

**A DIASPORIC STUDY OF SELECTED WORKS OF  
JHUMPA LAHIRI AND CHITRA BANERJEE  
DIVAKARUNI**

A Thesis submitted to Gujarat Technological University  
for the Award of

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**In**

**Humanities – English**

**By**

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under the supervision of

**Dr. Seema R. Gida**



**GUJARAT TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY  
AHMEDABAD**

May - 2021

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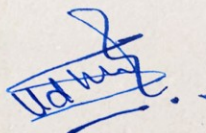
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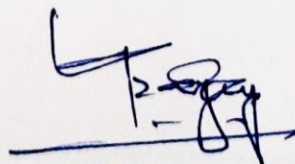
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## ABSTRACT

The present research aims to evaluate selected novels of two prominent Indian American writers Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni in the light of theory and attributes of diaspora. Primarily diaspora means voluntary or forceful migration from one's native country to a foreign country for the purpose of residence. In diaspora, members of the immigrant community share collective ethnic consciousness and maintain strong bondages with their native land. Diaspora generates some existential issues for immigrants such as feelings of displacement, cultural conflict, identity confusion, etc. Of course, the immigrants have the option whether to give up language, culture and traditions of their native land or continue cherishing them in the settled land. But in most cases, even though immigrants embrace the culture and lifestyle of the settled land, they cannot completely abandon their roots and values of their native land. Most diasporic dilemmas are attributed to the cultural conflict. The native culture of the immigrants clashes with the culture of the settled land and generates further issues like identification and so on. The expressions of such experiences by immigrant writers in literature have given birth to 'Diaspora Literature'. Both the chosen writers Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni are prominent writers of Indian Diaspora. *The Namesake* and *The Lowland* written by Jhumpa Lahiri and *The Mistress of Spices* and *Queen of Dreams* written by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni are chosen for the present research.

The primary results of the research indicate that in Jhumpa Lahiri's work, there are Indian roots and American life. The characters face constant pull of two contradictory cultures and lifestyles. Their memory and nostalgia act as an access to their roots and relieve them from the pangs of alienation. The issues of identity become severe especially for the second generation who end up making compromises with their hybrid identity.

In Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's works, the characters struggle to ascertain their roots by cherishing cultural heritage and glorifying the past. She also touches issues of racial discrimination and patriarchal dominance in her novels. Her characters show desire to assimilate with the western society, but the racial discrimination poses questions against their identity.

Both the novelists have chronicled journey of self discovery, identity crises and gradual process of negotiating two cultures in their novels. The present research has focused on various diasporic dilemmas experienced by the characters in all four novels and the resolutions sought by them are also probed into. An in depth study has been made adopting a diasporic approach.

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**- Dipam Jentilal Joshi**

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# List of Abbreviations

1. *Namesake: The Namesake*
2. *Lowland: The Lowland*
3. *Mistress: The Mistress of Spices*
4. *Queen: Queen of Dreams*

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# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction to Diaspora

The term diaspora comes from the Greek word '*diaspeiro*' meaning 'to scatter about'. It is a status in which a diasporic is living in a foreign land away from the place of his or her origin. The term also refers to the members of ethnic group who have willingly or forcefully left their native land. The word diaspora was first used in 586 B.C. by Babylonians to address the exile of Jews from Judea. The term was first introduced in English language in 1876 by Protestants. The 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed extensive migration across the most parts of the world for religion, education, employment or so on. The term diaspora has gained popularity from the 1960s onwards. Phil Cohen opines "diaspora is one of the buzzwords of the postmodern age. It has the virtue of sounding exotic while rolling sibilantly off the English tongue; it whispers the promise of hidden depths of meaning, yet assimilates them to the shape of a wave breaking gently on native shores" (3). Earning money and degrees have not remained the only reasons for migration, as people have been accepting migration for gaining status symbol, economic and social security, better prospects, to flourish skills and so on.

Diaspora is often understood with some terms such as migration, exile, transnational, etc. Scholars have attempted to differentiate all such terms. According to McLeod, migration is a process which is influenced by the former migration of one's parents or ancestors (207). In migration, the migrant person or communities do not have strong affiliation with their native land, whereas in diaspora migrant communities possess strong cultural relations with their native land. Another relative term 'transnational' is identified with globalization and global capitalism as a result of migration by Braziel and Mannur in *Theorizing Diaspora* (8). The term 'exile' simply refers to forceful departure from one's homeland to a new place. The diaspora is an umbrella term which accommodates all of the above mentioned three terms as it simply means voluntary or forceful migration from native land to an alien land. However different connotations all these terms have, the diasporic people

possess far and more similar attachment with their homeland. They attempt to preserve their religious and cultural background; of course, they have the choice to discard them as well. The experience of having multiple identities and multiple cultures are common to all diasporics. Similarly, the early migrants might possess the desire of returning home, whereas the desire to return or attachment with homeland fades away among the second and the third generations, which are mostly engrossed completely with the culture of the hostland.

Other terms so often used for diasporic status are expatriate and immigrant. These two terms however come under the umbrella of diaspora, but both have different connotations. 'Expatriate' refers to a professional sent to a foreign land by his or her government or company. The term 'Immigrant' refers to a person who arrives in a foreign land with a hope to settle there forever. So the difference between Expatriate and Immigrant is that the expatriate doesn't imply the sense of permanence, but the immigrant does possess the connotation of permanence. An expatriate is mostly closer to the past and his or her focus is on native country to which he or she belongs. An immigrant on the other hand enjoys his or her present in the host land and shows desire to assimilate with host land.

## **1.2 The Concept of Migration**

Migration is the very nature of human existence. The human history of each and every country has numerous records of people's migration from one part to the other. The first humans on this earth might have moved from places to places in search of food and shelter. Not only humans but birds, animals and each life form on the earth from the antiquity of time decide journey in every season in search of food and breeding place. In ancient times, human being's migration had the purpose to fulfill basic needs only. With the passage of time, man's needs increased and to satisfy increasing needs, either people or goods needed to move from place to place. As a result, food, spices, clothes, medicines, jewelries and other things began to be transported from one place to another and around the world. With the formation of the kingdom and army, the imperial migration started. Temptation for power and property made the emperors and invaders expropriate more and more places. Moreover, human nature has always been curious. Quest for knowledge and desire to know the unknown has made man explorer. Human history has witnessed the travel of thousands

of adventurous explorers to unknown lands in search of new discovery, wealth and learning.

Some migrations are temporary, whereas some become permanent. The forceful migrations have no choice, but the willful migrations can be temporary or permanent depending upon its motives. Temporary migration is generally accepted to fulfill a purpose on a new land and there is always a hope to restore the former status at the former place. The permanent migration is purposefully done to abandon the former status with a hope to achieve a new one. Indian vendors and monks had been travelling to various parts of Asia for selling goods and propagating religion respectively in ancient times. Lately from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, mass movements of the people started around the world for a variety of reasons. Employment, education and escape were three major grounds due to which people accepted migration. A huge number of Indian indentured labourers were sent to the various British colonies in various parts of the world to work on sugar and rubber plantations. During World War II, as India was subject to British rule, approximately 2.5 million Indian soldiers were sent by Britishers to Europe, North Africa and Asia to fight for Britain. In post colonial India, people started voluntary migration to various parts of the world for employment and education.

Migration takes away past associations and paves a path for future opportunities, but this shift from past to future is full of complex negotiations. Salman Rushdie said in BBC conversation series, "To migrate is to experience deep changes and wrenches in the soul, but the migrant is not simply transformed by his act, he also transforms the world". When a person migrates, it is not a physical migration of the body only, a set of values, beliefs and lots of other nonfigurative aspects do confront the migration.

W. J. H. Sprott gives three stages of migration movement in *Human Groups* (1958). According to Sprott, three stages are compulsory for the process of migration. The first stage of the migration is 'motivation to move'. There could be different types of motivation for people which may create desire in them to leave their existing known homeland and seek shelter in unknown host land. The reasons or motivations may derive from personal, social, economic or political aspects. A person may feel that his society doesn't provide him opportunities to fulfill his aspirations and goals. Lack of qualitative education and unemployment and social or economical discrimination may also work as motivation to move. Moreover, dissatisfaction against government policy and the political

system of the native land may also invoke a desire to migrate. The second stage is changes in social structure due to the actual migration process. The physical shift from old place to a new place brings changes in the migrant's social field. At social level, the migration may not always prove beneficial. At certain points, the changes brought by the migration at social level may become reasons for disappointment. The roles and responsibility a person was performing and enjoying earlier in the native land may become irrelevant, less important or may get changed drastically on the new land. The social interactions may also shrink. The third and the last stage of the migration movement is the process of negotiation. Here, the migrants assimilate themselves with the culture of new society. The process of assimilation with the host culture may require certain skills such as learning new language and manners, performing new roles, adopting new values, etc.

### **1.3 Difference between Diaspora and Migration**

The term 'Diaspora' conveys the process of being scattered. Ashcroft Bill and others define diaspora as 'the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their home-lands into new regions' (68). When a certain group of people from a particular community is spread away from the home land, this process is known as diaspora. The existence of such scattered communities on the foreign land is also known as diaspora. The Indian people who moved to various parts of the world such as Canada, America, England and so on are grouped and referred to as Indian Diaspora. In this sense, diaspora refers to a geographical space where dispersed communities live. There is a key difference between diaspora and migration: diaspora refers to a group of people who possess a common heritage and who are spread around the world, on the other hand migration means movement of people from one place to the other in search of settlement. Furthermore, people maintain a strong bond with their homeland, culture and roots in diaspora, whereas in migration such a bond or affiliation with the homeland is not found. In diaspora, people possess collective memory of their native land and it also influences their identity and belief system. In migration, people move from one place to the other due to economical, political, social or environmental reasons. Migration can be of four types: internal migration (within the country), international migration (from one country to the other), temporary migration (hope of returning) and permanent migration (no hope of returning). Diasporic people are conscious about their roots, culture and heritage unlike migrants. Though various

differences are found between these two terms, it is obvious that diaspora evolves out of migration or in other words, migration gives birth to diaspora.

In today's world, the process of migration has made the term diaspora a multifaceted one. The issues of identity, belongingness, assimilation and acculturation have made it more complex. Sushma Varma and Radhika Seshan in *Fractured Identity- The Indian Diaspora in Canada* opine that diaspora not only gives birth to identity issues but also raises issues of power and culture, multiculturalism and transnationalism (29). The conception of diaspora has made a considerable growth in modern times. Earlier it was connected with many pessimistic notions such as loss of culture and identity, whereas in modern times, it expresses positive propositions. Diaspora is linked with displacement, the displacement brings distressing experiences at first place, but the other side of it is seen as creation of multicultural space which broadens the understanding of human life.

#### **1.4 Operational Terms and Definitions**

As the present research proposes to study diaspora and various features of diasporic literature, some of the operational terms which will be used occasionally in this research are to be understood. A brief explanation of each of such terms is given below.

##### **(1) Culture**

Culture is a phenomenon where a group of people share a certain number of characteristics which differentiate them from other groups or individuals. When people from different cultural groups are able to interact with one another, the space that is created is called Multicultural. Diasporic communities always create varieties of cultural space, for example when Indians go to America, they will at once cherish Indian culture and simultaneously due to interaction with the outside society they have to become part of American culture willingly or unwillingly. Thus, it creates cross cultural space where intentional bridges between two cultural groups are created by way of sharing values. Furthermore, when people of different cultural groups unite and interact with one another, share values and experiences with one another a multicultural space is created.

## **(2) Identity**

Identity is a medium used by individuals or groups to define their state of being in a unique way. It is a sum of various affiliations. A self identity is formed from a person's assessment of self, personality, characteristics, hobbies, skills, values and knowledge. A person's behavior, attitude and appraisal of self play key roles in forming identity. A person may identify himself or herself based on his or her religion, occupation and permanent place of residence (region or nation).

## **(3) Hybridity**

This term comes from horticulture and it means breeding of two species to create a new one. In social science, it suggests creation of new trans-cultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization. The cross reproduction of two species can be of linguistic, culture, politics, race, etc.

## **(4) Third Space**

It is a post colonial sociolinguistic theory of identity and community realized through language and is attributed to Home Bhabha. In a simple sense, the first space is one's own home or a place of social interaction, the second space is formalized institutions such as workplace, school or church and the third space is a hybrid space where seemingly oppositional first and the second space work together to generate the third space of knowledge discourse and literary forms.

## **(5) ABCD**

This term is used by the first generation immigrants to refer to their second generation youngsters. The term 'desi' comes from 'desh', a Sanskrit word meaning one's homeland. The term 'confused' denotes the psychological state of many second generation South Asian Americans who struggle to balance values and traditions taught at home with attitudes and practices which are more conducive to the majority of white culture.

## **(6) Race**

Race is a division or classification of people into groups based on shared physical features, ancestry or cultural attributes. A racial group refers to a group of people sharing similar physical features and belonging to the same type. Race based grouping system have obvious influence over social behavior and relations.

**(7) Caste**

Caste is one way of determining one's ancestral job. Caste imposes taboos and restrictions. The caste system was defined in India by lord Manu in 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. in his book 'Manu Smriti'. According to it, the Vedic Indian society was classified in four castes namely Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Shudra. Brahmins played the role of teacher, worshipper and advisor to the king. Kshatriyas were rulers, who had the duty of protecting people and kingdom. Vaishyas were traders and shopkeepers. And Shudras were at the bottom of the caste system and they had duty of serving the other three casts.

**(8) Nostalgia**

Nostalgia means sentiments of past time. It is a combination of two Greek words: *nostos* meaning 'homecoming' and *algos* meaning 'pain'. The modern connotation of the term has changed and it suggests an independent and positive sentiment of the past life. The sentiments could be of a particular period or place of the past time and mostly consisting of happy feelings. The term also denotes longing for the past life or events and happy days of the past. Any significant or trivial incident or experience of the present time or senses such as smell and touch may act as a stimulus to connect the person with his or her past memory leading to nostalgia. Weather and music are considered as strong evokers of nostalgia. In diaspora, nostalgia connects the person with his or her roots or native place temporarily and at the same time it disconnects the person from his or her present time.

**(9) Alienation**

Alienation is a sociological conception which describes an individual's inability to integrate with the mass. It is a state of an individual in social connection replicated by little extent of assimilation and high extent of isolation between individual and society. The separation from society occurs due to various reasons in which the ideology or status of an individual is in contrast with society or one particular group. The alienation creates feelings of helplessness or misfit in a particular situation. Two other relative terms, though having different connotations, are loneliness and isolation. Loneliness comes out of disconnection from the desired people and isolation is a deliberate attempt to cut off from a group or society.

