. Her attainment of adolescence makes her realize her own growing sexuality and the indifferent sexuality of her aged husband. The narrator is astonished to witness the unbelievable change in her when she one day visits her house and finds her in the arms of a young man,

> Through the open door at the top of the stairway, I saw Ayshan, sitting on a cot, cuddled down in the arms of a man.
>
> They saw me, and rose; and speaking most deferentially in English, he passed me and disappeared down the stair. It was her husband's oldest son. There she stood: at least, there stood someone— (185).

The narrator for a while is spellbound at such scene and confounded whether it was Ayshan or somebody else. She deluses herself thinking that it must all have been a trick of the moonlight, because there was shining around her white draperies a light, a green halo. But her delusion breaks when she hears,

> 'Come in, Miss Sahib,' she cried. 'Oh, come in!'
>
> Her voice, too, was strange. It had its halo.
>
> She came up to me. I turned her toward the moon. I saw it was Ayshan, but her face was new— I can't describe its glory. Even the jasmine at her ears and throat was shinning. She hid her head on my shoulder, and said,-- in that voice,-- ' O Miss Sahib!'
>
> I was too amazed to know what to say. I stammered out,--
>
> 'Why, Ayshan, my dear child, are you perfectly crazy? Who is that?'
>
> She answered—her words dancing, 'Oh, that's my son – my son'.

> I stood staring at her, and she said, 'Oh, I didn't know there was any thing in the world like this. I wanted someone to tell it to!'
>
> I burst out,-- from the depths of my fear for her,-- ' You need n't bother to tell anyone. They must all know. Your mother-in –law might have come more quietly. His wife might have come—anyone might have! They will find out and tell your husband. He'll kill you for this, Ayshan, and you know it. He'll take no explanation.' (185-186)

The conversation between the narrator and Ayshan truthfully authenticates the practice of incest in sexually conservative society. However, here the biological aspect of sexuality is also witnessed. Basic human instincts like "sex" cannot be called by imposing any restriction; it needs a source for outlet. The socio-source of sexual outlet is no doubt marriage, but when it fails the socially unaccepted agency take over it. The marriage between Ayshan and her husband cannot be justified on the sexual compatibility. Consequently she finds sexual shelter in the arm of her son-in-law. Significantly she does not have any regret for committing incest. When she after knowing her relation with her son, she nonechallantly replies;

> " 'It's safe enough,' she answered, glowing. 'Is he not my son? And anyway, we've never been caught yet'. (186)

Ayshan does not realize the outcome of her act, and finds it quite comfortable. The narrator here seems to reflect on the sexual immaturity of an adolescent which seeks for pleasure ignoring all social obligations. Ayshan is the victim of the teenage sexual immaturity. It is this immaturity that makes Ayshan to surrender herself to her own son-in-law. In adolescence everything appears to be marvelous and acceptable even though it

is not in reality. In the following quotation the narrator's maturity and Ayshan's immaturity concerning sexuality finds an ample expression,

> 'Oh!' I exclaimed, 'he tells you it's safe. He won't be the one who will die for it. Don't you remember what happened to Phul— of your own caste? This house so full of people!'
>
> Her manner changed, and she said with a sort of desperation,--
>
> 'I don't care for a minute whether it's dangerous or not. I don't care a bit if I do die for it. It's worth dying for. Ah, he loves me so! No one else loved me like that. I say to you that in his very voice there is love when he speaks to me.'
>
> 'I have no doubt he loves generally,' I retorted. 'Oh, my dear, he is not worth this!'
>
> 'he never loves anyone anyone but me' she replied, delighting even in the sound of the words.' Oh, I am going away with him. I am going with with him forever—forever!'
>
> I was so sorry that joy had come to her in this fatal way that I felt as if it could die to make her happy. Sometimes dying for others seems easy. I was so sure of what she was going to pay for this that I smelled pools of blood. I could see her, lying kicked into a corner—crushed, broken. (186)

Wilson seems to voice the pain that naturally comes with romance, love and sex. Her story "The Story of Sapphire" is a poignant tale of a *conjuri* named Sapphire who engages in marital sex with already a married person. No doubt Sapphire's marriage to Judge Faiz Ali brings her social dignity, but it lasts till her husband's interest lasts in her. Thus, in the works of Wilson different social facets of human sexuality get reflected. But interestingly, instead of concentrating only on the sexual pleasure, she penetrates deep into the inherent pain and malaises of human sexuality.

Treatment of Ecology:

Nature has always played a pivotal role in the shaping of literature. However, in recent time nature has been viewed differently under the ecocriticism[8]; emphasis has been laid on the relation between man and his natural surrounding in all its manifestations. Significantly, Sherry B. Ortner wrote an essay "Is Female to Male as Nature to culture?" in 1974 which gave birth to ecofeminism. Ecofeminism is at present used to analyse almost every genre of literature. In Jhumpa Lahiri and Margaret Wilson traces of Ecology and ecofeminism can be easily seen.

In the story "Unaccustomed Earth", Ruma's father makes a short visit to her. During his visit he starts giving shape to the otherwise withered garden within the campus of Ruma's apartment. He collects different species of flowers and plants them in a systematic and scientific method, and very soon the garden appears to be the garden of a professional gardener. In fact, 'garden' appears in every work of Lahiri which suggests her ecological concern.

Garden in "Unaccustomed Earth" in deeper import stands for gardening a family. Human social system has a close link with system of nature. As nature encompasses both concordant and discordant elements in its arm, so is the society. Ruma's father's nurturing of a garden is significant in itself. An elderly person having a wife long dead, living a life of a traveler, arrives to his inter-culturally married daughter to spend a few days. In initial stage the discord between father and daughter is quite visible. But within a

few days Ruma finds her father useful as her son Akash finds comfortable in his company. But Ruma's father is on sojourn, and during his short stay spends much of his time in nurturing a garden in which he plants flowers of different species, makes a small pond for his grandson to play, and also does all sorts of things to garnish the garden. His effort is the manifestation of human tendency to be with nature. Ruma's father's nurturing of a garden also suggests a man's latent desire to be with woman. Nature is female, and since Ruma's mother has been long dead, her father has been without a companion and the gardening provides him a companion. Since he has lost his wife (female/Nature) long ago, his care for the garden equates his longings to care and nurture his wife. Man cannot live alone; he must need a companion, and in case of Ruma's father garden replaces his wife.

In modern world, no doubt, industrialization and technology has outlived nature, nature's position has still remained intact in human heart. The association between culture and nature is well conveyed through the cover page of Lahiri's work *Unaccustomed Earth*. A vacant chair with a flower pot and electric lamp on a table in one side and a telephone on the other side with a tree in the background speaks a lot about the life of people narrated in the stories. The chair and lamp is fore-grounded which indicates the upper hand of culture over nature which is receded in the background. The contemporary human life is lost in occupying the chair which stands for position and status. It is this search of position that has taken away the diasporic people both from their home and nature. The perfect man is one who can nurture nature anywhere. Ruma's father is a real man of the Earth. He belongs to Earth and Earth to him, that is why, he can create a garden in a foreign land. While the other characters live in foreign land but

do not spare their precious time to create a garden. Creating a garden means interacting with soil and natural surrounding. Unless and until one can understand the nature of soil and the climate of the place one cannot become fully adoptable to that soil. In this sense the garden in the story "Unaccustomed Earth" is quite symbolic. Moreover, 'garden' in "An Unaccustomed Earth" also suggests man's tendency to create life in an alien land as suggested in the epilogue. This tendency has been suggested in the cover page of Lahiri's *The Namesake*

Lahiri's *The Namesake* also contains a cover that speaks a volume about the character portrayed in the novel. On the front cover page there is a tree with two leaves and on the back cover page there is a well bloomed flower. The front cover picture stands for root and sprouting of leaves; the arrival of Ashok and Ashima on an alien land, while the back cover picture suggests the fruits of their struggle on an alien land. Between the root and flower we find a stem which keeps them connected. Flower which is cherished and is the symbol of joy stands for the life of Ashok and Ashima in the U.S. They make their home there with Gogol and Sonia but all the time they keep themselves adhered to the root. However this connection between roots and flower is with the first generation (first stem). The second generation (Gogol and Sonia) somehow find somewhat indifferent towards their root which results in much of their disorientation. Thus, Lahiri's work through pictorial cover gives a hint about the life and world portrayed therein. In this way the cover page, with the help of ecological allusions, constitutes the very essence and gist of the novel.

Similarly, Margaret Wilson's novel *Daughters of India*, through its cover page picture: a hut with earthen pot and a bullock cart in front of it, a white woman in western attire sitting on the front of lowered bullock cart and the rustic Indian pariah women sitting on the ground with their veils on. This is the picture of the Flowery Basti where Davida herself has planted a tree of peace to be taken care of by the pastor Jalal and his wife Begum. In this novel life and characters portrayed are nearer to nature; no touch of industrial corruption is seen. The people are engaged in the struggle of survival as they lack the basic need of life, they are left to the mercy of nature regarding their health and hygiene.

Garden is an integral part of European life[9]. In a way Gardening is typical to European culture. Garden means order, caring, nurturing, arranging, and governing and the person who is fond of garden inherits all this qualities. European tendency to gardening is a part of colonial design to order the disorganized Orient. In much of the stories of Wilson garden runs parallel to the thematic texture. In *Daughters of India,* Wilson connects garden with Christianity. Davida's planting of a flower which stands for peace and blossoms on the Christmas is the evidence of how missionaries were associated with gardening during the colonial Raj,

> 'This plant', she went on, thoughtfully, 'is very good Christian plant, rejoicing much in peace. And it says to itself, "I will grow and grow and grow and I will be red, red for the Great Day, for joy that there is to be peace instead of wars and fighting". I knew you were a peaceful lot. I knew this plant would be happy and thrive in the school. But if, by any chance (I don't suppose it is really necessary to mention this to you, even) but if at this time of the year, there should be a – well , unpleasantness – strife – you know – '

> ‘Ah, *we* know!’ someone broke in sarcastically.
>
> ‘Well, in that case, this plant –’ she did hesitate a bit just there. She saw it was impressing them – and she paused.
>
> ‘Will be blasted and withered away’, a little girl finished for her, solemnly.
>
> They were silent. They looked curiously at it.
>
> ‘Will it really be blasted and withered away?’ they asked.
>
> ‘It will certainly be very - unhappy. It might cry – at night, when you can’t see it.’
>
> ‘Might it, really?’
>
> ‘It *might*, I said. I – have never tried the effect of a good fight on a poinsettia myself. I wouldn’t dare to.’
>
> ‘You’d better take it home with you. This is no place for it.’
>
> Some one also asked, ‘does even swearing disagree with it?’
>
> ‘It flourishes more under kind words.’ She felt comparatively safe, it was unlikely that there would be another outbreak of billingsgate before Christmas. (38)

By taking a plant, Davida aims to spread the basic values of Christianity that is love and peace among the Pariahs of the Flowery Basti.

The portrayal of landscape is an inseparable part of Wilson’s narrative. Her keen observation of the natural surrounding reveals the western perspective to the Indian tropical environment. In the story, “Taffeta Trousers”, a mesmerizing landscape

description is presented from a moving train, in which the narrator is traveling, which reveals typical Indian colour,

> Forty-Eight hours north of Calcutta, as the train passed between walls of swamp-grass and willows, I stood expectantly at the car window. My friend had said repeatedly, 'Be sure you look out at the city when you get to the river.' And as I waited – suddenly no more wall, but a great distance of gray sand stretching away to the purple foothills of the Himalayas, whose eternal snows glimmered shell-pink in the sunset. Far away, this stream of soft sand was bound on either side by olive-green groves, and above it shone the highest, bluest sky I has ever seen.
>
> The train hurried over a mile and a half of river-bed, and drew near to the river, flowing deep and green against a brick wall. Beyond the wall, flat-roofed palaces rose through the haze of blue smoke which came from the evening cooking. And near me I saw, screened from the street beyond, brick stairs, under the branches of great overhanging trees, naked women were bathing and some, wetly draped, were lifting filled water-pots of brass to their heads. I saw this, and the train drew into the city. And I saw wide crowded streets, above which, very high in the air, great gnarled branches of the *sheshem* trees on both sides met in cathedral arches. And the streets of that city were pure gold. (721)

Here in the excerpt "pure gold" is a metaphor of affluent natural setting of India. The bounty of nature and its freshness provides the narrator a feeling of pure gold,

> … of course there are no streets of gold, yet I was ridding down one of them. Through those lofty branches, shafts of rosy gold were slanting down over us, making the little leaves above us shine like copper, and lighting into glory clouds of dust kicked up by laden donkeys and flocks of goats. (721)

In "Taffeta Trousers", Wilson gradually veers her narrative from purely natural setting to the context of Man-Nature interaction. In the narrative cited above the very essence of Indian condition is projected in which nature and human dwellings are interlocked.

Moreover, it also reveals the western voyeurism which seeks exoticism in every aspect of India.

Metaphors of Pain and Ambition:

Diasporic existence is a sentence of history; a sentence that inflicts both corporeal and mental agonies, as an inevitable part of human experience. History is witness of the arousal of unfathomed agony and trauma in humankind when placed in diasporic condition. The very seeds of human diaspora germinated in the traumatic exile of Adam and Eve from heaven to an alien earth. In both Jhumpa Lahiri and Margaret Wilson, the metaphor of pains and ambitions runs through in integrated and intricate manner. Significantly pains and ambitions are part and parcel of diasporic existence. Lahiri weaves her narratives in such a manner that characters are compelled to experience the poignant consequences of their ambition, the ambition that takes them away from the place of their origin.

The seed of trauma theory lies in the Freudian psychoanalysis as revaluated after the mid 1990s, and focused on the psychological, philosophical, ethical and aesthetic questions about the nature and representation of traumatic events. Freudian psychoanalysis provides a model of traumatic subjectivity and accounts for the effect of trauma on memory. Though Freud primarily intends to apply trauma and memory as clinical measures, he turns to literature to describe traumatic experience because literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relationship between knowing and not knowing. It is at this specific point of knowing and not knowing that the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience and the language of literature meet.

