THE DIALOGIC OF REPRESENTATION OF MEN: A STUDY OF THE SELECT NOVELS OF CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI, BHARATI MUKHERJEE, AND JHUMPA LAHIRI

(Thesis submitted to Nagaland University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for award of Ph.D. Degree in English)

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I, Anjan Kumar Behera (Reg. No. Eng/PhD/00023), hereby declare that the thesis entitled *The Dialogic of Representation of Men: A Study of the Select Novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Bharati Mukherjee, and Jhumpa Lahiri* submitted for the award of Ph.D. Degree in English is a bonafide record of research done by me under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Rosemary Dzüvichü, Professor, Department of English, Nagaland University, Kohima Campus, Meriema, during the period of my research (2017-2023) and it has not been submitted, either in full or in half, to any other university or institution for the award of any other Degree, Diploma or Title.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that thesis entitled *The Dialogic of Representation of Men: A Study of the Select Novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Bharati Mukherjee, and Jhumpa Lahiri* is a bonafide record of research work done by Mr. Anjan Kumar Behera, Registration No. Ph.D/ENG/00023, Department of English, Nagaland University, Kohima Campus, Meriema during 2017-23. Submitted to the Nagaland University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, this thesis has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or other title and the thesis represents independent and original work on the part of the candidate under my supervision. This is again certified that the research has been undertaken as per UGC regulation 2019 and 2016 and the candidate has fulfilled the criteria mentioned in the university Ordinances-OC-4, sub section-5(i) of the section-9 for submission of the thesis.

Mr. Anjan Kumar Behera has completed his research work within the stipulated time.

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passed away when I was but an infant, and hence I could never talk to her or hear her stories. Today, I would like to dedicate this research work to her glorious memory. Thank you grandma for inspiring me all my life to always give my best and never ever give up.

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PREFACE

This thesis studies the representation of men in the Select Novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (*Queen of Dreams, Sister of My Heart*), Bharati Mukherjee (*Jasmine, Desirable Daughters*), and Jhumpa Lahiri (*The Namesake*, *Unaccustomed Earth*). It examines four primary hypotheses as a guideline for its findings. The research has attempted to verify or nullify these statements - Indian women diaspora writers represent their male characters with a feminist bias. The male characters in these novels have similar traits and personality aspects, based on the stereotype of a sexist patriarchal masculine identity. These male characters form a force that the female characters must break away from to achieve self-actualization. The male characters in these novels thus face double subjugation; first as a diaspora individual, and second being typecast by the writers as an oppressive force which must be overcome.

This research will follow a descriptive analytic approach where the six selected novels will form the primary texts. The researcher will focus on characterizations, setting, language, themes, motifs, narration, and symbols to conclusively answer the research questions, in light of the cross examination and analysis in relation to the secondary texts. *Orientalism* by Edward Said, the theory of the subaltern by Gramsci, Ranajit Guha, Gayatri Spivak, and other postcolonial theorists, various postcolonial theories like hybridity, identity, ambivalence, mimicry, and cultural hegemony, and the Lacanian concept of *Gaze* will form the secondary texts. Gender theories like Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, Helene Cixous' *The Laugh of the Medusa*, and others will be applied to study the representation of male characters in the given novels.

The thesis is divided into six chapters, out of which the first two chapters outlines the mode, scope, and direction the study has undertaken. The following three chapters provides an in-depth

analysis of the select novels by Divakaruni, Mukherjee, and Lahiri. The final chapter, conclusion, sums up the arguments and will report on the findings.

Chapter I: Introduction

This chapter forms the introduction of the thesis and will present detailed interpretations of key concepts in Diaspora writing like the subaltern and new subaltern, orient, occident, homeland, hybridity, cultural hegemony, nationalism, multiculturalism, race, and displacement. All of these play a key role in the construction and reading of diaspora literature. This chapter also outlines the various diaspora literatures present and will elaborate their common themes, writing techniques, and characteristics.

Chapter II: Women Novelists of the Indian Diaspora: An Overview

The second chapter focusses on the various Indian women diaspora novelists, and attempt to understand their works unders the light of diaspora fiction. The chapter takes into account writers like Meena Alexander, Kiran Desai, Uma Parameswaran, Sujata Bhatt, Anita Rau Badami, and will introduces the selected authors for the thesis: Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Bharati Mukherjee, and Jhumpa Lahiri. This chapter discusses the various facets of postcolonial feminism and elucidate on the various feminist theories put forth by theorists like Simone de Beauvoir, Helene Cixous, Luce Irigaray, among others, and examines these in the light of the novels by the women novelists of the Indian diaspora.

The following chapters have analysed the select novels in the light of the theories discussed in the previous chapters.

Chapter III: Power and Masculine Space in *Queen of Dreams* and *Sister of My Heart*

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni weaves the element of magic realism into the narrative of *Queen of Dreams* which focuses on an Indian immigrant family settled in the US. The mother, Mrs. Gupta, is able to forsee the future through her vivid dreams, a fact that is kept hidden from the protagonist, Rakhi, who is a single mother living in Berkeley, California. The research will analyse characters of the father, Mr. Gupta, Rakhi's former husband Sonny, the mysterious Yoga man, among others. Divakaruni's novel *Sister of My Heart* runs a parallel narration from the perspectives of Anju and Sudha, cousins. Anju weds Sunil, an NRI who lusts for Sudha, who is now married to Ramesh, a man burdened by the patriarchal society he lives in. This chapter

studies in detail the characters of Sunil and Ramesh, along with those of Bijoy (Anju's father), Gopal (Sudha's father), and Ashok (Sudha's love interest before her marriage).

Chapter IV: Postcolonial Complexities of the Men in *Jasmine* and *Desirable Daughters*.

Mukherjee's 1989 novel *Jasmine* narrates the story of a young Indian woman, Jyoti, who is struggling to settle in the US, and as a result of various circumstances in her life has taken on many identities. The men in the novel function as the pivot around which her life revolves. Prakash Vijh, Taylor, Bud Ripplemayer, Darrel Lutz and the astrologer who had foretold her future: a widow who would live in exile are the characters the study will take into account. *Desirable Daughters* focuses on the lives of three Calcutta women, where the American Dream has been achieved, but more something more valuable has been lost. This chapter looks at the male characters in this novel and the role they play in the narrative.

Chapter V: Relocating the Diasporic Space: Identity and Self-Actualization of the Men in *The Namesake* and *Unaccustomed Earth*.

Ashoke Ganguli, an NRI, picks out the name 'Gogol' for his son after he survives an accident while reading Russian author Nikolai Gogol's short story *The Raincoat*. The son, however, resents the name and does not understand the significance. The son is called 'Nikhil' out of home, and soon officially takes on the name of Nikhil Gogol Ganguli. This chapter looksinto the identity crisis and self-actualization of both Ashoke Ganguli, a first-generation Indian diaspora man, and Nikhil Gogol Ganguli, a second-generation Indian diaspora man. The chapter also analyses the various male characters of Lahiri's collection of short stories *Unaccustomed Earth* with the same perspective, their identity formation and their journey towards self-actualization.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

This chapter sums up the arguments and state if the hypotheses have been verified or rejected in light of the analysis of the select novels. The chapter also states whether a common pattern of characterization for male characters has been found in the novels, and lay a groundwork for further research to be carried it in the area.

ANJAN KUMAR BEHERA

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

With the rise of feminist thought in the 20th century, radical women have questioned the representation of women by men writers. French existentialist Simone de Beauvoir in her 1949 book *The Second Sex* explains the myth of the woman which has been developed by the patriarchal society over the years which has been used as an excuse to explain a woman instead of trying to understand her. Literature and media fails in attempting to portray "mysterious" women; they can appear only at the beginning of a novel as strange, enigmatic figures; but unless the story remained unfinished they give up their secret in the end and they are then simply consistent and transparent persons (Beauvoir 266). Literature has always portrayed women in binary roles. Either she is the princess or the evil step mother, either the angelic girl or the perverse virgin (261). Helene Cixous in her 1975 seminal essay *The Laugh of the Medusa* directed women to break free from the limitations placed by patriarchy on them and language itself, and to write using their bodies. When women write, they are able to draw their own narratives and escape from the rigid structures set for them by the androcentric world. In *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf postulates that the only way a woman can truly express herself is if she is independent, in every way possible, from patriarchy, and thus, can present realistic depictions of themselves, as opposed to the romantic idealized versions presented by male writers.

This research contests that the reverse of this idea is also true, that when women writers construct male characters, they fail to offer realistic representations. To examine this, select novels by Indian women diaspora writers will be undertaken. What emerges is a dialogic on the representation of men. Before venturing into the nitty-gritty of the research, it is paramount to have a comprehensive understanding of the two core subjects in this thesis: representation and diaspora.

1. On Representation in Literature

The issue of representation in art and literature has been the genesis of critical theory. Early on, Plato studied Greek poetry and drama and found that even though these writers attempted to tell the truth about the world, they lacked the authority. What they passed on as the absolute truth was in fact their version of the truth, marred by their own subjective biases. Plato borrowed the Greek word *mimēsis* meaning imitation to explain the process by which the artist and/or author constructs art/literature. Mimesis is the visual or verbal artistic representation of agents and events in the world by the medium of language. Therefore, artistic representation had a different status than the real and ordinary world. Literature depicts things as they appear as opposed to how they really are. True reality lies in a metaphysical and divine space above and beyond human realm, thus making it unattainable (Nightingale 38). Truth is arbitrary.

In the discourse of structuralism, Saussure put forth the concept of the langue and the parole. Parole is the function word or image, while langue is the context behind the parole. The langue must be understood comprehensively for someone to decipher the meaning behind the parole. This concept can be used to understand representation in literature. Unless the readers know the context, the representation will be lost on them (Young 129). For example, a reader who is not familiar with the Christian faith and the Bible will miss out the elements of Christian allegory in C. S. Lewis' 1950 fantasy novel *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* and interpret it as a mere fable. Aslan will just be a talking talking lion, and not a representation of the sacrificial Jesus Christ, and neither will Jadis be understood as a representation of Lucifer. Representations in fiction are created in the jurisdiction of specific rules or conventions, and familiarity with these conventions is vital to identify what is being represented.

The word 'representation' when broken down into the root words gives 're' and 'presentation', which means representation aims to 're-present' something which exists in the real world. The subject being represented is the lifeline for the representation to exist in the first place. James O. Young (2011) in his paper *Representation in Literature* wonders if the representation of fictional characters is a possibility. He concludes that such an occurrence is not possible, as the subject does not exist in the real world, and that any attempts to do so will merely count as descriptions, not representations (130). However, he agrees that, "partially fictional items unquestionably can be representational" (131). This can be comprehended better by analyzing the fictional character of Miranda Priestly appearing in Lauren Weisberger's 2003 novel *The Devil Wears Prada* is a representation of both a

character type (driven, ambitious, career-oriented woman), and a real person- Anna Wintour, the Editor of the American *Vogue* magazine.

For Aristotle, poetry, which represented the real world, imbibed moral values in the readers. This means that representations in literature do not have to be based on a specific subject, but rather a type or class so as to either critique or laud it (133). In Charles Dickens' 1839 social novel *Oliver Twist*, the character of Mr. Bumble, the beadle at the parish workhouse where the central character Oliver Twist spends his early years, is not a representation of a real person, at least none that the readers are aware of. Rather, he is a representation of a class of clergymen who were hypocritical and corrupted. Thus, even though the subject may not exist in the real realm, it might be a "metaphor" and help construct a real person, type, location, situation, or sentiment (140).

To paraphrase, representation is marred by author bias, and can either represent an absolute element in reality, a partially real element, or a type of real element. The readers must be aware of the context for the representation to convey meaning. The culture and nationality of the writer shapes representation as well. Representation depends on the genre of the work as well. Representation in the background of gender will be comprehensively dealt with in the second chapter. With the basic ideas of representation in literature now set, an analysis of the phenomenon of diaspora is required.

2. Diaspora

> On a sticky august evening two weeks before her due date, Ashima Ganguli stands in the kitchen of a Central Square apartment, combining Rice Krispies 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. Ashima has been consuming this concoction throughout her pregnancy, a humble approximation of the snack sold for pennies on Calcutta sidewalks and on railway platforms throughout India, spilling from newspaper cones. Even now that there is barely space inside her, it is the one thing she craves. Tasting from a cupped palm, she frowns; as usual, there's something missing (Lahiri 1).

These lines from Jhumpa Lahiri's debut novel *The Namesake* are powerful enough to evoke a strong sense of longing and nostalgia. It assembles an intricate imagery of what life of a displaced person can be like, the struggle to hold on to the past while trying to make sense of the present, all the while realizing that something will always be missing – the past. These are the key elements of the experiences of an expatriate: yearning for the past which no longer exists, while trying to recreate the past in the present. Dascălu defines exiles as those who live "in a foreign country, a culture that is not his or her own, one that is alien, "other"" (7).

The study of various diasporas is crucial to understanding the human populace, the growth and development of culture, and the ways in which dislocation affects various facets of life. There are several reasons why studying diaspora is important. First is the growing number of diaspora entities. The capability of these displaced groups to overcome tremendous hardships makes them an interesting subject for study as they struggle to maintain a balance between their home and their adopted nation. The historical and current cultural, social, political, and economic significance and contributions of these entities to their homelands, host lands, and the international system brings to light the ways in which diaspora has contributed to world history and life as is it. Studying diaspora entities gives greater insight into the existence of the 'Other' (Sheffer xxv).

The word 'diaspora' is employed by anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, and postcolonial theorists, and critical thinkers to describe such displaced people and expatriate communities. More recently, the term has had an increasing occurrence in political, journalistic, and popular usage (Kenny 1). However, 'diaspora' is more than a synonym for 'migration'; it brings with it a plethora of political, socio-economic, and postcolonial connotations. Diaspora communities do not usually occupy a position of power in their adapted nation, have to work to establish themselves in the new surroundings, and are deemed inferior by the members of the host nation, thus establishing themselves as the subaltern. A look into the etymological origins of the word will shed more light on the connotations and denotations of the term diaspora.

2.1. Etymological Origins of 'Diaspora'

The Oxford Dictionary records the origins of the word 'diaspora' in the Greek language. Diaspora is understood as a derivative of the Greek verb – *diaspeirein*, which in turn can be split to its root words – *dia* meaning 'across', and *speirein* meaning 'to scatter'. From this evolved the Greek feminine noun διασπορά (transliterated as *diaspora*), which means 'dispersion'. In the Greek sense of the term, diaspora had more of negative connotations attached to it. Kenny points out that the ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus "used the term to refer to the decomposition of matter and its dissolution into smaller parts" (2). Dispersion meant breaking away from something whole, and dividing into smaller bits, thus indicating destruction.

The term was adapted into its current meaning by the Jewish community, in particular, the Bible. The word *diaspora* makes its first appearance in *Septuagint*, the first Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. The word 'diaspora' appears in Deuterenomy 28:25 as the Greek translation of the Hebrew word לְזַעֲוָ֖ה, which in the English *King James Version* is translated as 'dispersion'. This occurs in the speech of Moses to the Israelites prior to their entry into the promised land, Canaan. After this, the word 'diaspora' appears several other times in the Bible (for e.g., John 7:35, James 1:1, and I Peter 1:1). Diaspora, or dispersing, in the Bible was divinely imposed exile and anguish. To be separated from one's own land and become diaspora was meant to cause agony.

The Jewish expatriates, along with the emerging Armenian diaspora in the fifth century CE had further moved the word into the realms of the familiar vocabulary in use today. Today the term is used loosely to denote migration of all kinds (9). Diaspora is the "voluntary or forcible movements of the people from their homelands into new regions" (Ashcroft et al 68).

Diaspora differs from transnational communities in this that the transnational individuals, though migrate, visit their 'homeland' at regular intervals, and invest a part of their income there. They are inherently more connected to the 'homeland' than their diaspora counterparts where the fissure is deeper.

2.2. Diaspora: The Historical Context

To understand the phenomenon, it is crucial to study the development of diaspora communities around the globe and map its history.

2.2.1. Jewish Diaspora

Diaspora, with the capital 'D', refers in particular to the Jewish Diaspora which occurred as early as the 5th century BCE during the period of the Babylonian Exile. Also known as the

Babylonian Captivity, this included the forced detention of Jews in Babylonia following the latter's conquest of the kingdom of Judah in 598-7 and 586 BCE. Escaping persecution and resettling as lost communities would be the primary force behind the formation of the Jewish diasporas. After the Persian conquest of Babylonia in 538 BCE, Cyrus II[1] gave the Jews the option to return to Palestine. However, some Jews voluntarily chose to remain in Babylonia—thus constituting the first of numerous Jewish communities living permanently in the Diaspora (Evans 2). Around the 1st century AD, the Jewish diaspora has grown to include an estimated 5,000,000 people lived outside Palestine, about four-fifths of them within the Roman Empire. Palestine was still considered as the homeland, and seen as the centre of their religious and cultural life.

Most Jews interpreted their life outside Israel theologically, believing that their dispersal was divine punishment for disobeying the laws of Moses (Kenny 21). Eventually, the Diaspora Jewish communities gradually adopted distinctive languages, rituals, and cultures, some submerging themselves in non-Jewish environments. By the 19th century, Israel was no longer seen as the 'homeland' by many, opposing the views of the Zionists who thought otherwise (Seltzer 75). The Jewish diaspora fell victim to anti-Semitism during various phases of history, and suffered greatly during the World War II. Under Hitler, more than 6 million European Jews in Germany were tortured and killed as part of the Holocaust (Rudolf 31).

2.2.2. Armenian Diaspora

The Armenian diaspora, like the Jewish Diaspora, came into being due to repeated conquests and invasions by the Persian, Greek, and Roman empires in the ancient times, the Byzantine in the medieval era, and the Ottoman and Russian in the modern period (Kenny 6). These invasions caused people to migrate to other lands. Of course, there were several Armenians who migrated voluntarily, like those who chose to settle in the Armenian plantations located in various parts of the Balkans as early as the 5th century CE (7). By the tenth century, the Armenian diaspora had spread to various European countries, and by the 17th century, they had spread to Persia as well. Like the Jewish diaspora, the Armenian diaspora faced persecution as well.

> In 1894-1896 and again in 1909 the rulers of the Ottoman Empire suppressed an incipient Armenian nationalist movement, killing hundreds of thousands and compelling tens of thousands more to emigrate to neighbouring Syria or to the United States. Further suppression of the Armenian minority in 1915-1916 resulted in the deaths of some 1.5 million people, out of a poplation of only 2 million (8).

The Armenian Genocide, also known as the Armenian Holocaust, was a systematic extermination of Armenians by the Ottoman Empire during World War I. Beginning with April 24, 1915, several hundred Armenian intellectuals (in present day Republic of Turkey)

were rounded up, arrested, and later executed. This continued till 1917. Armenians in the Ottoman Empire were branded as a security threat, and were brandished for having sided with the Russians. The University of Minnesota's Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies has compiled figures by province and district that show there were 2,133,190 Armenians in the empire in 1914 and only about 387,800 by 1922 (Kifner).

What makes the Armenian diaspora similar to the Jewish diaspora is that there is an absence of a 'homeland'. "Armenians lacked an independent state between the fall of Cilicia (on the Southwest shore of present-day Turkey) in 1375 and the proclamation of the present-day Republic of Armenia in 1991" (Kenny 7). While the Armenian diaspora had the notion of a 'homeland' they were nostalgic of, there was no actual 'homeland' to return to. It was but a concept frozen in time. This notion of a 'homeland' frozen in time resonates with the African diaspora as well.

2.2.3. African Diaspora

The African diaspora is perhaps the most well represented diaspora to exist in the world today. Academicians consider Africa as the intellectual starting point of African diaspora studies. Research questions centering on Africa, whether as a real or imagined homeland, reconfigure many traditional disciplinary ideas (Olaniyan, Sweet 4). The African diaspora owes most of its existence to the slave trade which began as early as 47 BCE with the

Roman Empire importing men and women from North Africa. Other powers like the Ethiopian Empire began exporting Nilotic[2] slaves towards the 18th century. The formation of the Atlantic Slave Trade (16th to 18th century CE) deported thousands of Africans to the Americas where they would be employed as indentured servants. The Portuguese, the British, the Spanish, and the Dutch empires had established outposts on African coasts where they bought slaves. It is estimated that approximately 12 million Africans were sent across the Atlantic to work as slaves in various plantations and industries (Palmer 28).