**(10) Cultural Assimilation**

It is a process initiated by minority cultural groups to adopt values, beliefs and behaviors of the mainstream culture in diaspora. The process may be slow or rapid depending upon the

reason for the minority group's confrontation with the dominant culture. The cultural assimilation modifies the aspects of minority culture and there are also chances of loss of certain features of minority culture. The assimilation process completes when the members of minority group become indistinguishable from the mainstream group.

## **1.5 List of major Diasporas across the World**

### **(1) Jewish Diaspora**

The dispersion of Jews out of their ancestral homeland Kingdom of Judah – the land of Israel and their further relocation from the settled land to other parts of the world is known as 'Jewish Diaspora'. There had been various phases of exile in Jewish Diaspora. The Judahites people were expelled from the Kingdom of Judah during 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. These Judahites people were titled Jews in exile. Before 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, the Jews had faced exile in 733 BCE and 722 BCE which is known as Assyrian Exile. These were conquests of Assyrian kingdom in Israel. The most significant Jewish Diaspora in the Jewish history is Babylonian Exile of 586 BC. When Babylonians dominated the Kingdom of Judah, many Jewish people were deported into slavery. In 538 BC, Babylonian conqueror Cyrus the Great allowed Jews to return to their homeland, but many of them voluntarily remained behind. Furthermore, Jews population had faced many migration movements during 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and 1<sup>st</sup> century AD for many reasons including various invaders' conquest and religion. The Jewish diaspora subsisted for several centuries in the middle ages till the modern times and Jews population had to move towards many countries including Babylonia, Spain, Poland, Persia, U.S., Germany, Russia, France and some Asian countries for shelter. In diaspora, Jewish population easily adopted culture and customs of settled land and submerged themselves with the new societies to live in peace, while some other Jews became victims of anti-Semitism (hostility against Jews).

### **(2) African Diaspora**

The indigenous people of Africa, especially from the West and Central Africa were enslaved by the Britishers and were shipped to various British colonies beyond the African continent. Millions of African people were sent to the United States, Brazil, Haiti, Columbia, France and other European countries under Atlantic Slave Trade from 16<sup>th</sup> century to 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### **(3) Irish Diaspora**

The Irish diaspora denotes mass migration of Irish people from Ireland to various parts of the world including the U. S., Canada, New Zealand, Australia, U. K., South Africa and other countries due to famines and political chaos. The mass migration movements from Ireland to other countries started around 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### **(4) The Great Expulsion (Acadian Diaspora) (1755-1764)**

It was a British military campaign against the region of Acadia, a colony of New France in North America. The Britishers expelled Acadians people to British colonies, England and France. Plank states that out of approximately 14,100 Acadians in the region, 11,500 Acadians were expelled in total (149).

### **(5) Australian Diaspora**

The Australian Diaspora refers to Australians living outside Australia. Most of them are based in European and Asian countries. The reasons behind Australian people migrating from their homeland are believed to be colonization, unemployment and child removal policy.

### **(6) Palestinian Diaspora**

The 1948 Palestine war between Palestine and Arab States (Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Trans Jordan) made Palestinian Arab people leave Palestine. A huge number of Palestinians underwent through waves of exile and spread into locations around the world.

### **(7) Cuban Diaspora**

The term Cuban exile or Cuban diaspora refers to exile of approximately two million Cuban people from the island of Cuba. The Cuban people left Cuba due to fear of widespread reprisals after communist takeover during 1950s-70s. Most of them fled to the United States.

### **(8) Chinese Diaspora**

The term refers to the existence of overseas Chinese people. Although Chinese people began migrating quite early from 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards, post A.D. 1850 huge groups of Chinese people migrated to the U. S. , Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Canada, Australia, the U. K., Russia, the U. A. E., and other countries. California Gold Rush and prosperity of the U.S. attracted Chinese people towards America. Political upheaval in China from 1911 to 1949 and Chinese civil war in 1949 made many Chinese nationalists flee to Singapore,

Taiwan, Indonesia, Malaysia and other South East Asian countries. In the past two or three decades, China's economical and political ties with Europe and Africa paved the path for millions of Chinese people to seek shelter and employment in these countries. A growing Chinese community is also found in Germany, Austria and Russia. Remittances sent by overseas Chinese to their family members living in China not only help them economically, but it is also viewed as China's asset across the border.

### **(9) South Asian Diaspora**

The South Asian diaspora denotes migration of people from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and other countries of South Asia to various parts of the world. During the colonial period in 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, South Asian or especially Indian people were sent to various British colonies in South Africa, Trinidad, Tobago, Jamaica, Fiji, Guyana, Singapore, Malaysia, etc. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, South Asian people began to migrate to the U. S., the U. K., the U. A. E., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, etc. for higher education, employment and in some cases, to reunite with their relatives who had already settled abroad. South Asian diaspora is categorized into Indian Diaspora, Pakistani Diaspora, Sri Lankan Diaspora and likewise.

## **1.6 Indian Diaspora**

As the present research aims to evaluate fictional works written on Indian Diaspora, an attempt has been made here to glance at history of Indian Diaspora. Indian Diaspora is the Second largest Diaspora in the World. As per a report of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, as of 2015 approximately 28.45 million people of Indian origin live outside the geographical border of India. Although Indians began migrating long ago, a large number of Indian people started migrating to various parts of the world from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Till the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Indians could set up their communities on almost each continent and also on islands in the Pacific, Caribbean and Indian oceans. There have been various segments in Indians' migration across the world. These segments consist of indentured labourers sent to various British Colonies, labour force required in post world war Europe, skilled professionals moving towards the U.S. and semi-skilled labour force seeking employment in the Middle East.

Considering the mass migration movements of Indian people from India to various parts of the world, three major phases of migration can be categorized: (1) Pre-Colonial Migration, (2) Colonial Migration and (3) Post-Colonial Migration.

### **1.6.1 Pre-colonial Migration**

Britishers, when they colonized India believed that Indian people are stagnant and they do not have mobility, however this was not true. India's international trade and migration date back to the 3rd millennium B.C.E. At that time, natives of Indus Valley civilization established business linkages with Mesopotamia. Spread of Buddhism in Japan, China, Vietnam, Indonesia and other Asian countries show the mobility of Indians. The Buddhism started in India around 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE and reached to many countries of Asia. Traders and settlers from India reached to Malaysia and other South Asian countries from the first century A.D. establishing trading ports and coastal towns across Asian region. Indian traders along with Indian monks have been roaming around Southeast Asian countries for a long period of time.

Lately from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards, Seamen, who were called lascars, travelled from India to England and many other countries situated at distant locations. After reaching England and other places, these lascars used to mingle with the crowd there. They returned to India and sometimes they didn't. They sometimes married white women there and started their family abroad.

Influx of Indian people had moved to Southeast Asian countries by 18<sup>th</sup> century. In many cases they were able to return to India due to proximity. This has resulted in Indianization of South-East countries. Indian people exchanging trade and commerce activities have significantly exchanged cultural values as well, i.e. why there is presence of Indian languages, Indian traditions and Indian temples in almost all countries of Southeast Asia.

### **1.6.2 Colonial Migration:**

The Indentured Labour system introduced by British colonizers in India in the 19<sup>th</sup> century became the reason for mass migration of Indians to various parts of the world. About 2 million Indians were transported to at least 19 colonies of Britain under the indentured labour system (Anitha and Ruth). Many reasons were responsible for the birth of the

indentured labour system. Abolition of Slavery was the root cause for the rise of indentured labour system. Britishers owned sugar or rubber plantations in Jamaica, Trinidad, Fiji, Barbados, Mauritius, Surinam, Congo, etc. After abolition of slavery in 1830s, there was a big question: who would work on plantations? When Black men and women slaves became free, they raised their price of labour. It was a concern for the plantation owners how to maximize their profits by reducing the charge of labour so they forced colonizers to supply labourers from their colonies at lowest wages. At that time India was a largest colony of Britain therefore Britishers introduced the indentured labour system in 1834 and sent about 2 million Indian people as indentured labourers to various parts of the world to work on sugar and rubber plantations. Britishers declared Indentured Labour System as an Anti-Slavery system, but in reality it was just substitute of slavery.

Furthermore, towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, India had witnessed major famines and deaths in millions. The Great Bengal Famine of 1770, Chalisa Famine in North Indian states in 1780s, Doji Bara famine of 1790s devastated many regions of India. Unemployment was also a major issue during the colonial period in 18<sup>th</sup> century. Many Indians were deceived by the agents of colonizers under the pretence of recruitment. During the hard times of 1830s many unemployed people were told by the agents of the Britishers or plantation owners that they would be given jobs in Calcutta or other parts in the east coast of India. The journey to reach such a destination of course took time, as they had to decide the journey either on foot or by bullock cart. On reaching there, they were denied jobs with reason that they were late. So these desperate people were helpless to choose any option offered to them. Taking disadvantage of their condition, they were offered jobs overseas. People helplessly accepted the overseas job of indentured labour and in one way became victim of so called agents. Indian government was not in position to intervene being subject of British rule, so the government showed an attitude of laissez-faire. Such circumstances might have compelled some of the Indian people to accept the labour contract system as the only source of survival.

Moreover, India's social and political conditions were also responsible for people's migration. In some cases, social milieus or the caste system remained reasons for people to opt migration. Some people were dissatisfied with socio-political turmoil of the Indian society and wanted to escape from the situation. Family disputes were also sometimes reasons for migration. Some people thought that migration to new country would end their existing problems. Due to a variety of problems of that time like famine, colonization,

casteism, unemployment and others, some Indian people began to think that it is better to get insulted in Fiji or other countries than in one's own country. Therefore they were ready to leave India and go to any part of the world and not with a thought of ever returning to India. Instances of such kinds are found in *Coolitude: An Anthology of the Indian Labour Diaspora* (2002) written by Khal Torabully and Marina Carter.

### **1.6.3 Post Colonial Migration**

There have been various phases of migration movements in the post colonial era. The first and foremost migration movement of Indian people at the very end of colonial period was migration due to partition of India. The political partition of India into two independent nations: Indian and Pakistan resulted in migration of millions of Indian people from India to Pakistan and vice versa.

Post World War II, much of Europe was destroyed and European countries needed a labour force to rebuild the economy. Once economy started to pick up, a huge labour force was required to rebuild Europe. This was the time, when Indians started migrating to Britain, Germany and Poland. Not only Indians, but also Pakistanis and Bangladeshis saw it as an opportunity. Thus, it was also one of the major reasons why Indians became important in places like Britain, Poland, Germany and so on.

During the 1960s or 1970s two different strands of Indian people started to move to the West. Many graduate students started migrating to the U.S. to get Master Degree or Ph.D. There were mostly single males and most of them came back to India after some time, married Indian women and moved back to the U.S. to raise their family there. Such a phenomenon remains to this day. Half of the IIT (Indian Institute of Technology) graduates live in the U.S. They go to the U.S. for a Master's or Ph.D. degree. Such bright students feel themselves as "misfits" in India may be due to lack of resources or opportunities.

Another strand consisted Indians moving to Gulf countries like Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. There were two kinds of men moving towards the U.A.E.: The first is construction labourers who have been playing a significant role in changing the face of Dubai and other places and the second is professionals like engineers, doctors and others.

## 1.7 Life in Diaspora

Living in diaspora means living in forces or voluntary exile and living in exile usually leads to severe identity confusion and problems of identification and alienation from the old and new culture and homeland. India being a home of multicultural, multi religion and multilingual people, the Indian migrants across the sea speak different languages and preserve their specific cultures, which belong to one of the many branches of Indian culture, but what abides them all is their first and foremost Indian identity. Their Indian origin and preservation of Indian culture bring them a sense of being attached to India. But the conflict arises when they come across the influence of culture of the settled land. Diaspora brings issues of identity and culture, where one feels constant pull of two cultures and two identities.

Generally the migrant community has a dual sense of identity, their first identity belongs to their native country and native culture and the second identity they put on is of host culture. For instance, when an Indian migrates to the U.S., his first identity is Indian and his second identity is American Indian. It becomes difficult to build a bridge between these completely contradictory identities therefore sometimes people seek shelter of third world identities. The idea of negotiation of identities itself is complicated; it becomes severe for some people who have more than one native identity. There are some groups of migrants, whose one parent is from India and the other is from Kenya, Bangladesh or any other country. Such families already have with them heritage and affiliations of two different countries and cultures. When the second generation of such already hybrid community migrate to the U.S., the U.K. or other parts of the world, they have at least three identities and three cultural backgrounds with them and constant pull among these three, may lead them towards the fourth identity, which is in others' case is the third identity or third world identity. For instance, many people left India after partition, most of Muslims moved to Pakistan and a few to Kenya. They already have plural identities and plural cultural values. When they migrate to another country for example to America, they have fusion of identities, cultures, values and lifestyles. In such cases, the first generation people expect from their second generation to preserve cultures of their formal upbringing, i.e. India and their second place of residence. But second generation groups who may or may not be born on any of the aforesaid two lands are attracted towards Western way of life. They desire to embrace American life and American Identity, but opposition of their parents and

hesitation of American culture to easily accept outsiders compel them to live a life with multiple identities or else discard whatever identities and cultural heritage they have to put on new one.

Apart from issues of identity and culture, the recent decades have raised some serious issues pertaining to safety of diasporic communities such as racial discrimination and racial attacks. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni gives voice to racial assaults on Indian immigrants that followed after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in her novel *Queen of Dreams* (2004). After the collapse of the WTC, there was havoc on the streets of the U.S., any black skinned people having beard or wearing a turban were considered to have association with the countries of terrorist regardless of their actual identity, religion or citizenship. Furthermore, unfavorable immigration policies of the host land may also pose questions against the existence of immigrant communities. The spread of life threatening pandemic COVID19 has also raised a number of issues for the entire world and it may affect diaspora community and migration movements.

In diaspora, people are always conscious about their home and identity. Many of them live un-homed in their houses, for example the first generation immigrants in the U.S. consider India as their home even after spending decades in the U.S. It is like nation and country. A nation possesses geographical borders, constitution and system, whereas a country is made of culture, people, feelings and traditions. For the first generation immigrants, India is a country as they are attached to it, but for the second generation youngsters India remains a nation and the settled land becomes their country.

## **1.8 Literature of South Asian Diaspora**

Literary works produced by migrant writers expressing their experiences of being dispersed from known (homeland) to unknown (host land) and discussing their journey of confronting the new land is termed as Diaspora Literature. The literary works produced by immigrant writers who originally belong to South Asian countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Burma, Sri Lanka and Nepal and have settled outside their country of origin, fall under the category of Literature of South Asian Diaspora. Literature of South Asian Diaspora can further be categorized into Literature of India Diaspora, Literature of Pakistani Diaspora and likewise based on native land of immigrant writers.