Freud's most significant works dealing with trauma are "Moses and Monotheism" and "Beyond the Pleasure Principles". "Moses and Monotheism" is Freud's ambitious attempt to show that the return of the 'repressed' and the process of distortion of the 'repressed revived' determine the formation of religious and historical thought. For the analysis and justification of this point Freud considers the history of Jewish people; a history which can well be regarded as history of trauma. The ideas in "Beyond the Pleasure Principles" (1920) are drawn from the traumatic experience of World War-I (1914-18), which mostly centre on Freud's concern with the memory of events. However, Freud in this work seems to emphasize that it is not only the memory of trauma but also the trauma of memory that is important in releasing the psychical trauma. Freud's dealing with trauma, no doubt, apparently seems to be a study of the pathological but it is also important in the study of the shifts and changes of society and history, and in the perspective of looking at the contemporary literary texts that emerged in the middle of last-decade of 20th century.

The principal propounders of trauma theory are Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman and Geoffrey Hartman. Cathy Caruth, in particular, in her book *Unclaimed Experience* recognizes the possibility of a history no longer based on simple models of straightforward experience and reference. Through the notion of trauma, she contends that the sense of history is far beyond our immediate understanding. Caruth's view problematizes the very perception and conceptualization of trauma. There are numerous factors at work in the formation of trauma, and this further leads her to view as a crisis of experience and temporality.

Trauma is always associated with some kind of 'loss' or the 'presence' of loss in psyche, and in this sense Freud's notion of "object loss" in "Mourning and Melancholia" (1984) as also Derrida's notion of 'presence'[11], acquire a focal point in the discussion of trauma. The "object loss" indicates what is physically absent but psychically ever remains with us. Such a felling of loss is excruciatingly painful particularly when it is related to our existential essence of being and includes our culture, nation, ethnicity and history. It is such a trauma that we witness in diasporic writings. "Trauma", as Caruth says, "is deeply tied to our own historical realities" (12), which are rarely space-specific. For this reason the exact dating of trauma is less important than the "posterior resubjectifications and the restructuring of the subject, that is the consequence" (Rauch 113). To define trauma as a consequence of an event, Juliet Mitchell observes,

> (trauma) must create a breach in a protective covering of such severity that it cannot be coped with by the usual mechanisms by which we deal with pain or loss. …. In trauma we are untimely ripped. (21)

Mitchell's view corroborates Freud's opinion that trauma is augmented by the memory of traumatic event more than the event itself. In such a curious relationship of past and present regarding the trauma of event, we find that all human beings are bound in their sense of acts and thoughts, their national, cultural and ethical values. It is this aspect of trauma that is handled by the theory of trauma in literature. Literature has had an intimate relationship with trauma right from its loss of something invaluable and unforgettable.

Mourning and Trauma are integrally linked. To quote Freud again,

> Mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or the loss of some abstraction which has taken place, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal so on. (251-252).

The mourning of loss may transform into trauma when we do not find any substitute for the lost one in the new scheme of things. In diasporic existence the mourning of loss may acquire such a dimension of recurring trauma and of all that is associated with it.

Pain in *Interpreter of Maladies* serves as a method of expressing inexpressible. In "A Temporary Matter", there is a pain of losing a newly born baby and in "Interpreter of Maladies", there is a pain of being disloyal to husband and also keeping secret of begetting illicit child. While "When Mr. Pirzada came to Dine", "Sexy", "Mrs. Sen's" and "Third and Final Continents" present the pain of displacement, the story "A Real Durwan" and "The Treatment of Bibi Haldar" presents the pain of subjugation. Significantly, the pain of displacement is the outcome of ambition of making life better abroad. This is most explicitly expressed in *The Namesake* in which Ashoke and Ashima come to America just after their marriage for Ashoke's desire of seeking better future.

A reconsideration of major characters' predicament in the novel – Ashoke, Ashima, Gogol, Sonia and Moushumi – unfolds the high intensity psychological disturbance and uprooting they live with. Ashima typifies the highly disturbing experience of a person away from home. The novel commences with her painful pregnancy and child-bearing abroad and culminates in her final decision to divide the rest of her life between India and America. In the U.S. she does her best to perform the role of a perfect homemaker in an otherwise alien place and to become a cementing force in holding up the traditional India values against the largely materialistic value of American

life. However, the fear of losing her Bengali cultural values and of her children's neglect of their original culture secretly torments her. The rumblings of the trauma emanating from such a fear are easily noticeable during her labour pain in the very first chapter:

> It's not so much the pain, which she known, somehow, she will survive. It's the consequences: motherhood in a foreign land…. Throughout the experience, in spite of her growing discomfort, she'd been astonished by her body's ability to make life exactly as her mother and grandmother and all her great grandmothers had done. That it was happening so far from home, unmonitored and unobserved by those she loved, had made it more miraculous still. But she is terrified to raise a child in a country where she is related to no one, where she knows so little, where life seems so tentative and spare. (6)

During such a period of emotional unhinging, the only source of comfort for Ashima is the *Desh* magazine that "she'd brought to read on her plane ride to Boston and still cannot bring herself to throw away" (6), in addition of the supporting hand of her husband, Ashoke. Through her traumatic labour pain, her acute feeling of isolation and her memories of Calcutta, Lahiri presents her at two levels: as a 'woman' and as a 'mother', The former is naturally linked with the latter, particularly in the Indian cultural context where a woman accomplishes full womanhood after attaining motherhood. Such a feeling also endows her with a mysterious strength to endure the excruciatingly painful period of delivery. It is this strength, which supports Ashima during the traumatic period of delivery. She is determined to bear the pain of giving birth to a new life in an unknown land and to survive.

Little acquaintance with the place, people and culture of the United States augments Ashima's agony of failure in performing her functions as her parents did. Her

problem compounds when, the baby is delivered but her grandmother (who stays in India) has yet not assigned a name to it, the couple confronts the immediacy of christening it. They are faced with the rule of recording the name of the boy in the hospital book before discharge. To get rid of this dilemma they temporarily christen the baby as Gogol; the name which harbours the secret of a traumatic event in Ashoke's life. The whole episode reveals her intense desire for holding fast to the convention of the homeland and equally intense pain at the failure to do so due to circumstances. Lahiri captures this emotional state of Ashima when the fellow Bengali expatriates visit them:

> For as grateful as she feels for the company of the Nandis and Dr. Gupta, these acquaintances are only substitutes for the people who really ought to be surrounding them. Without a single grandparent or parent or uncle or aunt at her side, the baby's birth, like most everything else in America, feels somehow haphazard, only half rue. As she strokes and suckles and studies her son, she can't help but pity him. She has never known of a person entering the world so alone, so deprived. (24-25)

Through the existential struggle of Ashima, Lahiri presents the pang of a woman as wife living in diaspora; a pang caused by a sense of isolation. She is isolated from both the local society (despite there are occasional exchanges) and her own society, which is further intensified by Ashoke's inability to give more time to Ashima due to his professional assignments. Ashima lives with her children and when the children are away she engages herself in cooking, arranging clothes, reading or watching T.V. She continues with her temporary work at library, but with ever-increasing sense of being alone despite the presence of her husband and children. At the age of forty-eight when her husband goes out of Boston for nine months on a research project she finally seems to realize the enormity of solitary existence:

> At forty-eight she has come to experience the solitude that her husband and son and daughter have already known, and which they claim not to mind. "It's not such a big deal", her children tell her. "Every one should live on their own at some point". But Ashima feels too old to learn such skill. She hates returning in the evening to a dark; empty house, going to sleep on one side of the bed and waking up on another. (161)

Her acquiescence in living in the empty house is suggestive of her going to spend the rest of her life alone which is starkly reinforced when Ashoke suddenly dies soon after his departure from Boston. The death of her husband changes the course of Ashima's life and sets in motion a series of suffering for her; she is saddened to see the break off of Gogol and Maxine— a break- off occasioned by Gogol's growing awareness of filial duty and his sense of responsibility. Ashima cannot bear Gogol living a lonely life and so she endeavours towards engaging him with Moushumi; a girl whom Gogol knew in childhood. However, their marital bond could not last for long and this further adds to the agony of Ashima as she herself had taken initiative for their marriage:

> That it was she who had encouraged Gogol to meet Moushumi will be something for which Ashima will always feel guilty. How could she have known? But fortunately they have not considered it their duty to stay married, as the Bengalis of Ashoke and Ashima's generation do. They are not willing to accept, to adjust, to settle for something less than their ideal of happiness. That pressure has given way, in the case of the subsequent generation, to American common sense. (276)

In this quoted excerpt, the initial fear of Ashima regarding the weakening of traditional ties in the second generation comes true. However, she feels somewhat reassured to know that Sonia will be happy with Ben whose marriage is to be solemnized in Calcutta.

Interestingly, the novel begins with the departure of Ashima from Calcutta (in the background) and ends with her anticipated arrival in Calcutta. In this sense, the novel seems to be an epic about the going away from home and also about 'homecoming'. At the centre of this departure and arrival is the life of Ashima divided between 'home' and 'away from home'. Ashima's trauma of living two lives of vastly different kinds, Indian and American, draws attention to the true meaning of her name , i.e., broderlessness or homelessness despite having a home. Probably, a man's life can never be put within a border, but to live a life it is imperative that one has a particular place to call it a home. It is this 'home', which is central to the existence of Ashima. As long as she is at Pamberton Road, she considers Clacutta as her home, but when it is time to sell her house at Pamberton Road, she feels a mysterious pain within her and is hurt to think:

> They will knock down the wall between the living and dining rooms, put an island in the kitchen, track lights overhead…. Listening to their plans, Ashima had felt a moment's panic…. (275)

The house that she has decorated for such a long period will now change and its past will be lost forever. The sense of this loss torments Ashima, and its memory always stays as a kind of trauma for her. It seems that Ashima is living a life of memory; the memory of Calcutta when she is in the States, and the memory of the States when she is in Calcutta. In this sense, she is a citizen of third space; a trishanku, neither of Calcutta nor of America. This *trishanku* existence is at the centre of diasporic trauma, and Ashima is a true representative of such an existence.

The traumatic experience of Ashoke is in the nature of a psychical wound; a process which, according to Roger Luckhurst.

> took place over the course of the latter half of the nineteenth century. It was the product not just of emerging mental sciences, but also of Victorian modernity. The shocks produced by railway accidents were first thought to be the result of direct physical jars to nervous constitution, an illness termed 'railway-spine'. (498)

The train accident that Ashoke had at the age of 20 impinges on his psyche deeply, apart from changing him physically for he had a limp after the accident for the rest of his life. The train accident and its aftermath mysteriously establish a rapport between two strangers, Ashoke's lifelong remembrance of the story "The Overcoat", his feeling of association with its protagonist, and his realization that all beings have an experience of pain one way or the other impact and haunt him for the rest of his life.

> Ashoke was always devastated when Akaky was robbed in "a square that looked to him like a dreadful desert", leaving him cold and vulnerable, and Akaky's death, some pages later, never failed to bring tears to his eyes. In some ways the story made less sense each time he read it, the scenes he pictured so vividly, and absorbed so fully, growing more elusive and profound. Just as Akaky's ghost haunted the final pages, so did it haunt a place deep in Ashoke's soul, shedding light on all that was irrational, all that was inevitable about the world. (14)

More significant is the fact that Ashoke was reading this story when he was crushed beneath the railway debris and it was the dropping of this book from his hand that drew the attention of rescue team. Such an association of a man and a book may seem a coincidence, but its overbearing force cannot be ignored considering the magnitude of its impact on the psyche of Ashoke. In fact, Ashoke's life seems to be the gift of the book and this intensifies the memory of the event and his consistent feeling of gratitude to the author. Ashoke himself whole-heartedly acknowledges this:

> Although it is Ashima who carries the child, he, too, feels heavy, with the through of life, of his life and the life about to come from it. He was ….. nearly killed at twenty-two. He tastes the dust on his tongue, sees the twisted train, the giant over-turned iron wheels. None of this was supposed to happen. But ….. he had survived it. He was born twice in India, and then a third time, in America. Three lives by thirty. For this he thanks his parents, and the parents of their parents. He does not thank God; he openly reveres Marx and quietly refuses religion. But there is one more dead soul he has to thank. He cannot thank the book; the book has perished, as he nearly did, in scattered pieces, in the earliest hour of an October day, in a field 209 kilometers from Calcutta. Instead of thanking God he thanks Gogol, the Russian writer who had saved his life. (21)

For Ashoke, to convey his gratitude to Gogol, nothing seems more befitting than to name his son after him, even as it is also occasioned by compulsion of circumstance. Be that as it may, his limp and his boy Gogol always remind him of the accident and keep his pang and fear afresh and his gratitude to the writer deep. That Gogol is named after the memory of such a traumatic event is kept secret from him. Ashoke also bears hidden agony for nurturing this secret- a secret that constitutes the essence of his being. However, when Gogol attains his 20th year, Ashoke lets out this secret to him, and the disclosing is as tormenting as the event was. Ashoke's emotional state is so touching that Gogol psychologically goes through that traumatic event and feels the pain of his father:

> Gogol listens, stunned, his eyes fixed on his father's profile. Though there are only inches between them, for an instant his father is a stranger, a man who kept a secret, has survived a tragedy, a man whose past he has not fully known. A man who is vulnerable, who has suffered in an inconceivable way. He imagines his father in his twenties as Gogol is now, sitting on a train as Gogol had just been, reading a story, and then suddenly nearly killed. He struggles to picture the West Bengal countryside he has seen on only a few occasions, his father's mangled body, among hundreds of dead ones, being carried on a stretcher, past a twisted

> length of marooned compartments. Against instinct he tries to imagine life without his father, a world in which his father does no exist. (123)

This psychic experience of Gogol reveals to him a new significance of his pet name (Gogol, Nikhil is his real name). It is bound up with a catastrophe his father has been haunted by for years. The realization of the significance of his name in the life of Ashoke is so overwhelming that he asks his father:

> 'Do I remind you of that night?'
>
> 'Not at all', his father says eventually, one hand going to his ribs,
>
> A habitual gesture that has baffled Gogol until now. 'You remind me of everything that followed'.(124)

In the representation of the trauma of Ashoke and Ashima, the first generation immigrants in the novel, the memory of events in the homeland holds the sway. It is this memory that strengthens Ashima's endurance to create her homeland in an alien land and induces Ashoke to perpetuate his obligation to Gogol through his son's name. It is the creation of meaning from a traumatic event; a meaning, which has universal implications for Ashoke and Gogol, i.e., Man's life is uncertain and a displaced entity aggravates the pain of life.