What constructed these deported populations as the African diaspora is having them classified as racially inferior. They were treated as units of labour, and children born to slaves were also identified as slaves, with the slave owners having absolute rights over them. They occupied the position of the subaltern in their new countries. Many of the slaves were converted to Christianity and given Anglican names in an effort to 'civilize' them and purge them of their savage ways – a fact the Church used to justify slavery. For these slaves, Africa was their 'homeland', although the 'Africa' they came from was a concept frozen in time. Much like the Jewish and Armenian diasporas, the African diaspora too acclimatized to their new existence and appropriated an amalgamation of cultures, resulting in a hybrid cultural identity. It was only in 1808 that the African slave trade was legally abolished by the Congress in the United States, and other countries followed suit.

Palmer (2000) in his paper *Defining and Studying the Modern African Diaspora* highlights that the final migration of the African diaspora happened after the abolishment of slavery (and continues), where people resettled in various societies (28).

> African and African descendants flocked to new "diaspora capitals"- urban centers of industrial and manufacturing employment; cosmopolitan hubs such as New York, London, Paris, and Rio de Janeiro, where domestic work was plentiful and the economy diverse…(Butler 22).

This was a voluntary movement by the diaspora in search of a better life, and the zeal to overcome the limitations placed on them by the centre due to their race and ethnicity.

> Given the multiplicity of expressive languages with which African peoples have encoded, remembered, and recovered their experiences, it may seem at first glance counterintuitive to separate the way of knowing imparted by specific disciplines. Yet, upon closer consideration, it presents an opportunity to assess the analytical tools of those fields to better understand their unique contributions and potential for enhancing the future study of the African diaspora (21).

2.2.4. South Asian Diaspora

Similar to the African diaspora, the South Asian diaspora is a collection of a multitude of experiences, cultures, and languages. It collectively includes several ethnic groups dislocated from various nations in Asia, and settled in either Western countries, or reshuffled among other Asian nations. The earliest record of the Asian diaspora occurs around 210 BCE when Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of a unified China, sent out around 3000 'virgin' men and women accompanied by his court sorcerer Xu Fu in search of elixirs of immortality (Wright 49). This expedition later settled in Honshu, Japan. With Europeans colonizing Asian countries by the 18th century, more displacement occurred, leading to the formation of newer Asian diaspora communities. The Pakistani diaspora in Britain began around 1842-1847 with immigrants from the region arriving in the British isles as employees of the East India Company. They served as sailors and lascars in British port cities. After 1857, the Pakistani diaspora grew more rapidly in Britain with more immigrants coming to establish trade and find employment in the country. Pakistani diaspora owes a lot to economic, social, and political factors in their 'homeland'.

2.2.5. Indian Diaspora

The Ministry of External Affairs, India, in December 2017 released a report which stated that there are an estimated 312,33,234 Indian diaspora residing outside India. This does not

include the undocumented Indians residing abroad. The highest number of overseas Indians are listed in the US, at an estimated count of 44,60,000[5]. It is a Herculean task to pinpoint the starting point of the Indian diaspora. The discovery of the Pompeii Lakshmi[6] statuette in the ruins of Pompeii indicates the presence of trade between the 1st century city of Pompeii and the ancient Indian civilization. Trade relations with countries like Indonesia, Sumatra, and Borneo was also recorded. Gijsbert Oonk in his 2017 book *Global Indian Diasporas: Exploring Trajectories of Migration and Theory* states that trade relations with other countries created the precursors to the Indian diaspora.

> One of the key characteristics of this so called 'trade diaspora' may be the fact that most of it consisted of 'temporary' or 'circular' migration. Sons were sent to search for trade elsewhere, but also to eventually return. These traders acted as filters through which other cultures were linked with their own. Frequently, they developed a more cosmopolitan lifestyle due to their exposure to other cultures (11).

M. C. Madhavan (1985) in his paper *Indian Emigrants: Numbers, Characteristics, and Economic Impact* notes that owing to the abolition of slavery in the British territories, emigration from India happened at a much larger scale after the 1830s. While some Indians chose to go to countries like Ceylon, Malaya, Burma, and East Africa voluntarily, most Indian workers were sent to the British territories as indentured labourers[7] to fill in the gaps left by the emancipated slaves. Indentured labourers were the main working force for various plantations in Fiji, West Indies, and Mauritius (460). These workers worked under

miserable conditions, providing various raw materials for the Industries of Europe. However, their own economical condition and position in society never improved. Most of the Indian diaspora communities in Trinidad and Tobago, Fiji, the Caribbean Islands, and Jamaica are descendants of these indentured labourers who chose to stay in their adoptive countries even after their contracts had expired.

The 20th century saw an increase in commercial migrants from India to various other countries. With these migrants now acting as salesmen, petty entrepreneurs, traders, shopkeepers, and streetside vendors, they were actively contributing to the economy of these countries (461). There were several reasons explaining the lowered status of Indian emigrants in other countries. First of all, the emigrants were mostly indentured workers who had been recruited belonged to the economically backward strata of society. Such workers were preferred because they were already used to manual labour. Being illiterate also meant not having the adequate potential to fight the abuse they were subjected to. Being trapped in the cycle of debt, they had little option but to stay and continue to work. Most important, being of foreign origin, they were seen as outsiders in their new lands, thus automatically occupying the position of the subaltern.

> It needs hardly to be emphasized that Indian labour and non labour immigration vitally fulfilled the economic needs of British colonialism. Indian immigrants, however, were welcome only in sub servient economic roles-roles which the natives as well as the white colonists could not perform. Whenever Indians tried to compete

> with whites, as within trading activities or government services, at tempts were made to block their progress (Jain 164-165).

With the English Education Act being passed by the Council of India in 1835, East India Company began relocating funds towards the study of English in India. This created a generation of Indians who had to their advantage the knowledge of a dominant European language. Indians migrated to countries like UK, USA, and Canada for education and employment in various organizations. It was no longer just the lower strata of society migrating. Also referred to as the 'brain drain' syndrome, education in India was producing professionals who were able to find better paying jobs abroad. Migrating to foreign countries for education and employment was associated with a sense of prestige back home in India. As teachers, scientists, businessmen, traders, doctors, engineers, Indian emigrants were contributing significantly to the development of their adoptive countries. Women were now very much a part of the Indian diaspora. Children born to Indian emigrants would form the 2nd generation diaspora, often disoriented about their notion of a 'homeland'.

The Indian diaspora today continues to grow and thrive. The number of people of Indian origin in South East Africa is nearly 3 million, most of them being of Gujarati and Punjabi origin. Gujarati is widely spoken in Madagascar. Indians in Mauritius form the majority of the population, nearing at almost 65%. Interestingly, Mauritius celebrates several Hindu religious festivals with pomp and gaiety[8]. From working as manual labourers in the 19th century, Indian emigrants in the United Kingdom have gone a long way, with many

contributing to the field of medicine, technology, research, and academics. After English, Punjabi is the most widely spoken language in the UK. While early emigrants from India were denied citizenship rights in the United States of America, the law was altered in the 1930s to award American citizenship to qualifying applicants. Many of the emigrants who came to the US after the 1940s have contributed vastly to the economy of the country, as well as various fields, especially the IT sector. Since most Indian diaspora people in the US belong to the 'working class', their population is concentrated in the metropolitan areas (Wikipedia). The number of Americans of Indian origin forms such a huge number of voters that Donald Trump, during his campaign for the 2016 US Presidential Elections, released an advertisement focusing on the Indian community, with him speaking in Hindi- "*Ab Ki Baar, Trump Sarkar*", mimicking Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's campaign slogan[9]. While many choose to settle abroad, others choose to return to India either after education or retirement.

The discourse of diaspora is a complicated paradigm, with intertwined dimensions where the person is subjected to a vortex of decisions- of designing the image of one's 'homeland' and at the same time asserting one's loyalty to a particular history; and at the same time, interacting and reacting to the new land and culture one is exposed to. The Sikh diaspora was created when the notion of a separate ideal nation 'Khalistan' was propagated amongst the Sikhs in India some time after partition. The disrespect to Sikhism during *Operation Bluestar*[3], and the violence against Sikhs[4] following the assassination of the then Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi, forced many Sikhs (who were of Indian descent) around

the world to formulate a new identity and pledge loyalty to the utopian 'homeland', Khalistan.

In a multicultural nation like India, it is not uncommon for diasporas to form and exist within the nation itself. The British brought with them the business of tea plantations. Established in Darjeeling and various regions of Assam, these estates attracted several people from the Indian states of Odisha, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar, and Telengana.

Most of these inter-state immigrants sought work in the tea estates to find employment in an increasingly mechanized India, and to escape the various famines plaguing the country. Even so, many of these workers were recruited by men of authority (*arkatis*) who abused them for monetary gains. Most of them were mistreated by their owners, and had little or no rights.

> These emigrants, as a rule, were recruited from the lowest and the most ignorant class of the population. The recruiters do not always deal fairly with the lowest class of emigrants. They are too often entrapped into the snares of the recruiters either by fraud or misrepresentation and when once caught are never allowed to escape (Chattopadhyay 894).

Today, although the immigrant communities have contributed vastly to the economy of Assam, they are still denied the Scheduled Tribe status, while people from their

communities in their home states have been given the same. The Munda, Santhals, Oraon, Bhumij, and several other tribes which compromise the tea estate workers in Assam are seen as ‘outsiders’ by the Assamese.

2.3. Common Traits of Diaspora

The overview of various diaspora and their history has made one thing clear, that common traits and features exist even though the migrating communities may have nothing else in common. First and foremost, the diaspora individual or community migrates from the ‘homeland’. This can be either forced (refugees, slavery, indentured workers), or voluntary (students, professionals). The migration is for a substantial period of time. The immigrants are at the margins (more so in the past) of the society, and form the subaltern classes. Most of the immigrants are driven by economical factors. They contribute vastly to the economy and culture of the host countries forming multicultural hotspots. The diaspora communities observe and follow cultural practices of the ‘homeland’, both out of nostalgia and holding on to their nationality. However, they also must mimic the dominant culture of the host country in order to find acceptance. This back and forth creates a hybrid identity for the diaspora, who balances both these identities. For the first generation diaspora, the ‘homeland’ is a concept frozen in time, dearly cherished. Second generation onwards, the diaspora people tend to imbibe the host country and their ‘homeland’.

3. Diaspora – The Theoretical Framework

Diaspora involves migration, and is addressed by various academic disciplines and schools of thought. Beginning with the postcolonial consciousness, the phenomenon of diaspora has been studied as a catalyst of shifts in cultural, social, and linguistic patterns.

> Diaspora entered the anthropological lexicon through the early ethnographic and theoretical work on the communities of African descent in the New World and has since attained new epistemological and political resonances. The term has been deployed within the discipline to cover a wide range of collectivities and experiences—a catchall to represent diverse movements and dislocations, and myriad forms of difference, heterogeneity, and, in particular, hybridity…A whole new genre of ethnographic studies has been informed by conceptualizations of diaspora, though the term has also been used across the various subdisciplines—in archaeology, linguistic anthropology, sociocultural anthropology, and folklore (Pierre).

The involvement of diaspora communities in their adopted nations is a concern of the discipline of Political Science. Some governments (like those of Mauritius and Fiji) include the diaspora communities in the decision making process, provide them with political and judiciary powers, while others (like those of Myanmar and China) minimize the influence of diaspora communities in the running of the country. Ethnic lobbying by members of a

diaspora community also tend to campaign and can influence the outcome of elections, as observed in the 2008 US Presidential Elections where Barrack Obama secured 95% of the African American votes[11]. Additionally, *The New York Times* reported that the number of African Americans (the word 'Black' is used in the report) who voted during this election was the highest turnout compared with other ethnic groups (Roberts).

The Harris-Todaro Model can be adapted to study diaspora formations. Developed in 1970 by John R. Harris and Michael Todaro[10], this economic model explains migration from rural to urban spaces. While not directly aimed at studying inter-country migrations, it constructs the rationale behind voluntary migrations like those by Indians to countries like Uganda, Fiji, and Surinam in the colonial period, and to America, England, Australia in the post-colonial period. The model states that migration occurs from the rural to the urban when the expected income in urban spaces is higher than the average rural income. The migration here is in the hope of finding higher paying jobs in urban spaces, in spite of an already present malady of unemployment in the urban spaces. It suggests that the likelihood for migration is increased if the chance of getting a job in the new space is higher. This model then gives a better insight into the voluntary migrations from underdeveloped and developing countries to developed countries. One of the primary reasons why the working class citizens of a nation migrate to another is to find a job which pays higher. Economical improvement is then at the heart of such diaspora communities, a view also suggested by the Ravenstein's Laws of Migration.

While ‘diaspora’ in itself is not a product of colonialism, literary criticism with regards to such migrations and displacement is fuelled by postcolonial criticism. Colonialism accelerated the creation of diaspora communities by displacing people to work as slaves and indentured labourers. Owing to the repugnant hegemonic mentality of a superior West left behind by colonialism, migration from the East is seen as a matter of prestige, respectable even. What is certain is that once the displaced community arrives as the adopted country, they occupy the position of the marginalized; being seen as ‘foreign’ they are denied any political, social, economic power to themselves. This concept is better understood by taking a look at Lacan’s concept of the ‘Other’. The other, as a concept, has political, cultural, racial and other implications. In psychoanalytic theory, the ‘Other’ is developed from the structures of ego and id and also from psycho-sexual relations. In Lacan’s theory of the ‘mirror stage’ as well as the development of a child from interaction within the family, the sameness and difference of the self emerges (Lacan 1287). Reducing the theory to the essentials, Lacan suggests that a child forms its concept of an identity only when it sees itself in a mirror. This reflection from an external source helps the child understand its own identity (the Ideal I) which is not complete owing to the gaps in language. Thus, identity is not constructed by the self, but is framed by the centre.

The concept of a ‘nation’ is vital while examining diaspora identities, since the very existence of a diaspora community depends on migration from their ‘nation’. A nation is not a country. A country is more of a political entity, while a nation is the sum total of the culture, beliefs, ideals, and sentiments of a particular group of people residing in a given land.

> It is possible, in other words, that nations pre-existed nationalism. While this possibility cannot be ruled out, I think that we should be wary about drawing too sharp a distinction between a nation and its political manifestation. The concept of the nation is a hermeneutic one: a nation only exists in and through the consciousness of its members (Poole 32).

The diaspora community, particularly after the emancipation of slaves in America, challenged the traditional concept of a nation which involved a homogeneous population as the basis. A nation is a political entity which dictates a fixed physical territory and governing laws. Those outside of the 'nation' comprise of the 'Other'.

In the postcolonial context, this concept of the 'Other' is understood by the position maintained by the colonizers with respect to the colonized. The colonized was the 'Other'; deemed inferior, uncivilized, weak, and in need of saving. The colonizer 'Self' took upon itself the task of reforming the 'Other' (also referred to as the White Man's burden), and by doing so, pushed the 'Other', their culture, their history, their language into the margins. Following the Lacanian concept of the 'Other', the colonized in this case 'accepted' the identity given to them by the colonizer 'self'. As the colonized were transported to Europe and the Americas to work as slaves and indentured workers, and later as students and professionals, they formed the 'Other', and if incidents of racial attacks in the US and UK are to be examined, they still do.

This makes the diaspora (the 'Other') a subaltern. To comprehend how the 'Other' is created in this context, understanding Gramsci's concept of the subaltern becomes crucial. During the Fascist rule in Italy, the Marxist Antonio Gramsci developed the Marxist model, adding many new concepts and ideas to the existing theory. While widely known for his concept of cultural hegemony, Gramsci also postulated on the most effective way to formulate a Marxist vanguard; which he envisioned working alongside the proletariat. It was through this exploration of theory that Gramsci coined the term 'subaltern'. For Gramsci, the term included anyone or any group of inferior social, economic or political rank. The dominant classes dictated social norms, and the subalterns were supposed to follow these set rules and regulations without questioning its significance. In short, the subaltern was marginalized. Gramsci writes:

> …spontaneous consent is given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group, and that this consent is 'historically' caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position… (145).

Hence, the way in which the subaltern groups' histories are constructed, and the way they are represented is decided by the dominant class. He advocated that these marginalized people be examined within their 'own cultural and social prisons'. Subaltern studies, thus, examines histories from the point of the colonized rather than from the point of the colonizer

(Gyan 1475). The main theme of the subaltern school in India was resistance to oppressive systems. Taking inspiration from Marxists like Gramsci and Foucault's ideas on power relations in a society, the Subaltern study has received constant renewal in its definitions and implications. Gayatri Spivak in an interview with Leon de Kock defines the subaltern, "In postcolonial terms, everything that has limited or allowed no access to the cultural imperialism is a subaltern- a space of difference" (45). The subaltern identity, just like the diaspora identity, is "situational" (46). Owing to the subaltern status of the diaspora, it is either abased or exoticised.

Edward Said in his work *Orientalism* further discusses the term subaltern and its implications: "As a discipline representing institutionalized Western knowledge of the Orient, Orientalism comes to exert a three-way force, on the Orient, on the Orientalist, and on the Western "consumer" of Orientalism" (Said 68). Orientalism, as a practice, penalizes the Orient for not being Europe. In the process of penalizing the Orient, the Occident is orientalizing the Orient by implementing a set of constraints, limitations upon the Orient. The West constructs an identity for the Orient, which is then naturalized and passed on to the Orient. Not being heard and rendered silent, they become the subaltern. The subaltern is always the 'Other', and hence is dependent on the centre for its identity. It cannot independently exist. The power struggle between the centre and the marginalized, or the 'Other' is in constant negotiation. It is in response to these social tensions that the power structure offers compromises through reform movements and change in political agenda. The Orient, according to him, was constructed as a negative version of the West. The West propagated the idea of a racially biased superior Western culture, immediately pushing the

Eastern cultures into the margins. Thus, the 'Other' was considered inferior, of impoverished cultural background and their art highly mediocre.

The diaspora communities, as the 'Orient', are in constant negotiation with the dichotomy of cultures they know – one of their own, and the other of their host country. The host country, much like Said's Occident, impresses upon the diaspora the superiority of their culture and language while ignoring that of their 'homeland'. The diaspora understands this cultural and linguistic hegemony and tries to mimic the structures of the host country so as to bargain their status in the society. For example, in present day Europe, several countries have banned the use of burkas in public[12]. The burka, interpreted as the requirement for 'modesty' as per the Islamic law, is essential to the identity of several Muslim women who reside in Europe. When the case of diaspora Muslim women is deliberated, the issue of the burka ban is nothing but an assertion of the host countries' standards and culture on them. The host countries expect the diaspora identity to dissipate, such that the unfavourable 'Other' no longer exists. This is an assertion of their power on the diaspora communities and their cultural identity.

The diaspora identity breaks the grand narrative of a homogeneous and superior nation and culture. It challenges the notion of the singular and stable identity such as 'the self', and 'the nation'. British postcolonial critic and culture theorist Robert Young attributes any form of oppression, including colonial, relies on the stable self and the uniform nation (Dascălu 11). It is this uniformity of the nation, in terms of ideals and goals, in terms of beliefs and

aspirations, that allow the oppressors to oppress those outside the realm of the nation, those whose 'homelands' do not deserve the terminology of 'nation', since they are inherently inferior, deviant, ad uncultured. This is where the role of postcolonial mimicry comes in, to balance out the changes by making the diaspora adhere to the cultural paradigm of the host country. "The exile (perhaps by copying Western ways) shows that the black man, the Indian man, the Chinese man (or black, Indian or Chinese women) can be something else" (11).

Bhabha, in *The Location of Culture* (1994) quotes, "Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (122). However, there remains a catch, in so that the mimicking colonized never actually becomes the colonizer. Points of divergence remained, and helped the colonizer assert domination. This marks for ambivalence in colonial discourse, as on the one hand the colonizer does want the colonized to become them, but also, 'not quite'.

Mimicry is more evident among diaspora communities. They have been displaced from their homeland and are in a new land, a land where they will be viewed as 'immigrants'. This automatically places the diaspora community in the position of the 'Other'. The new land has its native culture, something which occupies the dominant role, and the diaspora community has to adhere to those principles. As a subaltern group, they are expected to mimic the cultural practices and believe in the dominant ideology of the new land (the centre), and they do so, hoping to 'blend in' and 'avoid persecution' (Chua 55). This expectation calls for two phenomenon, loss of the self, and devaluing the culture of their

homeland. Their identity becomes ambivalent as they struggle to find a balance between who they are and what they are expected to be. They become imperfect copies, and thus end up in a 'neither here nor there' kind of a predicament (57). What emerges though as a result of mimicry is a hybrid culture, an amalgamation of both the 'canon' and cultural elements from the 'homelands' of the diaspora communities. Homi Bhabha believed that hybridity subverts the narratives of dominant cultures and colonial superiority by contaminating it, thus acting as a much needed counter-narrative and a critique of the canon.