However different genres and stories there may be in diaspora literature, far and more all possess some similar elements such as sense of being dislocated, conflict between two worlds, dual sense of identity, alienation, memories of past and nostalgia. The diasporic writers can be divided into two groups: the first generation writers and the second generation writers. The first generation diasporic writers are those who are born and brought up in their native place and afterwards at any point of time they leave their native land and choose any foreign destination for residence. The second generation diasporic writers are those who are born and raised outside the native land of their parents.

A detailed study of a variety of diasporic works leads to determine certain characteristics of diasporic works. They are: memories of past, identity crises, alienation, conflict between real life and imagined life, generation gap, protest against cultural discrimination and racism, sense of returning home, concern for losing values, and so on. The concepts of time and space work as common features of diasporic writings. Being unable to locate in a new land, diasporic people often attempt to locate themselves in an imaginative native land. Their past memory of the homeland continues in their present. They travel with a dual sense of time: past and present and similarly at times, they live in two seemingly contradictory worlds: physically in the present host land and nostalgically in the past native land.

As the present research deals with diasporic works by immigrant writers of Indian origin, an attempt has been made to discuss in brief about Literature of Indian Diaspora and prominent writers and works of Indian Diaspora in the next section.

## **1.9 Literature of Indian Diaspora**

India's social and political circumstances have far and more remained themes for Indian English literature till postmodern age or to be precise up till 1960s. With emerging literary trends and post colonial theories, Indian immigrant writers have come up with new expressions. A huge number of Indian immigrant writers have expressed diasporic feelings in their literary works. As the present research study deals with diasporic study of selected fictional works of Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni who are Indian American writers of diaspora, a brief introduction to prominent Indian diasporic writers and their fictional works will help understanding thematic aspects of Indian diasporic literature. Most of the diasporic writers attempt to create an image of India in their work through their

past memories or inheritance, yet discovery of self and identity on an alien land is full of varied experiences.

Bharati Mukherjee was born in Kolkata in 1940. After achieving a post graduation degree in India, she migrated to the United States in 1961 for further education and doctoral studies. She spent more than a decade in Toronto, Canada with her family and then returned to the U.S. In her works, Bharati Mukherjee depicted dilemmas and experiences of Indian immigrants in United States. Bharati Mukherjee's fictional works include *The Tiger's Daughter* (1972), *Wife* (1997), *Jasmine* (1989), *The Holder of the World* (1993), *Leave It to Me* (1997), *Desirable Daughters* (2002), *The Tree Bride* (2004) and *Miss New India* (2011). Her short story collections include *Darkness* (1985), *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988) and so on. In her novels, she wrote about immigrant experience, cultural conflict, east – west conflict, transformation, relationship, homelessness, racism and so on.

Gita Mehta was born in Delhi, India in 1943. She received her education in India and later in the United Kingdom. In her works, she writes about social, political and cultural intricacies of India. Elements of myth and self discovery are also found in her works. Her major works include *Karma Cola* (1979), *Raj* (1989), *A River Sutra* (1993), *Snakes and Ladders* (1997), etc.

Meena Alexander was a prominent poet and writer. She was born in Allahabad, India in 1951 and raised in India and Sudan (North Africa). Presently she lived in New York and taught at Hunter College and CUNY Graduate Centre. Her literary works represent the immigrant experience confronted by Indians. Her novel *Nampally Road* (1991) tells a story of socio-political turmoil of contemporary India. Her novel *Manhattan Music* (1997) outlines the story of a female migrant who passes through a series of multicultural and multi racial relationships leading to gradual discovery of self and identity. Her other works include *Fault Lines* (1993) and several collections of poems.

Kiran Desai is a daughter of renowned literary figure Anita Desai. Kiran Desai was born in India in 1971 and migrated to England when she was 14 years old with her family. After spending a year in England, her family moved to the United States. Her novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998) has the themes of isolation and sense of alienation. It tells a story of frustration of a young man and his desires in the material world. Through her

characters, Kiran Desai represents social issues of the modern age. Her another novel *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) surveys issues pertaining to racism, class and gender in the west, multiculturalism and clashes of cross culturalism, confrontation of East and West, transnationalism and alienation. She was awarded the 2006 Man Booker prize for her novel *Inheritance of Loss*.

Salman Rushdie is an Indian born British novelist and essayist and presently lives in the United States. His first novel *Grimus* (1975) was a science fiction. The hero of this novel is a Flapping Eagle, an outcast Indian, who after drinking a magical fluid wanders earth for some 700 years searching for his immortal sister and exploring identities. Salman Rushdie's famous work *Midnight Children* (1981) deals with India's transition from British colony to independent India and its partition. It is a magical realist work of post colonial literature and combines myths and history. This novel won him the Booker Prize in 1981. His *Imaginary Homeland* (1991) is a collection of essays containing topics on politics, literature and experience of migrants. His *The Satanic Verses* (1988) is a great diasporics work with a touch of magic realism. The novel is about identity, alienation, rootlessness and compromise. The title of this novel refers to a group of Quranic verses that allow intercessory prayers to be made to three Pagan Meccan goddesses. *The Satanic Verses* received both positive and negative reactions. This novel stimulated a great dispute in the Muslim community as the novel has blasphemous references and mocks religious faith. Some people accused Rushdie of misusing freedom of speech. The novel was banned in India. The other fictional works of Salman Rushdie include *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990), *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995), *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999), *Fury* (2001), *Shalimar the Clown* (2005), *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008), *Luka and the Fire of Life* (2010), *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty Eight Nights* (2015) and *The Golden House* (2017) and *Quichotte* (2019).

V. S. Naipaul was a renowned British writer and Nobel laureate of Indian descent. He was born in Trinidad in 1953. He is considered as a master of English prose as his depiction of alienation and exile with psychological insight and touch of irony are noteworthy. He is famous for his early comical writing and later somber autobiographical works. In early 1960s, Naipaul published *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961), which is believed to be a significant contribution in his career. The novel is a re-imagination of his father's life as he witnessed in his childhood. V. S. Naipaul's fictional works include *The Mystic Masseur* (1957), *The Suffrage of Elvira* (1958), *The Mimic Men* (1967), *In a Free State* (1971),

*Guerrillas* (1975), *A Bend in the River* (1979), *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987), *A Way in the World* (1994), *Half a Life* (2001) and *Magic Seeds* (2004).

Amitav Ghosh is a prominent Indian born writer of fiction who lives in New York. His famous fictional works include *The Circle of Reason* (1986), *The Shadow Lines* (1988), *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1995), *The Glass Palace* (2000), *The Hungry Tide* (2004), *Ibis Trilogy* consisting of (i) *Sea of Poppies* (2008) (ii) *River of Smoke* (2011) and (iii) *Flood of Fire* (2015) and his latest work is *Gun Island* (2019). His fictional works have a vast variety of themes; there are stories of migration, political struggle, history, love and loss, communal violence and so on.

As the present research is going to evaluate fictional works of Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, introduction of both the novelists and brief details about their major works are presented in the following sections.

### **1.10 Life and Works of Jhumpa Lahiri**

Jhumpa Lahiri is the second generation writer of Indian Diaspora. She was born to Bengali parents in England in 1967 and her family migrated to the United States when she was only three years old. Jhumpa Lahiri believes that for immigrants, the challenge of exile, loneliness, constant sense of alienation and longing for a lost world are evident and stressful. Her first collection of short story *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) was awarded the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for fiction. It is a collection of nine stories about the lives of Indians and Indian Americans who are torn between two cultures: the culture of India and of the host country. The characters struggle to maintain their culture on foreign land. Native language, social relationships, religion and rituals help them to preserve culture and identity, but they end up forming hybrid personalities.

Jhumpa Lahiri's first novel *The Namesake* (2003) was adapted into a popular cinematic version with the same name. *The Namesake* is primarily a story of struggle and hardship of Bengali parents who immigrate to the United States to form a life beyond their knowledge. The story covers about thirty years in life of Ganguli family. The Kolkata born parents immigrate as young adults to the U. S., where their children become adult confronting constant pull towards American culture and American life, against their parent's yearning.

Being unable to trace and perceive their root and cultural affiliations, the second generation characters end up living plural identities.

Her second novel *The Lowland* (2013) is a complex novel about immigrant experience. It is a novel about finding right place and right people and about sense of alienation and guilt felt by central characters. It tells the story of two brothers Subhash and Udayan and their wife Gauri. Udayan indulges in Naxalite movement of 1960s and Subhash escapes to the US for higher education. After police encounter of Udayan, his wife Gauri is remarried by Subhash and they move to the US. Gauri's journey of self discovery, her unhappy married life and intricacies of relationships make this novel a complex one. There is always communication gap among all the members of the novel. Subhash, Gauri and Bela, daughter of Gauri and Udayan, all of them appear to be introvert in nature on the foreign land. They keep secrets and do not share their whereabouts. Their quest for living a liberated life separates them from their own family and also results in creation of identity crises and feeling of loneliness.

The title of Jhumpa Lahiri's another collection of short stories *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) expresses notions of misfit. There are stories from the lives of first generation immigrants who have settled in the U.S. with the second and the third generation. The second and the third generations do not feel accustomed to culture of their parents. The conflict arising due to clash between cultural identity and cultural reality make them live with plural cultures and plural identities.

In Jhumpa Lahiri's fictions, there are Indian roots and American life. The first generation migrants struggle to establish Indian identity in alien culture, but the second generation youngsters face severe identity crises and they undergo the status of being American Born Confused Desi (ABCD). Presently Jhumpa Lahiri lives in Rome, Italy with her husband and two children and she also writes in Italian language.

### **1.11 Life and Works of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni**

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an Indian American novelist, who was born in 1956 in Kolkata. After receiving her graduate degree from Kolkata, she migrated to the United States in 1976. In the U.S. while receiving Master's degree and Ph.D. from university of California, she did multiple odd jobs to meet expenses of her education. Currently she is a

well known novelist, poet, writer and Professor in Creative Writing Program at University of Huston, Texas. In her works, she strives to explore complicated identities of diaspora community. Her novels address notions of multiculturalism, alienation and voyage for self discovery. Most of her novels are modeled on experience and struggle faced by middle class women who feel alienated, dissatisfied and incapable to share feelings.

Her novel *The Mistress of Spices* (1997) explores diasporic condition amid a multi cultural backdrop. The novel propounds deep rooted multiculturalism in its portrayal of cultural diversity, hybridity, racial tension and alienation. The central character of this novel Tilo is an immigrant from India in Oakland, California. She owns a shop named 'Spice Bazaar'. She helps her customers in satisfying their needs and desires with charms of spices. As soon as a customer enters in her shop, through her magical powers, Tilo is able to understand her customers' urges. The minor characters of the novel are Indian immigrants varying from wealthy people to struggling mass. Tilo tries to build a bridge among different cultures and finally ends up discovering a new self for her.

Another novel by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is *Queen of Dreams* (2004), which tells a story of a daughter of an immigrant couple who has settled in California and desires to raise their only child as an American, shielding her from their past life in India. Rakhi, their daughter is a young artist living in Berkeley, California. She is a divorced mother struggling to ascertain her livelihood in the hostile world. The 9/11 attack on World Trade Center and racist assaults following the incident are also depicted in the novel. Her mother is a dream teller, born with the ability to share and interpret the dreams of others to foresee and guide them through their fates. Her mother's gift of interpreting dreams attracts Rakhi but at the same time it isolates her from her mother and her mother's past life. Caught beneath the burden of adversities of her own life, Rakhi finds solace only after discovering dream journal of her mother after her mother's death. Rakhi attempts to trace her roots, knowing little of India, what she discovers is painful history and her own life is shaken by new horrors.

Divakaruni's collection of short stories *Arranged Marriages* (1995) investigates cultural dilemmas through a feminist point of view. The eleven short stories of this collection are about Bengali migrants in the United States. The effects of westernization on Indian marriage institutions become theme for these stories. The female characters of the stories

are narrators. Some of the immigrant brides get freedom and the others are caged by cultural restrictions. The stories explore their journey to achieve emancipation.

*The Unknown Errors of Our Lives* (2001) is a collection of short stories by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni that also explores immigrant experience of Indian women in America. The stories are set in India and U. S. The tales elucidate changes brought in characters' lives due to immigrant experience and contrast between their reality and imagined life. The stories depict pain, loss and loneliness experienced by immigrants. Other fictional works of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni include *Sister of My Heart* (1999), *The Vine of Desire* (2002), *The Conch Bearer* (2003), *The Mirror of Fire and Dreaming* (2005), *The Palace of Illusions* (2008), *One Amazing Thing* (2010), *Shadow Land* (2011), *Oleander Girl* (2013), *Grandma Great Gourd* (2013) and *Forest of Enchantments* (2019).

## 1.12 Research Aims and Objectives

The present research clubs two diasporic writers and two novels of each writer therefore the scope of research is wide. Both the chosen writers are prominent authors of Indian diaspora and are equally celebrated personalities. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is the first generation diasporic writer whereas Jhumpa Lahiri is the second generation writer. The reason to choose writers from two different generations is to examine whether any changes occur in diasporic sensibility, identity confusion and affiliation with India and host country in writing of writers of two diverse generations. *The Namesake* and *The Lowland* written by Jhumpa Lahiri and *The Mistress of Spices* and *Queen of Dreams* written by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni are chosen for the present research. The major objectives of the research are as under.

- 1) To examine the concept of Diaspora and other terms related to it such as alienation, identity confusion, multiculturalism, etc.
- 2) To study Indian Diaspora and its history of migration.
- 3) To trace out diasporic sensibility as is replicated in the selected novels of Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni.
- 4) To study significant themes and major attributes of diasporic writings in the works Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni.

- 5) To explore messages conveyed by both the novelists through their writings.
- 6) To indicate significance and proposition of the research undertaken.

The present research is not going to apply comparative approach to works of Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, but as there are certain similarities and dissimilarities in works of these two writers, an attempt will be made to trace such experiences and expressions.