The second-generation immigrants' trauma links up with such a crisis of identity, and obstructs in the development of effective relationship between self and place. When Gogol and Sonia visit Calcutta as children they do not feel Calcutta to be their home for they have grown up in Boston. However, they soon develop an attachment for the place

and the people, and when they return to Pamberton Road after their vacation they have a feeling of being a stranger:

> Though they are home they are disconcerted by the space, by the uncompromising silence that surrounds them. They still feel somehow in transit, still disconnected from their lives… (87)

This attachment with the place has been at the centre of the suffering of diasporas. They long for their lives in homeland and yet remain alien to it; they do not think of it as home, nor the land they live in as their homeland. Gogol's unsuccessful love affair with Ruth and Maxine can also be accounted for as a conflict between two alien cultures; his break-off with Maxine comes about mainly because of his adherence to the familial values and filial duty.

Gogol's metamorphosis is triggered by the death of Ashoke. Earlier he was living an American life; now he thinks as an Indian and understands the values of his family. He realizes the significance of his father's effort to abide by the Hindu tradition and family values and chooses to side with the family. When Maxine asks him "to get away from all this (Gogol's family situation)", he replies "I don't want to get away" (182). No doubt in taking such a step, Gogol experiences the pain of losing his love. The trauma of finding a suitable companion for Gogol becomes an impossible situation and his wedding with Moushumi eventually turns out to be a disastrous one. In matters of love Gogol's is a sufferer's lot. His break off with Moushumi is symbolically indicated in the beginning of their conjugal life when she refuses to accept Gogol's surname. In fact, her marriage with Gogol is a kind of substitution or compromise; he is a physical substitute of Graham whom Moushumi was supposed to marry. Gogol realizes his substitute role in the life of

Moushumi when she spends more and more time among her friends. Their relationship continues only till Moushumi encounters her first love. Her return to her first love terminates her relationship with Gogol and deeply shatters him for he never expected it from an Indian woman. His failure with Ruth and Maxine too has been the outcome of cultural conflict and so it is, in an extended sense, in the case of Moushumi. The staggering experience of failure in relationships lights up the true significance of Dostoyevsky's statement on Gogol. "We all come out of Gogol's overcoat" i.e., *life is decidedly undecided and rotates on the axis called suffering.*

Moushumi's suffering, however, is subjective and is the outcome of the kind of person she is. True to her name- Moushumi is the name of a season which is subject to change- she is variable and changing in nature. Same weather does not last for ever, and like monsoon she comes in the life of Gogol and leaves him helter skelter. Like the several past loves of Gogol, she also experiences love for three men- Graham, Gogol and Dimitri, and in the face of her longing for the first love the strength of her marital bond proves to be too brittle. A successful continuation of relationship depends on the couple's obligation towards the sensitiveness of relationship. Gogol has understood it through the experience of his parents, but Moushumi goes by her accultured ideology, these differences between them can well be noticed during the discussion of Moushumi's friends over the naming of the child of Astrid and Donald. However, more than circumstances and temperamental difference, the memory of past love plays a greater role on the breaking off the marriage of Gogol and Moushumi.

Moushumi had the stirrings of her first love when she met Dimitri years ago in the final month of her high school days. It was in a bus journey for a demonstration that they had come closer:

> As the bus grew quiet, as everyone began to fall asleep, she had let him his head against her shoulder. Dimitri was asleep, or so she thought. And so she pretended to fall asleep too. After a while she felt his hand on her leg, on top of the denim skirt she was wearing. And then slowly he began to unbutton the skirt… It was the first time in her life a man had touched her…. At seventeen for the first time. But he had not kissed her. He had only looked at her, and said, "You're going to break hearts, you know". And then he leaned back, in his own seat this time, removed his hand from her lap, and closed his eyes once again. She had stared at him in disbelief, angry that he assumed she hadn't broken any hearts yet, and at the same time flattered. For the rest of the journey she kept her skirt unbuttoned, hoping he would return to the task. (258-59)

After this momentary encounter, they met for some time but Dimitri left for Europe abruptly, terminating their unfulfilled relationship. Since then Moushummi had nurtured the memory of her first love and suffered the pang of its unfulfilment; a memory so strong and poignant that it was awakened by the very sight of Dimitri again. The fearful awakening of the past restlessly compels her to find Dimitri and their subsequent meetings revive the dormant desire for him in Moushumi despite her awareness that it will wreck her marriage; an awareness not the less tormenting for fear of losing her love again: "She wonders if she is the woman in her family ever to have betrayed her husband, to have been unfaithful. This is what upset her most to admit" (266). However, what is intriguing yet understandable is that her affair spurs her to feel "strangely at peace, the complication of it calming her, structuring her day." (266)

In contrast Moushumi's revelation of her affair to Gogol in a train shocks and torments him:

> He felt the chill of her secrecy, numbing him, like a poison spreading quickly though his veins. He'd felt this way on only one other occasion, the night he had sat in the car with his father and learned the reason for his name. That night he had experienced the same bewilderment, was sickened in the same way. But he felt none of the tenderness that he had felt for his father, only the anger, the humiliation of having been deceived. (282)

The association and dissociation between Moushumi's secret and Ashoke's harrowing trauma is at once enigmatic and revealing for Gogol. To get rid of this he turns a recluse for some time, visits Venice but when he returns after years, though the shock has worn off, a sense of failure and shame persists, deep and abiding and there has to be a parting of ways:

> It is as if a building he'd been responsible for designing has collapsed for all to see. And yet he can't really blame her. They had both acted on the same impulse that was their mistake. They had both sought comfort in each other, and in their shared world, perhaps for the sake of novelty, or out of the fear that the world was slowly dying. Still, he wonders how he's arrived at all this: that he is thirty-two years old, and already married and divorced. His time with her seems like a permanent part of him that no longer has any relevance, or currency. (283-84)

The life-situations of Ashima, Ashoke and Gogol, despite being emotional and psychological, and triggered by past experiences and encounters, are also linked up with their immediate environments. Their diasporic existence highlights their conscience and culture, and heightens their feelings of alienation in moment of deep despair. Often they take recourse to memory/recall: Ashima recalls Calcutta, Ashoke recalls the train-accident, Gogol recalls his father. This presence of the past in the present in *The*

Namesake weaves a charged and challenging pattern of figuration and refigurations, and of the problematics of both the land of promise and the native land.

Margaret Wilson's *Tales of a Polygamous City* presents the pains and ambitions of missionary workers no doubt, but it concentrates more on the Indian's pains and ambitions concerning their common affairs. For instance, the story "A Mother" presents the trauma of a child widow, Aziz whose mother anxiously strives to seek a means to make her smile. For the purpose the mother sends for the narrator to seek counsel.

> 'This is Aziz Begum,' she (mother) said quietly; 'my daughter. For her sake I sent for you.'
>
> Aziz means 'The Beloved.'
>
> 'Is she – at home – with you?' I asked hesitatingly.
>
> 'A widow,' said the Rani (mother).
>
> I looked again at the listless girl, and at the weary grief in the face of her mother.
>
> 'A widow,' she repeated. 'My daughter. A widow at fifteen.'
>
> . . . 'Would that I were barren,' moaned the Rani, 'and that she were the mother of sons. Oh, that I could have taken her widowhood and she my joy! . . .' (229)

The quoted excerpt casts light on the profound melancholy of a mother on the plight of her daughter. The way she narrates the tragic event of her daughter to the narrator is imbued with pain and regrets for not being able to provide all the pleasures of world to her daughter.

> *'... My* daughter a widow. I command all things but the one I want, her happiness. She has been sitting in the court ever since mourning . . . She has not known life, she who has no son. Have I joy in life, now that she is joyless?' (230)

Feeling the abyss of the mother's pang, the narrator suggests her to remarry her daughter so that she could live her rest of life in bliss. But the mother's response to it reveals how individuals are made to suffer by the anti-humanistic customs and traditions:

> 'Lady', I (the narrator) said boldly, 'you married her once contrary to your custom. Marry her again. Let her live.'
>
> 'Ah', she exclaimed, 'that may not be. Do women of our caste remarry? It could not be. You do wrong to suggest it. But you come and teach her something – reading, your religion, anything to amuse her. All day she sits there, waiting for nothing, all in her life – until death'. (230)

To the narrator, the mother appears to be, no doubt, aggrieved on the pathetic plight of Aziz, but her effort to change her life is temporal as she desire to bring happiness to her daughter without understanding the real cause of her sufferings. For a young teenage girl, deprived of companion, restricted by the traditional norms, the life becomes absurd. The absurdities of life can be concurred by giving a new shape to the already disturbed and disorganized one. The narrator feels for reshaping the life of Aziz by suggesting her remarriage which is outright rejected by her mother.

The conversation between Aziz and the narrator is crucial to understand the pain of Aziz. When the narrator intimates Aziz that a young christain woman will come to teach her and when Aziz languidly asks as to what she will teach her, the narrator's reply and Aziz's responds brings forth the latent longings and melancholy of Aziz.

> ‘Lovely things,’I began with enthusiasm. ‘ How to read. Reading is a kind of life all by itself making words out of letters books about women and everything in the world. And how to knit stockings, red and purple ones, and mufflers of many colors, and baby shoes with cunning tassels.’
>
> ‘And why should I make baby shoes?’ she asked.
>
> As she spoke, she turned her little hand palm upward in her lap. That significant gesture taught me more than I had ever known of unrelieved ennui. (230)

The narrator here feels that Aziz wants to be a wife and mother which is possible only if she is given into marriage which was presently impossible. The narrator sends Jasmine to teach her which gradually creates her interest in life. But the real doubt of narrator comes true when Aziz is killed by her own brother for having a clandestine affair with Raza Afzal. Aziz’s affair with Afzal, no doubt brings her tragic death, is a lesson to those who prevent young widow from getting remarried. Again here the trauma is linked with suppression and liberation of sexuality often leads to unwanted situation in which innocent individuals like Aziz are compelled to go through unfathomed trauma.

Wilson’s “God’s Little Joke” is the story of an innocent Farkhanda who is forced by circumstances to lead a life of asceticism full of physical pain. Her asceticism is her deliberate choice to expiate the scene of having a sensuous moment with her own brother. However, this is also true that her brother is in quite obilivion of this fact . Farkhanda’s conversation with the narrator reveals that even Farkhanda is not aware of the presence of her brother,

> ‘ No, I didn’t know. I should have known he would find me out some time. I saw in the crowd overthere a man more handsome than them all,as proud as a conqueror. He sat there looking so disgusted – looking digusted at *me*. I wouldn’t

> have it. And so—Oh, Lord, I can't tell *you* – I' ve learned horrible things. I sang at him—I—made him come up where I stood—close to me, looking at me – and singing. We were in the centre of hundreds of me—in a garden. And then the man who asked me to come cried out to us, laughing. He shouted—he said, "Aziz Shah, kiss your sister."
>
> ' My heart died just then. But he went on singing. Then that man cried, "men, see Sheik Alim Shah's children! Aren't they loving?"
>
> 'And when he heard our father's name in jest, my brother turned around angrily toward the man . but he sneered, "You didn't know you had a sister? I'm making you know!"
>
> ' The world was silent. My brother stood looking at me – *looking*. Stillness. He asked, " Is this true?"
>
> 'I said yes. I forgot my shame. I stretched out my hand to him.somebody laughed. The way he looked at me was worse than all curses. Then he rushed away, stumbling –' (607)

Later she comes to know that her brother has committed suicide by hanging. This act of her brother jolts her life and pulls her indeed in abyss of sorrow,

> After a long pause she cried, ' How well God arranges his little jokes! That fate should bring me here! That I should have danced before my brother! I hated it all. That's why I came here when that asked me. I wanted something new to do. But now I know. There is nothing new about pain. (608)

The narrator seems to comply with the feelings of Farkhanda and arranges for her safe departure from the town as her life is in danger. But Farkhanda longs for attaining the wailing ceremony of her brother. The wailful cry of Farkhanda is the suggestive of how the absence of her brother in her life makes her brother important,

> Farkhanda had begun wailing out that terrible death-song—that instinctive expression of the sorrows of the women of the East; a variation, according to the occasion, of words they know too well. They sing it to the air they call ‘ the stricken air,’ which may be the oldest in the world.
>
> ‘ Did light shine on the earth? My sun is stiff and cold.
>
> O wailing walls, be still. O earth, contain my grief.
>
> Hope came with morning light. There is no morning light.
>
> Do young men hate their life? My brother hated life.
>
> Do strong men die of shame? My brother died of shame.
>
> Do princes hang in ropes?my prince hung in a rope’. (609)

After this Farkhanda disappears for a long time and when she remeets the narrator she is an entirely changed creature, in fact, a miserable creature waiting for the day of judgement for her sin which might not be her alone.