"Culture has been conceived as the unique attributes of a given group of people, that is, the "things" that distinguish one group of people from another" (Rodriquez 152-153). Until the 20th century, cultural diversity in a nation was considered a liability (Hanson). The presence of the various diaspora communities is key to the creation of multicultural entities. Of course, in countries like India which are innately multicultural owing to a diverse group of sub-cultures and histories coming together to form one nation. However, in the case of countries with 'newer histories', like that of the United States of America which began as a settler colony, is multicultural as it is host to a number of divergent cultures and ethnicities. America has been described as the 'melting pot' of the world, thereby referring to the way though which the nation absorbs people of various ethnicities and cultural paradigms and keeps reshaping its cultural canon as per the influences of the guest cultures. Diverse cultures co-exist and interact with each other. A look at the instances of race based crimes will point to the contrary, that there still exists a canon culture in America. Even so, when the history of the US is scrutinized, it is not arduous to realize that America is the land of immigrants. Britain too is made up of an ethnically diverse populace. Reacting to the 2001

Braford Racial Riots in New Yorkshire, England, Amir Ali opines that while Britian is multicultural, brings to question the extent of multiculturalism.

> …where British multiculturalism has miserably failed has been its inability to address the economic marginalisation of black and Asian ethnic minorities. Such economically vulnerable sections have been completely neglected by this 'chicken tikka' variety of multiculturalism which is content to showcase Britain as a hap blend of so many diverse cultures and ethnic backgrounds. Significantly it stresses only the more cosmopolitan and sophisticated aspects of British life that are highly visible, like cuisine and fails to see those aspects of life that are strictly for whites only, say for example, the country's stuffy academia (2821).

The culture is heterogeneous due to the influx of immigrants and the existence of diaspora communities in the nation. Whether or not the multicultural aura fashioned by the immigrants and diaspora communities is truly multi-cultural is a matter of debate. While some uphold that true amalgamation of cultures does take place in a multicultural context, other believe that there is always a negotiation between the canon and the marginal, with the marginal having to compromise more.

4. A Look at Diaspora Fiction

Diaspora communities are deeply affected by the sense of longing for their homeland, and the everyday tussle they face trying to balance their own culture with that of the new land. These experiences have given rise to diaspora literatures and theory (McLeod 207). Diaspora fiction records the lives and experiences of people, who for various reasons, have been displaced from their homelands. Commonly addressed themes include identity crisis, displacement and alienation, sexual violence, nostalgia, mimicry, cultural hegemony, and cultural hybridity.

The novels of the African-American diaspora writers most commonly address issues of racism, sexual abuse, white supremacy, cultural hegemony, and mimicry. They highlight the issues faced by the black community residing in the United States of America, and most commonly tend to present a critique of the society and its norms. Maya Angelou's 1969 novel *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* presents an autobiographical account of her early years in Arkansas, Missouri, and California as she deals with issues of racial and sexual abuse. Toni Morrison's 1970 novel *The Bluest Eye* depicts the fictional character of an eleven year old black girl Pecola who is raped and impregnated by her father. The novel critiques the American Midwest society of the 1940s, while also elaborating on how popular culture helped imbibe in the blacks the notion of white supremacy. Alice Walker's 1982 novel *The Colour Purple* is set in rural Georgia and focuses on the life of African-American

women in the 1930s. It highlights several issues faced by the African diaspora women, including sexual abuse, marginalised status, and racism.

The Caribbean region consists of the Caribbean sea, its islands, and the surrounding coasts. All the islands had been colonised, and as such, several ethnic and religious groups reside in the region. There have been migrations by the people from this region to England and USA in search of the 'promised land', thus forming the Caribbean Diaspora. The novels of the Caribbean diaspora deal with displacement and nostalgia. The past plays an important role in their fiction. Caryl Philip in his 1985 novel *The Final Passage* tells the story of a young woman who leaves her native West Indian island and moves to London, which she considers her 'homeland' since the colour of her skin is lighter than others on the island. She however fails to find peace in London and eventually returns to the island. Edwidge Danticat in her 1994 novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory* deals with issues of racial and linguistic identities, as well as sexual violence and nostalgia. Narrated in first person by the main character Sophie Caco, the novel follows her life as she moves to the US from Haiti and eventually returns. Andrea Levy in her 2004 novel *Small Island* focuses on Jamaican diaspora. The central characters leave their homeland and move to England which they consider their 'Mother Country' since they have fought for her during World War II.

The East has always looked up to the West as a land of opportunities, instigating a migration for better employment, education, and the fabled 'fast life'. Migrations from Asian countries may also search of better a better existence, as in Joy Kogawa's 1981 novel *Obasan*, which

makes use of the element of nostalgia and memory. *Obasan* deals Canada's persecution and mistreatment of its Japanese diaspora citizens during World War II. Bapsi Sidhawa in her 1993 novel *An American Brat* follows the life of a young Pakistani Parsee girl Feroza as she is sent off to America by her parents so as to broaden her outlook. She chooses to settle in the US after she realises USA has made her into a woman who cannot live in Pakistan. Monica Ali in her 2003 novel *Brick Lane* highlights the issues faced by members of the Bangladeshi diaspora living in England. The central character Nazneen is married to Chanu, a man much older than her, in a loveless marriage. She moves to London only to be thwarted by patriarchal restrictions set on her by her husband, and racial subjugations she faces as a member of a diaspora community.

What remains at the heart of Indian diaspora fiction is the shared zeal of recreating an India in the new land, and maintaining a balance between foreign traditions and Indian values. Women writers portray the double subjugation of women characters belonging to the Indian diaspora. V. S. Naipaul, the winner of the 2001 Nobel Prize in Literature, is one of the most well known Indian diaspora writers. His 1961 novel *A House for Mr Biswas* follows the life of Mohun Biswas who is born into a Hindu Brahmin family residing in rural Trinidad and Tobago. After a pundit's prophesy about him bringing doom upon his family comes true, he struggles to find an identity, something he feels can be resolved if he has a house of his own to call 'home'. His 1967 novel *The Mimic Men* is about the fictional character of Ralph Singh, an East Indian-West Indian politician who is in exile from London and is writing his memoirs. A sense of nostalgia and rootlessness is an ever present theme in the narrative.

Kavita Daswani in her 2006 novel *Salaam, Paris* documents the life of Tanaya Shah, who is obsessed with Western culture and sees it as a way to escape the patriarchal society of her hometown Mahim. She eventually moves to France after a proposal for marriage comes for her from Tariq Khan, an NRI living in Paris. She attempts to find success in the modelling world, only to realise that she has lost the connection with her 'homeland'. Her 2004 novel *Everything Happens for a Reason* is about Priya, an Indian woman who moves to Los Angeles after marrying a handsome NRI man. Even though she lives at the centre of Hollywood, she holds on to her Indiannesss by being a true obedient and dutiful wife, which changes as she begins to work as a showbiz reporter, a job her family does not approve of. She is left dangling between two worlds, two cultures, two dreams.

Kiran Desai's 2006 novel *The Inheritance of Loss* follows the lives of Biju, an undocumented Indian working in America, and Sai, an anglicised Indian girl living in Kalimpong. With the narration switching to give the readers an in-depth understanding of both the characters, the novel highlights postcolonial struggles of the Indian diaspora living in the US. Anita Desai's 1999 novel *Fasting, Feasting* is divided into two parts, the second of which follows Arun, an Indian student studying in an American college. He lives with the Pattons only to be shocked with the British way of life which seems quite opposite to the Indian way of life. What follows is a struggle of loyalty as Arun tries not to give in to Western values and lifestyle. Her 1999 novel *Bye Bye Blackbird* depicts the struggles of three characters – Adit Sen, a Bengali immigrant living in the UK with his English wife Sarah Sen, and Dev, Adit's friend from India who has come to the UK to study. Though Dev

is hesitant about English ways in the beginning, he soon succumbs to the new lifestyle while it is Adit who becomes disillusioned with his life as an expatriate and moves back to India.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni shot to prominence with her 1997 novel *The Mistress of Spices* which combined magic realism with the issue of the Indian diaspora living in America. She has authored eleven novels, a few short story collections, and poetry anthologies. Divakaruni was born in Kolkata and moved to the US after her graduation from the University of Calcutta. Apart from her novels for children (*Brotherhood of the Conch* series), her novels for adults, feminist in nature, often deal with themes of diaspora and tend to employ the element of magic realism. The central character is often a woman who is suppressed by the patriarchal society and must break free from it to achieve self-actualization. She is a celebrated writer whose novels have been adapted into movies and television shows as well.

Bharati Mukherjee is an American diaspora writer of Indian origin who has written eight novels, published four short story collections, and three non-fiction books, apart from many other publications. In an interview with Ameena Meer of *Bomb Magazine* (1989), Mukherjee said she identified herself as an American writer who records the emotions and feelings of the Americans who are of Indian origins. Her first novel published in 1971, *The Tiger's Daughter* is about an Indian woman who is married to an American man, and the culture shock she faces when she returns to India.

Jhumpa Lahiri received the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2000 for her collection of short stories titled *Interpretation of Maladies*. Her 2003 novel *The Namesake* received international acclaim and was made into a movie of the same name, directed by Mira Nair. Lahiri is an American author of Indian origin who exemplifies the life of the India diaspora community in her fiction. Her 2008 collection of short stories *Unaccustomed Earth* has six narratives, each dealing with the Indian diaspora in the US. As a feminist writer, she brings out the impediments of the diaspora women.

5. Research Problem and Significance

This research work studies select novels of Indian diaspora novelists: Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Bharati Mukherjee, and Jhumpa Lahiri, all of which depict the Indian diaspora in the United States of America, thereby presenting a dialogic on the representation of men by women writers.

It is interesting to observe that most Indian diaspora fiction writers are women, and as such, tend to present the world from a feminist perspective. Their novels form narratives of feminist protest. However, in doing so, the representation of men in their works becomes questionable. Representation as such is a departure from reality, and their male characters tend to have similar personalities and traits. In most of these works, the women are displaced from India as a result of their husband's or father's decision to live in the US.

The selected writers, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Bharati Mukherjee, and Jhumpa Lahiri, are read and celebrated internationally, hence their novels normalise the view of a dominating patriarchal male identity. This research aims at deconstructing these narratives and recognizing the fact that feminist writers too may fail at representing absolute reality. A growing number of critics opine that men have been subjugated by the feminist movement, giving rise to the new area called *men's studies*, and the movement termed *meninism*. This research will compel readers to question if gender equality is truly a possibility in the scope of feminist diaspora literature.

Several theorists are of the opinion that in the guise of feminism, the male identity often gets misrepresented. The only recent evolution of the *Men's Studies* field shows the absence of a gendered voice and critique from men. Men's studies depart from traditional patriarchy by demanding for equality of genders and are against preferential treatment to women. Studying the depiction of men in diaspora fiction presents an intriguing insight into the formulation and struggle to maintain a masculine domination as the subject has already been displaced from the home turf. There, in the new land, these male characters struggle to find and establish themselves, probably at the cost of subjugating their women. Fiction by Indian women diaspora writers leans towards showing the men trying to re-establish a patriarchal system, parallel to the one found in India, and dominating their women in various ways. If we accept Frantz Fanon's theory according to which the oppressed have a privileged viewpoint over the mechanisms of oppression, then it is not surprising that women, largely oppressed by patriarchy, have been revising and rewriting masculinity from particularly revealing and innovating perspectives (Ribera 10).

This study focuses on six novels: *Sister of My Heart* (1999) and *Queen of Dreams* (2004) by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, *Jasmine* (1989) and *Desirable Daughters* (2002) by Bharati Mukherjee, and *The Namesake* (1999) and *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) by Jhumpa Lahiri. Various theories of feminism and gender studies, along with postcolonial and diaspora theories have been employed to form an objective analysis of the representation of the male characters in these novels.

6. Key Objectives

The research attempts to formulate a comprehensive understanding of the term diaspora and its theories and praxis, along with a study on representation in Indian diaspora literature. The research aims at understanding of the term ‘subaltern’ and ‘diaspora’ to the Indian characters in the select novels. The research also examines the conflict of the male characters with their identity both- as Indians and as Americans, and their notion of a national identity, if expressed. The researcher has also scrutinized the masculine identities of the male characters and compared them with the female characters and the position they occupy in their society. The study documents the notions of the West, in particular of the American society about the Indian community. Finally, this research tries to identify the stereotypes with which the male characters have been presented, and finds out if a common pattern exists in terms of characterization of the male gender in these novels written by women.

7. Review of Literature

David Leverenz' 1989 *Manhood and the American Renaissance* was one of the first and main critical works on masculinities in American literature. Drawing on various theoretical and critical discourses such as feminism, new historicism, psychoanalysis (and, up to a certain extent, deconstruction), Leverenz analyzes the representations of masculinity in the literature of five American canonical authors of the 1800s: Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman. According to Leverenz, these writers consciously felt that they did not fit within the dominant masculinity norms of their time. Leverenz also studied the representation of masculinity in literature by the nineteenth century American women writers such as Sarah Hale, Susan Warner, Caroline Kirkland, and Harriet Beecher Stowe. He opined that these writers throw light upon class and gender conflicts in American society with great clarity, even starkness (4). Leverenz's analysis of texts such as Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* adds race issues to gender and masculinity. When it comes to gender and class, he opines, "Men use their gender superiority to transcend class conflict, while genteel women use class superiority to transcend gender conflict" (165).

A 2002 study titled *Male and Female Characters in Illustrated Children's Books* by Carole Brugeilles, Isabelle Cromer, and Sylvie Cromer looked at the representation of the male and female gender in various illustrated children's books. They found that mothers appeared more frequently than fathers, and grandmothers more frequently than grandfathers, an

indication of gender stereotyping at work. Work appeared to be essentially a male activity. A glaring inequality compounds this difference: women, whether humans or clothed animals, seemed to be confined to teaching, childcare or shopkeeping. Male authors tended to favour male characters. Female writers went with the graphical representation of female elements in the cover picture, but rarely in the title. Mixed writer teams left more room for female characters, without sacrificing the male presence. These books, the research founded, promote a sense of masculine superiority among the readers.

Yingying Xu of Kristianstad University in a 2009 study looked at the portrayal of male and female characters in Jane Austen's 1813 novel *Pride and Prejudice* from the perspective of linguistic sexism. Xu found that Austen had used 22 nouns describing the male characters, and the number of the nouns describing the female characters was found to be 14, which apparently shows that the number of the nouns describing the male characters is much more than the number of the nouns describing the female characters. Thus, it may be claimed that the author of the novel paid more attention to depicting the internal qualities of the male characters (12). However, the case was reversed when it came to describing the external looks. There were more words describing the female characters (16).

Daniel Lewis in his 2011 doctoral thesis titled *Women Writing Men: Female Victorial Authors and their Representations of Masculinity* focused on texts by female Victorian authors to examine why and how they contributed to the ever-changing definition of masculine identities during an era where people were beginning to question gender roles set

by society. The thesis took a look at the construction of masculinities in various genres of Victorian fiction. It also highlighted the pressures men faced in performing their gender identities as depicted in these works of fiction. Miranda Elkins-Livingston's 2009 master's thesis titled *The Depiction of Male Characters in Selected Short Fiction of Kate Chopin*, as the name suggests, attempted to study the depiction of men. Elkin-Livingston found that Chopkin's male characters are as full, rich, and truthful as her female character. The male characters have consciously chosen to remain unbound by the restrictions of society. This thesis could not locate any gender biased depiction of male characters, instead urged critics to look at the works of Kate Chopin as representations of the human spirit.

Gina E. Wyatt's doctoral thesis submitted in 1988, titled *The Portrayal of Black Men and Black Women in Selected Works of Black Authors*, found that both black male and female authors have been known to place black men and black women in stereotypical roles. Black male authors usually depict black women as weak and uneducated, while black female authors illustrate black men to be users, abusers, drug addicts and uneducated individuals.

Rita Joshi's 2004 paper titled *Nations and Alienations: Diaspora in Recent Indian Fiction* focused on some select Indian novels which are concerned with the lives and trials of immigrant Indians: the breakdown of inter-racial marriages in these novels—signifying the larger uneasy relationship between the immigrant and his country of adoption—is a familiar trope in the diasporic Indian novel. Joshi opined that the presentation of diasporic experience in Indian Fiction in English has ranged from identity crises to relationship failures, to

unfulfilled immigrant dreams and fantasies, to a philosophical dimension which the immigrant builds. Joshi coined new words to describe the immigrant condition, foregrounding the word 'nation' in some appropriate words by capitalizing the letter 'N'—thus 'alieNation' would refer to the immigrant's alienation from the Old and New nations, and 'destiNations' would refer to the act of migrating to and attempting to embrace a new nation (92).

Geoffrey Kain in his 1993 paper "*Suspended between Two Worlds": Bharati Mukherjee's 'Jasmine' and The Fusion of Hindu and American Myth* studied the use of Kali like characteristics in shaping the character of Jasmine who, according to an American character Karen, "You're leaving a path of destruction behind you." (Mukherjee 182). By being the destroyer, the diaspora Jasmine is able to assert herself and protest against the cultural hegemony and atrocities towards her as a woman.

Vibha in her article *Second Generation Immigrants: Negotiating Contested Identities in Divakaruni's 'Queen of Dreams'* (2005) attempted to understand the protagonist's differing journeys as she developed a grasp on her evolving identity as a diaspora woman. The novel examines how even when the immigrants' beliefs about 'belongingness' are shaken, the characters continue to identify as American. The study brings out the multifaceted problem of identity through the various characters, both male and female. Rakhi, the protagonist, Jespal, Belle, Sonny, and third generation immigrant Jona adapt to their environment and consider America as their homeland. In the wake of 9/11, Rakhi along with her friends has

to grapple with dark new complexities about their acculturation. The paper focuses on how they are doubly displaced after 9/11, they are neither Indian nor are considered American.

D. Shanmugam and M. Thirunavukkarasu's 2016 paper titled *Portrayal of Indian Women in Jhumpa Lahiri's 'Unaccustomed Earth'* takes a look at the gendered representation of female characters in the collection of short stories. The paper focuses on characters like Mrs. Bagchi, who after becoming a widow, escape away from Indian culture and the nation to the US so as to refute the society's expectation of her needing a husband. Yet she has an affair with Ruma's father, a widowed man of her age, and agrees to marry him of her own accord. Aparna, a character from the short story *Hell-Heaven* denounces Deborah's wedding to Pranab on the premise that she is a foreigner, although the real reason is her liking for Pranab. The study finds that women are doubly subjugated, firstly as a result of their gender, and secondly, on the basis of their race.

There are ample studies on identity and gender issues, however, the researcher was unable to find any studies on the examination of male characters in the novels of Indian women diaspora writers.

8. Hypothesis

This thesis examines four primary hypotheses as a guideline for its findings. The research tries to verify or nullify these statements:

Indian women diaspora writers represent their male characters with a feminist bias. The male characters in these novels have similar traits and personality aspects, based on the stereotype of a sexist patriarchal masculine identity. These male characters form a force that the female characters must break away from to achieve self-actualization. The male characters in these novels thus face double subjugation; first as a diaspora individual, and second being typecast by the writers as an oppressive force which must be overcome.

7. Methodology:

This research follows a descriptive analytic approach where the six selected novels will form the primary texts. The researcher focusses on characterizations, setting, language, themes, motifs, narration, and symbols to conclusively answer the research questions, in light of the cross examination and analysis in relation to the secondary texts. *Orientalism* by Edward Said, the theory of the subaltern by Gramsci, Ranajit Guha, Gayatri Spivak, and other postcolonial theorists, various postcolonial theories like hybridity, identity, ambivalence, mimicry, and cultural hegemony, and the Lacanian concept of *Gaze* will form the secondary texts. Gender theories like Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, Helene Cixous' *The*

Laugh of the Medusa, and others will be applied to study the representation of male characters in the given novels.

The thesis has been divided into six chapters, out of which the first two chapters have outlined the mode, scope, and direction the study will undertake while providing the theoretical framework as well. The second chapter focusses on representation of gender in literature, and the the various Indian women diaspora novelists, and attempts to understand their works under the light of diaspora fiction. The next three chapters discuss the selected novels in light of the theories and the final chapter provides the conclusion for the thesis.