### **1.13 Justification for the Research**

In the present era of globalization, the world has witnessed extensive diaspora. Indians have contributed remarkably in diaspora whether it is survival of sugar and rubber plantation during colonization period or contribution in the field of research and technology in modern times. Indians have earned celebrated status overseas with their values, integrity and adaptability. Indian diaspora has been growing all over the world rapidly. At this juncture, in depth study of Indian Diaspora is given much importance by the prominent thinkers and academicians. Indian Diasporic literature being modeled on writers' personal experiences, observations and sometimes though tinged with imagination provides profound knowledge about Indian Diaspora. The present research attempts to comprehend the same as both the chosen writers Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni are internationally acclaimed writers of diasporic sensibility and they have dealt with innumerable issues the immigrants confront in culturally diverse circumstances to create a space for them. The present research will also be helpful to the society by conveying authors' messages as Jhumpa Lahiri conveys the significance of cultural multiplicity and lays emphasis on requirement of acknowledging universal aspect of human existence and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni presents different dimensions of diaspora and appreciates the value of the individual's emancipation. Such messages will surely spread wisdom and also benefit the diaspora aspirants.

### **1.14 Research Methodology**

The present research is based on applying the methods of analysis, close evaluation and interpretation to the novels of Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. The intensive study of select novels of both the writers will be carried out to trace diasporic

sensibility. An analytical method will be used to investigate problems faced by diasporic Indians. Thematic aspects and characterization employed by both the novelists will be evaluated in the light of diaspora and theories propounded by well known scholars in this field. The primary reading of select novels of Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni demonstrates that five elements viz. 1) Alienation 2) Memory and Nostalgia 3) Cultural Assimilation 4) Identity Crises and 5) Generation Gap are major components in the creation of Diasporic Sensibility in their writing. Under framework of these five constituents, novels of Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni will be evaluated and interpreted in the subsequent chapters of the present research work.

### **1.15 Research Framework**

The present research is organized into five chapters. The first chapter ‘Introduction’ introduces the idea of Diaspora and various concepts related to diaspora. The concept of migration and difference between migration and diaspora has also been highlighted. The chapter has also introduced terms like culture, race, alienation, hybridity, third space, identity, nostalgia, etc. which are directly related to diasporic experience. The first chapter has also described various types of diaspora across the world and waves of migration so far as Indian diaspora is concerned. The problems of living in diaspora have also been highlighted. Major writers of South Asian Diaspora and their significant works have been cited. The chapter has introduced Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and their works. The research methodology to be employed to apply diasporic approach to the selected works of Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has also been highlighted.

The second chapter of the thesis ‘Literature Review and Theorizing Diaspora’ will review the existing literature on diaspora along with building theoretical platform of diaspora. The first part of the second chapter will review literature, articles, critical essays and thesis written in the field of Indian diasporic literature. The second part of the second chapter will critically analyze the concept of diaspora. Various definitions given by acclaimed scholars will be interpreted and attempts will be done to understand various features of diaspora as given by various scholars. The chapter will also discuss features of diasporic writing. The issues confronted by diasporic community will be addressed in brief. Last but not the least the chapter will throw light on current scenario of Indian Immigration.

The third chapter '**Diasporic Approach to Selected Works of Jhumpa Lahiri**' will attempt to analyze diasporic sensibility as found in *The Namesake* (2003) and *The Lowland* (2013) written by Jhumpa Lahiri. The chapter will throw light on how skillfully Lahiri deals with immigrant experience of alienation and identity confusion faced by her characters in the novels. The chapter will study almost all the major characters and themes of both the novels and will investigate diasporic dilemma ubiquitous in them. The five components of diaspora theory chosen as the base for the present research namely (1) Alienation 2) Memory and Nostalgia 3) Cultural Assimilation 4) Identity Crisis and 5) Generation Gap will be applied to both the selected works of Jhumpa Lahiri.

The fourth chapter '**Diasporic Approach to Selected Works of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni**' will examine both the brighter and darker effects of migration on the middle class immigrants and their efforts to make peace with settled land as depicted in her two novels: *The Mistress of Spices* (1997) and *Queen of Dreams* (2004). In her novels, Divakaruni focuses characters' struggle to ascertain their roots by cherishing cultural heritage and glorifying past with her magic realism technique. The chapter will address the issue of patriarchal power, generation gap and racism as found in the works of Divakaruni in the backdrop of diaspora. The five chosen constituents of diasporic sensibility as mentioned above will be applied to both the novels of Divakaruni in this chapter.

The fifth and the last chapter '**Conclusion**' will present an overall analysis of contribution of Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni as expatriate writers. The chapter will draw out implications of the research. The general features of works of Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni will be traced out. Themes, symbolism and narrative techniques employed by both the novelists will be considered to list out major findings of the research. The perspective of the first generation immigrants and the second generation immigrants in dealing with diasporic situation will be paid attention. At the end of the thesis, scope for further research in the same direction will be outlined.

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## CHAPTER 2

### Literature Review and Theorizing Diaspora

#### 2.1 Introduction

The present chapter attempts to review literature and critical works done in the field of diaspora literature. By doing so, efforts are put in to prepare list of select works and researches previously done in this field. The second part of this chapter presents theory of diaspora and other terms pertinent to it.

#### 2.2 Literature Review of related works.

(1) **Vijay Mishra** (2007) in **Literature of the Indian Diaspora: Theorizing the Diasporic Imaginary** thoroughly discusses famous literary works by renowned Indian diasporic writers. Mishra differentiates between old Indian diaspora and new Indian diaspora. The old diaspora denotes early modern migration movements especially of indentured labourers, and the new diaspora comprises late modern or post colonial migration movements. In some cases, the old diaspora may become a part of the new diaspora through re-migrations for example Fiji Indians' migration to Vancouver or so on. He opines that for better comprehension of Indian diaspora, one needs to look at 'old' and 'new' locations. He lays emphasis on subjective description of writers to judge his or her works. Mishra's remark in the very beginning of this work 'All diasporas are unhappy, but every diaspora is unhappy in its own way' (1) conveys multiple meanings. The displaced status is a discomfort status, where people do not feel at home with their identity. Mishra discusses in detail almost all the works of V. S. Naipaul and Salman Rushdie in this monumental work. Other key diasporic writers such as M. G. Vassanji, Shantit Mootoo, Bharati Mukherjee, Hanif Kureishi and Rohinton Mistry are also studied in this book. He derives ideas and theories from discourse of Roland Barthes, Mikhail Bakhtin, Matthew Arnold, Jim Clifford, Sigmund Freud, William Safran, Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and others. He presents spiritual perspectives of trauma, longings and dislocation in

the study of Indian diaspora and texts. He uses the term ‘diasporic imaginary’ to depict any ethnic group that refers to itself intentionally or unintentionally or because of self knowledge or political pressure as a ‘displaced populace’. Further, he uses the term ‘imaginary’ in two different connotations; the original one as propounded by Lacan as mirror phase of the ego characterized by narcissism and the modern one as discussed by Slavoj Zizek as the state of identification with the image in which we appear likeable to ourselves (14). The diasporic imaginary is significantly linked to the idea of homing desire; it works as an idea of considering the home country as *desh* against the present location in diaspora as *videsh* i.e. another country. The sense of loss of homeland leads towards the feelings of trauma and mourning. In case of diaspora, the loss of essences of homeland cannot be replaced by new objects because in doing so, the purity of the original substance will be lost. As a result, a diasporic clings to and mourns for the objects which are lost. Only when the obsession for the lost object is freed, a diasporic can become an active participant.

**(2) Tracing an Indian Diaspora: Context, Memories, Representations** edited by **Parvati Raghuram, Ajay Kumar Sahoo, Brij Maharaj and Dave Sangha** (2008) is a scholarly work divided into four sections and twenty one chapters tracing numerous aspects of Indian diaspora scattered in various parts of the world ranging from history to the modern day. The book maps out a variety of forms of plurality in Indian diaspora including geographical dispersal, temporal frames, historical background, political connection and authorial positions. The first section of the book entitled “A New Form of Slavery: Indentured Diaspora” attempts to explore the roots of Indian diaspora in the colonial period. The social, economical and political effects of such forced migration are discussed in order to trace historical creation of the old Indian diaspora. The history of conflict between ethnic population of the British colonies and Indian population sent there as the indentured labour force is studied with conclusion of the present status of Indian communities in the settled lands. The socio-political aspects which affected Indian diaspora in Singapore, Malaysia and Myanmar are described in one of the chapters. The presence of Indians and especially Hindu Indians in such places has been witnessed since the third century because of trading connections and religious missions but only in the colonial period the presence of indentured Indian labourers in the South East Asian regions became more visible. However, due to the labour systems prevalent at that time, the Indian community was exploited with low wages and unpleasant working conditions.

The second section entitled “The New Indian Diaspora” discusses migration of Indians from free India to developed nations such as the U.S., the U.K., Canada, Australia, New Zealand and several other destinations in Europe. The modern day Indian immigrants are well equipped in diaspora compared to old indentured diaspora. The advancements in the communication technology enable them to make their presence visible in both the settled land and the native land. Sunaina Maira records the appalling experiences of Muslim youth of Indian origin in the U.S. post 9/11 event. They are represented as entangled in the mess of fight against terrorism and between native land and host land. Pierre surveys the role, influence and participation of Indian Americans in politics of the U.S. The impact of changes in immigration policies of the U.K. on the Indian diaspora is also given a thought. The third section “Doing Diaspora: Identification” covers the notions of identification prevailing among the diasporic community. The significance of religious and spiritual movements in restoring links with India and glorifying Indian identity is discussed. The cultural and religious practices of several distinct populations of Indian origin in the host land have resulted in Indianisation of the space. The fourth section “Representations: Contestations of/in the Indian Diaspora” explores how Indian diaspora is invoked in the novels, plays and films and other forms of media. Raghuram opines, “The media does not simply represent a diaspora, but actively produces diasporic subjectivity both amongst the authors and audiences” (323). Themes and character sketches of the literary works produced by women writers of South Asian Diaspora are also analyzed in the chapters of this section.

**(3) Women in the Diaspora: Historical Narratives and Contemporary Challenges** edited by **Amba Pande** (2018) explores the age-long ignored marginalized account of Indian women in diaspora by compiling contributions of scholars scattered across the world. This book doesn’t portray Indian women merely as sufferers or solely responsible for maintaining culture and traditions in the settled land, rather it looks at efforts of women in asserting their individuality, redefining their roles and awareness of self in diaspora. The book is divided into four parts namely (i) The Context of Theory and Identity, (ii) Revisiting Historical Narratives, (iii) The Contemporary Challenges and (iv) Diasporas Across the World and total fifteen chapters by academicians from India and abroad including the very first chapter written by the editor. The first chapter explores women and their situation in diaspora with special consideration of cultural impact as well as changes in identity. Pande opines that women’s contribution in diaspora has remained subdued

because of male centric homogenized perception and meta-narratives; therefore their significance in the success stories of Indian Diaspora has remained unnoticed (6-7). The changes in women's roles and responsibilities in the diaspora are given positive perspective as the writer considers these transformations as strengths of women. According to her, instead of crying and cribbing, the women are able to occupy transnational spaces and can fight against the constraints. The first part of the book explores the tendency and methods through which women have been represented in the diaspora. For instance, a number of Indian women work as domestic workers in the Middle East, but they are often overlooked or just referred briefly as victims of exploitation. A dynamic approach is required in depiction of women migrants with a focus on the gendered migrant experience. Their subjective struggle with diasporic dilemmas such as sense of displacement, identity crises and cultural conflicts are also given attention in the book. The rebellious voice of migrant women who are all set to break down conventional image desired by patriarchal mindset is analyzed.

The second part of the book presents an account of Indian indentured women in Caribbeans and Trinidad. The socio-economic condition of coolie women is also discussed. Archana Tewari, in the fifth chapter compares indentured women labourers with Sita of *The Ramayana* as an unequal metaphor with an insight that everybody desires Sita but no one makes efforts to be like Ram (61). The third part of the book looks at the modern-day challenges confronted by women in the diaspora. The ups and downs experienced by Indian women in America are delineated with an insight that the life of an immigrant woman in the U.S. is both challenging and rewarding. Gender differentials in economical aspects and inequality of gender ration being carried forward from native land to settled land are also addressed. The last part of the book looks at gender diaspora in South Africa, evolution of matriarchy narrative and experiences of Sikh women in diaspora.

**(4) American Karma: Race, Culture and Identity in the Indian Diaspora** by **Sunil Bhatia** (2007) touches upon various issues affecting diasporic communities pertaining to identity, life-styles, customs, memory and racism. The writer himself belongs to Indian diaspora in the U.S. and has attempted to record his observation, interactions and interviews with various members of Indian diaspora which he carried out for more than a year at various places in Connecticut and compiled his research in various chapters of this book. He adopts a dialogic approach by extensive use of interview and meeting with the

respondents to document the account of daily life of Indian immigrants in the U.S. The research carried out by the author encompasses ethnographical study of skilled professional immigrants only such as engineers, doctors, programmers, computer scientists, psychologists, architects and others who belong to wealthy or elite class, whereas the working class community consisting of drivers, mechanics, merchants, cooks, illegal migrants and others have been excluded in the study.

The writer attempts to justify whether Indian diaspora in the U.S. fits in within Acculturation Model proposed by Berry and others which lays emphasis on four aspects of acculturation namely (i) assimilation, (ii) separation, (iii) integration, and (iv) marginalization. He relies more on the concept of voice and expressions to study acculturation and development of identity. He distinguishes markers of otherness used by Indian diaspora at personal, social and professional level. The behavior, objects, language, appearance and cultural or religion specific attributes of Indian diasporic community such as saree, vermilion, Indian accent, turban, etc. express the feeling of otherness and become causes for their alienation, marginalized status and sometimes racism.

The writer traces various phases of migration of Indian people to the U.S. He addresses migration of Punjabi Sikhs who came to California and worked as laborers or farmers. He documents their journey of becoming skillful businessmen from mere workers. The arrival of well educated professionals from India to the U.S. from 1965 onwards has strengthened Indian immigrant community in the U.S. Indian people's adaptive attitude, advanced education and fluency in English language have paved path for bright career opportunities in the U.S. Though Indian immigrants occupy remarkable spaces in American society they are not spared from the nuances of racism. The racial discrimination at schools, workplace and outside world is inevitable for them. Sometimes they struggle with their status of 'brown people', but their adaptive ability helps them rise above odds and they give more importance to their goals and careers. They put aside the issues of color, class and race and attempt to re-establish their sense of self and identity as equal to that of majority groups. As a result, Indian immigrants in the U.S. have been termed as a model minority group. The writer cites various incidents from history and puts forward that members of Indian diaspora are ambivalent about their racial identity, that grants them status of 'separate but equal' to Americans.