In *Daughters of India,* the protagonist, Davida feels pain for the failure of her missionary ambition to reform the pariahs of the Flowery Basti. Though the sweepers are given education through Christianization, they are not upgraded from their traditional dirty works. Wilson painfully records,

> But from the broom and the basket they had not redeemed them, and as Davida came into the village she met one woman and another returning from the hated work. Some of them carried their babies balanced on one hip, and some of them had left the babies at home in the care of the smaller girls, who took them to the little school, (26)

Being a woman both the novelist and the protagonist are hurt to see the miserable plight of women in India. While reflecting on the painful existence of the Indian pariahs, the novelist realizes the futility and meaninglessness of life in this world,

> And presently in the dullness of that Indian remoteness, where the streets, the earth, the houses, the walls were one unvarying khaki – *khak* being the Indian word for clay – from khak were we made, and into khak shall we all return – (30)

This painful awareness of human existence makes both the writers and all their protagonists matured in their response towards life and events. Consequently, Davida appears matured in her perception of the problems and feelings of the pariahs of Flowery Basti. Moreover, it also helps her to handle some painfully awkward questions of pariahs pertaining to her virginity, love and marriage. It is in India that she realizes the importance of having a husband and 'a home' and her sense of absence of both add to her myriad pains of living alone in an alien land.

Notes:

1. Theories such as Gaze Theory, Gay/Queer Theory along with Feminism have extensively taken up the discussion of human sexuality and its components.
2. Pleasure is found to the primary motive in human sexuality. Freud also believes that if human beings are asked to choose between pleasure and duty, most men will choose pleasure. This latent desire for pleasure also dominates the human sexuality.

3. Procreation in human sexuality is secondary; it is opted for. Animals can not avoid procreation while seeking for sexual pleasure, but human beings can seek pleasure without procreation.

4. Kunti, the wife of Pandu, had five (il)legitimate sons, but she had given birth to Karna before her marriage with Pandu. To avoid social stigma, she discarded Karna in the River Ganges to be later discovered and brought up by a Sudra.

5. By natural men I mean those men who follow the natural instinct in their day to day life. Lawrence's favour for a nude camp and his practice of it in his own campus is a proof of his being natural man.

6. All cultures, in all times in Earth's history, have their myths, which are used to explain, rationalize and explore. There are many stories and myths and it is easy to read them as just fiction, but to understand myth we should also consider from where the myths arose, and in what circumstances. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) was one of the prominent thinkers of the modern age and considered myth in relation to dreams. He believed that along with the conscious mind, there exists a personal unconscious, from which stories arise, and where a person hides those things he cannot deal with. Freud, however, concentrated most upon dreams, which he described as "Myths of the individual". His student and protégé Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), however, took Freud's theories one step further, and in the process fell out with his erstwhile mentor. Jung believed not only in the personal unconscious, but also in a "collective unconscious". He believed that each person has deep in his

unconscious mind a racial memory, linking him to the rest of humanity, and that myths come from this collective unconscious. Within this racial memory, there are "Archetypes" and myths are the conscious manifestation of these archetypes. These archetypes link myths and legends across cultures, and across time.

7. By colonial sexuality, I mean the concern of the Imperial government to cater the sexual urges of its officers and soldiers who stay abroad without their sexual partners. The imperial government had a provision for prostitute house which was supposed to be kept under medical observation.

8. The word *ecocriticism* is a semineologism. *Eco* is short of *ecology*, which is concerned with the relationships between living organisms in their natural environment as well as their relationships with that environment. By analogy, ecocriticism is concerned with the relationships between literature and environment or how man's relationships with his physical environment are reflected in literature. These are obviously interdisciplinary studies, unusual as a combination of a natural science and a humanistic discipline. The domain of ecocriticism is very broad because it is not limited to any literary genre. The most widely known ecocritics are Buell Lawrence, Cheryll Glotfelty, Simon C. Estok, Harold Fromm, William Howarth, William Rueckert, Suellen Campbell, Michael P. Branch and Glen A. Love.

9. The Christian memory of Eden Garden (The paradise) is manifested in form of average European’s desire for a garden which also reflects their preoccupation for order and love for nature.

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CHAPTER-V

THE WORLD OF SUBALTERN

"Our joy was great – until my daughter was born"

Margaret Wilson: "A Mother", 1919: 229

The term 'Subaltern' is originally used for subordinates in military hierarchies. It was first used in a nonmilitary sense by Marxist Antonio Gramsci[1], and is, literally, referred to any person or group of inferior rank and station because of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity or religion.

The term 'subaltern' is oft quoted in post-colonial theory. However, the exact meaning of the term in current philosophical and critical usage is disputed. In a general sense it refers to marginalized groups and the lower classes – a person rendered without agency by his or her social status. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak uses it in a more specific sense. In an interview she argues that

> 'subaltern' is not just a classy word for oppressed, for others, for somebody who's not getting a piece of the pie... In post-colonial terms, everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is Subaltern – a space of difference. Now who would say that's just the oppressed? The working class is oppressed. It's not subaltern...Many people want to claim subalternity. They are the least interesting and the most dangerous. I mean, just by being a discriminated – against a minority on the university campus, they don't need the word 'Subaltern...' They should see what the mechanics of discrimination are. They are within the hegemonic discourse wanting a piece of the pie and not being allowed, so let them speak, use the hegemonic discourse. They should not call themselves subaltern (de Kock, Leon 45-46).

Gayatri Spivak suggests that the subaltern is denied access to both mimetic and political forms of representation. It may also be pointed that in several essays, Homi Bhabha, a key-thinker within post-colonial thought, emphasizes the importance of social power relations in his working definition of 'Subaltern' groups as

> oppressed minority groups whose presence was crucial to the self-definition of the majority group: Subaltern social groups were also in a position to subvert the authority of those who had hegemonic power. (Bhabha 191-207)

Bonaventura de Sousa Santos (2002) has come up with the term 'Subaltern Cosmopolitanism' in his book *Towards a New Legal Common Sense*. He refers to this term in the context of counter-hegemonic practices, movements, resistances and struggles against neo-liberal globalization, particularly the struggle against social exclusion. He also uses the term interchangeably with cosmopolitan legality as the diverse normative framework for an 'equality of differences'[2]. In fact, here, the term subaltern is used to denote marginalized and oppressed people(s) specifically struggling against hegemonic globalization.

To speak emphatically, subaltern is a term that commonly refers to the perspective of persons from regions and groups outside the hegemonic power structure. In fact, in the 1970s' the term began to be used as a reference to colonized people in the South-Asian sub-continent. It provided a new perspective on the history of colonized place from the perspective of colonized rather than from the perspective of hegemonic power. In this context, Marxist historians had already begun to view colonial history from the perspective of the proletariat but this was unsatisfying as it was still a Euro-centric

way of viewing the globe. However, Subaltern is now regularly used as a term in history, anthropology, sociology and literature. (Gyan, Prakash 1476)

Subaltern studies began in the early 1980s' as an intervention in South-Asian historiography. While it began as a model for the sub-continent, it quickly developed into a vigorous post-colonial critique. The term subaltern studies group (SSG) or subaltern studies collective (SSC) are a group of South Asian scholars interested in the post-colonial and post-imperial societies of South Asia in particular and the developing world in general. It may be pointed out that the term subaltern studies is sometimes also applied more broadly to others who share many of their views. In fact, their approach is one of history from below, focused more on what happens among the masses at the base levels of society than among the elite. It may be observed that the group associated with the subaltern studies arose in the 1980s, influenced by the scholarship of Eric Stokes, to attempt to formulate a new narrative of the history of India and South Asia. Undoubtedly, as stated before this narrative strategy most clearly inspired by the writings of Gramsci was explicated in the writings of the 'mentor' Ranajit Guha, most clearly in his 'manifesto in *Subaltern Studies I* [3] and also in his classic monograph *The Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency* [4] although they are, in a sense, on the left, they are very critical of the traditional Marxist narrative of Indian history, in which semi-feudal India was colonized by the British, became politicized, and earned its independence. In particular, they are critical of the focus of this narrative on the political consciousness of elites, who in turn inspire the masses to resistance and rebellion against the British. Instead, they focus on non-elite subalterns as agents of political and social change. They,

in fact, have had a particular interest in the discourses and rhetoric of emerging political movements, as against only highly visible actions like demonstrations and uprisings.

From the above discourse it can be observed that the Subaltern studies started in the early 1980s as an intervention in South Asian Historiography and emerged as a model for the subcontinent which quickly developed into a vigorous post-colonial critique. So far as the formation of subaltern studies group is concerned it was founded by Ranajit Guha. It may be pointed out that in more recent time, some former members have become disillusioned with the post-modern turn that the group has taken (notably Sumit Sarkar who left the group). A galaxy of eminent scholars such as Ranajit Guha, David Hardiman, Partha Chatterjee, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Gyan Pandey, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Susie Tharu, Gyan Prakash, Sudipta Kaviraj, Edward Said, David Arnold, Gautam Bhadra, Ajay Skaria, Qadri Ismail, Kamran Asdar Ali, Shail Mayaram, Sumit Sarkar (later dissented), Lata Mani, Aamir Mufti, M.S.S. Pandian, Shahid Amin are associated with Subaltern studies. The subaltern concept has become so prominent now a days that it is being regularly used in various disciplines such as literature, history, anthropology, sociology, etc.

I

In literature, subaltern is realized in forms of minority or gender representations which are profusely expressed in the writings of both Jhumpa Lahiri and Margaret Wilson. In Jhumpa Lahiri Subaltern concern runs through all her works in some or other forms. She presents subalternity at various levels: political, cultural, female, children, etc. The political subalternity is quite obvious from the fact that she juxtaposes migrants and

the locals which, apart from creating a sense of conflict, also creates an ambience of subordination. In *Interpreter of Maladies*, the story of Mr. Pirzada is a sheer case of political subordination. He is twice subordinated, first by Pakistani political system, and second by American political system.

Mr. Pirzada, an east Pakistani (Now Bangladeshi), lecturer of Botany at the University of Dacca, arrives in America – the first world –on a government scholarship to study the plants of New England. While staying in America, he is frequently perturbed by the thoughts of his wife and daughters at home and also by the thought of interacting with the new world. The clash of two worlds; the world he is in and the world which dominates his thoughts, constitutes the backbone of the story. Consequently, he has to accelerate his pace to adjust with the ever changing, dynamic world of America, yet, interestingly, he keeps his clock adjusted with the time of Dacca so that he could have at least the feel of his own place. As mentioned earlier, the subalternity in case of Mr. Pirzada is political which owes a lot to the contemporary globalized world where cultural and academic programmes are enthusiastically taken up by the academia which eventually leads to the emergence of a new class of population. This class proudly voices their experiences of the western world giving an impression that facilities in the native nation are not up to the mark and requires a lot of improvisation. Though this class appears to be quite enthusiastic about their foreign trips, their trips are often marked with pain of being subordinated in the western first world. In fact, the creation of Subaltern Studies Group (SSG) is the outcome of such academic and political subordination of scholars from the Third World.

The little girl Lilia, narrator of the story is the representative figure of Indians born abroad. It is from her eyes that much of the subaltern issues, though she can not understand, are conveyed. The divisions and subdivisions of the Indian subcontinent whet her curiosity about a world, which seems to be her own but is distanced from it both literally and metaphorically. The Mayflower, Declaration of Independence of America fail to dissuade Lilia's inquisitiveness about a land called Pakistan and an oft-heard city called Dacca. The American society in which Lilia is brought up can not be considered seamless. With the Declaration of the Civil War, it was anticipated that America would be a land without divisions on any ground; that the slavery would cease whereby creating a glorious chapter not only in the annals of America but of the entire world. But, unfortunately, the divisive bent continued to exist deep inside the psyche of the Americans. The segregation of the students as Redcoats and colonies, though playfully, reveals the inherent divisive tendency of the American society. This segregation is well realized by the visiting South Asian scholars who deliberately seek for their national/cultural comrade.

Mr. Pirzada's visit to the house of narrator (Lilia) might be determined by many factors, but she feels that her parents do every possible thing to make him at home with them. His visits and the conversation that follows thereafter reveal a lot about the plight of Indians in America and the situations at home. Their conversation basically centres on the realities of Southeast Asia. Mr. Pirzada's book on deciduous trees of America appears merely as interlude in the discussion of South Asian politics interspersed by coffee, scrabble, and ridiculous chatter about the weird eating habits of the co-workers at the bank where the narrator's mother works. The narrator is presented an array of

assortments by Mr. Pirzada and the empathy he establishes with her family astonishes her adolescent sensibility; uninvited visit even of neighbours is sometimes queer and absurd.

Mr. Pirzada visits the narrator's house not just for having meals but for companionship that he finds and gets there. Far away removed from his own homeland, Mr. Pirzada gets a helping hand and consoling heart in the family of narrator whose roots lie in a nation which was once his own. However, all is not well with Mr. Pirzada. As the East Pakistani continues to migrate towards India and the war for independence of Bangladesh stretches further, the days of Mr. Pirzada turns more tensed and cumbersome. The very thought of becoming a refugee, surviving on the alms of others is awful for him and perturbed by the thought of his family who might also be the victim of fate of moving around streets as refugees and living a miserable life. In such anxiety of Mr. Pirzada the narrator and her parents offer a soothing consolation and create in him a positive thought for best thing to come out of the all pervading gloom.

> . . . through the carpet I heard them as they drank more tea, and listened to cassettes of Kishore Kumar, and played scrabble on the coffee table, laughing and arguing long in to the night about the spellings of English words. I wanted to join them, wanted, above all, to console Mr. Pirzada somehow. But apart from eating a piece of candy for the sake of his family and praying for their safety, there was nothing I could do. They played scrabble until the eleven o'clock news, and then, sometime around midnight, Mr. Pirzada walked back to his dormitory. For this reason I never saw him leave, but each night as I drifted off to sleep I would hear them, anticipating the birth of a nation on the other side of the world. (34)

In the fear of Mr. Pirzada, the imminent political subordination thanks to the political instability at home is quite obvious. His subordination in America somewhat lies in his

inability to assimilate as migrant. In fact, every migrant is a subaltern in America be it first generation or second generation. In case of first generation, the subalternity is established by their willing detachment from the host society and culture. Mr. Pirzada, Lilia's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Sen are easily distinguishable for their typical Indian attire and hence become easy pray to subaltern treatment. A similar case is found in case of Ashoke and Ashima of *The Namesake*, the first generation protagonists. Wherever, Ashima goes, her typical Indian costume makes her centre of attraction and at the same time alien.