CHAPTER II

WOMEN NOVELISTS OF THE INDIAN DIASPORA: AN OVERVIEW

This chapter focuses on the various Indian women diaspora novelists, and attempts to understand their works under the light of diaspora fiction. The chapter takes into account writers like Meena Alexander, Kiran Desai, Uma Parameswaran, Sujata Bhatt, Anita Rau Badami, and will introduce the selected authors for the thesis: Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Bharati Mukherjee, and Jhumpa Lahiri. This chapter discusses the various facets of postcolonial feminism and elucidate on the various feminist theories put forth by theorists like Simone de Beauvoir, Helene Cixous, Luce Irigaray, among others, and examine these in the light of the novels by the women novelists of the Indian diaspora.

1. Understanding Gender

To understand the representation of genders in literature, it becomes important to define what the word ‘gender’ means. The World Health Organization defines gender as

> The characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other...Gender interacts with but is different from sex, which refers to the different biological and physiological

> characteristics of females, males and intersex persons, such as chromosomes, hormones and reproductive organs. Gender and sex are related to but different from gender identity. Gender identity refers to a person's deeply felt, internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the person's physiology or designated sex at birth. (WHO Web).

Since gender then emerges as a social construct, what it entails greatly varies from culture to culture, and changes over time. For example, the Bureau of Labour Statistics in 2017 noted a decrease in the number of households with a male provider working outside the home, and a female caregiver working inside the home (Hentschel Tanja et al Web). This shift exemplifies the changing notions of gender and gender roles within our society.

The properties of gender are defined by the powerful sections of the society, which often makes them patriarchal in nature, with more restrictions, limitations, and expectations placed on women. However, gender also places a different realm of restrictions, limitations, and expectations on men. Men are expected to be the breadwinners, masculine, assertive, logical, and emotionally stable (Hentschel Tanja et al Web). These assertions placed on all genders creates a theatrical atmosphere where every individual has to play out the roles assigned to them. Gender is hierarchical and produces inequalities that intersect with other social and economic inequalities.

2. Constructed Gender in Literature

Literature is the mirror to society, and as such, reflects the key beliefs and ideals of the culture and society it has been written in. Writers are affected by the dominant ideology prevalent in their society and time, and along with a mixture of their own perceived experiences, they weave into their narratives a reality that is not absolute. Bringing Socrates' metaphor of the three beds here, the absolute truth can be equated with the first bed which exists as an idea made by God. What the writers develop in their narratives is thus one step removed from the absolute truth and is their subjective imitation of the absolute truth.

A good place to look at the phenomenon of constructed gender in literature is the development of characters in folklore. Brothers Grimm, the collective term given to Jacob Ludwig Karl Grimm and Wilhelm Carl Grimm, the Hessian writers collectively compiled existing folklore and published a series of fairy tales, aimed at children. These stories, popularly referred to as *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, included several gender stereotypes which had been passed down from generation to generation in their original form as oral narratives. Common depictions included a brave and gallant prince whose job it was to rescue the pure, chaste, and innocent princess who had been either imprisoned, tortured, or were under a spell cast by a female antagonist. Feminist writer Simone de Beauvoir in her *The Myth of the Woman* critiques this patriarchal representation of genders in literature. "Either she is the princess or the evil stepmother, either the angelic girl or the perverse virgin". (Beauvoir 1408).

This ultimately results in naturalising these gender stereotypes over generations. Of late, such patriarchal representations of gender have come under sharp scrutiny. Peggy Orenstein (2011) in her *Cinderella Ate My Daughter: Dispatches From the Front Lines of the New Girlie-Girl Culture* elaborates on how the princess culture further popularized by Disney adaptations of *Grimm's Fairy Tales* has cast ironclad norms for women to follow from their childhood. These fairy tales do more damage than good, and inculcate in them an appreciation of these faulty gendered representations. Instead of adapting to the changing ideals of gender, women are exposed to the notion of their gender being weak, frail, and are expected to be chaste and pure.

Hence, it becomes essential to identify these stereotypes and analyse their presence in literature.

2.1. The Provider Working Outside the House

Stereotypes have been employed by literature so as to help the readers familiarize themselves with the characters more easily. These characters, known as stock characters, appear in a number of works which can be structurally seen as bearing the same traits. One of the most common male protagonist stock characters has been discussed below.

The caregiver, or the provider is one of the most commonly found male stock characters in literature. Take for example, the character of Ashoke Ganguli in Jhumpa Lahiri's 2003 novel *The Namesake*.

> When she calls out to Ashoke, she doesn't say his name. Ashima never thinks of her husband's name when she thinks of her husband, even though she knows perfectly well what it is. She has adopted his surname but refuses, for propriety's sake, to utter his first. It's not the type of thing Bengali wives do. Like a kiss or caress in a Hindi movie, a husband's name is something intimate and therefore unspoken, cleverly patched over. And so … she utters the interrogative that has come to replace it, which translates roughly as "Are you listening to me?" (Lahiri 2)

Ashoke is the patriarchal head of the Ganguli family. His wife Ashima respects and upholds his wishes for all the important decisions taken for their family. In the lines above, quoted from the novel, it can be seen that Ashoke is not just the provider for the family, but also someone that Ashima refrains from addressing by his given name. It was his decision to study engineering, it was his decision to relocate to Cambridge, driven by the memories of the train accident he is in. He remembered a passenger he had met on the train who had shared his philosophy of life with him, "Pack a pillow and a blanket" (20) and travel the world. Ashima is later left aghast when Ashoke dies of a heart attack. That is when she realises that it is Ashoke's name which is everywhere in the house, and not her's (169).

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (1999) also presents a provider in the form of Ramesh, Sudha's husband in *Sister of My Heart*. When Anju, Sudha's sister goes to visit her at her in-laws', she asks the latter,

> ‘Doesn’t it bother you that Ramesh is always going off to faraway places, leaving you alone with his family?’
>
> Sudha shrugs, ‘He can’t help his job, and they’re my family too. Besides, when he’s here, I have nothing to complain about’. (195-196)

Ramesh is the stereotypical stock male character who remains a provider working outside the house. He does not defend his wife Sudha when the latter is harassed by his family for not being pregnant yet. When Sudha contemplates running away, she fears “My mother-in-law would be happy, Ramesh would forget me soon enough…” (231). When she finally conceives, Ramesh’s family insists she aborts the unborn child since it is a girl. Ramesh later serves her divorce papers when she flees her in-laws’ place to save the life of her unborn child. Sudha is financially dependent on her husband, and for her to abandon her in-laws’ house is a big step. Barging on breaking Indian tradition, the society shuns her for abandoning her family, while few choose to chastise her husband Ramesh, since he fits into the socially acceptable gender role of being a provider and head of the family.

In Jhumpa Lahiri’s (2008) collection of short stories *Unaccustomed Earth*, the titular story *Unaccustomed Earth* has Ruma who is dependent on Adam, her American husband, who emerges as the provider working outside the home. When Ruma’s mother passes away, she is unable to cope with her job and switches her role to that of a homemaker. “...Adam’s new job

came through, with a salary generous enough for her to give notice." (6). *Hell Heaven,* the next story in the collection has the narrator's father who is the provider working outside the home. Even though the narrator's mother Aparna is unhappy with her marriage and knows her husband is not committed to her, she refuses to let go of the protective status her husband gives her. When Pranab marries Deborah, her jealousy overpowers her, and Pranab's visits only cause her emotional pain. All of these go unnoticed by the narrator's father (who remains unnamed in the story), showing his distance from his own family.

2.2. The Female Caregiver Working Inside the House

The novels being analysed by this study - *Sister of My Heart* (1999) and *Queen of Dreams* (2004) by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, *Jasmine* (1989) and *Desirable Daughters* (2002) by Bharati Mukherjee, and *The Namesake* (1999) and *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) by Jhumpa Lahiri) do not include female protagonists outside the home. They resort to their roles as female caregivers working inside the house. Showkat Hussain Dar (2015) in his paper *The Portrayal of Women as Rebels in the Literary Works of Jhumpa Lahiri and Bharati Mukherjee* states that,

> ...these women protest not for equality but for the right to be acknowledged as individuals— capable of intelligence and feeling. They do not only look for freedom outside the house but within as well. These characters are rebels for they fight against the current of the patriarchal society (872).

While female protagonists in diaspora novels by women writers start off as weak and in the quest for their identity, the narrative becomes a journey for these characters to find their voices and assert themselves. Lahiri's *The Namesake* depicts Ashima Ganguli, who while remained a submissive Indian homemaker while her husband was alive, takes on more responsibilities after the death of her husband. It begins with her working as a librarian in a public library (162) while her husband was alive, and later on, she decides to sell her house on Pemberton Road (275) while she shares her time with her family in India and her children in America. She has made an identity for herself.

Brajesh Kumawat SGL and Liji Ann George (2015) in their paper *Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's 'Queen of Dreams': A Typical Tale of Reconciliation of Intricate, Intertwined and Intimate Family* analyse the character of Rakhi who in the beginning of the novel is on a quest for her identity. After the death of her mother, Mrs Gupta, Rakhi is able to put piece by piece together and unravel the mysteries of her heritage and past, both as an Indian, and as the daughter of an Interpreter of Dreams. "The protagonist‟s trauma after her mother‟s death leads her to discover herself by knitting the bonds which she had once discarded" (771). She represents the modern woman, not because she is a single mother, but because she is in control of her own narrative and destiny, and does not allow her former husband Sonny, nor her father to control her life. This shift towards her becoming independent and empowered is characteristic of female protagonists in Indian diaspora novels written by women writers.

While representations like these do verge on being stereotypical, migration is considered to be essentially a masculine space. Indian culture is patriarchal, and so migration, if any, is mostly initiated by the men. This leaves the women characters to function as caregivers in the periphery of the home, or take up small jobs to pass time, like Ashiima in Lahiri's *The Namesake*. Since the male character assumes the role of the provider, the female protagonist loses socioeconomic independence and thus, a hierarchy of power is created.

Regardless of the cultural background, one can be certain that these representations of genders and gender roles are heavily influenced by the writer's own bias. What emerges as the truth in these works of fiction is not the absolute truth, but a subjective truth. With the plurality of truth in consideration, it becomes essential to analyse and study the various ways in which these characters are constructed, and to ascertain if there is a correlation between them. Women theorists like Simone de Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray, and Gelen Cixous have postulated that men's writing is incapable of capturing the female experience. Literature and media always fails in attempting to portray "mysterious" women; they can appear only at the beginning of a novel as strange, enigmatic figures; but unless the story remained unfinished they give up their secret in the end and they are then simply consistent and transparent persons (Beauvoir 1412). If men writers can be incapable of representing the absolute truth of women, the reverse must also be true, where women writers fail to represent the absolute truth of men and resort to stereotypes.

3. Indian Diaspora Fiction by Women Writers

3.1. Why Should Women Write?

Virginia Woolf (1929) in *A Room of One's Own* stressed on the necessity for women to write for themselves. In one of the most iconic lines from her essay, she writes that, "...a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction." (4) Only when a woman is free from any kind of patriarchal influence, will she be able to write herself and voice out her opinions. Woolf also notes that literature has given women a space and position which is far from reality. "Imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant." (34). Literature has thus wrongly depicted women as being influential and powerful, but in reality (atleast in the society of her time), women did not have as many rights and were subjugated by men. "Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband. (34). When she creates the fictional character of Judith, Shakespeare's twin sister equally gifted as him (36), she establishes how gender has been a barrier for women through the century and a basis to systematically deny them of their rights, including the right to write and express themselves.

> Reviewing the story of Shakespeare's sister as I had made it, is that any woman born with a great gift in the sixteenth century would certainly have gone crazed,

> shot herself, or ended her days in some lonely cottage outside the village, half witch, half wizard, feared and mocked at. (38).

Speaking about the works of the 17th century poet Lady Winchilsea, she writes,"It was a thousand pities that the woman who could write like that, whose mind was tuned to nature and reflection, should have been forced to anger and bitterness. But how could she have helped herself? I asked, imagining the sneers and the laughter, the adulation of the toadies, the scepticism of the professional poet. She must have shut herself up in a room in the country to write, and been torn asunder by bitterness and scruples perhaps, though her husband was of the kindest, and their married life perfection." (46-47) Woolf imagines the thunderous perils of emotional turmoil Lady Winchilsea must have undergone and how she has subtly captivated her struggles in her works.

Woolf justifies the need for women writers to write for themselves and break the silence that has been forced upon them for centuries, so as to right the wrong. One of the key proponents of écriture féminine, Helene Cixous had similar views on women's urgency to write. In her 1975 essay *The Laugh of the Medusa*, Cixous argues that women can either choose to imprison themselves in their bodies by a language which does not allow them to express themselves, or they can make use of their own bodies as a means of communication. "Woman must put herself into the text - as into the world and into history-by her own movement. The future must no longer be determined by the past." (875) Cixous believes that women must write her own bodies into paper, and unapologetically be herself, so as to create her own history. Even though the past

has been patriarchal, and male writers have have created biased representations of women, women must take it upon themselves to present their stories. “I write woman: woman must write women” (877)

Influenced by Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*, Kate Millet (1970) in *Sexual Politics* laid the foundation for subsequent feminist scholarship by showing how cultural discourse reflects a systematized subjugation and exploitation of women. In *Sexual Politics*, Millett demonstrated in detail how patriarchy's attitudes and systems penetrate literature, philosophy, psychology, and politics. To escape from this subjugation and exploitation, women needed to write and voice out their protest so as to shatter the monopoly of patriarchy.

Gramsci (1948) in his *Prison Notebooks* defined the subaltern as the cultural hegemony that excludes and displaces specific people and social groups from the socio-economic institutions of society, in order to deny their agency and voices in colonial politics (Green Web). Gayatri Spivak in *Can the Subaltern Speak?* stresses on the fact that the subaltern, which is any group of people who are outside the sphere of control, must speak for themselves so as to have their voices heard. It can be established that women too can be viewed as a subaltern group, considering the socioeconomic dependence the patriarchal society has forced upon them for decades. And using this contention, they must write themselves so as to fill the gap left by patriarchal narratives. This is where Indian diaspora fiction by women writers come in, to fill the gaps left by male writers and to present the other side of the story, to weave in their ‘herstory’.

3.2. Indian Diaspora Fiction by Women Writers

Indian diaspora fiction by women writers primarily reclaim a space dominated by the men, since migration is a heteronormative male experience. As postulated earlier, migration in the Indian context is a consequence of the decisions taken by the men, since the society is patriarchal and in the traditional Indian society, the providers in the family are the men. Hence, when it comes to migration for better socioeconomic prospects, the decision is often taken by the men in the family, and the women have to follow this. In their host country, they mostly assume the role of the caregiver inside the house, while their husbands remain the providers working outside the house. Writing becomes a mode of connecting with similar communities, as determined by Suman (2018) in her paper *Gendered Migrations and Literary Narratives: Writing Communities in South Asian Diaspora*

> Many of these qualified women often turn to alternate means of finding identity and fulfilment. Writing is one activity that provides them with this sense of purpose and achievement. The personal act of writing a literary text becomes as much a social activity when few of them form writing communities. (93)

And yet, the presence of women in the diaspora space becomes essential for the ‘continuation of life’. It is they who complete the family unit by contributing to the household as ‘caregivers’, or in some cases, contribute through their earnings as well (Ashima in *The Namesake*). Through

their presence, the diaspora experience of the men is completed, and hence it becomes crucial to understand their narratives and views, as expressed in their writings as these writings are a product of their experiences.

Apart from the writers being studied in detail for this study, here are a few other Indian diaspora women writers whose works revolve around similar themes of identity formation, diaspora, alienation, reconciliation, and hybridization of culture.

Meena Alexander was born in Allahabad, India, and raised in India and Sudan. When she was eighteen she went to study in England. She now lives in New York City, where she is a Distinguished Professor of English at Hunter College and the Graduate Center at the City University of New York (Ruth Web). Alexander has produced the acclaimed autobiography *Fault Lines* (1993), chosen as one of *Publishers Weekly*'s Best Books of 1993, and revised in 2003 to incorporate significant new material. She has also published two novels, *Nampally Road* (1991) and *Manhattan Music* (1997). In *Nampally Road*, Alexander writes about her character Mira Kannadical who has returned to India after graduate school in England to teach, but when she moves into a house on Nampally road in Hyderabad, she must come to terms with the conflicts and contradictions of life in modern India. Although the novel is set in India, it is a diaspora novel as it deals with the notion of an imagined homeland and the effect of displacement on diaspora individuals. Her novel *Manhattan Music* is set in New York city. The story moves around the life of Sandhya Rosenblum, who is an immigrant from India. She is married to an American Jewish man, and tries to make sense of her life in a time of unrest. In this

comprehensive novel, which is set in Manhattan and India, the author explores a lot of diverse elements and adding on to the diversity, by going over through the borders, Indian diaspora, ethnic intolerance, interracial issues and marriages, and various other things that add to an American life these days. Her nonfiction book *Poetics of Dislocation* (2009) highlights her struggles to find her place in America, and explores what the many cultures in this country mean for poets practicing their craft.

Kiran Desai is the internationally acclaimed author of *The Inheritance of Loss*, which won the 2006 Man Booker Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Fiction Award. The novel, Desai's second, explores the impact of British colonization in India. In *The Inheritance of Loss*, Biju, is an illegal alien residing in the United States, trying to make a new life for himself, and contrasts this with the experiences of Sai, an anglicised Indian girl living with her grandfather in India. The novel shows both internal conflicts within India and tensions between the past and present. Among its main themes are migration, living between two worlds, and between past and present. The novel shows the troubled relationship between the first and second generation of immigrants and how it has impacted their dispersed identity. It also unearths the lives of immigrants, their pungent diasporic experience with split identity and its fragmentations; and then their inevitable survival in the migrated locations. (Ashgar 25).

Uma Parameswaran, an Indian diaspora women writer, was born in India and now lives in Canada. Her recent publications include award-winning *What Was Always Hers* (short stories), *The Forever Banyan Tree*, *The Sweet Smell of Mother's Milk-Wet Bodice* (novella), *Mangoes on*

the Maple Tree (novel), *Sisters at the Well* (poems), and *Riding High with Krishna and a Baseball Bat & Other Stories*. Uma Parameswaran's first short story *The Door I Shut Behind Me* introduces her saga of thematically related, intergenerational and intertextual immigrant experience. It reflects the sense of wonder and fear of the immigrant at the new world around himself and nostalgia for the world left behind. All the characters often live in a world of nostalgia centered on a sort of homesickness, bearing the pains of uprooting and re-routing, the struggle to maintain the difference between oneself and the new unfriendly surroundings. "Indians abroad" seem to be more self conscious than the "Canadians abroad". (Sankar 1786).

Monica Pradhan was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and grew up in the suburbs of Washington, DC, after her parents emigrated to the United States from Mumbai, India, in the 1960s after her father received a scholarship to attend the University of Pennsylvania for his PhD in Electrical Engineering. Her 2008 novel *The Hindi Bindi Club* follows the relationships of two very different generations of women with everything to learn from each other. For decades, they've gathered together, dressed in saris and sweater sets, to share recipes, arguments, and laughter. They are the called the 'Hindi-Bindi Club'. For the female protagonist Kiran, a successful career can't fill the void left by her estrangement from her parents. Five years and one divorce later, she's ready to mend fences, and find a new husband the old-fashioned way. The novel documents hybridization of culture, diaspora experiences, and alienation, all from the perspective of its titular women characters.

Kavita Daswani is an Indian-American author. All three of her novels deal with the Indian practice of arranged marriages, and features heroines that refuse to go along with tradition. Her novels include *The Village Bride of Beverly Hills* (2005), *For Matrimonial Purposes* (2010), and *Bombay Girl* (2012). Her books represent the changes taking place in the diaspora Indian communities, especially regarding institutions such as marriage, alienation, displacement, the wife's role in families, and increasing opportunities for women.

Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (1985) deals with the migration of the Indians to England and disillusionment they often experience there. Dev comes to England to pursue his studies but he finds it very difficult to adjust with the alien surroundings. He is unable to bear the silence and emptiness of London. He feels trapped and racially conscious England questioning his choice of becoming "Macaulay's Bastard". However, he asserts that he was there to interpret India to them. Adit is a romantic admirer of England in the beginning but later he is drawn back to India the country which he called dirty and lazy. Sarah is an English girl married to Adit also faces identity crisis. She is romantically in love with India but when her husband expressed the desire that their child should be born in India, she felt shocked and surprised. She felt the sense of being uprooted. She accompanies her husband to India bidding goodbye to England. Anita Desai is also concerned with larger diasporic issues like inner alienation and up rootedness - rather than mere geographical displacement.