**(5) New Urges in Post Colonial Literature: Widening Horizons** edited by **Sunita Sinha** (2009) provides a collection of scholarly articles on subaltern voices, multiculturalism, decolonization and hybridization. It is an inclusive collection of twenty one scholarly articles covering the literatures of India, America, Africa and Australia. The book critically inspects the pertinence of postcolonial theoretical concepts and examines the conflict between tradition and modernity, empowerment and disempowerment, and notions of development as associated with perspectives of gender, race and subalternity. The book throws light on the issues tackled by modern theorists and offers an assortment of enlightening insights on the aspects of Postcolonial studies. In one article entitled “Selling the Idea of India in Recent Indian English Fiction”, the writer Shubha Tiwari poses a thought provoking notion of significance and status of language. She opines that there are great writers in India such as Premchand or Jai Shankar Prasad, but unfortunately they do not get as much public interest as Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh and others because the Hindi language of the former writers remains under shadow of English language, which dominates the literary scenario. She also raises a question that ‘when an Indian writer writes a novel, she is expected to write about India, now what kind of ideas about India sell and what kind of ideas don’t.

In another paper ‘Immigrant Experience and Pain of Exile in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Namesake*’, the writer Srutimala Duara remarks that the process of creating a new home in alien land by losing identity and alienating one’s self from a culture is very well developed in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Namesake*. To set up a new life in the cold, closed and stranger land of America, the people leave behind not only their family, relatives and friends but also the warmth and lively world of India.

**(6) Writers of Indian Diaspora: Theory and Practice** is a collection of essays edited by **Jasbir Jain** (1998). In this collection, various writers across the globe characterize their opinion on culture and migration. Scholars from India and abroad and Indians and non-Indians have contributed in this volume by providing different perspectives of different cultures in their essays. Theoretical formulations of diaspora theory, comparative perspectives, and reception theories have been voiced by various authors. Writers like Uma Parameswaran and Ashish Gupta depict their subjective experience of migration. Theoretical formulations are critiqued by Gurbhagat Singh and David Stouck. Some authors like P. A. Abraham, B. R. Nagpal, Jasbir Jain and Shyam Asnani present

comparative contexts in studying diasporic works while other writers like Ameena Kazi Ansari, Jancy James, Anisur Rahman, B. Chandrika, Veena Singh, Sonal Baxi, etc. write on individual author. Many essays of the book critically evaluate fictions, memoirs, poetry and drams written by renowned writers like Bharati Mukherjee, M. G. Vassanji, Kamala Markandaya, Rohinton Mistry, Ashish Gupta and others. The volume presents a novel perspective to post colonial assessments and analysis of diasporic literature.

Significant questions pertaining to the concepts of 'nation' and 'home' are raised in the essays for example, the title of Uma Parameswaran's article "Home is where your feet are, and may your heart be there too!" embarks to resolve prominent conflict confronted by diasporic people regarding which place is to be addressed as 'home' - the place and country of their origin or their present residence place in diaspora. It is suggested by Uma Parameswaran that by accepting the current place of habitation as home, one can begin to remove the differences between homeland and adopted land.

**(7) William Safran (1991) in *Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return*** states that in contemporary time, the term 'diaspora and 'diasporic community' are popularly used as metaphoric designations for various groups of people – immigrants, expatriates, refugees and alien residents. He extends Walker Connor's definition of diaspora that it is a segment of people living outside the homeland and share various attributes and adds: (i) they or their forefathers have been scattered from their origin place to two or more foreign region, (ii) they maintain shared reminiscence and myth about native land, (iii) they feel and think that the host society will never accept them completely and feel alienated, (iv) they consider their ancestral land to be their real home and keep a desire that they would ultimately return to it and (v) they feel that they should be loyal in maintaining their original homeland and to its security and prosperity (83-84). He compares Armenian diaspora with Jews Diaspora and opines that they both share similar situations. Armenians lived outside their native land like Jews and established various external centers of culture and religion. He also compares Polish diaspora with Jewish Diaspora and Armenian diaspora. He refers to Maghrebi and Portuguese immigrants in France and Turkish Gastarbeiter in Germany and consider them as diaspora but opines that they were not forcibly expelled from their native country unlike Jews and Armenians. Safran also talks about Palestanine Diaspora, Parsi Diaspora, Indian Diaspora, Chinese Diaspora and Cuban Diaspora.

**(8) Dr. Abhisarika Prajapati** (2013) in her research paper **Paradigm of Diasporic Sensibility and Cultural Agony in Major Indian Women Novelists** lays emphasis on how women define their self-identity in diaspora and how do they handle the experience of alienation and negotiate the cultural assimilation in the settled land. Dr. Prajapati states that the situation of women in diaspora is similar to that of ‘to be or not to be’ conflict of Hamlet, as they also come across intricate situations of whether to cling to old cultural values or to discard them and embrace new cultural values. According to her, culture is usually a sum total of emotional, philosophical, mental and physical resources of a country. It is a set of values and reality of life. Women are often prescribed the duty of preserving culture by society, but in the post colonial time, they come across cultural conflict. Dr. Prajapati opines that migration experiences of men differ from migration experiences of women and further, women’s identities differ by space and class. She talks about works of Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri and Kiran Desai. Anita Desai delineates the psychological condition of women and their existence in her novels. Desai also explores female sensibility and the inner psyche of women is often a central theme in her works. Bharati Mukherjee portrays a contradictory portrayal of women in her two novels *Jasmin* (1989) and *Wife* (1997). *Jasmin* tells a story of a young Indian girl whose American dreams soon gets shattered and she transforms herself into an adventurer girl. The other novel *Wife* also presents a transformation of the female character but in a negative way. Dimple, a dutiful Indian wife somehow becomes the murderer of her own husband. Her dreams of comforts and prosperity in America not only disappoint her but also shed a negative and cruel impression on her. Jhumpa Lahiri in her works focuses on the mindscape and cultural distress of women. Intricacies of human relationships are well tackled by Lahiri. Kiran Desai records her own experience of departing from India in her novel *Inheritance of Loss* (2006). Some characters of Kiran Desai are shown embracing traditional values while others choose to reject them. Thus, Dr. Prajapati presents diasporic feminine sensibility as is reflected in major Indian women writers of diaspora.

**(9) Diasporic Women in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Namesake***, a research paper by **Indu B.C.** (2013) explains cultural conflict, sense of isolation, and dilemma felt by immigrant women characters especially Ashima in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Namesake* (2003). The character of Ashima is a true representative of Indian women migrants. The women like Ashima are not really ready to change themselves or to accept the host country’s culture yet they are influenced by host culture. They continue their practice of following native

culture but it brings them distress lately as they cannot whole heartedly belong to America and nor to India and thus face a *trishanku* experience. Furthermore, identity crises, feelings of loss and unsustainable relationships between parents and children intensify their diasporic feelings. For first generation women migrants it is extremely difficult to get accustomed to American way of life. The first generation migrants proudly enjoy their cultural past and hesitate to violate cultural values; on the contrary, the second generation shows least respect to their parents' culture. Through Ashima's portrayal, Jhumpa Lahiri demonstrates pain of women living in an alien country

**(10) M. Sangeetha** (2013) in her research paper **Emancipation of Women in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Novel *The Mistress of Spices*** demonstrates representation of liberated female characters in Divakaruni's work. Indian women have been portrayed as dependent throughout her life; during her childhood she is dependent upon her parents, after her marriage she is dependent on her husband and during her old age, she is dependent on the mercy of son and daughter-in-law. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni was surprised to observe few depictions of friendship between women and her dependency throughout her life; she therefore presents images of enlightened female characters who are able to break restrictions imposed by society and lead independent life. The protagonist of the novel *The Mistress of Spices* (1997) in her pursuit of self discovery, moves from places to places and also changes her name so many times. Finally, she opens a spice store in America; here she is able to achieve herself identity while serving her customers, especially women customers through magical charms of spices. In her journey of self discovery, she passes through ups and down but helps other women in achieving liberation and is also able to emancipate herself.

**(11) Friedrich Heckmann** (1993) in his article on **Multiculturalism Defined Seven Ways** describes that the contemporary usage of the term 'multiculturalism' needs certain clarifications so as to avoid confusion. He states seven attributes of the term 'multiculturalism': (i) Multicultural society or multiculturalism is used as a marker of changes in social level and it also denotes that the homogeneous populace has become further heterogeneous. (ii) The term refers to a fact that the land has become a place for immigration in the present time and also in the future the land and its original people should be ready to accept the cultural and social consequences. (iii) Multiculturalism also shows a sense of tolerance towards outsiders; a supportive and friendly attitude towards

immigrants. (iv) The term multiculturalism itself gives a concept of culture which has not remained pure or original. In a multicultural scenario, each culture is influenced by other cultures. Furthermore, culture is a constantly growing phenomenon so here different cultures also gain opportunity for enrichment of their cultures. (V) Multiculturalism also works as an attitude to look upon certain attributes of immigrants' culture and customs such as food, tradition, celebration, spirituality, etc and perceive them as possible welcoming things in their own culture and thus to enrich their culture. (vi) On political ground for distribution of resources and rights, multiculturalism refers to ethnic community and ethnic identity a major basis for state and thus it articulates against the acculturation. (vii) To maintain balance and integration, multiculturalism neglects the requirement of common culture, identification and language. Heckmann thus simplifies multiculturalism by distinguishing its attributes.

**(12) Cultural Assimilation 'In-Between' spaces: A Study of Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland***, a chapter written by **Subrata Kumar Das** (2013) in **Dimensions of Indian diasporic Literature in English: An Exploration** talks about how native culture of diasporics gets transformed due to influence of host culture. While living in diaspora the native culture of diasporics is dominated by host culture, as a result, the assimilation of culture takes place. The diasporics begin to discard some of the values and traditions of their native culture, which are irrelevant in tune with host land and adapt host society's culture and practices. In this process of assimilation the host culture provides them in-between spaces, where 'lived culture' of diasporics evolves. As a result, the native culture doesn't remain the same as it was before migration and it becomes a new culture possessing new meanings and values. According to Stuart Hall, diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference (qtd. in Das 278). The assimilation process is not so simple, but involves complex structure. John W. Berry argues that the process of assimilation comes into existence when little interest has remained in maintenance of native culture, in such circumstances interaction with larger society takes place; the native culture gets transformed and the lived culture of the diasporics acts a counter culture to the native culture (qtd. in Das 278).

Talking about cultural assimilation in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* Mr. Das describes how lives of central characters of the novel change completely due to cultural assimilation.

In the beginning, he is hesitant to adopt American Way of Life, he even condemns his brother's act of marrying a girl of his choice and not of their parents' choice. He is even startled to find an Indian Professor Mr. Narasimhan married to an American woman in the US. But gradually Subhash's love for his brother, parents and native land starts decreasing. The liberty given by American culture and his own anonymous status compels Subhash to develop sexual relationships with women in the U.S. On the other hand, Gauri completely discards native culture on reaching the U.S. and easily assimilates with American culture. She leads an independent life and considers California as her home; it appears that she allows California to swallow her. In her quest of knowledge, she becomes all American by her behaviour, dress code and language. She discards her family, leads an independent life and also indulges in lesbian relationship. The third important character in the novel is Bela, Gauri and Udayan's daughter, who is born and brought up in U.S. She is never forced by Subhash to follow native culture and customs. Bela begins to learn Spanish language when she is in seventh grade. On reaching the age of twenty one, she discards home and works on a farm. It happens many times that Subhash is not aware of the whereabouts of Bela and Bela pays less frequent visits to her father. Subhash never interferes in Bela's choices and way of living but internally he worries for her. Bela's assimilation with American culture results in rootless and homeless life.

**(13)** In a research paper **Shifting Personalities in the Fiction of Women of the Indian Diaspora** by **Prof. Sujal Pathak and Dr. Vikas Raval** (2015), the authors explore how Indian woman plays variety of roles in diaspora and how they cope with conflict of choosing older tradition and values and newer ones. In diaspora, a woman is imposed various roles by her family and society as well and in doing so, a woman owns multiple identities. It is perceived that woman is an embodiment of culture and traditions not only in the homeland but also in the host land. But when a woman migrates to a foreign land, she is doubly marginalized, first by the patriarchal system and further gender and racial discrimination by outside world. Such challenging situations are irrelevant to male members of society who share the predominant assumption of gender hierarchy with the host land. It is only for this reason that many women writers have emerged to give voice to gender issues. As per sociological point of view the migration from birth place to an alien land imparts a sense of liberty and expands human possibilities. Zerbago Gifford in this regard opines that arrival in an alien land sometimes frees a person from restrictions of the native land; but as mentioned in many texts most women feel pride in their Asian roots,

whereas for a few, the host land appears to be giving them a promise of heaven and freedom from taboos of native land's traditions (qtd. in Pathak and Raval). Uma Majmudar divides the immigrant's attempts of adjustment into four stages: (i) shock, (ii) struggle, (iii) anxiety and (iv) adjustment (qtd. in Pathak and Raval). The literary works produced by migrant women writers demonstrate feelings of doubts, investigation, questioning, hesitations and conflict to form a new relationship with the host land. The social, cultural, racial and religious conflicts felt by the diasporic community, especially by women are very relevant here. Sense of alienation and cultural otherness compel them to get trapped between native culture and host country's culture. In Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*, Ashima and Ashoke become true representatives of native culture. Ashima is upset and disappointed by the influence of American culture on her children. She suffers pain of loss and being alone. It is only towards the end of the novel she grows some affiliation with host country, but now she neither fully belongs to America and nor to India and she thus gets into a status of trisanku. On the other hand, in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's works, immigrant women are able to get themselves liberated from various taboos and restrictions of Indian culture in America. They enjoy a free and independent life, despite facing certain problems.

**(14) Understanding the Nation: Mystifying, De-Mystifying India in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams***, a research paper written by **Mr. Soumayajyoti Banerjee and Dr. Amrita Basu** (2014) lays emphasis on concept of myth and how idea of nation is formed based on mythical elements. For this purpose, the authors present a semantic analysis of language used in the novel *Queen of Dreams*. The protagonist Rakhi is continuously haunted by the image of India. She herself has never been to India, and learns a little about India from her mother's stories. Her mother is a dream teller who came and settled in the U.S. a long time ago. For Rakhi, India seems to be an exotic place full of mysteries and legends. She is trapped between the image of imaginative India in her mind and her actual assimilation in the U.S. in the backdrop of certain difficulties of setting up her hotel business and racial attacks of the post 9/11 incident.

**(15) Dr. Faiza Hirji** (2009) in her paper **The Next Generation: Diaspora, Youth and Identity Construction** argues that various scholars have provided their definitions and features of diaspora such as Safran and Cohen, but their definitions and theory of diaspora do not encompass second and third generation, their experience and their problems. The

definition of diaspora should be elaborated so as to accommodate these generations. The departure and physical migration from one nation to the other and struggle to settle down in a new place are some of the major experiences of the first generation migrants, whereas the subsequent generations do not pass through such experiences of physical migration so they do not consider themselves as immigrants and they may or may not consider themselves as members of diaspora. For the first generation people the process of integration is much more complicated, while for the second and subsequent generation, they settle and integrate in the settled land seamlessly and for them, the settled land itself acts as native land. Right from their schooling, the second generation gets enough opportunities to get completely engrossed in the western values.