The subordination owes a lot to the *otherization* of migrants. Both the first and second generation migrants are forced to feel "Other" or intruder in the host land. Such feelings hinder them to mingle with "Self". Much of the subaltern studies are made on the basis of "Self – Other" dichotomy. Even in case of the second generation migrants, born and brought up in America, could not escape from the label of Other despite their apparent Americanization.

The representation of the other in the west has always been a troublesome one. The stereotypes and caricature have long been a privilege of the powerful that defines one major dimension of the relationship between America and its other allies. The issue is complex and is inevitable in diasporic identity; the identity which is never a given, never a peaceful state of being and never a comfortable phase of growth in between two lands.

The common stereotype is one of the great clashes between East and West which also goes in the making of subordination of the Indian migrants. The conservative, traditional, family bound, austere Indian culture versus a divorce-ridden, materialistic,

morally loose America often interacts in juxtaposition than walking in same gondola. Before Ashima accompanies her husband abroad in the novel *The Namesake* she is admonished not to eat beef or wear skirts or cut off hair. Gogol's American girlfriend, Maxine is astonished that his parents' friends are Bengali, that they had an arranged marriage, that his mother cooks Indian food every day, that she wears saris and bindis (138). Gogol is aware of the gulf between his parents and Maxine's parents, Gerald and Lydia,

> . . . he (Gogol) is aware that a line has been drawn all the same. To him the terms of his parents' marriage are something at once unthinkable and unremarkable; nearly all their friends and relatives had been married in the same way. But their lives bear no resemblance to that of Gerald and Lydia: expensive pieces of jewelry presented on Lydia's birth day, flowers brought home for no reason at all, the two of them kissing openly, going for walks through the city, or to dinner, just as Gogol and Maxine do. Seeing the two of them curled up on the sofa in the evenings, Gerald's head resting on Lydia's shoulder, Gogol is reminded that all his life he has never witnessed a single moment of physical affection between his parents. Whatever love exists between them is an utterly private, uncelebrated thing. (138)

Maxine feels depressed to know such things about the parents of Gogol. However, she feels amused when Gogol tells her "that they will not be able to touch or kiss each other in front of his parents, that there will be no wine with lunch." (145)

Gogol's mother, Ashima is put off by the idea of Maxine as her daughter-in-law. She is startled when Maxine calls her 'Ashima' and her husband 'Ashoke'. She refuses to admit before her Bengali friends that Gogol "has been dating her (Maxine) for over a year . . . sleeping under the same roof" (166). Such kind of difference between the locals

and migrants and the latter's concealing of their children's sexual inclination towards the former hinders assimilation and creates gulf between them; the gulf which eventually leads to the otherization of the migrants.

Devotion to family even among the second generation diaspora is what immediately sets them apart from the locals. Whenever Moushumi would go to her friend's place she would always call her mother to inform about her whereabouts. The American mothers were at once charmed and perplexed at her sense of duty: "I'm at Anna's house," she would report to her mother in English, "I'm at Sue's" (212). Devotion to family is trumpeted as a quintessentially Indian trait. When Gogol's father dies, Gogol wants to be close to his mother and sister. His American girlfriend, Maxine, fails to understand this, and, consequently, they break up soon. Indians do in fact come from a family bound culture which helps them in buffeting the experience of immigration. But this also goes into creating a chasm between the migrants and the locals, as Indians often resort to contra-acculturation as seen in case of Gogol, leading to the subordination of the former.

The food that the Gangulis eat at home is enough alone to justify how different they are from their American neighbours: their unpronounceable names, Ashoke's accent, Ashima always in saris. They seem to sponsor India abroad: they do not have to go to India, in their home India comes to them. But interestingly, India does not exist on the map of American identity during the time depicted in the novel (1960's). As children, Gogol and Sonia accompany their parents to live in India for eight months, and when they return to America, their American friends "ask them nothing where they've been"

(87). This speaks a lot about the condition of the children's experience from which their sense of identity is built. India to the friends of Gogol does not mean anything, but his half hearted association to India through his parents deters his total association that accounts for much of his crises that he goes through while maintaining his relation with his American girl friends. As such, he is compelled to live two different sorts of lives; totally diametric to one another.

The subordination of the diasporic people in the host land is also due to their idiosyncratically different costumes and apparel which is the mark of their cultural identity. The first generation authentic Indian immigrants wore their ethnic identity like a protective cloak over the other, the American identity. These first generation immigrants carefully cultivated values of Indian culture which contrasted sharply with the western culture, which to their mind was a degenerate. The authentic immigrant sees the nationalistic values inherited from the homeland as vital to his survival in the host land. These atavistic interpretations of natal culture are then rigorously enforced and in doing so the parents, who consider themselves as guardians or upholders of the natal culture, expect their children to follow their footsteps. The diasporic parents' urge to adhere to the natal culture, and their American born children's apathy to it renders a dialectical image to the Indian diasporic community. A dialectical image is very much a juxtaposition of elements position to bring out the contradictions, the hidden hits and misses, silences and pronouncements. Without regard to a catalogue of progress, claims of unyielding, image generate provocative thought because it plays up the contradictions ignored by the narrative progress.

Indians find themselves in a dubious position of being exploited and privileged at the same time. They find themselves targeted for racial bias precisely because of their skin tone and general social success, both of which invite scorn and categorization in a society that seem to be egalitarian but lives by the old dictum of white superiority. The fear of the horde of non-white people sweeping in from Asia, stealing jobs and lands away from the hardworking European origin Americans and in the process transforming the United States into something alien from its mythic Anglo origin was the part of the American psyche throughout the twentieth century. In Pemberton road, Gogol discovers the golden letters in 'Ganguli' in the nameplate

> has been shortened to GANG, with the word GREEN scrawled in pencil following it. His ears burn at the sight, and he runs back into the house, sickened, certain of the insult his father will feel. Though it is his last name, too, something tells Gogol that the discretion is intended for his parents more than Sonia and him. For by now he is aware, in stores, of cashiers smirking at his parents' accents, and of salesmen who prefer to direct their conversation to Gogol, as though his parents were either incompetent or deaf. But his father is unaffected at such moments, just as he is unaffected by the mailbox. (67-68)

The first generation diaspora, like Ashoke, has to bear such incident in a very frolic manner rather than voicing against it which might invite other such incident. But for the American born Gogol it is outrageous. Moreover, when during a school project where the young students are made to record the names etched on tombstones, Gogol realizes that he can never hope to find his family name on any of these among hordes of Smiths, Collins, and Woods or as his other classmates find theirs, he feels enraged at being

burdened with a useless, absurd identity. In fact, such incidents/feelings in the lives of diaspora reveal the uneasy outcome of multiculturalism.

Globalization might have eliminated geographical borders but it has set up psychological borders and quite often apathy for others. Moushumi severs her engagement with Graham when she realizes his disdain for her culture in his derogatory remarks for her family, country and culture. If America is truly egalitarian society, everyone's place should be that of equal irrespective of caste, creed and colour. But the success of diasporic people turns them subaltern due to the envious eyes of the seeming egalitarian American society.

Significantly, Lahiri has concentrated much on gender subalternity in her works. Her stories "A Real Durwan" and "The Treatment of Bibi Haldar" are imbued with the elements of gender subalternity. The story "A Real Durwan" is the story of Boori Ma, a caretaker-cum-doorwoman in an apartment building in post-independence, post-Partition Calcutta, a city all set to link up with modernity and growing material wealth. Sixty-four-year old Boori Ma ekes out a living by helping the residents with various chores of the kind that, it is pointed out, is normally "no job for a woman" (73). Yet Boori Ma, who had arrived as an East Bengali refugee in a humble cart, manages to clean and do odd jobs to the satisfaction of the residents and is therefore tolerated by them despite the somewhat peculiar stories she tells them about her past life as the wife of a well-to-do landowner. Her stories provoke their disbelief due to the glaring disparity between her present existence and what she alleges to be her past, for, alas, "What kind of landowner

ended up sweeping stairs?" (72). However, at the end she is chased out of the building with charge of pilfering the property of the inmates.

The dismissal of Boori Ma and the symbolic silencing of her voice express the allegorical weight she carries as a disempowered woman belonging to a no longer viable cultural past. Her voice is "brittle with sorrows, as tart as curds, and shrill enough to grate meat from a coconut" (70). Her expostulations, addressed to no one in particular, or perhaps to history itself, alternate with her tendency towards aggrandizement of this same history into almost pure legend. Unashamedly, she glosses over historical facts: "Why demand specifics? Why scrape lime from a betel leaf? Believe me, don't believe me" (72). As a transitional figure she recedes into the shadows, marked by spectrality and myth which both signify the difficulties we experience in trying to establish with exactness of historical truth. This very ambiguity concerning the historical status of Indian women is rendered visible through Boori Ma's story.

"The Treatment of Bibi Haldar", the penultimate story of Lahiri's collection is one of its two stories which are set in India. While shifting her tales between India and America, Lahiri has strived to sustain originality of events by adopting a narrative which does not seem to be that of an outsider or by taking help of books to describe the region she has never been to. She is equally at home in depicting scenes from India and the United States.

Bibi Haldar lives with her cousin who engages her in his cosmetic shop. For her work, she is not paid anything, but meals, and other provisions and apparels every

October during the festival. She has her own discontents and complaints, though not very appealing. She says,

> I ask you: is it fair for a girl to sit out her years, pass neglected through her prime, listing labels and prices without promise of a future? . . . Is it worng to envy you, all brides and mothers, busy with lives and cares? Wrong to want shade my eyes, scent my hair? To raise a child and teach him sweet from sour, good from bad? (160)

Her private confession made to the women of the neighbourhood is no doubt pathetic, but what makes her centre of discussion is her queer ailment which always eludes treatment – allopathic, homeopathic, ayurvedic and the like. When all the possible medical treatment fails, visits to temples, churches, tombs and shrines of martyrs and saints are taken up. Even then the plight of Bibi Haldar remains the same with swooning without any forewarning. However, it is eventually suggested that marriage is the only remedy left for her, she gets a new lease of life, and her feminine impulse begins to enhance. Simultaneously, her longing to present herself appealingly also grows inside her, and to soothe her dejected and depressed heart, her cousin Haldar publishes an advertisement in a newspaper depicting her physical features in order to find a suitable match. However, his effort is that of a compulsion than a genuine concern; he somehow wants to get rid of her. The plight of Bibi turns worst when Haldar's wife gets pregnant. She is subsided as an evil omen in the household. The habit of blaming a woman for any misfortune is common in India from which even the educated people are not free. The Haldar baby falls sick now and then and the blame is put on the disease of Bibi. As such, she is sent to the storage room to protect the baby from her ominous effect. The neighbours protest this

vehemently, and boycott Haldar's shop which eventually forced Haldar to leave the locality.

After the departure of Bibi's cousin from the locality, she is not frequently seen by the women and children who generally go to the roof. However, after a couple of months she is, to everyone's shock, discovered to be four months pregnant. A male child is born to her and this imparts her a new lease of life as she reopens the shop of her cousin and leads a normal life. The child is no doubt illegitimate and elements of stigma in a conservative society like that of India, but, at the same time, it also imparts a legitimate right to lead a normal life. She is cured of her malaises and the entire locality is pleased; who fathers her child does not matter to any one. "Her resurgence is a victory over the forces that encourage the subjugation of an individual or even of a race." (Gogoi 185).

The theme of "The Treatment of Bibi Haldar", however, has much in common with the other stories of the plight and anxiety of the female subaltern as it follows the aftermaths of the globalization process in the life of a native Indian woman who is a victim of both destitution and homelessness. Bibi Haldar is a woman living in India, in her own homeland, but is more or less exposed to the Othering process. Interestingly enough, "The Treatment of Bibi Haldar" and "Mrs. Sen's" have two shared points: firstly, both women are in thirties. Secondly, Bibi Haldar's neighbors are replications of those Indian neighbors who Mrs. Sen had longed for in America:

> At home that is all you have to do. Not everybody has a telephone but just raise your voice a bit, or express grief or joy of any kind, and one whole neighborhood

> and half of another has come to share the news, to help with arrangements." (128)

Reading the story in the light of female identity-formation process, one can come up with the view that "The Treatment of Bibi Haldar" can be in fact read as a commentary on the constructedness of the Indian notion of femininity and its possible burden on the life of the marginalized female subaltern in Calcutta, India. While Mrs. Sen lives in America and the threats to her identity are coming from the Other culture of her host land, Bibi Haldar's identity which is at odds with the culturally-constructed gender codes of her society is threatened by the Other cultural codes of her home land. The process of Othering takes place everywhere and at all times; identities, therefore, are always in the process of being made and remade. Bibi's Otherness to the culture she has been shaped in, is emphasized from the very beginning of the story in the guise of her allegorical mental disease – a disease which becomes the source of her being Othered as it "confined her world to the unpainted four-story building" (173). The source of this disease then, seems to be nothing but a departure from an adherence to the ethnic cultural codes. Anyone not clinging to these codes is doomed to Otherness – even in her own homeland. Bibi's disease is the result of her breaking of such codes both by her physical look; "She was not pretty. Her upper lip was thin, her teeth too small. Her gums protruded when she spoke" (174), and the things she could not do; "Bibi had never been taught to be a woman." (178)

Bibi's identity-crisis comes to surface when she wants to negotiate a new identity by embracing these gender codes of the Other. Despite the feminist community solidarity, this seems to be an impossible act as fitting into the ethnic cultural codes needs certain

essential characteristics which are missing in Bibi. So that, all her attempts to embrace such codes result in acts of mimicry when in order to practice, she is urged by the other women "to engage in small conversations with nearby men" (180). In such practices what is after all parodied and ridiculed is the very definition of the Self (The Self of Bibi's Community). This, however, seemingly opens the way for formation of the final "hybrid" identity of Bibi Haldar which soon leads to the treatment of her disease. Bibi, through negotiating between the Self and Other, becomes a mother without being a wife – a half–state of both this and that. It is this hybrid nature of Bibi Haldar's identity whose subversive dimension arms Spivak's subaltern with an act of resistance – an act that melts the boundaries of Self/Other and initiates an act of negotiation between both. Such subaltern is also noticed in Margaret Wilson's *Daughters of India*, where the plight of women and children creates sympathy in the hearts of readers.