Kamala Markandaya is the pseudonym of Kamala Purnaiya born of a reputed family in Mysore in 1924. In 1948, she went to England hoping to support her as a journalist. However, in

England, she had a tough time. She married an English man and lived in England as an expatriate. She is now a British citizen but her writings are anti-colonist and anti-imperialist. Her novel *Nectar in a Sieve* (1959) is her literacy tour at force. *Some Inner Fury* focuses on cultural difficulties involved in an interracial relationship that develops between Mira and Richard Marlowe, an English man. Her novel, *The Nowhere Man* (1972), deals with the sufferings of the first generation immigrants in England. The protagonist of the novel Srinivas leaves his native land to settle in England but eventually, he finds that he belongs nowhere. Through flashback technique, she recounts Srinivas's past life in India juxtaposing it against his present sufferings in England. The novel deals with the issues of diasporic angst, psychological and physical displacement and hyphenated identity often experienced by the immigrants in an alien country.

Sunetra Gupta was born in Bengal in 1965. She spent her childhood in Ethopia, Zambia and Liberia. Later she studied biology at the Princeton University and settled in London. Her first novel *Memories of Rain* (1992) won her Sahitya Akademi Award in 1996. Her works are characterized by a stream of consciousness style focusing on the interior lives of her characters. Her other works are *The Glassblower's Breath* (1993), *Moonlight into Marzipan* (1995) and *A Sin of Color*. Sunetra's interest lies in the inner worlds of her characters. Her writing interpolates cultures, histories and human understanding. Her fiction shifts the central preoccupation of diasporic writings from the crisis of identity to the mapping of a process of experience and feeling.

These writers have left India to live in other countries, sometimes out of their choice, that is to work or to study and at times they or their family need to leave India for economic, political or social reasons. They nostalgically recall their mother landits custom, culture, language and people, irrespective of any generation, creative writers use these things in their writings.

4. Select Indian Diaspora Women Writers

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni was born in Calcutta in 1956, she studied in Calcutta and then in the United States of America. She started writing poetry moved by the dual forces of pre-immigration and post-immigration conditions and sufferings of women in patriarchal society. Later she moved to short story writing and novels. Her collections of poetry are - *The Reason for Nasturtiums* (1990), *Black Candle* (1991), and *Leaving Yuba City* (1997). *Black Candle* chronicles scorched lives of women. It is a collection of poems about women of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. She depicts the sufferings of women in purdah, out-cast or widowed women. Women married against their wish, childless women tortured by their husbands and in-laws and women forced to die on funeral pyres of their husbands. Chitra is a crusader who fights for the cause of women. She says that her living in the USA made her more aware of the sufferings of women in Indian subcontinent. She believes that double standards for men and women prevail both in the East and the West. As a diasporic woman poet, Chitra portrays the sufferings of women in male dominated society. Her works have been critically well-received especially in the USA She has won many awards for her poetry and fiction. She fuses lyricism, realism, myth and emotional drama very deftly. She says that it is not enough for women to have a room of her own

to write. She needs to prioritize it. She says that women should look out for each other and draw strength from each other. In fiction, her narratives have taken multiple forms — realistic, historical, magical realism, myth and fantasy (The Punch Web). In her writings, male characters are often barriers that women must overcome.

Jhumpa Lahiri was born in 1967 in London to Indian parents. Her parents moved to the United States after her birth. Lahiri's collection of her short stories *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) won her prestigious Pulitzer Prize in the year 2000. It is a collection of nine short stories set in India and the United States. The author has assumed the role of an interpreter of suppressed emotions. Emotional anguish and nostalgia form the basic themes of the book. As a child of immigrant parents, she has undergone the experience of living two lives-one in India and other in the USA. The title story is about a young couple caught too early in the tangles of marriage and parenthood. In the story *Temporary Matter* there is a portrayal of soured marriage brought about by the loss of a baby. Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine is a story of a Pakistani scholar who visits an Indian family in New England. Lahiri shows in this story that the Indian family and the Pakistani scholar experienced "single silence and a single fear". They forgot all differences that the two countries always experience. She also has written many outstanding novels presenting Diaspora experiences such as *The Lowland* (2013), *The Namesake* (2003), *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) Lahiri sums up the diasporic experience by suggesting that assimilation is the only solution for survival in an alien land.

Bharti Mukherjee was born in 1940 and moved to Britain at the age of eight with her family. She was educated in Calcutta, Baroda, England and the USA. She married Clark Blaise, a Canadian in 1963. She moved to Canada with her husband but later returned to the USA where she taught at various universities. Bharti Mukherjee and her husband played supportive roles in each other's career. They pursued independent writing but also produced two nonfiction works in collaboration. She has combined a career of creative writing and teaching very successfully. Her choice to settle in the United States of America has had a liberating effect on her creative career. She embraced the openness of the American culture and its respect for one's individuality with enthusiasm and joy. She has stated emphatically that she would like to be treated as an American writer and not as a hyphenated or ethnic one. She is happily assimilated in American environment. In fact, her experience as an expatriate forms the main source of her writings. She is also concerned with migrations, dislocations and relocations. Her works also deal with the issues of identity, the notion of belonging, the feeling of alienation and rootlessness. She also questions the biases and prejudices of the two antipodal worlds. In earlier works, Mukherjee deals with cultural encounters between India and the United States but later, her works shift the focus to other multicultural encounters that take place in the USA. Her first novel *The Tiger's Daughter* (1971) has strong autobiographical overtones. It narrates the story of Tara who gets married to an American and returns to India briefly but finds that she is unable to connect herself to her motherland. She fails to adjust with the things. Once she loved and admired in the past, she feels like an alien in her own city Calcutta. At last she returns to the USA the land of her adoption. *The Stories of Darkness* (1985) present the experiences of Indian immigrants in the USA. *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988) focuses on immigrants from various countries that form the American Salad Bowl. Though they are a minority voice, they are a vital part of the

American mainstream. As they contribute to the making of the American culture. *The Holder of the World* (1993) focuses on the 17th century colonial America and the Mughal India. The novelist creates a vivid and complex tale of dislocation and transformation that take place in amalgam of two cultures. *Leave It To Me* (1997) is the story of a female child abandoned by a hippie mother from California. The girl child who becomes a young woman goes in search of her roots and true parentage. The revenge story is interwoven with the question of identity presented through twin motifs of Kali and Electra. Here the novelist explores the hyphenated individual's dilemma in the multi-ethnic USA. In her novel *Desirable Daughters* (2002) the concerns are again female identity and re-rooting of the self. *Jasmine* (1990) is the story of a rebellious girl Jyoti who rebels against the conventional set up of the traditional society. She goes to the USA where she becomes Jasmine, a personification of Americanness. Bharati Mukherjee writes about a minority community which frees itself from ghetto and adapts to the mainstream American culture and lifestyle. She advocates that through adaptation, adjustment, assimilation and acculturation, the immigrants can overcome the trauma of displacement and alienation. She is a diasporic fiction writer who holds that migratory experiences have enriched expatriate literary writings.

The following chapters analyse the select novels in the light of the theories discussed in the previous chapters. The concept of power and masculine space is analyzed in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams* and *Sister of My Heart*.

CHAPTER III

POWER AND MASCULINE SPACE IN CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI'S *QUEEN OF DREAMS* AND *SISTER OF MY HEART*

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is Indian-American novelist and has carved a niche for herself. She born in India and later moved to the United States to attend college. She completed her Masters from Wright State University, Ohio, and her PhD from the University of California at Berkeley. She has published several books, and her works include fiction, poetry, children's literature, and anthologies. She is a recipient of various prestigious awards like ' The American Book Award', the PEN Oakland/Josephine Miles Literary Award, The Allen Ginsberg Poetry Prize, the Pushcart Prize among others..

Queen of Dreams (2004) was the sixth novel authored and published by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. Evident as common elements in her previous novels, exploring the lives of the displaced Indian subaltern and examining the role played by gender identities, Queen of Dreams explores the complicated history of Rakhi's past, and the mystery surrounding her mother, Mrs Gupta's ability to see and interpret dreams. Set in California, Mrs Gupta is a 'dream teller' who is able to share and interpret the dreams of others, a unique ability she possesses which keeps her connected to her identity and past as an Indian. Her daughter, Rakhi does not possess this divine ability and owing to her identity as a second generation Indian immigrant, makes her feel disconnected from her mother and her Indian past.

Published in 1999, *Sister of My Heart* is Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's third novel. It has been translated into over 20 languages, and follows the lives of two sisters - Anju and Sudha. The Boston Globe reviewed it as,

> Queen of Dreams is a riveting story, eloquently written. Divakaruni's attention to detail in descriptive passages is beautifully telling without being at all overblown. A tiny glimpse into the family dynamic, for example, is simple yet vividly potent, as Rakhi describes her long-misunderstood father cleaning up the kitchen after a meal, "humming a Hindi song as he scrubbed the sink with Comet, his hands encased in neon yellow gloves. He was always the tidy one in our household, the methodical one, the one with music. My mother — secretive, stubborn, unreliable — couldn't hold a tune to save her life. I wanted to be just like her. (ChitraDivakaruni Web)

3.1. Power

To study the dynamics of power in the select novels, a detailed understanding of the term 'power' is first required. Power is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as "the capacity or ability to direct or influence the behavior of others or the course of events". It is the "social production of an effect that determines the capacities, actions, beliefs, or conduct of actors" (Barnett, Duvall 39). This means the entities with power determine who holds control, and who decides the realm of action and beliefs for a society. They command the dominant ideology and remain at the centre, while those lower in hierarchy are at the margins or the periphery and must adhere to the centre. Power may be exerted directly, say for example a goon who is extorting money from victims at a market area. Here the power is exerted directly and may be aided by the usage of symbols of fear - knives, guns, etc. The Principal of an institution also exerts power directly based on his designation and position within the institution. Power can also be exterted indirectly through an institution, taking the example of marriage in a patriarchal society. The wives are obligated and expected to adhere to the patriarchal setup, where the men form the centre.

It is also interesting to note that the dynamics of power can shift, depending on the 'actors' involved, as is seen in the case of the select novels for this thesis. Bharti Mukherjee's 1989 novel *Jasmine* for example has the titular character Jasmine transcend from a yielding wife to a domineering force defending herself and taking charge of her own life owing to the various circumstances she faces in life. Power dynamics may also shift when the person in question is dislocated from their homeland. As potulated by Salman Rushdie in *Imaginary Homelands* (1982), a dislocated individual holds on to tiny fragments of memories. However, this fails to create a complete image of the homeland. In their adopted land (or the new land) they become the subaltern, the marginalised, and lose power and agency. The dislocated individual while might have occupied a position of authority and power in his homeland, this power is lost in the new adopted land. This chapter looks at the power occupied by the male characters in the novels selected and the effects it has on the women characters.

3.2. Masculinity

Masculinity is seen as a set of attributes, behaviors, and roles associated with "biological" men and boys (Connell 167). Masculinity can be theoretically understood as socially constructed - the attributes associated with masculinity are are not naturally inherited, but are imposed upon by society based on preset understanding and comprehension of the gender. Since masculinity is socially constructed, it's expression varies from culture to culture. In 2015, the YouTube channel BuzzFeedVideo released a video titled *Men's Standards of Beauty Around the World*. With 25 million views at present, the video highlights how different cultures attribute differing characteristics to masculinity. The video notes that while Australians and Americans attribute bulky bodies and rugged appearances to masculinity, Asian countries like South Koreans expect their men to embody certain feminine traits like having a slender body, wear makeup, and it is

socially acceptable for men there to undergo cosmetic surgery to alter their noses, jawlines, and bodymass.

Some traits associated with masculinity and femininity are however biologically determined. Sporting Associations across the world have standardized different qualifying parameters and rules for athletes for different sexes. Physical strength and abilities can thus be seen and understood as an extension of the biological build of an individual shaped by their sex. Biological factors play a role in certain varied expectations and conditions for men and women, which then get naturalised and included to the socially constructed norms for masculinity and femininity. For example, in India, it is socially acceptable for men to ride motorcycles, while women who ride motorcycles are often gawked at - the preconceived notion being that riding a motorcycle is a masculine activity.

Anyone can depict masculine traits, it is not limited to men alone. Since masculinity is a set of traits associated with the male sex, any individual can project masculine traits, regardless of their sex. Jasmine in Bharti Mukherjee's *Jasmine* who takes on the role of the defender, a role typical of masculinity. Since masculinity is socially associated with the male sex, along with it comes comes culturally and socially sanctioned 'power', while feminine traits are deemed inferior. An example of this would be how various cultures and societies accept women wearing pants which are identified as a masculine clothing. However, the opposite is generally not accepted in society to the extent of deemed ridiculous - men in skirts (unless it is culturally sanctioned, like the Scottish kilts). This chapter further examines the role played by masculinity and the power dynamics in the narrative of the select novels.

3.3. *Queen of Dreams*

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams* published in 2004 weaves the element of magic realism into the narrative of an Indian immigrant family settled in the US. The novel takes into account diaspora characters who now live in the US, and it documents the lives of two generations of immigrants. The mother, Mrs. Gupta (first generation diaspora), is able to forsee the future through her vivid dreams, a fact that is kept hidden from the protagonist, Rakhi. Rakhi is the second generation diaspora born and brought up in the US, and is a single mother living in Berkeley, California. Owing to her being a second generation immigrant, Rakhi is alienated from her homeland, all she knows about the land are the vague and incomplete narratives she hears from her parents who have their own set of problems. Only after her mother's death, she sees Mrs Gupta's dream journals (an account her mother had maintained of her powers to interpret dreams, and her visions), which open the long-closed door to her past. The dream journals ultimately help her reconnect to her homeland - India, and her mother's past, while also helping her re-establish her bonds with her otherwise estranged father Mr Gupta, her ex-husband Sonny, and most importantly with herself. A study of the male characters within the novel brings about a deeper understanding of the role played by masculinity in establishing power dynamics within the narratives.

3.3.1. Mr Gupta: The Gatekeeper

To understand how Mr Gupta acts as a gatekeeper for Mrs Gupta, it is essential to understand Mrs Gupta's life and her powers. As a young woman, Mrs Gupta gained her powers of interpreting dreams in India, in a mystical cave occupied by the elders. Connected to a supernatural force, this enabled her to look into the dreams of others and interpret the deeper

meanings of the same. Notwithstanding to give up the powers, nor willing to reside in the caves with elders, Mrs. Gupta decided to strike a balance between the two choices. She resolves to choose the third where she could keep "the lesser ones, so that I might help others in the world" (Divakaruni 175). However, the powers she had received was connected to her independence as a woman. To remain in possession of the powers of interpreting dreams, she had to vow a life of independence, and was never to marry, through she could live with a man because only then. "In the eye of the Great Power, then, my spiritual essence would not be joined to his" (176). She therefore opted for a court marrriage with Mr Gupta so their union would not interfere with her powers, as this wedding would not have been valid in the eyes of the divine, on account of it not having been performed with the Hindu rituals of marriage. The court marriage became a loophole she employed which allowed her to take on a husband without the presence of the God of Fire - *Agni* to secure their union.

Mrs Gupta's powers are tied to the 'purity' of her body, and she is forbidden to squander her body in search of physical pleasures. Two things happens which weakens her powers - first is her consumating her marriage with Mr Gupta, and the second is her moving to the US on her husband's behest. Once she connects with Mr Gupta, a male entity on a physical level, Mr Gupta becomes the stumbling block between her and her powers. Being away from the mystical caves where she received her powers weakens her further. Being away from her homeland, something she has to oblige owing to Mr Gupta's insistence, she looses her connection with her motherland, which causes her powers to weaken. Since her powers were her essence, the root of her existence, she loses her identity and sinks into depression. To manage her identity crisis, she tries to maintain distance from her husband - both physically and emotionally. This is the reason for their marriage to become estranged. At the same time, she tries keeping the earth from India

under her pillow(176). However, "each time (the dream – teller) I had sex with my husband, or even slept in same bed, my powers – already weakened by being so far from the caves – dwindled further" (283).

Not able to make peace with her losing her powers of interpreting dreams, Mrs Gupta decides to "break off all ties with (her) husband" and return to the caves to regain her talent (284). She believes that returning to India, to the caves, will help her overcome the obstacles that have come in her life in the form her her husband, and she will be able to regain her powers. This is when Mrs Gupta discovers that she is pregnant (with her daughter Rakhi), and therefore decides to abandon her plans of leaving her husband. Even so, she preserves distance between herself and Mr Gupta since his presence alone is deterrent to her powers. It weakens them. This creates a malfunctioning family unit where Mrs Gupta is strained from the father (to hold on to her identity), and he gives in to drinking. Mr Gupta is unable to connect to Rakhi as well, who views the mother's mysterious nature enticing (8). Her ability to interpret dreams and her affinity to this power is a symbol for her connection with the homeland.

As diaspora individuals belonging to the first generation, while Mr Gupta easily adapts components of American culture, Mrs Gupta holds on to her Indian heritage. This is seen in the way she dresses (saris), her maintaining her dream journal and pursuing her power of interpreting dreams (symbolic of her homeland), and the company she keeps (mostly Indians). Mr Gupta has more easily adapted and acclimatized to components of American culture. He wears western clothes, is comfortable speaking and conversing in English (in addition to his native Bengali), and is able to make and sustain friendships outside the Indian circle. Mr Gupta thus acts as a gatekeeper between her and her powers (her Indianness) even without realising it, in the form of a hegemony which is subtly imposed. He serves as the prime obstacle in Mrs

Gupta's life alienating her from her homeland and her powers. Rakhi desperately wishes to connect with her past (an imagined homeland) but is unable to receive any help from Mr Gupta who has acclimatized himself into the American life (unlike Belle & Jespal's families - other Indian second generation characters in the novel whose parents imbibe *Indianness* in them). It is only after Mrs Gupta's death that Mr Gupta along with Rakhi come across her dream journals and are able to understand her past and the reason for her aloofness. The journals are written in her native Bengali language, which Rakhi is unable to read, hence Mr Gupta helps translate them for her.

3.3.2. The Stranger in Rakhi's Dreams

Rakhi begins to have a recurring dream which intrigues and scares her. Mrs Gupta cannot, however, interpret her daughter's dream from the description Rakhi provides. Decides to see the dream for herself, Mrs Gupta enters her daughter's consciousness and tries to help her, but she is powerless in the face of the threats she sees in the dream. In Rakhi's nightmare, a man is pursuing her in the lingerie section of a department store; his words somehow seduce Rakhi and she turns towards him, and they kiss The mother fails to warn her daughter, and later on, cannot "decipher what the man (in the dream) symbolized. When in her life he would appear, or where (52). When the mother and daughter awake, they weep together, and the mother is forced to come to terms with the fact that she, "who interpreted dreams for a worldful of strangers, would never be able to explain to (her) daughter what her dreams meant" or "warn her away from the disasters of her life" (52).

The Stranger in Rakhi's dream remains a mystery, and adds to the chaotic lives that the mother and daughter live. While his identity is never revealed, the readers can interpret him as an

symbol of the mother's subconscious guilt over not not being able to help her daughter, connect to her, and help her through the ups and downs of her life. The author Divakaruni uses a male entity in the form of The Stranger to symbolise this disconnect, the dangers that await Rakhi, and the evil forces that threaten her happiness. Its the use of a masculine being as a negative force which demonstrates the author's 'bias' in encapsulating the stereotypical representation of men in the novel as forces acting against the women, forces that the women must overcome. The dream does bring the mother and daughter duo closer, but the dream goes uninterpretted, and thus The Stranger remains a force to be feared, an entity to retreat away from, and an energy to be feared.

3.3.3. The Mysterious Yoga Man

The Mysterious Yoga Man is another unexplained masculine entity which appears throughout the novel as flashes in the visions that Mrs Gupta and Rakhi see. The Mysterious Yoga Man though is seen in these visions as an etheral being performing yoga, being at peace with himself, and thus, it ties Mrs Gupta's to her memories of her homeland. Rakhi is also able to see the Mysterious Yoga Man in a vision where she is unable to actually comprehend if what she is seeing is an apparition or reality, however, her being able to see the Yoga Man, feel his presence also denotes her connection to her imagined homeland, something she has inherited in scraps and batches from her first generation immigrant parents.

Much like The Stranger who emerges only in the dreams of Rakhi, The Mysterious Yoga Man appears in visions that Mrs Gupta is able to see, and she sees this right before her car meets with an accident, wounding her fatally. Thus, once again, a masculine entity is used by the author Divakaruni to serve as as a symbolical banshee predicting her demise, and her spiritual return to

the caves where she had received her powers, a place she truly sees as her home. It is a masculine entity which predicts death, and serves as a deterrent to the lives of Mrs Gupta and Rakhi. Although present in the most crucial moments of the narrative, the yoga man does not serve any clear purpose. His presence simply adds on to the magic realism aspect of the narrative, and at the same time, adds to the mayhem in the Gupta household. He is yet another masculine figure who adds to the chaotic lives of the mother-daughter combo.