The second and subsequent generations occupy significant positions in the host land and possess immense potential for the creation and preservation of global community. On the other hand there are chances that the sense of alienation haunts the second generation and they may lead life differently without adding any value to the host land and its culture. All the second and third generation youth may or may not feel the sense of alienation but most of them possess the understanding of being different from the mainstream. They are born and raised in the host land and have never gone through migration and many of them rarely visit the homeland of their parents, yet the outside world consider them as migrant or foreigner due to their racial attributes. They are constantly reminded of their status of not belonging to the host land. In Sunaina Maira's assessment of South Asian youth in the US, it was discovered that they are constantly aware of the fact that they originally belong to South Asia despite they being born, raised and educated in the U.S. It is this discrimination which makes them feel that they do not belong to the host land and thus they become part of diaspora (qtd. in Hirji).

**(16) Mr. Suryawanshi Pravin Dadaji (2013)** in his research thesis entitled **Immigrant Feminine Experience in the works of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni** critically examines varieties of experiences that women immigrants confront in diaspora. According to the researcher, most of immigrations as depicted in Divakaruni's works happen on account of marriage, higher education, employment, fascination for western world and quest for liberty. Divakaruni's major focus in her works is on female protagonists and their humiliating experiences as Indian immigrants in the U.S. She explores various shades of their struggles for assimilation, accommodation, isolation, racism, nostalgia, cultural shock

and lack of individualism. Divakaruni's *Arranged Marriage* (1997), *Queen of Dreams* (2005), *The Mistress of Spices* (1997), *Sister of My Heart* (1999) and *The Wine of Desire* (2002) are selected by the researcher for detailed study.

Women's confrontation to the harsh realities of life as immigrants are well delineated by Banerjee in her collection of short story *Arranged Marriage*. Journey to the US excites immigrants but they are soon disappointed by realization of their restricted existence. In one of the stories from this collection, an immigrant woman suffers due to her total detachment from the home country and home culture. There are a few immigrant women too who rebel for liberty. For instance, in a story called *Affair* the female protagonist walks out of marriage due to an unhappy married life. The third chapter of the thesis deals with feminine sensibility in *The Mistress of Spices* and *Queen of Dreams*. *The Mistress of Spices* represents inner distress and struggle faced by immigrant women. The protagonist Tilo is able to achieve individuality while following responsibilities and maintaining social relationships. Apart from Tilo, there are two sets of female characters in the novel, the first set consists of those who suffer a lot due to patriarchal power and the other set consists of those who break the clutches of orthodox Indian tradition and embrace the free life that America offers them. *Queen of Dream* depicts existential issues of immigrant people. The Indian immigrants primarily struggle to maintain their identity along with safety. Their struggle for fearless existence is sometimes messed up due to racism. The second generation immigrants desire to be known as American as they are born in America, but Americans do not consider them American due to their Indian heritage. The racial riots which took place post 9/11 attack put the very existence of immigrants in danger. In the remaining chapters of the thesis the researcher deals with other fictional works of Banerjee and demonstrates how women characters suffer the patriarchal power and struggle to triumph over the supremacy of men. Divakaruni has portrayed realities of life of immigrant women through her literary works. Her short stories and novels take account of immigrant women's journey from suffering to emancipation.

**(17) Narasingaram Jayshree** (2009) in her research thesis entitled **Remapping Diasporic Sensibilities: A Critical Study of the Novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni** attempts to explore the diasporic themes and techniques of Divakaruni. The researcher evaluates four novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, namely, *Queen of Dreams*, *The Mistress of Spices*, *The Palace of Illusion* and *The Vine of Desire*. The researcher observes that Divakaruni

maintains equilibrium between native and adopted values in her narratives. In the process of acculturation, immigrant women become the ambassadors of native culture and values. But sometimes women are dependable and feel a sense of insecurity due to alienation.

The magic realism technique so often used by Divakaruni is also discussed in detail by the researcher. The magic realism combines two contradictory facets of oxymoron, the first being magical and the second being the realist, which gives the narrative a novel perspective. Divakaruni employs magic realism techniques in three of her novels namely, *The Mistress of Spices*, *Queen of Dreams* and *The Palace of Illusion*. Divakaruni uses first person narration technique so as to connect readers effectively. Her use of metaphors gives aesthetic touch to her fictions and also delights the readers. Her narration is so often enriched by including interior monologues and letters. The prominent issues faced by immigrants such as alienation, racism, conflict between old and new values, financial instability and issues of identity crises are tackled practically in her works. By employing a variety of styles and themes in her works, Divakaruni can convey significant messages to the society.

**(18)** The research thesis entitled **Native Visions and Alien Voices in the works of Jhumpa Lahiri** by **Vijay Kumar M.** (2014) explores intricate realities of Indian immigrants' lives in host countries. The researcher opines that for Jhumpa Lahiri, fiction writing serves as a medium to express her personal experience and struggle as an immigrant. Jhumpa Lahiri becomes a successful diasporic writer on account of an appeal by her parents to live as an Indian at home and her own desire to live as an American outside the home. Jhumpa Lahiri's immigrant characters live with native vision however they intermingle with alien voices. Such a perception and interaction causes conflict in their mind. The migration to alien land puts the migrant in such a situation which demands certain kind of dependence on the alien society. The first generation immigrants in Jhumpa Lahiri's works live their lives as brilliant settlers with a sense of perseverance. They are unable to enroot themselves in the alien land, therefore they are tangled in dual status, and they are neither Americans nor Indians. Furthermore as the formative years of their lives are passed in India, they could discriminate the traditions and lifestyle of their host country from their native country. Their desire and ability to assimilate with the native country are often marginal. The second generation being born and brought up in the new land finds a suitable environment to adopt the lifestyle and culture of the host country. They come

across conflict when they are forced to adhere to native culture and customs. The first generation is only exposed to multitude of cultures, but the second generation is the result of bi-cultural progeny.

The psychological impacts of diaspora are discussed in detail by the researcher. He observes that alienation, loneliness and sense of exile are some of the inseparable aspects in an immigrant's life. The psychological interface between self and society and between two generations reveals mysterious facets of human psyche. The memories, nostalgia and longing for return are prominent features among most of the first generation immigrants. Their dressing, food, language and lifestyle mostly remain unchanged which differentiate them from other Americans and at the same time it also alienates them. They do not possess any intention to appear different from Americans but their psyche does not allow them to give up their original identity.

**(19) The Experience of Indian Immigrants: A Critical Analysis of Select Works of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni**, a research thesis by **R. Rajeshwari** (2015) explores evolution of diasporic literature especially in reference to South Asian Diasporic Literature. Migration of people from eastern countries to western countries has brought significant social, economical and cultural changes and literature is also not left untouched. Many South Asian immigrant writers gave voice to their immigrant experience in their literary work. The researcher evaluates biographical aspects of the novelist Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and critically assesses how her life and her immigrant experience find expression in her novels and short stories. The initial excitement of immigrants soon confronts the harsh reality of socio-cultural conflicts they face in the host society. Immigrants surely face issues of identity and cultural conflict, but the thing which affects them more is racial discrimination. Despite their struggle, the Indian immigrants retain Indianness on American land. Memory and cultural heritage play a crucial role in preservation of native culture and it also continues their link with home land. Immigrants' ethnic identity and cultural heritage uphold their morale and it is only for this reason they are able to survive from abuse or misfortune.

The researcher also discusses the existence of dominance of patriarchal power in diaspora and how it affects women's lives. The patriarchy is such a social set up where there is a dominance of male partners. It demonstrates that the power to control resides with men. Such a patriarchal mindset is prominent among many diasporic men. As a result, the

diasporic women are doubly marginalized; first by the alien society and secondly by male members of the family. Divakaruni herself witnessed the oppressed condition of diasporic women and to extend help to such oppressed diasporic women, she co-founded an organization called 'Maitri', which served South Asian Women in oppressive condition. In her short stories and novels, Divakaruni presents harsh realities of immigrant women and how they negotiate with such situations.

The researcher also opines that the intergenerational conflict in diaspora arises due to generation gap and it is further aggravated by cultural contradictions. As both the first and the second generation members are born and raised in completely contradictory countries and with dissimilar cultural scenarios, there surely arises a generation gap between these two. Divakaruni's characters continuously make efforts to locate themselves in the entirely unfamiliar space of the settled country. Their continuous efforts to form identity affect the dynamics of family relation and the problematic generation gap brings adverse results. In her novels and short story collections like *Queen of Dreams* (2005), *The Mistress of Spices* (1997), *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives* (2001), *Arranged Marriages* (1997) and so on, some characters easily and quickly accept the process of acculturation while some characters deny acculturation. The first generation immigrants remain attached to values of native land and native culture even after spending several decades abroad, whereas the second generation chooses the lifestyle and cultural practice of the host country. The researcher opines that psychological counseling is required to reinstate harmony in family. The cultural conflict and identity conflicts faced by them can be mediated and such negotiation can lead towards creation of new family values.

**(20) S. Sujaritha** (2009) in her doctoral thesis **Diasporic Chronotope in Women's Fiction: A Select Study** analyses historical and cultural aspects in various novels including Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003), Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2003), Amy Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (2001), SKY Lee's *Disappearing Moon Café* (1990), Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* (1981) and Bapsi Sidhwa's *An American Brat* (1997). The writers chosen by the researcher belong to different diasporas namely Bangladeshi-English, Indian-American, Chinese-American, Chinese-Canadian, Japanese-Canadian and Pakistani-American respectively. The common characteristics of diaspora such as identity confusion, cultural conflict, discrimination, nostalgia and survival are explained in details and are chosen as basic parameters for research. Russian literary scholar M. M. Bakhtin's

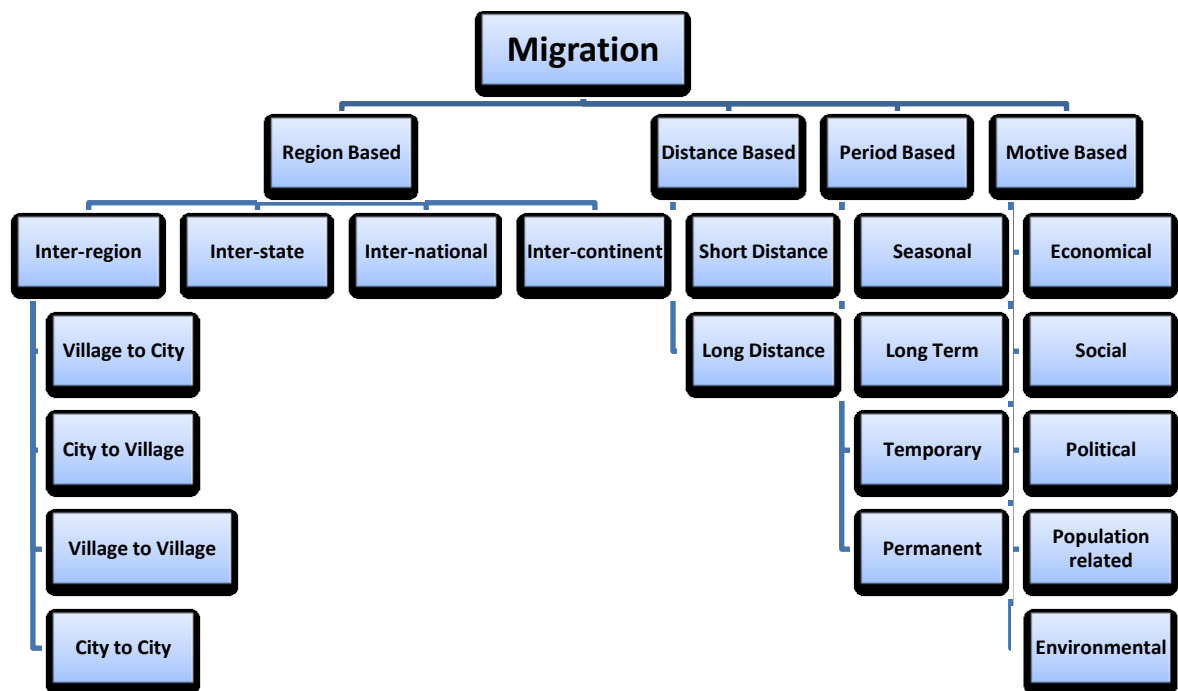
theory of history with reference to temporal aspects as discussed in his essay *Form of Time and Chronotope in the Novel* is also taken into consideration to apply attributes of time and space to the primary sources. Amy Tan, Sky Lee and Joy Kogawa represent history by depicting familial situations and milieus related to their communities in their work *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, *Disappearing Moon* and *Obasan* respectively. These writers lay emphasis on the past and expose pitiable situations of their people in the host society. The narrators in these three novels reconstruct past and represent their past and present conditions such as historical reality of discrimination experienced by Japanese-Canadian people after the Second World War as depicted by Joy Kogawa in *Obasan*. The other two novels *The Bonesetter's Daughter* and *Disappearing Moon* depict familial history and their life in their native land China and in settled land the US. A key method used in literature for representation is temporal and as a result nothing can be explained beyond the passage of time. If the passage of time is removed from its connection to past and present, the validity of present is lost. The diasporic writers give importance to time factor by showing their narrator's shift from past to present and from present to past and simultaneously to the geographical space where he or she is located. The other three novels, *Brick Lane*, *The Namesake* and *American Brat* put emphasis on cultural values of space and how it moulds the lifestyle of the immigrant community. The setting of these novels consists of two locations: homeland and settled land. The novels reveal that in the early period of settlement on the new land, the migrant communities face various issues. At this juncture, if the migrant community shows desire to make compromise and is able to assimilate in settled land, then the problems are subdued. But if they are not able to make compromise or adjust themselves in the new land, it will lead towards helplessness, alienation, identity issue and discrimination. In reading of diasporic work, social and cultural aspects of life cannot be overlooked. All six writers mentioned above are able to utilize time and space so as to deal with their characters' split identities and fragmented consciousness.

## **2.3 Theorizing Diaspora**

### **2.3.1 Migration to Diaspora**

Migration is a very nature of each and every life form on the earth. From the beginning of the time, human beings have been moving from one place to the other for various purposes

such as hunting, search for food and water, agriculture, safety, social, political or economical purpose or for personal fulfillment. Invention of wheel and vehicles gave boost to transportation of people and goods. In one sense, migration means to move from one place to the other for residential purpose. The temporary movements from one place to the other for picnic, shopping or business trips cannot be considered migration. Thus transfer from one residential place to a new residential place is called migration. The migration can be within a country or outside the country. A classification of migration can be given as under.