II

Margaret Wilson seems to voice colonial subalternity in her works. Colonial subalternity is the darker side of European enlightenment which pledged to liberate human mind by diffusing rationality, but the geographical exploration that accelerated aftermath resulted in slavery of non-Europeans. In fact, colonial subalternity is the wider manifestation of East-West juxtaposition which can also be illustrated in terms of Self-Other as discussed before. Interestingly, Wilson presents a triangular relation of Self-Other: the colonizer (British) – The missionaries (American) – the colonized (Indians). That the relation between the colonizer and the colonized is tinged with acrimony and animosity is well known to every one. The pathetic plight of the colonized is deeply felt

and understood, and also documented by the missionaries. But they are also the victim of subaltern treatment because being white they are treated as colonizer by the Indians and at the same time they are looked down upon by the ruling whites for being sympathizer of the colonized.

The title of the novel, *Daughters of India*, itself is the suggestive of the writer's deep concern for the Indian women's predicament during the British Raj. The portrayal of women and their circumstances in the novel is not the story of Ainyanwala only, but that of the entire India. The character of Miss Bhose is representative of educated Indian class who has adopted Christianity for its liberal outlook. The enthusiasm that she shows towards the education of the girls is the outcome of the Christian light and European thoughts. When she sees the volume of Encyclopedia Britannica with Davida, her joys know no bounds due to its vastness of content, though she also feels sad for not being able to read all the volumes, ". . . Here I am, sixty-six years old, and there are twenty-nine volumes of books here, and thousand pages in every one of them! Look what I've missed" (8). However, when Davida tells Miss Bhose to keep the copy with her, she desires to take it to her school and show it to her girls so that they could have inspiration for learning. She says,

> If I could show them all those books squeezed together this way, knowing more about the streets they walk down than they know themselves, and never saying a word about their learning! Wouldn't you think that would put some ambition, some strength into their silliness? What hope is there of self-government when women never even see the binding of an ency _____. (9)

The last sentence of Miss Bhose is the critique of traditional image of Indian women who are often deprived of education and light of outer world, as they are confined within four

walls, on the name of culture. By the time this novel was written, there was all round clamour for home rule or self governance in Indian. For self governance, the nation must have educated citizen, particularly women as it is under their care that the new generation is shaped. It is such thought of Miss Bhose that might have inspired her to set up a girls' school in Aiyanianwala.

On the day of Christmas, Miss Bhose displays the Encyclopedia Britannica to the audience of local women and in her speech emphasizes on the education of girls and discourages the child marriage:

> She praised those noble mothers who sent their daughters to school up to their maturity, so that they know the whole earth, so that sitting there in England they write histories of the feet that walked past this door of our school before the baby Jesus was born. Marriages, too, are good, made in heaven, and sons and daughters born of righteousness are not unworthy of us. (This statement was a concession to Davida, of course). But we, we worthless natives, we marry off our young daughters in infancy, through the intrigues of barbers and priests not heavenly, so that women never learn, never get any further from ignorance and on and on, until the poor guests turned their palms upward in hopeless assent, and sighed aloud, murmuring: 'The lust which is in the world! Our daughters unmarried would be ruined!' (75)

Miss Bhose seems to imply that child marriage/early marriage is the first hindrance in the physical, mental and moral growth of woman. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, despite various commissions for women's development such as Women's Indian Association (1917), National Council for Women in India (1925) etc. for women's upliftment, education was still a distant destination for them. This was more for the conservative mindset of the Indians than for the lackadaisical attitude of the reformers.

Here citing of a few speeches by some of the educated women of the 19th century will be pertinent to understand the plight of women (daughters of India) before independence.

Rashasundari Devi, born in 1809:

> I was so immersed in the area of housework that I was not conscious of what I was going through day and night. After some time the desire to learn how to read properly grew very strong in me. I was angry with myself for wanting to read books. Girls did not read.

Sharda Meheta, born in 1882:

> In a reformer's family, higher education for a girl was tolerated. But in a middle class family, an unmarried girl taking education in a college in a class with boys around was just impossible. A person going against the norm has to be ready for all kinds of ridicule, comments and hurdles. In my class (in 1899) we were only two girls, one Parsi and myself. Though it was a completely new experience, I was feeling hesitant. But I had tremendous desire to learn.
>
> (quoted in Desai and Thakkar 46)

The feelings of Rashasundari Devi and Sharda Meheta corroborate the thoughts of Miss Bhose regarding the education of girls in the then India.

The character of Begum, the wife of Jalal, represents the downtrodden Indian women of 19th and 20th centuries who had received education through the Christian missionaries, but were not able to go ahead due to their filial burden and poverty. In fact, her plight reveals the lack of medical facility during the British Raj. She suffers from an acute earache and has not adequate money to seek medical assistance. Davida often shows concern over Begum's suffering. Wilson writes,

> Every day she had wish that she was a doctor – though she knew she would have made the worst possible doctor. For the distressing and recurrent pain of Begum's ear she knew no further remedy but a trip to a distant Mission hospital. And she was fond of Begum. (12)

It is Davida's attachment with Begum that she has given her only pillow to soothe her aching ear.

Davida is, in fact, at pain for the suffering of entire Pariah of Flowery Basti where Jalal and Begum run their missionary school. It is tough time for the missionary workers to teach them and make them come out of the shackles of their traditional dirty work. Wilson writes,

> . . . at the Flowery Basti these low caste Christian women were still going, morning by morning, to remove the night soil from the houses of that village, to sweep their floors and courtyards, and to do any other dirty work that might be awaiting them. Now the floors of the rooms and courtyards were of clay, and the brooms which they used to sweep them had no handles – at least the shortest possible excuse for handles – so that the women bent over with their faces in the dust as they stirred it up. And that dust, and the tropical sun, and the flies and the diseases about, had inflamed their eyes and narrowed them, till their very babies seemed to be born with eyes half shut in self defense. (25-26)

The quotation deflates the missionaries' effort to purify the Pariah community of Flowery Basti, and the novelist painfully observes that they (the Pariah women) "gathered the dusty, ill-smelling, sweepings into baskets which they carried away on their heads to dump where the flies live" (26). The American missionaries had done a lot for the welfare of these low caste Pariahs. They had even fought for their legal rights to be socially equal. Despite all these, the Pariahs were not redeemed from "the broom and the

basket" (26). In fact, even after independence their plight continued to be same till recently.

The portrayal of the characters of Taj and Davida reveals a lot about the subaltern concerns of Margaret Wilson. Taj is a young but widow Persian teacher in the school of Miss Bhose. She has been missing for long which creates a rumour of her elopement in the locality. Such act on the part of a teacher is considered to be quite unbecoming. However, as regard to her class management and performance, she is regarded as the most efficient teacher. Her ability to motivate the young mind is well acknowledged by Miss Bhose. Taj represents the reformed women, thanks to the Christian enlightenment. Her being a child widow does not hold anything to her. She is quite romantic in her approach towards life. When she returns towards the end of the novel married with a man, Davida is shocked to see that Taj had no remorse for her deed. Rather she is quite content and said 'A woman's place … is in her home," (162) i.e. with her husband.

While portraying Taj, Wilson hints at the emancipation and empowerment of women which is necessary to achieve any sort of substance in life. But poverty and exploitation comes in the way of such achievement. The life of two other women in the novel: Begum and the dying sister, is an apt ingredient of subaltern in the novel. Begum's life is ruined by poverty and lack of medical facility. She acutely suffers from ear-ache but she does not have proper medical treatment. Davida somehow tries to soothe her pain in her own way, but when it deteriorates she gives her only pillow to her to keep her head while sleeping so that her ear rests in comfort. Begum's life, in fact all the women's life

in Flowery Basti, is constrained to cooking and caring of children and so they do not get any opportunity to think beyond their traditionally assigned duty.

However, the most painful subalternity is witnessed in case of the dying sister. Wilson writes that

> In her childhood she (the dying sister) had been given unseen to someone in marriage, of her own inferior Hindu caste – she couldn't tell how old she had been then – when he lifted her veil and saw her dark, unlovely face and that hand of hers which was deformed, he had cried out that he had been cheated in the bargain and had struck her such a blow that she fell down. And presently he had passed her on, unseen, to a man to whom he owed money. And that man, seeing her, had kicked her into a corner, but kept awhile. He was a gambler and, having lost all that he had, he staked her, at length, in a game of dice. And the winner had sold her to a man who put her into an inspected house of prostitution in a great cantonment. And when she had become too diseased to serve longer their, they had sent her to a government hospital to die. (41)

All possible exploitation of women has been done to the dying sister: child marriage, domestic violence, sexual assault, physical assault, selling and prostitution. Her treatment as a mere object of consumption is a gross violation of human/women rights. This leads the writer to comment, "This (India) is a rotten, loathsome, dirty nation". (55)

Wilson's *Tales of a Polygamous City* is imbued with subaltern subjects. In fact all the stories in the collection reflect subalternity in their own way. However, subalternity in Wilson is not due to any subjugation of migrants. Rather a migrant narrator reflects on the prevailing gender bias and gender atrocity in the then Indian society. Child marriage and child widowhood, a gross violation of a woman's fundamental rights, are well

conveyed through the story “A Mother”. The widow child, Aziz is deprived of all the joys of life, though she craves for it. Her craving for a normal life leads to her tragic end.

Similarly, in the story “Waste”, Ayshan is married to an elderly married person having already a son- in- law at a very tender age. She is not even old enough to understand the meaning of marriage and husband. When she attains sixteen, realizing the futility of her marriage, and also imminent sexual depression, she is seen in the arms of her own step son-in-law. Ayshan’s attitude shocks the narrator, but it also signals the dire consequences of childhood marriage, and its subsequent incest relation.

The treatment of subalternity in both Lahiri and Wilson is marked by a sense of humanity. Both the writers seem to clamour for some sort of change in our attitude towards the concern of those who are subordinated due to circumstances.

Notes:

1. In *The Modern Prince and The Prison Notebooks* Gramsci describes the subaltern classes as those subordinated by hegemony excluded from any meaningful role in a regime of power. Gramsci himself has workers in mind, but the term has also been used to describe other groups who are excluded and do not have a position from which to speak--for example peasants women. Gramsci further notes that "the subaltern classes, by definition, are not unified and cannot unite until they are able to become a 'State'".
2. Santos here voices in favoour of practicing equality while recognizing the racial differences.

3. *Subaltern Studies No. 1 Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Edited by Ranajit Guha. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982.
4. *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* by Ranajit Guha Publisher: Duke University Press, 1999. This classic work in subaltern studies explores the common elements present in rebel consciousness during the Indian colonial period. Ranajit Guha—intellectual founder of the groundbreaking and influential Subaltern Studies Group—describes from the peasants' viewpoint the relations of dominance and subordination in rural India from 1783 to 1900.

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1. "A Mother". *The Atlantic Monthly*. February 1919. pp. 228-234 (obtained from Hathi Trust Digital Library : http://babel.hathitrust.org).
2. "Waste: The Story of a Sweet Little Girl". *The Atlantic Monthly*. February 1921. pp.1 80-188 (obtained from Hathi Trust Digital Library : http://babel.hathitrust.org).

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CHAPTER – VI

CONCLUSION

> MAN DOES NOT HAVE A SINGLE, CONSISTENT LIFE … He has several laid end to end, and that is his misfortune… Friends leave us, others take their place, there is always a time when we possessed nothing of what we now possess, and a time when we have nothing of what we once had.
>
> Francois-Auguste-Rene de Chateaubriand (quoted in Peter Fritzsche**)**

Chateaubriand's statement is the revelation of loss on the wake of the French Revolution. However, it is also relevant in context of diasporic existence which is marked by ever pervading instability. The diaspora's such condition is caused by its inability to belong to a fixed space; be it geographical or cultural. Its position can be well explained in terms of 'neither here nor there; everywhere yet nowhere'. 'Neither here nor there' corroborates Uma Parameswaran's description of diasporas as 'trishanku'and also Bhabha's concept of 'Third Space'. Similarly, in *East, West* (1994), Salman Rushdie classifies his stories under three heads – 'East', 'West' and 'East, West'. Following Rushdie, G. S. Sarat Chandra classifies the stories in his collection *Sari of the Gods* (1998) in to three segments – 'Here', 'There' and 'Neither here Nor There'. Sarat Chandra's 'Neither/Nor', or the comma between Rushdie's 'East and West' is reflection

of Bhabha's 'Third Space' – the hyphenated space, a hybrid location often occupied by the people living in diaspora. Moreover, most of the contemporary intellectuals, critics and writers also occupy this space. As such, this space is highly reputed and disputed at the same time. No doubt, there have been formulations to valorize this space, there have also been theories to question and challenge it.