3.3.4. Sonny: The Distant Husband

Early on in the novel, Mrs Gupta teaches her daughter Rakhi that, "the best way to love people is not to need them" (45). This stems from our own existence, which required her not to 'require men', as that was essential to her possessing her powers of interpreting dreams. When Mr Gupta came into Mrs Gupta's life and took her away to America, her bond with the mystical caves in India was severed, and his presence and her physical union with him weakened her powers. She therefore believed that a masculine force can act as a restraint in a woman's life, a view shaped by her own experiences. She therefore encourages Rakhi that that men cannot overpower their lives. Owing to this advice which Rakhi had received from her mother, she learnt how to maintain her independence, and not fully connect with the men in her life. Mrs Gupta's message undermines Rakhi's relationship with her husband Sonny, whom she has attempted to love in that "need - less way" (45), where her relation with Sonny is that of mutual love and respect, but she has never allowed him to be there for her, nor has she expressed her vulnerabilities to him.

It is also this advice that is indirectly responsible for Rakhi and Sonny ultimately ending their marriage. Rakhi wonders if her mother's words indirectly caused her to separate from her husband. Being accustomed to Rakhi's independence, Sonny "couldn't come through when she

finally did require help" (45). A DJ in a famous nightclub, Sonny invites Rakhi to come and hear him play. At the nightclub, much to her dismay, an unsuspecting Rakhi is drugged and raped by a stranger. While she screams for help, calling out to her husband to come to her aid, the loud music being played by Sonny in the club, and the general commotion prevent Sonny from hearing his wife's cries for help. When Rakhi finally tells her husband about the rape, Sonny refuses to believe her. Although it is hard for Rakhi to share her traumatic experience, Sonny does not notice the paralinguistic signals that reveal his wife's anxiety: "she kept running out of breath, her mouth grew dry and her face was hot as though it was she who'd done something shameful" (202). The husband's failure to interpret his wife's mental state correctly indicates the couple's basic inability to communicate. It reveals the nature of their marriage, that Sonny has never really understood Rakhi, and is therefore unable to be there for her emotionally, supporting her through what turns out to be the darkest trials of her life.

This results in further alienation to an already now clearly revealed weak marriage. Sonny's dismissal and inability to support her infuriates Rakhi. As his wife, Rakhi for the first time wishes a masculine force to sooth her and protect her. While they have turbulent arguments after this event, she never gets to the main reason for their separation. For Rakhi, "the worst part of the night wasn't the assault but the fact that he (Sonny) hadn't been there to rescue her from it. She'd called to him for help, and he'd failed her. She never brought it up again. Soon after that, she moved out" (202). Sonny is unable to protect his wife, provide her support when she needed it the most. In the long line of masculine characters in the novel who act as restraining forces for the women characters, Sonny emerges as the primary masculine entity who fails Rakhi, projecting her to a life of unresolved emotions. Sonny does not identify as an Indian, but an

American Indian, and has undergone cultural hybridization as he is a second generation diaspora individual.

3.3.5. The Men Have to Ultimately Rescue Rakhi

While Rakhi had always struggled with her identity, and her loss of connection and awareness of her origins, she receives a remedy after Mrs Gupta's death. While clearing out Mrs Gupta's things after her funeral, Rakhi discovers neatly maintained journals which her mother kept. The journals are in Bengali, and hence she is unable to read them and decipher the memories of her mother. It is at this point that Mr Gupta, her father, comes to her aid and helps translate the dream journals from Bengali to English so Rakhi can understand the extent of her mother's powers and life. This activity which she undertakes with her father serves her three purposes: she is able to find a distraction which enables her to cope with the grief of having lost her mother, she is able to reconnect to her father as they sit and translate the journals, working on it together, and finally she is able to understand her mother, finally, and is able to reconnect to her homeland. It is the same masculine force who had acted as a gatekeeper for her mother and her powers who comes to Rakhi's aid and enables her to deal with life better, while also forging her identity rooted in the knowledge of her origin, and her homeland.

Rakhi runs an Indian themed cafe *Chai House* to support herself and her child financially. For Rakhi, this restaurant symbolises her independence and freedom. However, like all other Indian owned businesses which were affected adversely after the 9/11 attacks, *Chai House* begins to accumulate more losses, endangering the custody rights granted to Rakhi for her daughter, which dictates that she must have a source of income to provide for her daughter. The failure of *Chai House* could have resulted in her losing custody of her daughter to Sonny. It is at this point that

Mr Gupta volunteers to help resuscitate *Chai House* into "an Indian snack shop, a *chaer dokan*, as it would be called in Calcutta. They're going to model it after the shop the father worked in so many years ago, with a few American sanitary touches thrown in" (165). Mr Gupta throws himself into this project, overseeing the transition, and even sits in the redefined cafe, singing old Bollywood songs, fascinating and intruiging both Indian and American customers, who throng to the cafe to have tea, and most importantly, to hear Mr Gupta sing. Mr Gupta is thus able to save *Chai House* and enable Rakhi to continue providing for her daughter, while also saving her source of income.

While Rakhi gains success professionally with the triumph of *Chai House*, her estranged relationship with her husband, Sonny, continues to trouble her. Eventually, being at peace with herself in the folds of her now found identity, Rakhi is able to reach out to Sonny. The novel ends with Sonny inviting her to his club once again, where she dances wholeheartedly, for once, not caring about who or what anyone thought of her. There in the dance hall, she dances, "on the web of the world where Sonny and she have touched orbits once more" (307) indicative of a reconciliation between husband and wife. While the narrative does not clearly mention whether Rakhi reinstitutes her marriage to Sonny, the imagery in the quote by the narrator in the novel indicates towards their lives touching each other again, thus paving the way for an integrated family life, very much similar to that in a traditional Indian setup. Rakhi's happiness therefore ultimately depends on the actions of the men in her life - Mr Gupta, and Sonny.

4.1. *Sister of My Heart* (1999)

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's third novel *Sister of My Heart* published in 1999 runs a parallel narration from the perspectives of Anju and Sudha, who are cousins. In the novel, Anju weds

Sunil, an NRI who lusts for Sudha, who is now married to Ramesh, a man burdened by the patriarchal society he lives in. Other male characters in the novel include those of Bijoy (Anju's father), Gopal (Sudha's father), and Ashok (Sudha's love interest before her marriage).

4.1.1. Bijoy and Gopal - The Absent Fathers

Bijoy, Anju's father, and Gopal, Sudha's father, are mostly absent from the narrative. Early on in the narrative, the past is recounted where Gopal abruptly appears at Bijoy's house with his pregnant wife, declaring that they are long lost cousins. He then tempts Bijoy to undertake an expedition to retrieve gemstones from an unexplored part of the forest. Being extremely trusting of Gopal, and much to the dismay of the family members, Bijoy agrees to undertake this journey, which ultimately proves to be fatal for them (it is only at the end of the novel that the readers are told of Gopal's escape and subsequent life under wraps). Bijoy dies in the shady ruby hunting incident owing to an unplanned explosion. Gopal tries to save Bijoy but is unable to, and gets burnt in the process.

> I hate my father. I hate the fact that he could go off so casually in search of adventure, without a single thought for what would happen to the rest of us. I blame him for the tired circles under mother's eyes, the taunts of the children at school because I don't have a father. None of it would have happened if he hadn't been so careless and got himself killed. (24)

This quote in the novel by Anju exemplifies the frustration she feels over having been abandoned by her father. She hates him for shoving her mother into the life of a widow for something as trivial as searching for gemstones. She blames the father for all the worries and heartaches the family has had to undergo owing to his absence from their lives. The household hires a man named Singhji as their driver, who is extremely loyal to the family. It is later revealed that Singhji is actually Gopal who has continued to remain attached to the household after assuming his new identity. No one in the household is able to recognise him as most of his face has burn

wounds, and he feels morbidly guilty to declare his identity to the world, feeling responsible for Bijoy's death. As Singhji, he becomes the confidant of the girls - Anju, and his daughter Sudha. When Sudha meets a handsome stranger at the movies - Ashok Ghosh, he arranges for them to meet several times, and later alerts Anju when the two decide to elope. Anju in turn ends up having a crush on Singhji, which she later realises is her folly as she moves on to marry Sunil. Because the masculine entities Bijoy and Gopal fail at performing the roles assigned to them - that of husbands, of fathers, and of caretakers of their family unit, the family undergoes hardships and sufferings.

While Gopal as Singhji does try his best to help the family, he is at the periphery as their chauffeur, and there is only so much he can do. Before Sudha's wedding, he sends her an envelope of money, signing on the letter as Gopal. Sudha does not reveal to anyone that she has received a package from her father whom everyone thought was dead. She knows that Pisima (Anju's mother) who already blames Gopal for her husband's demise would not take to the revelation kindly. At the same time, she herself has her own doubts to the whereabouts of her father and what he has been up to. She ultimately decides to donate the money to charity, not wanting to partake in the money that her father has sent her, fearing that it might have been procured by criminal means.

It is only at the end of the novel when Sudha is on her way to America to meet and stay with her sister Anju that Singhji reveals his true identity. He sends her a letter explaining the circumstances of his disappearance, his innocence in the accident during the gem hunting expedition, and how he has in his own way been always there for him. This moves Sudha, but by then the damage has been done, and there is a lot for Gopal to make up for. Along with the letter, he sends her a ruby pendant, indicating that he did eventually find the gemstones. This points out

to his failure as a father. He had the wealth and his own life, which could have been of great help and solace to the family, however, he chose to live in the shadows owing to his guilt. As a masculine force, he falls short of his duties, and acts as a deterrent to the happiness of everyone around him.

4.1.2. Ashok Ghosh - The Lover

Ashok Ghosh meets Sudha for the first time at a movie theatre. They have chance meetings and intended meetings after that, and when Nalini comes to know about this, she hastens her plans for Sudha's wedding (34). She fears Ashok will ruin her daughter, and she does not want him to gamble away her daughter's chance at happiness. When Ashok comes to know that Sudha's wedding has been fixed, he proposes marriage and plans to elope with Sudha. However, owing to Singhji's intervention, Anju is able to stop this. He ultimately fails to 'rescue' her from marriage to a stranger.

In the later part of the novel, when Sudha has left her in-laws' house and returned to her own house pregnant with her husband Ramesh's child, Ashok comes back into her life, although momentarily. He offers to marry her, once again offering to rescue her from her misery. He sets a condition, that she must abandon the child she is pregnant with at her mother's house. As a masculine entity, he refuses to give Sudha's child a home, since the child does not belong to him. Naturally, Sudha refuses the proposal and decides to move to the US instead to be with Anju. Ashok, although offers hope to Sudha twice in the novel, is ultimately unable to support her, unable to help her in any way. He emerges as a masculine force threatening to ruin the happiness of Sudha, who actually decides to ultimately leave her in-laws' household when they try and

force to abort the child because it is a girl. Ashok is unable to see and comprehend her dedication to her child.

4.1.3. Sunil Majumdar - The Unsteady Husband

Both Sudha and Anju have arranged marriages. Anju is married off to Sunil, who works in the US, and is described as "young executive with a bright future in a prestigious computer company" (75). He is happy with the match, however, he harbours a secret desire for Sudha. During the wedding, when Sudha drops her handkerchief, he picks it up and keeps it as a token for himself. Anju discovers this and realises that the man she is getting married to is also interested in her sister Sudha. This momentarily ignites a token amount of resentment in the mind of Anju for Sudha, even though the latter is blissfully unaware of the entire episode. Sunil is thus unable to be completely faithful to Anju owing to his infatuation with Sudha. When Sudha's marriage falls apart, and Anju suggests she come over to the US to live with them, he is unable to help Anju bring Sudha to the US in spite of being a computer scientist. He has the means to help Anju financially, but Anju has to take on additional jobs to save money for Sudha's ticket to the US.

When Anju is pregnant with Sunil's child, he is unable to give her the support she requires, and she has to mostly fend for herself. Later on, Anju gives birth to a still born baby. He is unable to be there for his wife emotionally, and provide her with the support she needs at that point either. This can be explained by his residual feelings for Sudha, and he has never been able to truly and completely commit to Anju, much like the disconnect between Rakhi and Sonny in *The Queen of Dreams*.

> 'Shit!' of all American term I've avidly gleaned in the three years I've been here, it's my favourite...But I am careful to use it only when Sunil isn't around because he thinks it

> isn't ladylike. I point out that I hear far worse from him when he's driving. He claims that's different. (205)

In this quote from the novel, Anju is narrating to Sudha how she feels comfortable using swear words. Sudha is visibly shocked when Anju uses the word 'shit' in their telephonic conversation (205). She explains that in the three years that she has been in the US, she has picked up a few swear words, however, she refrains from using them when Sunil is around. As a masculine entity, Sunil wants Anju to be feminine in nature, and avoid using such swear words, even though he himself uses says much worse. When Sunil's father speaks to Sunil over the phone, he says, "I wonder how impressed she be if she knew about your American exploits, all that drinking and whoring" (197). Sunil's father warns Sunil of creating double standards for Anju - that the latter himself has had several affairs, and drinks - attributes uncomfortable in the traditional Indian setting and often seen as an evil scar of Americanization. Sunil thus clearly maintains double standards, giving himself more power and freedom over his wife, to the point of controlling several aspects of his wife's life. The power that he possesses comes to him from the institution of marriage in a patriarchal society - where the husband is considered to be the head of the household. He uses this power to suppress Anju. This also makes it clear that while Anju in a lot of ways holds on to her Indian heritage, Sunil has developed a hybrid existence for himself, assimilating components of American culture. In a lot of ways, he is unable to fulfil his obligations and duties towards Anju, and thus emerges as a demi-villain.

4.1.4. Ramesh Sanyal - Bound by Family

On the day that Anju marries Sunil, Sudha marries Ramesh Sanyal. Unlike Sunil who is distracted by his feelings for Sudha and therefore cannot commit to Anju wholeheartedly, Ramesh loves Sudha dearly, and the first few weeks of marriage prove to be blissful for Sudha.

Ramesh though belongs to a family which believes that the elders have the right to control almost all the aspects of their lives. Sudha mentions that "He is a decent man and a loving husband but in the presence of his mother "he is like a leaf in the gale" (197). Ramesh is under power of the patriarchal society and family he belongs to. As the days progress, Sudha is unable to conceive, and this becomes a matter of great concern for her mother-in-law, who places the entire blame of this shortcoming on her. She is the one taken to be checked by the doctor, and she is the one taken on long and tiring pilgrimages so she can conceive. No such obligations are placed on Sunil, and neither does he feel brave enough to defend Sudha against the humiliations and the taunts. He fails to stand up for her.

> My mother-in-law is gracious, with the graciousness of someone who knows. She cannot be persuaded. If I return at once and go through with the scheduled abortion, she will consider my foolish act of rebellion forgotten. If not, she is afraid she will have to set the divorce proceedings in motion." (267)

While Sudha does eventually get pregnant, she is promptly taken to a gynaecologist who performs an illegal sex determination test on the unborn child. Sudha's mother-in-law is dismayed to learn that she is pregnant with a girl child. An online article by Pranati Sinha states that, "Between 2001 and 2011, India lost 3 million girls to infanticide." Sudha's mother-in-law wants Sudha to abort the child, which shocks Sudha and she ultimately decides to leave her husband's house. Sunil is unable to support Sudha on account of his loyalty to his mother, and his cowardice.

5. Conclusion

> Two women who have travelled the vale of sorrow and the baby who will save them, who has saved them already. Madonna's with child…for now the three of us stand unhurried, feeling the way we fit, skin on skin, into each other's lives. A rain-dampened sun struggles from the clouds to frame us in its hesitant holy light? (349)

Sudha and Anju have to fend for themselves, since the men in their lives act as oppressors, unjust forces, gatekeepers of happiness, and tormentors. In America, they once again unite, and join forces to save themselves from the masculine forces which oppress them. Both *Queen of Dreams* and *Sister of My Heart* present men who are oppressive, stumbling blocks which must be overcome, tormentors, forces threatening the identity of the women characters. It is the men who yield the power, owing to their masculine presence. There emerges a similar pattern in the characterization of men by Divakaruni - as forces the women must overcome. The exception to this is Mr Gupta who finally assists Rakhi in finding solace and becoming one with herself by helping her reconnect with her past, her imagined homeland. Another observation that emerges is that the men are able to adapt to other cultures much easier, and are able to sustain a hybrid existence, carrying components of both cultures - that of their homeland, and of their adopted or new land.

CHAPTER IV

POSTCOLONIAL COMPLEXITIES OF THE MEN IN BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S *JASMINE* AND *DESIRABLE DAUGHTERS*

Mukherjee's 1989 novel *Jasmine* narrates the story of a young Indian woman, Jyoti, who is struggling to settle in the US, and as a result of various circumstances in her life has taken on many identities. The men in the novel function as the pivot around which her life revolves. Prakash Vijh, Taylor, Bud Ripplemayer, Darrel Lutz and the astrologer who had foretold her future: a widow who would live in exile are the characters the study will take into account. *Desirable Daughters* focuses on the lives of three Calcutta women, where the American Dream has been achieved, but more something more valuable has been lost. This chapter takes a look at the male characters in this novel and the role they play in the narrative.

1. Jasmine (1989)

Bharati Mukherjee's 1989 novel *Jasmine* focusses on a young Indian woman, Jyoti, who is struggling to settle in the US. As a result of various circumstances in her life she has taken on many identities The men in the novel function as the pivot around which her life revolves - Prakash Vijh, Taylor, Bud Ripplemayer, Darrel Lutz and the astrologer who had foretold her future: a widow who would live in exile. The novel follows a non-linear narrative, with several

flashbacks to fill in the gaps. The male characters have been discussed in the order of their appearance in the novel.

1.1. The Men in *Jasmine*: The Enforcers of Patriarchy

While the male characters in the novel are deeply patriarchal, Masterji, Jyoti's school teacher is fairly open minded and does not act as a subjugating force. Masterji is influenced by Western ideology as a result of his education, and encourages Jyoti to continue with her education instead of getting married early. He wishes to see Jyoti succeed professionally and build a name for herself (Mukherjee 39). However, the death of Jyoti's father causes her to marry Prakash before she can establish herself professionally. Her marriage to Prakash however is shortlived. While Prakash wishes to go to the US to study, an armed gunman shoots him on the streets, and he dies in Jyoti's arms. As a husband, it is his demise that sets Jyoti on a long journey to find herself and her identity. He becomes one of the primary reasons why Jyoti's life is removed from the ordinary.

1.1.1. Taylor Hayes: The Good Husband

After getting to America, Jasmine falls in love with Taylor Hayes after his wife abandons him. She finds happiness in his presence. However, their relationship comes to an abrupt end when Jasmine spots Sukhwinder, the man who had killed Prashanth in India. Unable to take this

sudden appearance of the killer of her husband, Jasmine flees to Iowa much to Taylor's dismay since he had never wanted Jasmine to leave him and Iowa - "Taylor didn't want me to run away from Iowa. How can anyone leave New York, he said, how can anyone leave New York, you belong here. Iowa's dull and it's flat, he said." (4) Taylor at this point attempts to mend his marriage to his wife Wylie, though unsuccessfully. Taylor ultimately becomes the saviour to Jasmine when he arrives at her house towards the end of the novel and invites her to come with him to California. She ends the narrative with the lines, "Watch me re-position the stars", as a reference to the astrologer who had predicted she would live the life of a widow. It is Taylor who frees Jyoti/Jasmine from the prediction given by the astrologer, and ultimately gives her a happy life. An American, even though Taylor does not subjugate Jasmine, he ultimately emerges as the Occident which must 'save' the Orient. Mukherjee's characterization enables him to take on the role of the white saviour. In the absence of Taylor, Jasmine would not have been able to overthrow the prediction made by the astrologer decades ago.

1.1.2. Prakash Vijh: Renames Jyoti and Deepens her Subaltern Identity

It is Prakash, her first husband, who gives her the name Jasmine. Renaming Jyoti however robs her of her individuality and identity. While Jyoti initially intends to continue with her education it is her father's untimely death that leads her to marry Prakash. Once she marries Prakash, she is sujugated on three levels as a subaltern, as opposed to two - as a woman, as an Indian, and now as a wife.