**Fig. – 2.1 Classification of Migration**

The above chart represents in detail the flow and types of various migration movements. Human history has witnessed almost all the above mentioned types of migration. The migration may open up opportunities and at the same time it may bring with it certain challenges. The culture of two different places could interact and create a multicultural environment or give birth to new culture due to migration. The process of migration brings changes to multiple stakeholders. It impacts the place and people which they have left, place and people of the new land and the migrants are largely affected by the migration process.

When migration is done outside the political boundary of a nation for a long period and the migrant permanently opts to reside in the host nation, it gradually becomes diaspora. The main difference between migration and diaspora is that in diaspora, the migrant people maintain a strong bond with their native country, the place of their origin and their cultural roots unlike migration. In migration, people move from one place to another, the place can be within or outside the political border of the nation and there is generally a specific motive behind the migration. According to A. K. Sahoo and Brij Maharaj, migration becomes diaspora when it fulfils four conditions: (i) a collective ethnic consciousness, (ii) an active associative life, (iii) contacts with the land of origin through various types of mediums and (iv) there should be relations with other groups of the same ethnic origin spread over the world (5). Following images help to demonstrate the difference between migration and diaspora. The figure 2.2 represents diaspora and the figure 2.3 represents migration.



**Fig. – 2.2 Diaspora (Doyle)**



**Fig. – 2.3 Migration (Lawrence)**

According to William Safran, diaspora refers to expatriate minority communities which have dispersed from an original center to two or more peripheral or foreign regions (83). Safran characterizes six fundamental qualities in his meaning of diaspora. As indicated by him, for something to be called as diaspora there ought to be a dispersal from home country to at least two new places; those individuals who are away from their country have an aggregate memory about their country; they have a conviction that they will consistently be incredible in their host state; they glorify their assumed hereditary home; there is a conviction that all individuals from that society ought to be focused on the support or rebuilding of the country and they keep on relating, actually or vicariously, to

that country somehow, and their ethno collective awareness and solidarity are significantly characterized by the presence of such a relationship (83-84).

Robin Cohen agrees with Safran's definition but gives additional features of diaspora. Cohen opines that one's dispersal from native place to alien place is often traumatic. There may arise challenging relationships with the host society and lack of acceptance may create desire for return (17). He describes following attributes of diaspora in his monumental work *Global Diaspora: An Introduction*:

- i. Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions.
- ii. Alternatively or additionally, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions.
- iii. A collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history, suffering and achievements.
- iv. An idealization of the real or imagined ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation;
- v. The frequent development of a return movement to the homeland that gains collective approbation even if many in the group are satisfied with only a vicarious relationship or intermittent visits to the homeland.
- vi. A strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history, the transmission of a common cultural and religious heritage and the belief in a common fate.
- vii. A troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group.
- viii. A sense of empathy and co-responsibility with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement even where home has become more vestigial.
- ix. The possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism. (17)

Cohen further describes five kinds of diaspora namely: (i) Victim diaspora (examples: Jews, Africans, Armenians, etc), (ii) Labour diaspora (examples: Indian, Chinese, etc.), (iii) Imperial (example: British), (iv) Trade (examples: Chinese, Lebanese, etc.), and (v) Cultural diaspora (example: Parsi) (18)

According to Vertovec, in *Three Meanings of Diaspora: Exemplified among South Asian Religions* the term Diaspora sometimes refers to a community which has been deterritorialized (277). By de-territorialized, he means a population, whose current place of residence isn't the same from which they descended and hence their socio-political ties extend the border of their present day residence. Vertovec propounds three categories of diaspora: (i) 'Diaspora' as a Social Form, (ii) 'Diaspora' as a Type of Consciousness and (iii) 'Diaspora' as a Mode of Cultural Production (278). Discussing about the first meaning, Vertovec gives a detailed list of commonly discussed perceptions of Diaspora as discussed earlier and adds the idea of "triadic relationship", a progressing exchange that streams between the scattered diaspora, their new nation of living and their native land. As indicated by Vertovec, the second meaning of diaspora as a sort of consciousness is a mindfulness that communities possess regarding their status of homed away from home. Vertovec's third and last meaning of diaspora is its role as cultural creations. As indicated by him, diaspora can "include the creation and recreation of transnational social and cultural trends". This third aspect largely lays emphasis on fluidity of constructed styles and identities among diasporic communities and it points to significance of elevated level of hybridity and syncretism found in numerous diaspora.

From above discussion, it is clear that diaspora refers to a group or community which is scattered in the various parts of the world that shares common inheritance of their native land. In diaspora, people maintain deep connections with their homeland. Their intimacy with homeland and home culture affects their present identity. The diaspora also opens up space for new social interactions and cultural negotiations. The result of such interactions and negotiations can lead towards creation of hybrid culture and hybrid identity. Homi Bhabha's idea of 'Hybridity' which is largely derived from Edward Said's *Orientalism* becomes significant here. Bhabha believes that culture is not an inert entity and therefore it cannot be fixed to any particular space and time. The concept of 'uncontaminated culture' is fictitious. Bhabha sees culture not in its static nature, but characterized by change, flux and transformative attributes. The fluidness of culture enables it to remain perpetually in motion. It is a melting pot of various distinct elements which are frequently being added and which are regularly transforming cultural identities. Each culture is distinguished by mixedness to which Bhabha calls 'cultural hybridity'. Diaspora becomes a hotspot for cultural hybridity as it generates space where different cultural groups interact with one another and all are influenced by one another.

Another term closely related to 'hybridity' is 'Third Space'. It is a postcolonial sociolinguistic theory of identity given by Bhabha. Bhabha opines that every single social articulation and frameworks are developed in a space that he calls the 'Third Space of enunciation' (37). The idea of the third space is used as a socio-cultural term to assign shared space, as separate from the home (first space) or work (second space). It is a hybrid cultural space where individuals can pass through a sense of transformative self and identity in connection to other people. From a basic perspective, first and second spaces are two unique and conceivably clashing groupings where individuals interact physically and socially, for example, home and school. Third space is the in-between, or hybrid space, where the first and second spaces work together to generate a new third space of knowledge and discourse. For Bhabha, the acknowledgment of this conflicted space of cultural identity may assist us with overcoming the exoticism of cultural diversity. It is the 'in-between' space that possesses the concern and significance of culture, and this is the thing that makes the idea of hybridity so significant.

The literature that came out of diasporic experience has caught the attention of readers and critics. Two types of writings have evolved out of diaspora. The first type deals with Diasporic experience of the subject and the second type focuses on the studies on diaspora. Tololyan calls these types as 'Emic Diaspora' and 'Etic Diaspora' respectively (648). The emic diaspora is in nature autobiographical and on the other hand the etic diaspora denotes scholarly work on Diaspora. Here the method of representation matters a lot.

The diasporic works mostly deal with two contradictory perspectives of the migrant community: attachment to native land and desire to belong to the host land. This results in the birth of hybrid generation. The diasporic people are multicultural and multilingual and they cannot entirely associate themselves to a particular single culture. A new subset of culture evolves out of multicultural influence and this could be a combination of both the cultures, the best from both the cultures are adopted, but at the same time a sense of being caught between two worlds leaves them belong to neither.

When a diasporic writer records his or her experience or observation in the literary work, it is largely realistic, still sometimes imaginative perspectives of the writer influence the realistic approach. Jasbir Jain calls it 'split narrative' ("Dislocation and Multiculturalism: Essays in Homage to Professor R K Kaul" 76). Jain distinguishes between past and modern diasporic literature. She finds that the diasporic literature of the earlier period had a

different history and heritage; there was colonial influence whereas the modern diasporic works talk more about alienation, identity confusion, success and failures.

Nostalgia and displacement are some of the general traits of diasporic literature. According to Salman Rushdie (1991), migrants at certain point of time feel a sense of loss and they crave for the past. Their physical departure from the native land makes them feel that their association with native land is lost forever and they will not be able to reclaim it. As a result, diasporics are left with the concept of imaginative homeland so when they write about India, it is India of their mind.

In diaspora, the experience of alienation and identity confusion occurs mostly due to a diasporic's status of being displaced. The first and foremost sentiment which bothers diasporic is dislocation. There could be various reasons behind this dislocation as people might have accepted this dislocation voluntarily or involuntarily. The voluntary migration could take place for education, vocation or fulfillment. The non voluntary migration could occur due to exile, marriage (in case of women), and lack of opportunities in home country and unhealthy social or political environment. Such situations may compel people to embrace migration as an escape from their unfavorable situation. Their status of being dislocated from their native country disappoints them. They constantly attempt to rebuild the image of their home country, past association and belongingness in their mind and attempt to situate themselves in their nostalgic past. In such attempts, the diasporics cannot feel at home with the host land and cling to nostalgic past and in doing so knowingly or unknowingly their reality is overlooked. Nostalgia creates an illusionary picture of the native land. By seeking shelter of illusionary world, the diasporic unconsciously lives with pretentious notions of comforts and safety which continuously keep him or her away from reality.

Many times, the first generation migrants create an imaginary border between themselves and the outside world which appears to them strange as well as hostile. Not only their dislocation but also their hesitation in mingling with others in the host land becomes reasons for loneliness. However judicious attempts they make to mingle with the other community, sometimes racial discrimination make it difficult for them. It becomes intensely difficult for diasporic people to escape from feelings of loss and loneliness. So externally they confront the force of racial discrimination and inwardly they suffer from pang of being alien.

In the initial period of migration, the diasporic people show desire to adjust on the land. They show readiness to accept the host country's culture and customs, but at the same time huge differences between the cultures of native land and the host land is not easily accepted by many of them. It takes a long way to get completely engrossed in the host land's culture, but diasporic cannot wholly feel at home there as even after spending a long time in the host land, they regard the host land as another country and not as their own country. When the first generation experiences racial discrimination on the host land, it is not a big deal for them, as they are continuously conscious of their being alien and minority status in the host land. But the case can be acute for the second generation as the discrimination affects them emotionally and psychologically. The second generation being born and brought up in the settled land considers the settled land as their own land, they embrace its culture and way of life as their own, but when they come across discrimination, they are hurt and they begin to question their identity and roots. Thus discrimination becomes one of the major reasons for the diasporic dilemmas.

The ground on which cultural discrimination occurs in the host land is host culture's attempt of preserving its autonomy. The host land considers the practice of alien cultures of different migrants as a menace to its own culture and as a result, it persuades the host society to create a wall to differentiate its culture from other alien cultures. Due to the arrival of migrant communities of different cultures in the settled land, there appears a multicultural scenario. At this point, the culture of settled land feels a threat of disintegration of its own culture, so it doesn't allow much access to immigrants. The novelist Jhumpa Lahiri shares similar experience in one of her interviews with Tina Srebotnjak, she says,

“I was a stranger to the walled off World of America. Real life seems to be not entirely accessible as American Culture was walled off. I didn't have access to it. I was living in a place where real life seemed to be not entirely accessible to me as the American culture was sort of walled off. And I had a certain occasional access to it, but when I did enter it was a kind of trace passing, because of the way and people who raised me and how and where they were coming from both literary and in a more sense.”

According to Wieviorka, racism arises in diaspora when the national majorities of the hostland consider the migrants to be the main cause of their social problems; they therefore

draw a racial discrimination line that differentiate the natural race and native culture of the host land (71). Due to such reasons diasporic communities become victim of cultural and racial discrimination. Furthermore, such circumstances also create situations in which native people do not even feel hesitant to take laws for granted and racial attacks also take place. Religion and way of life led by migrants also become subject for contempt. The national identity of the migrants is also bullied by the settled community when they recognize the identity of a particular migrant group.

Identity confusion is one of the major dilemmas felt by the diasporic community. Search for identity and identity confusion have become prominent themes in diasporic literature. The first generation migrants cling to their native land and attempt to preserve native identity. The identity problem starts mostly from the second and the subsequent generations of the diasporic community. Being born and brought up in the settled land, the second and afterward generation consider the settled land as their home town, whereas the society consider them outsider, as a result they begin to question their identity. They have a little knowledge about their ancestors living in the native land of their parents. They possess least affiliation with the country of their origin, so they cannot consider the home country of their parents as their own, but at the same time, they develop certain affiliations with society and institutions of the settled land and thus call it their own. Contradictory to their notions, the settled land does not easily accept them as their own. As a result, they attempt to explore their roots and identity and find that they do not completely belong to the native land of their parents and neither to the host land, where they have no roots.

### **2.3.2 Features of Diasporic Writing**

There are no certain rules and regulations for diasporic literature, yet some features of diaspora are common in diasporic literature. Primarily diasporic literature deals with the theme of dislocation, identity issues, cultural conflict, nostalgia, rootlessness, generation gap and adjustment. The writers of diaspora may choose any of the aforesaid aspects associated with immigrant's experience and explore diasporic sensibility. Considering the theme of such literature, the writers of diaspora can be distinguished into two kinds. The first kind consists of such writers who focus on their native land in their writings and the other kind includes those writers who talk about the host land. The former kind of writers portray pictures of their native land in their novels for a variety of reasons, it could be an

act of criticizing it, or to make representation of native country before the foreign readers or an act of recreation of their past memory of native land. Whereas the later type of the writers choose host land as setting of their work, by doing so they represent various impacts of host land on them and demonstrate discrimination and cultural conflict they come across. They may also talk about their improved situations and availability of opportunities in the host country. The writers of diaspora can further be distinguished on the basis of their generation. In most cases, the diasporic literature produced by the first generation writers differs from the diasporic literature produced by the second and subsequent generation writers. In the writings of first generation writers, the location often shifts from settled land to native land and vice versa. They are well versed with the culture of their native land but are beginners for the culture of settled land, so they are able to glorify their native culture and their past life in native country and they are also able to depict their adjustment with the customs and culture of settled land. On the other hand, the second generation immigrants are well acquainted not only with the culture and customs of their parents' native land but also with the culture and customs of settled land because of their upbringing amid values of both the land. They approve the practice and values of the settled land more than the practice and values of native land of their parents on account of their major interactions with the outside world. They attempt to represent the same through their writings. They glorify the notions of liberty and individuality imparted by western culture in their works.