In the last page of the last story of Rushdie collection, portraying immigrant experience in London, a character soliloquizes:

> But I too have ropes around my neck, I have them to this day, pulling me this way and that, East and West, the nooses tightening, commanding, *choose*, *choose*. (127)

This cannot be much of a happy situation, because they are aware of the benefits of not making a choice: neither Rushdie nor his protagonist makes a choice. Writing about Gunter Grass, Rushdie says in *Imaginary Homelands* that the immigrant who loses his roots, language, and social norms "is obliged to find new ways of describing himself, new ways of being human" (127). He clarifies this in another article in the above cited work:

> If literature in part consists of finding new angles at which to enter reality, then once again our distance, our long geographical perspective, may provide us with such angles. (128)

Looking from this perspective the Third Space is "not an infertile territory for a writer to occupy". Rushdie's assertion that this 'third space' is conducive to literary creativity cannot be disputable. When countries, like America, England, Canada and Australia have been indulging in experiment with multiculturalism on the home front, and process of

economic and cultural globalization all over the world, there can be no two opinions that this space is definitely a fertile territory to occupy for professionals and writers. That is why in the area of Indian English literature today the number of immigrant writers is much more than those who have stayed back home. Also, for the majority of these immigrants, their choice of residence has been America, England and Canada – in that order. And their favorite literary forms have been the short story and the novel. In the same article referred to above Rushdie clarifies what the fictional preoccupation of these writers is:

> …*Exiles or immigrants or expatriates are haunted by some sense of loss*, some urge to reclaim, to look back…But if we do look back. We must do so in 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 we lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, *imaginary homelands*, Indias of the mind. (128)

In this statement of Rushdie the first assertion is highly disputable and the pretty phrase at the end raises several questions. It may perhaps be true that there is a "sense of loss" in all types of dislocations cited by Rushdie. But in the intensity of loss there are bound to be great differences. If we consider the case of the "Exile", he is a victim. The force of external agency will be behind rendering him exile. But with expatriates and immigrants, it is a "willed journey"—undertaken for the sake of personal gains like career advancement and material prosperity. That is to say they "don't lose their nation, but exchange"—and that too entirely for personal gain. When this is the fact, how far it is justifiable to consider the "loss" suffered by all to be similar? This is not to deny that immigrants experience a sense of alienation or loss, but to suggest that they are the

people who have determined their present after carefully considering their advantages and disadvantages, and that, in the future, if they so wish, the option to go back is always open to them.

But this option to return is more suitable in case of the first generation diasporas. Even then their journey from home to abroad and from abroad to home is that of anguish and anxiety as manifested in the statement of Chateaubriand. In fact, their journey turns their lives into a perennial exile. Exile has been the source of good literature and sometimes even of great literature in all ages. An emotive and moving part of the *Ramayana* comprises Ram's going into exile for fourteen years. Similarly the Pandavas too have to spend twelve years in exile in the *Mahabharata*. The *Bible* also sings of man's loss of Eden and his exilic condition. Exile, migration or expatriation, whatever one may call, is not only a physical condition but also a state of mind. It does not matter where your feet are, in your own native land or in an alien land. The sense of exile results in "a deep feeling of loss, ache, separation, yearning for recuperation and restoration and this is the most favoured and fertile site for creative activity, especially that of literature" (Shukla Sheobhushan and Anu Shukla 7). Jhumpa Lahiri and Margaret Wilson are the product of such exilic condition; however, they differ in treatment of exilic/diasporic conditions in their works.

At the centre of exilic condition of diasporas lie the concept of 'home' and 'identity'. Home is a singular abode where one belongs to. But for diasporas home is not a singular space, it is a poly space. This ambivalence of home as space problemtizes the identity of diasporas, particularly the second generation (as for Gogol and Kaushik) who

finds comfortable in none of the home space; neither at original nor at the adopted. The paradox of diasporic existence is that the diasporas tend to reclaim a cultural space of their own while at the same time long to be part of the global nation. Consequently, they are caught between the nebulous frontiers of the dreamland and the homeland, belonging to both while at the same time feeling a misfit everywhere.

The concept of home is tied up in some way with the notion of identity, the story we tell of ourselves and which is also the story other tell of us. Identities are free—floating, they are limited by borders and boundaries. When migrants cross a boundary there is hostility and exclusion as well as welcome and inclusion with both responses often overlapping with each other. Workers are needed for dirty jobs but lack of hygiene is singled out as an innate quality among certain ethnic groups. Roots, like home, are in a certain place. However, places or homes are socially constructed. Place is often associated with tradition and tradition is fluid, it is always being reconstituted. In fact tradition is about change, change that is not being acknowledged. Identity is changed by the journey, so our subjectivity is recomposed. Thus identity is not to do with being but with becoming.

There are many sorts of migrants, some live on the border line, the border between two states, or a more figurative kind of borderline, between two cultures or two families, two ways of life. The borderline is always ambivalent, it can be an inherent part of the inside or the chaotic wilderness outside. It is interesting to leave one's homeland in order to enter the culture of other but this move is undertaken only to return to oneself and one's home, to judge or laugh at one's peculiarities and limitations. According to Julia

Kristeva, the stranger is neither friend nor enemy; s/he is one member of the family of undecidables. In fact, they are unclassifiable for being physically close while remaining culturally remote. They often seem to be suspended in the empty space between a tradition which they have already left and the mode of life which stubbornly denies them the right of entry. In fact they blur the boundary line, standing between the inside and the outside, order and chaos, friend and enemy. This makes the life of diaspora imbued with deceit, disappointment and desperation.

The disappointment of diaporas is augmented by their oft-overlapping of past and present. Their past helps to accept the ambiguity of the present. When the real past does not fulfill this condition, has to be invented. The past is an absolutely vital element in the negotiation of identity but it comprises a renovated and selectively appropriated set of memories and discourses. Individual history is somewhat leaky category, where past and present blend into each other. The authority of the past depends on people's present subjectivity and vice-versa. The stories the people tell about their past have more to do with the continuing shoring up of self- understanding than with historical truths. Identities are fabrications, both invented and constructed. With post-colonial subjectivity, one cannot disregard the ways in which colonial experiences interiorized, as well as with the fragmentation imposed by conditions of migrant marginality. It resents a general understanding of history as a fabricated text. The past can become, in fact must become fixed because disambiguating the past allows people to make sense of uncertainties of the present.

The present is uncertain for everyone since it is always in the process of emerging. It is doubly ambivalent for migrant subjects who also have to deal with difference and marginality. Thus one set of uncertainties is repressed by rendering the past in coherent, unequivocal and undoubtedly artificial ways. Emigration is supposed to liberate people although nostalgia about the past reveals repressed fantasies of identity and belongingness. Immigration is associated with betterment of social status and financial security but material freedom is opposed to experiences of marginality and alienation. My entire thesis is the elaboration of this assertion.

From the Chapter-II, it is revealed that the entire diasporic reality/discourse is enshrined in the tension between Present and Past and the realization of the presence of "Third Space" which is inevitable. Past is never away from present, our past is always present in our present life in some or other form, and often functions as a motivational force to stand against the poignant past. It is also true that the glorious past is often the creation of mind to derive consolation. In Lahiri's "Real Durwan", Boorima's recollection of her blissful glorious past in Bangladesh and her proud depiction of it to the building dwellers in Calcutta might be the creation of the figment of her imagination. Her present is too miserable and humiliating to bear as she lives on the mercy of the building dwellers; the only way of getting some kind of sympathetic dignity is to create a past of her own choice, which may not be her past. Similarly in the story "Mrs. Sen's", Mrs. Sen remarks that everything is there in India (India which is her past). If it is so how come she is not in India to get everything? It must be mentioned here that most of the migration in post-independent India has occurred to avail the things not available in India. Mr. and Mrs. Sen also come under such category of migration. Her remark then

seems to be a consolation strategy against the unanticipated difficulties in the host land. Wilson's Davida also time and again engages in reminiscences of her home in America whenever she is faced with unanticipated, painful and awkward situation.

The Chapter-III reveals the inherent connection between the diasporic reality and multiculturalism. In fact, diasporic obsessions and concern emerge out of the cultural pluralism, cultural interaction, confrontation and also assimilation. This imparts diverse dimension to diasporic existence. The characters in the stories of the book *Interpreter of Maladies* seem to adjust with their multicultural surroundings. Be it Shoba and Sukumar of "A Temporary Matter", Mr. and Mrs. Das of "An Interpreter of Maladies", Twinkle and Sanjeev of "This Blessed House", everyone has got multicultural touch right from their costume to character. However, they also exhibit their Indianness, particularly in their most personal moment.

The world in *The Namesake* is also purely multicultural like the world of *Interpreter of Maladies*. Here, again we witness differences between the perspective of first and second generation migrants towards their multicultural ambience. Ashoke and Ashima try hard to protect their children from being influenced by the American culture surrounding them all the time. Consequently, they make occasional visits to India with a view to keep in touch with their own people. But their children, Gogol and Sonia, the second generation American born migrants do not see any point in their such visits and feel awkward to see that their parents call India their home. Gogol thinks himself to be American and does not look forward to occasional visits to Calcutta or the annual pujo held at one of the local community halls where "they were required to throw marigold

petals at a cardboard effigy of a goddess and eat bland vegetarian food" (64). To him it was never as interesting and lively as Christmas. His relation with Americans like Ruth, Maxine, Gerald, Lydia and others and his acceptance despite being Indian shows the multicultural concern in the novel.

Moreover, a reverence for India and Indian culture is well expressed by the American characters like Maxine and her parents. No doubt their knowledge of India is gathered from books and magazines. Such reverence for India and Indian culture occur in Gogol after the death of his father. The death of his father is a turning point of his life. Now he understands the significance of every cultural act and rituals performed by his father and the pain associated with it. Consequently, he starts recognizing himself to be Indian despite his seeming Americanization; he appears Indian in private and American in public – a truly multicultural identity.

Significantly, Jhumpa Lahiri's works present the conflicting human relationships, they are bound intricately with some elements of Indianess. Indian and the Western culture could be seen as coming to terms with each other through Lahiri's narratives. The complicated Indian nature and culture is presented with all its vitality in her narration in both Indian and American contexts. The West could be seen as presented with a sense of sentimentality by Lahiri. This is apparent in the epilogue to her short stories *Unaccustomed Earth*. Affinity to Western culture and life style that most of the NRIs have in their psyche is obvious in the epilogue. Moreover, Lahiri adopts female point of view to present the life and characters in her stories. In *Unaccustomed Earth* and other stories where the female protagonists including the author's first person narrative voice,

Ruma, Boudi, Sudha, Sang, Hema, and Chitra present the blend of India and the West from their experiences.

In *Unaccustomed Earth*, particularly in the second segment "Hema and Koushik", Lahiri moves from multiculturalism to tranculturalism. Since they move from one country to another country, they acquire a touch of different cultures in assimilating manner. In fact, they adopt different cultural point of view depending on their location.

Margaret Wilson's *Daughters of India* is basically a novel of missionary expedition in India, and much of the action has been unfurled through the experiences of the female protagonist Davida Baillie. It is through her experience in dealing with the converted Christians of Aiyenianwalla that much of the multicultural/multilingual elements have been disclosed. Multiculturalism in this novel is found in its very nascent stage; in fact it is cultural conflict, rather than cultural amalgamation, though effort is made to achieve it through religious conversion.

The fourth chapter analyses the inherent complexities of diasporic existence at the personal level. The geographical displacement of the migrants allows them to undergo different climatic condition and sexuality as well. No doubt, sex is primarily biological; I have found three different manifestations of human sexuality with regard to biology, culture and psychology. It is the harmony among these three aspects of sexuality that results in a healthy human sexuality. Jhumpa Lahiri explores all the facets of sexuality in her different stories. In the story "An Interpreter of Maladies" the biological facet of sexuality is explored. The very beginning of the story reveals the frivolous relationship of Mr. and Mrs. Das who are least concerned with the things that could affect their conjugal

bond. However, behind this surface relation lie more serious issues. Mrs. Das has three children – Ronny, Bobby and Jina, but Bobby is not from Mr. Das. The revelation of this fact by Mrs. Das to Mr. Kapasi constitutes the very crux of Lahiri's narrative device which reflects on the natural relationship between a man and a woman, aside of any traditional or cultural bindings. As noticed by Mr. Kapasi, the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Das lacks the required warmth of conjugal affair which is identical to his own. His job of interpreter has never been admired by his wife, and the same job appears romantic to Mrs. Das who does not seem romantic to her husband anyway. Consequently, Mr. Kapasi feels, "Mr. and Mrs. Das were a bad match, just as he and his wife were" (53). The concept of marriage was evolved to curb aberrant sexuality which requires compatibility of couples on both physical and mental grounds. The lack of compatibility of any kinds leads to the frustration of sexuality which, in turn, occasions the collapse of marital bond, though the couples superficially continue to live together. This is corroborated by Mr. Kapasi's confession of his marital discord and his observation of the same in the case of Mr. and Mrs. Das.

Lahiri's "Sexy" presents the cultural aspect of human sexuality by juxtaposing the relationship of a man and a woman belonging to two different cultures in an extra-marital affair. The loose sexuality of the Americanized Indian libertine, Dev and Laxmi's cousin's husband has also been juxtaposed with the tradition-bound domestic sexuality of Laxmi and her cousin. There is a crucial relationship between 'body' and 'sex'; the former is the stimulant of the latter; physical attraction and sexual stimulation are inextricably linked – it is the lack of both these things that lead to the collapse of marital bond of Laxmi's cousin. To what extent body is related to sexuality can well be explained

by different sexual encounters of the central character of the story, Miranda. When the story opens, Miranda is engaged with the Indian married man, Dev whose love toward her is more of a sexual exploit than the love of the real sort. Miranda's sexual experience with Dev reveals a hypocritical male response to female sexuality, particularly in Indian context. In an orthodox society like India, marital sexuality is often imposed under traditional values; and the partner when exposed to the liberal sexuality of the West tends to play a dubious role, by pretending royalty to the married partner, and at the same time committing adultery by indulging in extramarital sexuality. Any judgment on the nature of human sexuality is a matter of the values established in a society. This conflict between Sex (Nature) and moral values (Culture) is explicitly noticeable in the sexual pursuits of Dev and Miranda.