> Jasmine, what do you think of America? I didn't know what to think of America. I'd read only Shane book and seen only one movie. It was too big country, too complicated a question. I said, "if you're there, I'll manage, when you're at work in America, I'll stay inside. Listen to me Jasmine. I want for us to go away and have areal life. I've had it up to here with backward. Corrupt, mediocre fools. (73)

Prakash Vijh is a hardworking man, who works multiple jobs to secure their finances. He decides to move to the US, without really considering Jyoti's prospects in the alien land. As the husband, it is him who has the upperhand. Shaped by the colonial ideology of a better life in America, he never asks Jasmine if she would like to move to the US. It is a decision he takes on his own. Jasmine moves to America after his death 'to complete his dreams', and not her own. Though his presence is remarkably brief, it is his influence that gets Jyoti to leave India and become Jasmine.

1.1.3. The Sailor Called 'Half-Face'

The sailor called Half-Face in the novel acts as the quintessential 'white saviour' who appears to help Jasmine, only for ulterior motives. He helps Jasmine move, though he ultimately rapes her, thus disrobing the honour she had held on to as the widow of Prakash. He further alienates her from herself and she ends up murdering him. It is here that Jasmine begins to challenge her subaltern identity, indicated by her burning a suit of Prakash that she had carried with her until now. By doing so, she symbolically sheds the patriarchal cage and expected roles that Prakash her entrapped her in, with a brief identity crisis. This experience also explains why she succumbs to the identity of Jazzy, as given by Mrs. Gordon later on in the novel.

1.1.4. Professor Vadhera: The Two-Faced Benefactor

Though does not directly control Jyoti (now named Jasmine by Prakash), he arranges for Prakash to study in the US and arranges for both of them to travel there. He does not explicitly nor implicitly try to subdue Jasmine, and maintains more of a neutral stance. He takes Jasmine in when she arrives at his house long after the death of Prakash. However, it is at this point that he demands fifty thousand rupees in exchange for a green card for her. Jasmine does not take on a new identity here, although she remains a subaltern due to her not having a green card. He serves as a force that Jasmine must overcome. Owing to the greencard which he has, he, in some ways, is no longer the subaltern. Since he lives in the US legally, he has the upper hand and he uses it to his full advantage.

1.1.5. Bud Ripplemeyer and Darrel Lutz: The One Sided Lovers

Jasmine begins to assert her identity and independence in an attempt to escape from the patriarchal society she has been living in. She gets an opportunity to redefine herself and take control of her own life, a luxury she did not have back in India. In Iowa, Jasmine (now known as Jane) refuses to reciprocate the romantic feelings of Bud Ripplemeyer and Darrel Lutz, thus exemplifying her escape from performing her gender roles under the guise of a ‘duty’. Although she is married to the 53 year old Bud Ripplemeyer (She meets through his mother in Iowa. He works for a bank and is paralyzed when he is shot), she never commits to him emotionally. She

take care of his household and his son Du from a previous marriage, but she limits her emotional involvement with him. Jane and Bud's neighbour is Darrel Lutz, a recent college graduate who has fortunately inherited his family's farm. In the narrative, he struggles with maintaining the farm, often contemplating selling it (43). When he expresses his desire to borrow money from Jane's husband Bud, he refuses to lend citing his doubts regarding his skills as a farmer and a manager. Darrel is romantically interested in Jane, who does not reciprocate his feelings. She is able to escape the postcolonial hierarchy here as she does not allow the power of the race of both of these men to control her.

2. *Desirable Daughters* (2002)

Authored by Bharati Mukherjee, this novel tells the story of three sisters as they find their very different paths in life It uses autobiographical elements to explore the South Asian immigrant experience. Nayak (2005) writes:

> Like Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya(Suraiya), Shashi Deshpande, Nayantara Sahgal, Ruth Prawar Jhabwalla, and Githa Hariharan, Mukherjee exposes many facets of feminism, encompassing agitation for equal opportunity, sexual autonomy and right to self determination. (267)

In the novel *Desirable Daughters*, the protagonist Tara ventures out into the world to widen her horizons in matters of identity, existence, marriage, and love. She takes it upon herself to redefine her gendered roles as that of a wife and a mother. The title of the novel *Desirable Daughters* is significant and ironical. It suggests that daughters are the object of family prestige, so their behaviour should be desirable and be as per the norms laid out by the patriarchal Bengali

society. Only such daughters adhere to the culturally expected behaviour and characteristic attributes will be liked and appreciated, and deemed desirable for marriage. However, of the three sisters, Tara divorces her Indian husband and is in a live-in relationship with an American-Hungarian man, and Parvati has a child born out of wedlock, to a man not belonging to their religion, caste, and social standing. but in the novel two daughters including the protagonist cross the borders. As young girls, the three daughter of Bhattacharjee family are considered to be desirable by the patriarchal society since they fulfil the requirements of an ideal woman - obedience, politeness, intelligence, and beauty, and most importantly, their reach is limited for the sake of family status and respect. “Our father could not let either of my sisters out on the street, our car was equipped with window shades.” (29) Tara quotes this about her youth in Calcutta, “Our bodies changed, but our behaviour never did. Rebellion sounded like a lot of fun…My life was one long childhood until I was thrown into marriage.” (27-28). The women in the novel are repressed - repressed by the male characters, and the patriarchal society they live in.

2.1. The Myth of Tara - The Tree Bride

The novel opens with with Tara (a child bride) getting ready for her wedding. Her groom, “...Satindranath Lahiri, fifth son of Surendranath Lahiri, of the landowning Lahiri family; in his own right, a healthy youth, whose astrological signs had pointed to continued wealth and many sons” (9), was considered to be the ideal husband for the young girl, as deemed fit by her father Jai Krishna Gangooly. However, as Jai Krishna’s family awaits the arrival of the groom’s party,

they are informed that the young Surendranath, Tara's intended, has been bitten by a snake, and has passed away. This comes as a shock to the entire Gangooly household. For Tara, it is no less than a tempest she had no idea had begun brewing. "The poor child had no idea that already she had been transformed from envied bride about to be married to a suitable husband into the second-worst thing in her society." (12). Since she had not been married off to Satindranath, she was not technically a widow, however, she had become and outcast - "a woman who brings her family misfortune and death" (12). She had been spared the life of a widow, which came with many limitations and sufferings, but was still a pariah.

Surendranath's family proceeded to demand the dowry, maintaining that they did not want anything to do with Tara, which came as a welcome relief to the father (13). Since no one would now marry her, Jai decides to marry her off to a tree so that she would still be a married woman in her own right, living in dignity amidst society, and be ultimately be able to attain nirvana, since an unmarried woman would not be able to obtain the same. The young Tara is not told she is being married off to a tree, she realises this only when she lifts her veil and gazes upon her husband - "He is the god of Shoondar Bon, the Beautiful Forest, come down to earth as a tree to save her from a lifetime of disgrace and misery" (16). She becomes the 'other' in the absence of her husband and thought of as incomplete, an ill-omen, unlucky, and dark. As the tree's bride,she can now live the life of a married woman (the tree being the hypothetical man). This fable set in the past presents men as tyrannical (father-in-law and patriarchal society) and establishes the need for a woman to have a man by her side. The men decide Tara's fate and what life has in store for her.

2.2. Bishwapriya - The Husband Divorced

As the years roll by, Tara has grown into a young woman who wants to study more, but her father says which she calls the magical words “There is a boy and we have found him suitable. Here is his picture. The marriage will be in three weeks” (23). Set in a deeply patriarchal society, it is Jai Krishna Gangooly who continues to control her life, along with the lives of other women in his family. The matter is not up for discussion or debate, once the words have been spoken, it is written in stone. Since Tara never wanted to get married in the first place, her lack of enthusiasm regarding the same is paramount. She recounts the utter lack of romanticism in her marriage.

> "I married a man I had never met, whose picture and biography and bloodlines I approved of, because my father told me it was time to get married and this was the best husband on the market" (26).

She is thus married off to Bishwapriya, who soon moves her to the US. The author Bharati Mukherjee has named this character ‘Bishwapriya’ to point out to the irony in the narrative - his name meaning someone who is loved by the entire universe, and yet it is his wife who is unable to love him. The marriage is unsuccessful, and Tara leaves him after more than 10 years of them living together. Bishwapriya has his flaws, and is unable to give Tara the independence she yearns for. He is unable to understand her essence inspite of being with her for all these years, amounting to almost a decade.

> When I left Bish (let us be clear on this) after a decade of marriage, it was because of the promise of life as an American wife was not being fulfilled. I wanted to drive, but where would I go? I wanted to work, but would people think that Bish Chatterjee couldn’t support his wife? (82)

She later divorces him. Tara refuses to alienate herself from her identity and holds on to her free spirit. Bishwapriya and her own father, Jai Krishna Gangooly are male entities that hav e so far bound her life. For Tara to overcome both these forces, is a moment where her independence and self assertiveness is first seen. Bishwapriya emerges as the stumbling block she must overcome, and she does overcome him, along with what the patriarchal society expects of her as a wife. In the Indian immigrant community that Tara is a part of in the US, divorce is unheard of. She once again casts herself as the pariah in the eyes of the Indian community by walking out of the marriage and leaving her husband. She is also seen as the 'other' by the Indian immigrant community itself for having divorced her husband.

Five years after her divorce, she comes across a suspicious man Christopher Dey, who claims to be her nephew. To investigate his true identity, she hires a detective Jack, who ultimately warns her that she is a target for being the wife of Bish Chatterjee, her ex husband, who is being hunted by a gang for cyber fraud.

> 'In the eyes of Brahma..', isn't that what Hindus say? Under California law five years is a long time, people move on with their lives. But in the eyes of Indians you'll always be linked (to Bishwapriya Chaterjee as his wife). (143)

The detective points out to Tara that in "the eyes of Indians," Tara will always be connected to her ex-husband Bishwapriya. Given how wealthy and prominent Bishwapriya is, she cannot hide her identity as his ex-wife, even though by this time she is already in a relationship with an American man, Andy. Since the Indian community still views her as the wife of Bishwapriya, the Indian underworld continues to keep tabs on her, along with the SPDF (San Francisco Police

Department ‘Ethnic Squad’). Even after her divorce, she is unable to let go of Bishwapriya’s influence on her life, and he continues to act as an obstacle she must overcome.

2.3. Andy - The Boyfriend

A latter-day hippie described as a “Hungarian Buddhist yoga instructor/contractor.” (75). Andy does not oppress Jasmine directly. However, he is of Indian ethnicity, which facilitates Tara adapting faster to her hybrid existence as an American-Indian now. This does aid in Tara leading a happier life now, separated from her Indian husband who controlled her, and being able to truly feel the independence which comes with living in the US. A problem that comes about is that this results in Tara being further alienated from her identity as an Indian owing to his presence in her life, much like how Mr Gupta’s presence in Mrs Gupta’s life disconnected her from her identity and powers (Divakaruni’s *The Queen of Dreams*). She is able to define herself through what she is not (a subjugated Indian wife), but struggles to identify what and who she is. She describes herself as feeling invisible, but to her, this invisibility is freeing. Andy thus serves as the Occident which facilitates cultural alienation and distances Tara, the Orient, from her homeland.

2.4. Christopher Dey - The Awakening

Five years after her divorce, an Indian-American man arrives at Tara’s doorstep, claiming to be her sister Padma’s illegitimate son. He tells her that he is born out of an affair that Padma had

with a Christian man Ron Dey, all of this was back when Padma was a teenager. In the novel, Padma has reclaimed her life out of this scandal, and is now a well-known news anchor and an entrepreneur with a designer sari business. For Tara, this revelation is a shock.

> Therefore, Ron Dey slipped under the most refined radar system in the world: Hindu virgin protection. So many eyes were watching, so many precautions were taken, and so much of value was at stake-the marriageability of Motilal Bhattacharjee's oldest daughter, which, unless properly managed, controlled the prospects of his second and third daughters as well that any violation of codes, any breath of scandal, was unthinkable. (32)

Her Indian past sets the stage for her being unable to comprehend so much that had happened in the decades gone by - a child born out of wedlock to her sister, fathered by a man of a different social caste and religion, and a teenage pregnancy, all of which are undeniably taboo to the clan of Jai Krishna Gangooly's Brahmin society. It is this bombshell surprise which leads Tara to reflect on her past and on the culture she was raised in with its strict premarital patriarchal social codes to protect daughters' virginities and honour, and its equally rigid definition of what makes a good Indian wife.

It is Christopher's presence that pulls Tara away from her American existence (host land) to delve into memories of her homeland - India. As any subaltern diaspora person, her memories of India are frozen in time (as postulated by Salman Rushdie) since she has disconnected herself from India after ending her marriage to Bishwapriya. Another reason for her distancing herself away from India is her other sister, Parvati, who fell in love while studying at Mount Holyoke (Massachusetts) and married for love. She later moved back to India with her husband, hoping for a peaceful and happy life back in India. Ironically though, Parvati is now an anxious woman

who cleans compulsively, and her husband is depressed. The two are plagued with a constant stream of visiting relatives and rarely enjoy a moment alone. Tara, having seen and heard their story, decides that moving back to India is not a trajectory she wishes to pursue, and hence she completely focusses on her life in America. It is Christopher's arrival which breaks this monotony, forcing her to revisit and reevaluate her connection with India.

Tara does eventually visit India with her son Rabi. As they journey through India, the paths they take mirrors the imagery used in the tale of the Tree Bride at the beginning of the novel. Tara has a vision of kerosene lamps that again echoes the opening scene, and experiences a spiritual moment of wonder and peace. She is able to find peace and solace in her homeland, something that would not have happened unless Christopher Dey had stepped into her life. Christopher Dey however emerges to be a con-artist, pretending to be Christopher Dey, and thus is another male villain that Tara must overcome.

3. Conclusion

The analysis of the men in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* and *Desirable Daughters* brings out parallels and similarities in the manner in which male characters have been conceptualized by the author. The men in these novels emerge as forces that bind and control the women, and the women characters find solace and freedom only when they are able to escape from the men and overcome their shackles. In *Jasmine*, Jyoti takes on several identities created for her owing to the

presence of men in her life. From being the naive Jyoti who decides to listen to her elders and get married, to that of Jasmine, who travels to the US so as to fulfil her husband's dreams, to Jane, who escapes Taylor and her husband's killer in Iowa, to being Jase, and finally back to being Jasmine again. It is the men who control the narrative and the flow of events in the novel, as Jasmine reacts to the actions of the men and the patriarchal society, fighting for her independence and her individuality. The men oppress her, subjugate her, and persecute her. Only a handful of male characters in the novel are clear of this characteristic - Masterji, Taylor, and Du.

Desirable Daughters begins by describing the high position in society enjoyed by Tara's father - Jai Krishna Gangooly, owing to his associations with the English, and his knowledge of the language. This is indicative of the policy used by the British to train Indians in the language so as to govern them better, and Indians would perceive these English speaking counterparts as superior. Jai Krishna Gangooly and Surendranath emerge as the main agents of patriarchy. While Surendranath blames Tara for the death of his son due to a snakebite, he still demands the wedding dowry from Jai. Jai on the other hand adheres to the Hindu tradition that a woman who's groom-to-be will never be seen as a prospective bride by anyone. He thus gets his underage daughter married to a tree. The other male characters in the novel continue to alienate Tara from her identity and individuality. Tara divorces her Indian husband Bishwapriya, who oppresses her, and begins to date an American man, Andy, whose presence further alienates her from her Indian roots.

The author Bharati Mukherjee has therefore created a pattern of similar male characters in these two novels - as forces who oppress, victimize, and alienate the women characters from their identities, and themselves.

CHAPTER V

RELOCATING THE DIASPORA SPACE: IDENTITY AND SELF ACTUALIZATION OF THE MEN IN JHUMPA LAHIRI'S *THE NAMESAKE* AND *UNACCUSTOMED EARTH*

The diaspora community is alienated from their homelands, while traversing the complexities of cultural hegemony and assimilation, and hence they compromise of a complicated identity. The first generation diaspora individual tries to recreate the homeland as postulated by Salman Rushdie in his 1991 collection of essays titled *Imagined Homeland*. The second generation diaspora individual feels more connected to the host country and is able to hybridize cultural elements, thereby leading to multiculturalism. The third generation has little connection to the "original" homeland, and the host land has become the "reconstituted" homeland. We get to see this phenomenon comprehensively in Jhumpa Lahiri's fictions - *The Namesake*, published in 2003, and the short story *Unaccustomed Earth*, published in 2008 in her collection of short stories with the same title. This chapter studies the male characters with respect to their diaspora identity, and their relationship with the women characters in the novel.

1. *The Namesake (2003)*

The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri depicts how one particular family of Indian-born parents and their American-born children experience the common conflicts between new and old,

assimilation and cultural preservation, working toward the future and longing for the past. The novel revolves around the lives of Ashoke Ganguli, a Bengali man who miraculously survives a train accident and decides to move away from India, his wife Ashima Ganguli, who moves to the US with Ashoke, and their children, Gogol Ganguli (named after his father's favourite author), and Sonali Ganguli.

1.2. Ashoke Ganguli - The First Generation Diaspora Man

Owing to his identity as a first generation diaspora man, Ashoke Ganguli is gripped by nostalgia. It was in his youth that he had been travelling by train, back in India (Lahiri 17). He is gravely injured and spends months recuperating. When he recovers, he remembers what Mr Ghosh, one of his co-passengers has told him right before the accident, "...Before it's too late, without thinking too much about it first, pack a pillow and a blanket and see as much of the world you can. You will not regret it. (16) He uses this as incentive to move to the US. When Ashima gives birth to his son, he names him Gogol after the Russian novelist Nikolai Vasilyevich Gogol, whose book *The Overcoat* he was reading and had in his hand when he had been rescued from the wreckage of the train crash (18). In the US, Ashoke maintains Indian traditions and initiates celebrations of Indian festivals while also keeping up social ties with fellow diaspora Indians. It is nostalgia which drives him, and he is always rooted to the past.

Ashoke also acts a limiting force. Ashima is dislocated because of him, it was never her decision to leave India, she had to follow him to the US because she was his wife, and he was already living there. While in the US, he does not have much time to help Ashima acclimatize to life in the foreign land. He leaves her to her own devices, as she explores her surroundings and struggles with homesickness. Gogol becomes a second generation diaspora because of him, mainly owing to the way Ashoke decides to name him - an unusual name which results in him being bullyed and ridiculed by his peers at school and the neighbourhood.

> 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 true. 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)

Ashima, who had moved to the US to be with her husband, decides to return to India (partially). It is evident that Ashoke is subtly a controlling force, and it is his actions which ultimately causes several hardships for many of the characters, obstacles they are able to overcome when they are able to let go of his realm of control.

1.3. Gogol Ganguli - The Second Generation Diaspora Man

Gogol Ganguli is Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli's son and first-born. Gogol consciously rejects a past he has never had - his connection to India which his parents keep trying to impress upon him. They take him to Apu Trilogy plays, Kathakali dance performances, sitar recitals, and he is

sent to Bengali language and heritage classes (65 - 66). India, however, will always remain a foreign land to him, and he consciously rejects a past he never had. He actually falls physically ill during one of their visits to Calcultta, and the relatives remark, “It is the air, the rice, the wind…” denoting them viewing Gogol as someone foreign to Calcutta. He does not belong, and neither does he want to belong, denoted by the relief he feels when they are in the flight returning to the US (87).

Gogol's desperate attempt to deal with a name that attracts everyone's attention in the US for all the wrong reasons reflects his conflict to accept an undefined identity and a multicultural existence. Through Gogol’s character, the author Jhumpa Lahiri exemplifies the difficulties faced by second generation immigrant Indians in Western countries who want to find their identity, and at the same time hold on to the values and heritage their parents have passed on to them.

> Cultural inheritances are in fact composite for Indian immigrants who were born in the United States; lineage and genealogy have been disrupted or redirected. Broken filiations have been partially replaced by compensatory affiliative ties, but there is still a strong sense of the filiative force-field of the ancestral culture in these partnerships. (Munos 108)

Gogol had a name that comes close to meeting the standards of both cultures while identifying him with none. Though he is born to Bengali parents, their normative culture is squashed under the American law, which dictates that the baby cannot be discharged from the hospital without it having a name first for the birth records. The culture of Ashoke and Ashima’s homeland dictated

that it be the grandparents who name the baby. The letter carrying the letter is dispatched from Calcutta, however, is unfortunately lost in transit (Lahiri 25). Ashoke has no choice but to name him "Gogol", after his favourite author and to whom he credits his life. Gogol's identity thus begins as much in the accidental as in the opposing "double space" of America and India (Munos 108). It is interesting to note that while the parents are much better prepared to name their second child Sonali, her name also undergoes mutations in the guise of the dominant discourse of their host country, and she begins to be known as Sonia.

Gogol does not understand the significance of his name Gogol, and wonders why his parents “chose the weirdest namesake” (76). When he is taught about the Russian novelist he is named after at school by Mr Lawson, he feels ashamed to learn the details of the writer’s life. Mr Lawson teaches, “...(Nikolai Gogol) was given to fits of severe depression. He had trouble making friends. He never married, fathered no children. It is commonly believed he died a virgin”. (91) This revelation causes him embarrasment, as his classmates make fun of him for being named after the novelist who led such a peculiar life. The name alienates him from his classmates, perhaps on a second level - his ethnicity had already cast him as the ‘other’ as evidenced from his trip to the graveyard on a school trip where his classmates are able to find their surnames engraved on the tombstones. However, “Gogol is old enough to know that there is no Ganguli buried here”. (69). As time goes by, this resentment he has towards his name grows, and ultimately he legally changes his name to Nikhil, much to the disappointment of his parents (102).

As a second generation immigrant individual, Gogol Ganguli takes on several identities in the course of the novel (via his relationships and his name) which one by one are all rejected since none of them fit him properly - The Indian Son - Gogol, The American Rebellious Teen - Nikhi,l An American College Guy - an identity he takes on while dating Ruth, An American- where he almost wishes to expunge his Indian ethnicity when he is in a relationship with Maxine, An Indian - after the death of his father Ashoke Ganguli, the guilt he feels over Americanizing and changing his name makes him want to be Indian, as he eventually marries the Indian girl - Moushumi/ His identity crisis is deeper since he does not a clear concept of 'home' or a 'homeland'. He is stuck in the middle.

Gogol maintains a passive stance, unlike Ashoke. His life is driven and shaped by the other characters in his life - his parents, his friends, Ruth, Maxine, Maushami. In addition to falling in love with Maxine, Gogol also associates with her family, their environment, and their American way of life, through her. It gives him an opportunity to connect with the culture he feels he is most well associated with, that of his birthplace - America. Gogol ultimately decides to relocate to New York, giving him more time with Maxine's family, thus learning about a way of life that is extremely different from his own. "The Ratliffs' very affluent environment is one that blends whiteness, ownership, rootedness, and guilt-free consumerism with cultural sensitivity and friendliness." (Munos 112)

> He is responsible for nothing in the house; in spite of their absence, Gerald and Lydia continue to lord, however blindly, over their days. It is their books he reads,

> their music he listens to. Their front door he unlocks when he gets back from work. Their telephone messages he takes down. (142).

Gogol chooses to exile himself to Maxine's house, all the while connecting to the independence he has at her house. There are no obligations that he has to serve. While being a spectator to another culture, he also participates in the freer lives of the Ratcliffs. For Gogol, the Ratliffs' property is a paradise, "utterly disconnected from the world," which consists of a main house where Maxine's parents live, and an adjacent cabin, "no bigger than a cell" (Lahiri 152), occupied by Gogol and Maxine. While Gogol is kept away from the historical artifacts of his own family, he observes a small privage graveyard within the Ratcliff estate, "where all the members of the Ratliff family lie buried…where Maxine will be buried one day" (153). He understands how being tied to a land where all the ancestors lie buried fills the Ratcliffs with a sense of accomplishment and peace, something he never feels with his family.

Gogol remains a passive "reactor" to the actions of other characters, except for Maxine perhaps when he takes the initiative to end his relationship with her since she is not Indian enough. With Moushami, things are different. He shares with her an unhinged and delicate identity, that of second generation immigrants.

> It's not the type of wedding either of them really wants. They would have preferred the sort of venues their American friends choose, the Brooklyn Botanic

> Gardens or the Metropolitan Club or the Boat House in Central Park…But their parents insist on inviting close to three hundred people, and serving Indian food, and providing easy parking for all the guests…It's what they deserve, they joke, for having listened to their mothers, and for getting together in the first place, and the fact that they are united in their resignation makes the consequences somewhat bearable (219).

Gogol and Moushumi, though do not comprehend or prioritize having their wedding under the strict laws of the Hindu faith, have to adhere to what their parents and elders have laid out for them - a big fat Indian wedding. Their hybrid heritage does not allow them to view the importance of the rituals that originate in their fabled homeland. What is interesting is that during their wedding, the hotel serving as the venue for the rituals does not allow them to light the ceremonial pyre which is an integral part of the wedding ceremony. The presence of fire in the rituals symbolise the Fire God *Agni* himself bearing witness to the pairing, and only when this happens, the marriage is considered ritually complete in the eyes of the Supreme Creator. They are left with no choice but to walk around an unlit pyre, which reminds the readers of the futility of their wedding rituals. While Gogol marries Moushami to reclaim his Indian heritage and identity, the latter wishes to escape it.

While Moushami loves him, she eventually cheats on him with another man, leaving him devastated. Gogol eventually comes to understand the true significance of his *daaknaam* Gogol, how a page from the Russian writer's novel had been critical to rescue workers finding his father

in the wreckage of the train all those decades ago. Towards the end of the novel, he gains a clearer image of 'home', though it is abstract since what he perceives to be home is based on accounts he heard from his parents, from the Indian diaspora community he interacts with, and his short visits to India. He builds an image of the homeland which gives him peace, however, this is only an imagined homeland.

In the last part of the novel, Gogol travels back to their family house in Pemberton Road, filled with memories of all his trips to his home, including images of his father Ashoke waiting for him at the railway station. Ashima has decided to sell off the house and partially move back to India, and thus Gogol loses the last place he truly identifies as his home. While he understands how his mother is now an integral part of the Indian immigrant community, seen in her hosting the Christmas Eve party as a way to show the new members of the community the hybrid lifestyle, he is severely nostalgic of the house he grew up in, the four walls he called home. The novel ends with him settling down to read a short story collection of Nikolai Gogol, his namesake, thus indicating his acceptance of his roots and heritage, and his renewed determination to find his identity.

2. Unaccostomed Earth (2008)

Jhumpa Lahiri's collection of short stories by the same name documents the journeys of various Indian immigrant community members as they sport with their complex multicultural identities

while also facing subjugation as the subaltern members of the society. This chapter takes into account the titular and first short story in the collection titled *Unaccustomed Earth*. *Unaccustomed Earth* is a story about Ruma, a second generation Indian diaspora woman who lives in the US with her American husband, son, and is visited by her father *Baba*. After her mother's death, her father has sold their family home and now extensively travels. The short story documents her stormy relationship with her father, doused in her complex Indian-American identity, and *Baba* who has himself adapted several American values to the extent that it makes Ruma uncomfortable.

2.1. Baba: The Americanised Indian Father

When Baba decides to visit Ruma, he calls her to tell the same. Ruma dislikes the formal behaviour of the father. "You're always welcome here, Baba," she'd told her father on the phone. "You know you don't have to ask." (4) While Ruma has been born and brought up in the United States of America, she has held on to the cultural expectations of her homeland India where parents do not usually 'take appointments or formally inform' of their visits. Ruma wishes Baba would give her the chance to serve him, thus enabling her to fulfil her obligations of being an Indian daughter. She is thus visibly perturbed by the new found independence of Baba. Baba feels guilty of Americanizing, he has shed his inhibitions and seeks an independent life, which is culturally expected of Americans where parents live on their own without being dependent on their children or living with them. This however falls in sharp contrast to the Indian values both Baba and Ruma have grown up with - to the 'Shravan Kumar' Indian narrative from the epic

Ramayana. In the *Ramayana,* Shravan Kumar carries both his blind aged parents on his shoulders so they can go on a pilgrimage. It is narratives like this that creates the cultural expectation of parents relying on their children, even living with them during their old age. Baba is nostalgic of the past, and this nostalgia evokes guilt in him, of having abandoned his 'Indianness'.

Much like Ashoke Ganguli, nostalgia envelops Baba. Nostalgia prevents Baba from fully acclimatizing to the American lifestyle. He fondly remembers chunks of his family life - of Ruma insisting he quit smoking, which he ultimately does, of their transit stop at Bangkok where everyone slept, being too fatigued to sightsee, of their fond memories of the trips to India. Additionally, Baba had planted a garden at his family home shared with his wife, which he now severely misses. He attempts to recreate this home at Ruma's house and constructs a garden. Ruma however wonders who would be tending to the garden after his departure. It does not matter whether the garden survives or does not, Baba understands this, he however wishes to give himself and Ruma a remnant of the past in the form of the garden, especially since it reminds him of his late wife who would proudly cook the fresh produce. "…a plate of Nice biscuits. He associated the biscuits deeply with his wife—the visible crystals of sugar, the faint coconut taste—their kitchen cupboard always contained a box of them." (18) His sense of nostalgia is so deep that mundane objects like a plate of biscuits is enough to unleash a flood of memories of his past, of his wife, their home, and their lives together.

Baba meets an Indian widowed woman on one of his trips, and the two quickly form a bond. Baba however feels guilty about this romantic entanglement, and thus hides his relationship with Mrs Bagchi. “He had mentioned nothing to Ruma or Romi about Mrs. Bagchi, planned to say nothing. He saw no point in upsetting them…” (19). An old widower in India who is already a grandparent would not be expected to date again, and he understands the cultural limitations that prevent him from going public with this new relationship. “Before coming to Seattle he had given Mrs. Bagchi his daughter’s phone number in an e-mail, but it was understood that she was not to call.”(30) His nostalgia about his wife, and how they jointly frowned upon such ‘affairs’ prevents him from revealing his relationship with Mrs Bagchi.

Additionally, it is the nostalgia of the past that prevents Baba from moving in with Ruma “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?” (29). He remembers with guilt how it was when his own father had lain on his deathbed. Baba was settled in America and he could not serve his father during his last days. Bringing his aged mother to America was also not a possibility, since Ruma’s grandmother had spent her whole life in India. To bring her to America would be to sentence her to a life in an alien land, or so he thought. Because he himself could not serve his parents during their old age, he cannot bring himself to impose his stay on Ruma. He feels that she should not have the shoulder that responsibility which he himself had abandoned.

3. Conclusion

The question that then emerges is that if Baba is a force that Ruma must overcome? Contrary to the general representation of men in diaspora texts studied in this thesis, Ruma is not subjugated by men. Baba actually supports and helps her adapt to her identity as a second generation diaspora woman living in America. He is extremely accommodating, he does not protest when Ruma decides on marrying an American man, Adam. He does not wish to impose himself on her, and all the while wishes the best for her (going to the extent of attempting to hide his relationship with Mrs Bagchi, though unsuccessfully. Adam does not subjugate Ruma as well. He is a supporting husband who supports Ruma and makes as much time as he can for her inspite of his demanding job. When he is not there to help her out in person, he talks to her over the phone as her confidant, trying to resolve the stormy relationship with her father, and being fine with Ruma proposing he stay with them. He also names their son Akash, an Indian name, thus respecting Ruma's cultural heritage and roots. Adam does not ask Ruma to be a stay-at-home mom, this happens because Ruma herself chooses to be a stay-at-home mom, while Adam continues to work. The only way in which Baba serves a "stumbling block" for Ruma is his desire to live on his own which deprives the culturally sanctioned duty for children to look after their parents in their old age. The only way in which Adam serves as a "stumbling block" is his presence in Ruma's life hastens her adapting the American lifestyle, thus subtly alienating her from her own heritage, something that Ruma is always guilty about, that she is unable to serve and look after her father. In both cases however, the issues created by the male characters are nominal.

The men in Jhumpa Lahiri's fiction thus suffer from an alienated and displaced Identity crisis, a 'neither here nor there' situation. The strain is mostly emotional, and these characters feel guilty about leaving behind their homeland and its values, while also attempting to forge a new

multicultural hybrid identity - of them as American-Indians. Such experiences for first generation and second generation diaspora men in Lahiri's stories are common, perhaps indicative of universal experiences embodied in a character archetype.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This thesis thus examines six select novels by Indian Women Diaspora Writers. It examines the various representations of women by men, and the feminist critique of the same, namely by writers like Virginnia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir, Helene Cixous, among others. By Plato's understanding of mimesis, this study understands that the representation of the absolute truth is never possible. Whatever is represented will always present a constructed reality, shaped by the writers' gender, background, past experiences, the society they belong to, and the dominant ideology of the time. The study has also examined the term diaspora, and traced its historical origins and the various diaspora groups in the world. A qualitative descriptive analytic approach has been used as the methodology, where the six select novels form the primary text. The study has focussed on characterizations, setting, language, themes, motifs, narration, and symbols to conclusively answer the research questions, in light of the cross examination and analysis in relation to the secondary texts.

The second chapter has examined the representation of women in literature, and introduced various women Indian diaspora novelists.

In the analysis of the primary texts, the study has found Mr Gupta in Divakaruni's *The Queen of Dreams* to be a gatekeeper that Mrs Gupta must overcome to be herself and access her magical powers. Other minor mascluline characters in the novel like The Stranger in Rakhi's Dreams,

and the Yoga Man add chaos and fortel impending doom, a conscious decision taken by the novelist to use male character to bring about darkness into the lives of the women. Sonny, Rakhi's estranged husband is unable to defend his wife and is unable to support her either. Rakhi however finds her peace and identity when she is able to reconnect to her past through her mother's journals and is able to save her cafe, all through the help of her father Mr Gupta. At the same time, she is able to reconnect to her husband Sonny, which ultimately provides her with the renewed zeal to lead on with life.

Bijoy & Gopal in Divakaruni's *Sister of My Heart* are the absent fathers who are unable to provide for their families. Ashok Ghosh is deeply patriarchal, tells Sudha to abandon her child from her previous marriage if she wishes to forge a new life with him. He fails her twice in rescuing her from the drudges of her complicated life. Sunil Majumdar, Anju's husband lusts after his sister in law Sudha, thereby never being able to fully commit to his wife. He sets double standards for himself, while subjugating his wife. Ramesh Sanyal divorces Sudha since she cannot bear him a male child, a fact that he does not seem to be much concerned about, but he is completely helpless in the face of his controlling mother, who serves as an agent of patriarchy.

Prakash Vijh in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* alienates and displaces Jyoti, renaming her and alienting her further. He dies early on in the novel, and is unable to provide for her. The sailor named Half-Face rapes Jasmine, further alienates her and robs her of her identity as the sacred widow of Prakash Vijh. She ultimately takes the form of the defender, murdering him in the motel the crime takes place in. Professor Vadhera, the man who encourages Prakash and Jasmine to move to the US is corrupt and declines to help Jasmine for free. Bishwapriya in Bharati

Mukherjee's novel *Desirable Daughters* is patriarchal, limits Tara and endangers her life. Andy, Tara's live-in American-Hungarian boyfriend alienates Tara from her Indian roots, thoug subtly. Christopher Dey is a crook and a con artist. Ashoke Ganguli in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* displaces Ashima from her homeland causing her to be alienated from her homeland. He also inadvertently causes identity crisis for his son in the manner in which he names him Gogol. Gogol struggles to maintain his identity. He keeps gyrating between his identity as an Indian and his desire to be an American. In Jhumpa Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth* Baba has adapted components of the American culture and leads an independent life, thus robbing Ruma of her obligation as an Indian daughter to take care of him in his old age. He hides his affair from Ruma, and lies about it. While Adam is an accomodating American husband, he does alienate Ruma from her Indianness by enabling her to acclimatize to the American way of life more easily.

The study finds thus finds that the male characters in these select novels have similar traits and personality aspects, based on the stereotype of a sexist patriarchal masculine identity, verging on a character archetype created by women writers. The general absence of a diverse male character pool is indicative of author bias, brought in by their gender. These male characters form a force that the female characters must break away from to achieve self-actualization. The male characters in these novels thus face double subjugation; first as a diaspora individual, and second being typecast by the writers as an oppressive force which must be overcome. One common aspect observed among these male characters is the ease with which they are able to adapt to a hybrid identity - of them being Indians and Americans, and live with aspects of both cultures. The male characters attempt to mimic the culture of the host land, thereby alienating themselves

from their homeland. This is in part due to the colonial hangover of the Western ideology being superior, and hence the naturalised attempt to assimilate into it. They move to the US for better employment opportunities, taking their wives along with them, and thus further alienating these women who grapple with their nostalgia of the homeland. Their children struggle with their identities as second generation immigrant Indians, unable to find that fine balance between the homeland of their parents and their birthcountry.

The study, while comprehensive, postulates that further research on the area would provide a more comprehensive and detailed understanding of the issue. Studies revolving around the comparative analysis of the representation of male characters in diaspora novels by men and women writers, and studies on the representation of men in various diaspora novels (Jewish, Asian, Canadian, etc) would add to the knowledge pool that this thesis has created. A limitation of the current study is that only six select novels have been selected, two each of three women writers.

While feminist writers like Virginnia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir, and Helene Cixous had postulated with valid examples that male writers are unable to represent women characters truthfully, forging the need for women writers to write for themselves and have their voices and stories heard, this study finds that the reverse is also true, that women writers are unable to represent male characters truthfully and realistically. The study finds the presence of the archetype of a male dominant force which oppresses women and acts as a stumbling block, a force that women must overcome to achieve self actualization and peace with themselves. They

emerge as the villains and demi-villians of these novels written by women writers. Perhaps a realistic representation of either gender is a myth, and this will always remain a shortcoming of fiction, since all narratives are always influenced by the subjective experiences of the writers.

ENDNOTES

Endnotes:

1. Cyrus II of Persia lived between 600 and 530 BCE. He is more commonly known as *Cyrus the Great* and also called *Cyrus the Elder* by the Greeks. He was the founder of the the Achaemenid Empire, the first Persian Empire. He conquered Babylonia in 538 BCE.

2. Nilotic refers to the region around River Nile of Africa. It includes the Luo, Dinko, Masai, and Turkana communities of Africa.

3. *Operation Bluestar* was the codename assigned to an Indian military operation carried out in 1984. The then Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi ordered the Indian armed forces to remove the militant religious leader Jarnail Singh Bhrindranwale and his armed followers from the Harmandir Sahib (located at Amritsar, Punjab, and also known as the Golden Temple). Harmandir Sahib is one of the most revered shrines of the Sikh faith, and as a result, many Sikhs saw this as an attack on the dignity of their faith.

4. Unofficial estimates indicate more than 3000 Sikhs being killed in the anti-Sikh riots that begun after the assassination of Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards.

5. Ministry of External Affairs. "Population of Overseas Indians." *Population of Overseas Indians*, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, Dec. 2017. mea.gov.in/images/attach/NRIs-and-PIOs_1.pdf.

6. The *Pompeii Lakshmi* is an ivory statuette that was discovered in the ruins of Pompeii, which was destroyed in the eruption of Mount Vesuvius 79 CE. Thought to be representing the Hindu Goddess Lakshmi when initially discovered, a 1950 paper by Mirella Levi D'

Ancona suggested that the figure is more likely to depict a *yakshi*, a female tree spirit that represents fertility (168), or possibly a syncretic version of Venus-Sri-Lakshmi from an ancient exchange between Classical Greco-Roman and Indian cultures. See D'Ancona, Mirella Levi. "An Indian Statuette from Pompeii." *Artibus Asiae*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1950, pp. 166–180.

7. More prevalent in colonial times, an indentured labourer, also known as an indenture, is bound by a contract to work for an employer for a specific period of time. Indentured labourers were usually recruited from the lower strata of society.

8. These festivals include Maha Shivaratatee, Holi, Ganesh Chaturthi, Divali. "Mauritius National Holidays and Festivals." *Mauritius Attractions: Dream, Explore, Discover*, ABZ Travel, mauritiusattractions.com/national-holidays-and-festivals-i-39.html.

9. This advertisement was critiqued in an episode of *Jimmy Fallon Live*. Fisher, Andy, director. "Can Indians Understand Trump Speaking Hindi?". *Jimmy Kimmel Live*, created by Jimmy Kimmel, season 14, ABC, 28 Oct. 2016.

10. This theory was published in the 60th volume of *The American Economic Review*. Harris, John R, and Michael P Todaro. "Migration, Unemployment and Development: A Two-Sector Analysis." *The American Economic Review*, vol. 60, no. 1, 1970, pp. 126–142.

11. These findings are published in the Roper Centre for Research website on the Cornell University website. The survey was conducted by the Edison Media Research/Mitofsky International for the National Election Pool (ABC News, Associated Press, CBS News, CNN, Fox News, NBC News). The sample of 18,018 voters consisted of 15,640 voters as they left the voting booths on Election Day November 4, 2008, and a telephone

absentee/early voters survey of 2,378 respondents conducted October 24-November 2, 2008.

12. As per an article published in *The Sun* in June 2018, Denmark, France, Belgium, Latvia, Bulgaria and several others have banned the use of burkas in public, while other countries have partially banned it. Baker, Neal, and Sofia Petkar. "What Is the Burka Ban, What's the Law in the UK and Is the Burka a Religious Requirement?" *The Sun*, 3 June 2018.

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