The psychological facet of sex is portrayed in the story "The Treatment of Bibi Haldar". Through the portrayal of a hysteric character, apart from highlighting the atrocious attitude of Indian society, Lahiri seems to emphasize the role of sex in the healing of physical deformity and mental retardation. Although a long period of suffering, humiliation and indifferent attitude of the relatives has emaciated Bibi Haldar physically and mentally, the fire of sexuality burns as intensely in her as in any normal human being. Her desire for a man is well identified by other characters and when they discover that she is pregnant, there runs a wave of shock in them. However, this stigma turns out to be a blessing as it cures Bibi, and enables her to live a normal life with her unknown fathered child. Thus, in this story sex is used as purgation which purges Bibi of all her ailments. Sex as clinical purgation and sex as social stigma again raise the conflict

between sex and culture, and they need to be distanced if the former is meant to be used clinically.

In *The Namesake*, Lahiri presents sex both in biological and cultural perspectives. Ashoke and Ashima presents traditional domestic sex while Gogol's sexual exploits with with Ruth, Maxine and Moushumi represents biological aspect of sex which aims at seeking of pleasure. No doubt he ties in marital bond with Moushumi but they soon separate for by this time Gogol has returned to Indian domestic sexuality while Moushumi still adheres to American life style which allows for extramarital sex.

In Margaret Wilson's *Daughters of India* the cultural aspect of sex has been treated extensively. Davida's response to the polygamous nature of Indian pariahs, her reaction on Taj's elopement and her psychological trauma for not being able to forget Ferguson while the Indians could easily go for their next sexual partners is the testimony of cultural conflict pertaining to sex.

Wilson's treatment of sexuality is a part of broader colonial sexuality which maintained prostitution in healthy way to cater to sexual urges of the British soldiers. However, when the women lost their physical luster and got infected, they were dumped in some hospitals and charity centre to suffer and die. The dying sister is an apt example in this context. The dying sister is the outcome of the darkest side of colonial sexuality. The inter- cultural sexuality is marked with lust and licentiousness devoid of any warmth and love. For the White colonial, the Indian tropical sexuality is a noble experience and, to some extent, an exotic too. The sexual attraction toward "other" is a recurring motif in

the stories of Lahiri and Wilson. However this interaction is the result of lust and love for experiencing different sexuality.

The reflection of ecology has been seen in form of a garden in both Lahiri and Wilson. In fact, 'garden' appears in every work of Lahiri which suggests her ecological concern. In the story "An Unaccustomed Earth", Ruma's father's short stay with her is spent in the making of a garden. However, her father's nurturing of a garden has another import. Since he has lost his wife (female/Nature) long ago, his care for the garden equates his longing to care and nurture his wife. Man cannot live alone; he must need a companion, and in case of Ruma's father garden replaces his wife.

Moreover, 'garden' in "An Unaccustomed Earth" also suggests man's tendency to create life in an alien land as suggested in the epilogue. This tendency has been suggested in the cover page of Lahiri's *The Namesake*; on the front cover page there is a tree with two leaves while on the back cover page there is a well bloomed flower. The front cover picture indicates the arrival of Ashoke and Ashima on an alien land while the back cover picture suggests the fruits of their struggle on an alien land. In this way the cover page, with the help of ecological allusions, constitutes the very essence and gist of the novel.

Similarly, Margaret Wilson's novel *Daughters of India,* through its cover page picture: a hut with earthen pot and a bullock cart in front of it, a white woman in western attire sitting on the front of lowered bullock cart and the rustic Indian pariah women sitting on the ground with their veils on. This is the picture of the Flowery Basti where Davida herself has planted a tree of peace to be taken care of by the pastor Jalal and his wife Begum. In this novel life and characters portrayed are nearer to nature; no touch of

industrial corruption is seen. The people are engaged in the struggle of survival as they lack the basic need of life, they are left to the mercy of nature regarding their health and hygiene.

In both Jhumpa Lahiri and Margaret Wilson, the metaphor of pains and ambitions runs through in integrated and intricate manner. Significantly pains and ambitions are part and parcel of diasporic existence. Lahiri weaves her narratives in such a manner that characters are compelled to experience the poignant consequences of their ambition, the ambition that takes them away from the place of their origin.

Significantly, trauma/pain is always associated with some kind of 'loss' or the 'presence' of loss in psyche, and in this sense Freud's notion of object loss in "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917) and also Derrida's notion of 'presence' acquire a focal point in the discussion of trauma. The 'object loss' indicates that what is physically absent but psychically ever remains with us. Such a feeling of loss is excruciatingly painful particularly when it is related to our existential essence of being and includes our culture, nation, ethnicity and history. It is such trauma that we witness in diasporic writings. According to Cathy Caruth,

> Trauma is deeply tied to our own historical realities" (12), which is rarely space-specific. Consequently, the exact dating of trauma is less important than the "posterior resubjectifications and the restructuring of the subject, that is the consequence (Rauch 113).

To define trauma as a consequence of an event, Juliet Mitchell observes,

> (trauma) must create a beach in a protective covering of such severity that it can not be coped with by the usual mechanisms by which we deal with pain or loss. … In trauma we are untimely ripped (21).

Mitchell's view corroborates Freud's opinion that trauma is augmented by the memory of traumatic event more than the event itself. In such a curious relation between the past and present regarding the trauma of event, we find that all human beings are bound in their sense of trauma, and it is this sense that determines much of their thoughts and acts, their national, cultural and ethical values.

Pain in *Interpreter of Maladies* serves as a method of expressing inexpressible. In "A Temporary Matter", there is a pain of losing a newly born baby and in "Interpreter of Maladies", there is a pain of being disloyal to husband and also keeping secret of begetting illicit child. While "When Mr. Pirzada came to Dine", "Sexy", "Mrs. Sen's" and "Third and Final Continents" present the pain of displacement, the stories "A Real Durwan" and "The Treatment of Bibi Haldar" present the pain of subjugation. Significantly, the pain of displacement is the outcome of ambition of making life better abroad. This is most explicitly expressed in *The Namesake* in which Ashoke and Ashima come to America just after their marriage for Ashoke's desire of seeking better future.

A reconsideration of major characters' predicament in the novel – Ashoke, Ashima, Gogol, Sonia and Moushumi – unfolds the high intensity psychological disturbance and uprooting they live with. Ashima typifies the highly disturbing experience of a person away from home. The novel commences with her painful pregnancy and child bearing abroad and culminates in her final decision to divide the rest of her life between America and India.

The traumatic experience of Ashoke is in the nature of a psychical wound. The train accident that Ashoke had at the age of twenty deeply impinges in his psyche; it establishes a rapport between him and Gogol because it was the latter's book that saved the former. Ashoke's lifelong remembrance of the story "The Overcoat", his feeling of association with its protagonist, and his realization that all human beings have an experience of pain one way or other impact and haunt him for the rest of his life. When his son, Gogol attains his 20th year, he lets out his secret to him, and the disclosing is as tormenting as the event was. Ashoke's emotional state is so touching that Gogol psychologically goes through that traumatic event and feels the pain of his father. This psychic experience of Gogol reveals to him a new significance of his pet name, Gogol (Nikhil is his real name). It is bound up with a catastrophe his father has been haunted by for years. The realization of the significance of his name in the life of Ashoke is so overwhelming that he eventually understands that he is a constant reminder of his father's past anguish. Moreover, in the representation of the trauma of Ashoke and Ashima, the first generation immigrants in the novel, the memory of events in the homeland holds the sway.

Margaret Wilson's *Tales of a Polygamous City* presents the pains and ambitions of missionary workers no doubt, but it concentrates more on the Indian's pains and ambitions concerning their common affairs. For instance, the story "A Mother" presents the trauma of a child widow, Aziz whose mother anxiously strives to seek a means to make her smile. "God's Little Joke" seems to be a saga of pain for its depiction of a pathetic Farkhanda's decision to adopt stern asceticism to expatiate the sin of her

brother's committing suicide which eventually turns into an astonishingly miserable creature.

In *Daughters of India,* the protagonist, Davida feels pain for the failure of her missionary ambition to reform the pariahs of the Flowery Basti. Though the sweepers are given education through Christianization, they are not upgraded from their traditional dirty works. Being a woman both the novelist and the protagonist are hurt to see the miserable plight of woman in India. While reflecting on the painful existence of the Indian pariahs, the novelist realizes the futility and meaninglessness of life in this world.

This painful awareness of human existence makes both the writer and the protagonist matured in their response towards life and events. Consequently, Davida appears matured in her perception of the problems and feelings of the pariahs of Flowery Basti. Moreover, it also helps her to handle some painfully awkward questions of pariahs pertaining to her virginity, love and marriage. It is in India that she realizes the importance of having a husband and 'a home' and her sense of absence of both add to her myriad pains of living alone in an alien land.

The fifth chapter reveals how the diasporic people are subordinated at different levels in the host land. In Jhumpa Lahiri subaltern concern runs through all her works in some or other forms. She presents subalternity at various levels: political, cultural, female, children, etc. The political subalternity is quite obvious from the fact that she juxtaposes migrants and the locals which, apart from creating a sense of conflict, also creates an ambience of subordination. In *Interpreter of Maladies*, the story of Mr. Pirzada is a sheer case of political subordination. He is twice subordinated, first by Pakistani

political system, and second by American political system. In fact, every migrant is a subaltern in America be it first generation or second generation. In case of first generation, the subalternity is established by their willing detachment from the host society and culture. Mr. Pirzada, Lilia's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Sen are easily distinguishable for their typical Indian attire and hence become easy pray to subaltern treatment. A similar case is found in case of Ashoke and Ashima of *The Namesake*, the first generation protagonists. Wherever, Ashima goes, her typical Indian costume makes her centre of attraction and at the same time alien.

The subordination owes a lot to the *otherization* of migrants. Both the first and second generation migrants are forced to feel "Other" or intruder in the host land. Such feelings hinder them to mingle with "Self". Much of the subaltern studies are made on the basis of "Self – Other" dichotomy. Even in case of the second generation migrants, born and brought up in America, could not escape from the label of Other despite their apparent Americanization. In *The Namesake*, Gogol feels enraged at such labeling. When he finds the family mailbox bearing the surname GANGULI had been tampered with to spell GANGREEN (67), and when during a school project where the young students are made to record the names etched on tombstones, Gogol realizes that he can never hope to find his family name on any of these among hordes of Smiths, Collins, and Woods or as his other classmates find theirs, he feels enraged at being burdened with a useless, absurd identity.

Significantly, Lahiri has concentrated much on gender subalternity in her works. Her stories "A Real Durwan" and "The Treatment of Bibi Haldar" are imbued with the

elements of gender subalternity. Reading these stories in the light of female identity-formation process, one can come up with the view that they can be in fact read as a commentary on the constructedness of the Indian notion of femininity and its possible burden on the life of the marginalized female subaltern in Calcutta, India.

Margaret Wilson seems to voice colonial subalternity in her works. Colonial subalternity is the darker side of European enlightenment which pledged to liberate human mind by diffusing rationality, but the geographical exploration that accelerated aftermath resulted in slavery of non-Europeans. In fact, colonial subalternity is the wider manifestation of East-West juxtaposition which can also be illustrated in terms of Self-Other as discussed before. Interestingly, Wilson presents a triangular relation of Self-Other: the colonizer (British) – The missionaries (American) – the colonized (Indians). That the relation between the colonizer and the colonized is tinged with acrimony and animosity is well known to every one. The pathetic plight of the colonized is deeply felt and understood, and also documented by the missionaries. But they are also the victim of subaltern treatment because being white they are treated as colonizer by the Indians and at the same time they are looked down upon by the ruling whites for being sympathizer of the colonized.

The title of the novel, *Daughters of India*, itself is suggestive of the writer's deep concern for the Indian women's predicament during the British Raj. The portrayal of women and their circumstances in the novel is not the story of Ainyanwala only, but that of the entire India. Wilson's *Tales of a Polygamous City* is imbued with subaltern subjects. In fact all the stories in the collection reflect subalternity in their own way.

However, subalternity in Wilson is not due to any subjugation of migrants. Rather a migrant narrator reflects on the prevailing gender bias and gender atrocity in the then Indian society.

It has been seen that both Lahiri and Wilson have successfully portrayed the diasporic concern and obsessions in their works with regard to their respective time and social condition. However, a diasporic obsession is not only particular to Lahiri and Wilson. There are many other writers who have projected these issues in their works; Anita Desai, Shashi Despande, Bharati Mukharjee, Chitra Benarjee Devakurni, Sunetra Gupta etc. But what distinguishes Lahiri and Wilson from these writers is their positive attitude towards the conditions and obsessions of diaspora. Both Lahiri and Wilson maintain neutral profile in their fictional art and explore microscopically everyday common events with seer detachment. Their art provide a contrast to the fictional world of Bharati Mukherjee marked by its rapid pace and an abundance of violence and sex. No doubt sex is a motif in both Lahiri and Wilson; it is motivated by love, lust and romance, it includes deception but not violence. Moreover, unlike in the stories of Rohintan Mistry and Bharati Mukherjee, we do not witness in the stories of Lahiri and Wilson any uneasy relations with the cultural ambience of the host land and an implicit plea for better terms of accommodation. Lahiri and Wilson take for granted that in an alien land certain obstacles and compromises are inevitable. So we witness in their works self confident immigrants who have created in the host land a little world of their own. Holding on to their cultural memories in things and food, attire and attitude they have assimilated themselves in to the mainstream culture of their host country.

However, still a lot is left to be done on Lahiri and Wilson. In doing this research it has been my sincere effort to reconcile between the diasporic obsessions of a colonial migrant and a postcolonial migrant, and the study reveals that pangs of displacement seem to be identical irrespective of time and space. It varies by degree depending on the diasporas' potentialities and predilections for acculturation. I am not able to include all the issues that we find in Lahiri and Wilson. Wilson's work contains very crucial elements concerning the sociology of Imperial India and plight and position of women during the British Raj. Lahiri's works other than the inherent feelings of isolation and uprootedness, can be a better study of transnational cuisine, and sociology of diaspora. In fact, Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth* has wider potentiality for being studied from the perspective of Bakhtian dialogism and polyphony.

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