## **2.4 Dilemmas of Diasporic Community**

Diasporic community comes across various problems when they try to settle in the host land. Loneliness, alienation, survival problem, changes in way of life and discrimination are some of the major issues diasporic community withstand. The reasons behind their predicaments lie in their alien status on the new land which may or may not appear supportive always. If a plant is cut from its root and is replanted in a different soil which has adverse property for the growth of the plant, the result could be unpredictable. Likewise migrant people come across survival crises while laying their feet in the alien land. Multiple barriers come into existence when they try to interact with the outside world. Culture, language, society and environment also hinder their interaction. The Novelist Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni shares her personal experience in one of her interviews, "When I immigrated in the 70s, there was so much I did not know about

America, that was the pre-information age, and I just didn't have access. I just came here with some very mistaken notions of what American life would be like.”

Dislocation creates feelings of loss among diasporics which leads towards loneliness. It affects diasporics physically and psychologically as well. In the words of Peepre, “Diasporic literature is about loneliness and alienation of the displaced person, the struggle to survive in the harsh circumstances, the battle to retain their heritage culture while adjusting to the strange, new host culture, and the search for tradition and roots by the partially acculturated second and third generation.” (80)

When people migrate to a new country, the foreign environment is not always suitable to all and may affect their health. Furthermore, the reason for their migration act as a catalyst here; for those who had to accept migration by force, their miseries will be acute when compared with those who migrated willingly. The state of being displaced gradually makes diasporic feel lonely. A diasporic is always conscious of his status of being in the minority, alien and lonely in the foreign country. To escape from lonely status, the diasporic begin to dwell in the imagined place. They begin to follow their native culture and customs so that they can feel at home. In most cases, a diasporic stands different in the settled land due to color of skin and by following the culture and tradition of the old native country. As a result, he or she becomes victim of discrimination. Parekh also presents a similar view that any community or culture will never show complete equality to other minority cultures (411). Sometimes where there is economical, political or social upheaval in the society, the diasporics can become an immediate subject and restrictions are often imposed on them. Race based discrimination is inescapable issue faced diasporic community in the settled land. The religion and religious practice of diasporic community may also become subject for discrimination. These kinds of discrimination may become severe for certain group of diasporic who belong to economically weaker section or are struggling for survival in the settled land. At the same time the case of discrimination with educated, rich and well established diasporic group may be less frequent.

Though diasporic people come across various kinds of troubles in the settled land, diaspora is not always a game of loss. In many cases, the diasporics feel that the settled land gives them opportunities, liberty and dignity. This leads towards the thought of acceptance. The diasporic community perceives both the positive and negative picture of the host land. Though diasporic communities go through lots of ups and downs economically, socially

and emotionally in the early stage of their arrival in the settled land, they do not feel to leave the settled land at later periods. They learn to live with acceptance and adjustments. They may also begin to believe that it is only in this land (settled land) their children would have a bright future and thus they do not keep desire to permanently move back to native land.

## **2.5 Indian Immigrants: An Overview**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has opened up a bundle of opportunities through communication services, fastest transportation and acceptance of western values and as a result the process of globalization. All the parts of the globe have come closer and the entire world is going to become a single entity. Once upon a time in India, only a handful people used to travel abroad and orthodox people considered it ill omen to cross the sea, whereas in today's time, there could be hardly any community in India, whose members are not settled abroad. Indian people have been residing across all the continents of the world. Indians have also contributed significantly in development of host countries. Indians migrating to foreign land are categorized by 3 designations based on their citizenship. These are NRI, PIO and OCI.

NRI refers to Non Resident Indian, who possesses citizenship of India but has migrated to a foreign land. He or she basically comes from India but permanently lives out of India. Sometimes East Indian or Asian Indian words are also used to address them on host land. Sometimes they are also called 'desi'. Any Indian citizen who goes to or lives abroad for (a) employment, (b) business, (c) vacation and (d) government deputation, etc. but spends 182 days or less in India is considered N.R.I. Whereas P.I.O. means a person of Indian origin, he or she doesn't hold citizenship of India but his or her roots lie in India. The government of India issues P.I.O. card to such people and consider them of Indian Origin till their fourth generation. This P.I.O. card provides them some concession from various restrictions applicable to foreign citizens in India such as economical restraints; visa and work permit related rules. From January, 2006 onwards, The Government of India has initiated a scheme called 'Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI)' for all persons of Indian origin who were eligible citizens of India on 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1950 with certain conditions. An Overseas Citizen of India is given many privileges such as multiple entries and life-long visa for visiting India, exemption from registration with Foreign Registration Office for

any length of stay in India and many other advantages in economic, financial and educational fields.

## **2.6 Summary**

The present chapter has attempted to review articles, research papers and research thesis written or related to South Asian Diaspora with special reference to Indian Diaspora. Definition, theory and various features of Diaspora have been examined and attention has been paid to features of diasporic literature. The present chapter has also built up a platform for evaluation of diasporic sensibility by discussing major issues the diasporic community confronts. Considering whatever discussed in the second chapter, works of Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni will be evaluated in the subsequent chapters.

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## CHAPTER 3

# Diasporic Approach to Selected Works of Jhumpa Lahiri

### 3.1 Diasporic Approach to *The Namesake*

#### 3.1.1 Introduction

Jhumpa Lahiri's debut novel *The Namesake* (2003) compellingly tells the story of a Bengali family and echoes the uncomfortable condition of immigrants, tension between east and west, familial relationship and freedom. The novel is a life story of Indian immigrant Ganguli Family in the US and especially of their American born son Gogol Ganguli. Lahiri inspects sociological and psychological analysis of the Gogol's struggling experience with his hyphenated identity. The immigrants' attempt of settling their feet on a foreign land itself is difficult and a sense of loneliness, cultural conflict and identity confusion make it complicated. Being a child of immigrant parents, the idea of exile pervades in the writings of Jhumpa Lahiri and the novel *The Namesake* also contains her personal experiences. In Jhumpa Lahiri's case, her parents were first generation migrants in England, Jhumpa Lahiri was born in England and her family migrated to the US, when she was only two years old. She opines that to come to the US was like an idea of crossing over, being attracted to it but not feeling a part of it but living there. Jhumpa Lahiri wanted to be American when she was young, but it was a kind of betrayal against her parents as her parents didn't want her to believe that she is an American, they wanted her to be called Indian. About her upbringing in the US, Jhumpa Lahiri said in an interview:

I didn't feel American and I was taught not to be. They [her parents] didn't want to call myself American because this was something they found distressing. It was however not uncommon. As when Britishers came to India and lived here for more

than two centuries, the Britishers who lived here didn't consider themselves Indian at all, they remained Britishers.

In her novels, Jhumpa Lahiri presents a view that the dilemma of identity is critical for the people who are culturally displaced. The immigrants themselves and their children grow up in two completely contradictory worlds simultaneously. The sense of exile originates among the first generation and somehow it further continues among the second generation as a sort of heritage. Talking about conflicts Jhumpa Lahiri herself faced while growing up as the child of immigrant, she revealed in her interview that as a child she wanted to please her parents and fulfill their expectation, she also wanted to meet the expectation of her American peers and at the same time she wanted to meet the expectation she put on herself to fit into American society. In a way it appears that a single person has to play divided roles which result in multiple identities. Jhumpa Lahiri effectively represents the contradictions and conflicts between east and west in innumerable things whether it is lifestyle, food and customs or family values or relationship in *The Namesake*. The novel was also adapted into a film with the same title in 2006. The present section will analyze relevance diasporic sensibility in the study of *The Namesake*.

### **3.1.2 Alienation**

*The Namesake* presents the characters who are alienated not only culturally but also psychologically. To leave one's country is to cut off from one's roots. The diasporic community's separation from their native culture governs their behavior. The cold treatment by the alien culture and the society make them feel depressed and isolated. The title of the novel *The Namesake* itself denotes the existential distress of the displaced character. The theme of loneliness and identity crises which most immigrants face in their attempts of settling down in an alien land are well delineated by Jhumpa Lahiri in *The Namesake*. Being away from native culture and language, the characters of the novel feel displaced culturally and emotionally. The novel covers the story of an Indian couple Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli. Ashoke, a young immigrant in the US returns to India to get married. He is united with Ashima through arranged marriage as per Bengali tradition. And after marriage the couple moves to the US. Here Ashoke completes his Ph.D. in Fiber optics at MIT. Soon they have their first baby boy, who is given name Gogol out of Ashoke's affiliation with the Russian author Nicolai Gogol and especially due to absence of the letter

from Ashima's grandmother, who was supposed to send suggestions for baby's name as per Bengali tradition, but the letter never reaches to them. After a few years they have their second baby girl who is named Sonia.

On reaching the US for the first time, Ashima is homesick and emotionally broken down being disconnected from her family and native country. She is worried and not ready to raise her children on the alien land. She finds it difficult to get used to American way of life. During her stay in the hospital at the time of birth of her first baby, the pain of being alone was more intense than the labour pain. She remembers that while she was bidding farewell to her family to board on a plane, all of her twenty six family members were present to give her a warm send off. But in the hospital lying on the bed she is accompanied by only American doctors and nurses. Absence of family members and relatives increases her feeling of alienation. Ashima also feels terrified thinking how she would raise her child on the land where she knows none (Lahiri, *Namesake* 6).

Ashima never feels at home in the US. Revealing her psychological condition, Lahiri writes, "For being a foreigner, Ashima is beginning to realize, is a sort of lifelong pregnancy – a perpetual wait, a constant burden, a continuous feeling out of sorts" (Lahiri, *Namesake* 49). On the other hand the experience of living in the new land is completely different for Ashoke. He does not feel homesick or lonely as Ashima does. For Ashoke home is where his feet are. For their son Gogol, there is no home at all, in his adult life he lives in rooms, changes it every year. Their daughter Sonia, who though occupies a little place in the canvas of the novel, also moves from one place to another for education and career and does not demonstrate any feelings for home or family bondage.

The traditional aspects of Bengali culture make the Ganguli family realize their displaced status as the rituals and traditions of their native culture have no place or significance in the western world. At the time of birth of their first child, Ashoke and Ashima come across a complex situation, as before discharge from the Hospital, a birth certificate is to be issued and the birth certificate requires a name. As per Bengali tradition, the baby was to be named by Ashima's grandmother living in India. Ashoke and Ashima were waiting for the letter from the grandmother containing two name options: one for boy and one for girl. In Bengali tradition, the elders choose names for new born babies in the family and in naming the children they take their time that may exceed ten to twelve years. The other Bengali people can understand this very well, but it was beyond understanding of a US doctor. As a

result, they are forced to choose an official name quickly to get discharged from the hospital. Various suggestions for the name do not suit them; they accept the hospital official's suggestion of naming the child after the name of another person, whom they greatly admire. Ashoke quickly remembers a train accident he met with at a young age and a paper from a short story of a Russian author Nikolai Gogol saved his life from the train wreck so he proposes 'Gogol' name for the child.

Furthermore, Bengali tradition of giving two names: pet name and good name becomes the root cause for all the troubles Gogol confronts on account of his name. In Bengali tradition, pet name is used by family members and friends only and the good name is for identification in the outside world. The good name appears on envelopes, on certificate, in telephone directories and in all other public communication. At the time of discharge from hospital, the couple chooses Gogol name for their child and this name is supposed to be used as pet name, by which he will be addressed by family members and friends only. They have to decide a good name for the child as well. A good name signifies enlightened characteristics, for example Ashima means 'limitless or without border', Ashoke is the name of an Indian emperor and the name symbolises 'he who transcends grief'. Pet names do not possess such aspiration. Pet names are not used officially and they are often meaningless or sometimes silly or ironic. Ashoke's pet name is Mithu and Ashima's pet name is Monu. Whenever Ashima receives a letter from her mother, she writes Ashima outside the letter, but inside she addresses her by Monu (Lahiri, *Namesake* 26). At the time of Gogol's admission in the school, they wanted the school authority to register the boy's name as Nikhil. But as the school authority does not understand the Bengali tradition of two names, the principal asks Gogol which name he would like to be called, he responds with 'Gogol'. As a result the name Gogol becomes his good name against his parents' desire of using Nikhil name in accordance with their Bengali tradition. The relevance of Bengali tradition in the United States is pointless. As a result, their cultural values have no place in the host land and this creates feelings of being culturally displaced.

Migration within diaspora is also a suffering for Ashima. From Cambridge they move to a university town outside Boston. Ashoke gets a dream job, he ever dreamed of, but for Ashima, migrating to the suburbs feels more drastic, more distressing than the move from Calcutta to Cambridge had been. After two years they purchase a home on Pemberton Road. "In her own life Ashima has lived in only five houses: her parent's flat in Calcutta, her in-laws' house for one month, the house they rented in Cambridge, living below the

Montgomerys, the faculty apartment on campus, and, lastly the one they own now. One hand, five homes. A lifetime fist” (Lahiri, *Namesake* 167). During college education, Gogol stays in New Haven in an apartment with two other students and refers to it as his ‘Home’. Ashima is irritated by Gogol’s consideration of his room as ‘home’ as Ashima herself cannot consider their owned house on Pemberton Road as their ‘home’ even after staying twenty years in America. It indicates her sense of displaced status in America.

Throughout his life since childhood, Gogol carries with him feelings of alienation. He constantly struggles to search meaning out of his name. He cannot understand his roots, he cannot share them, but he is not even an American in the core and while trying hard to live in the West, he cannot forget where he comes from. His feeling of rootlessness, sense of belonging nowhere and failure in love relations mark his existential predicament. Jhumpa Lahiri herself also felt such rootlessness. Lahiri reflects her own experience of identity confusion and alienation through Gogol’s character. Gogol and his family constantly face the pull of homeland culture and American lifestyle. To establish his root and identity, Gogol is compelled to face multiple challenges and hindrances and even after confrontation of each obstacle there is no solace. Primarily Gogol has to confront three types of obstacles. The first obstacle is his being a child of immigrant parents; the second is his constant efforts to be a part of American society and the third is his ardent desire to avoid himself from the label of ABCD. To overcome these difficulties Gogol tries his best to keep himself away from Indian culture and heritage. His parents hope that their children should receive cultural values of India in heritage but what Gogol inherits is their unpleasant state of living in an alien culture. He tries to isolate himself from his parents and their traditions. He wants to be recognized as an American man, but his name also acts as an obstacle in it, it appears like a burden for him. He constantly fights against the force of Indian culture, Indian roots and his name.

Gogol’s parents could not comprehend Gogol’s feelings of alienation. The root cause for his alienation is his name. He hates that his name is both obscured that it has nothing to do with who he is, it is neither Indian nor American but of all things a Russian. He hates having to live with such a name, a pet name that turned into a good name. When Gogol moves to New Haven for study he stays with two other persons named Brandon and Jonathan, both of whom had been notified by mail over the summer that his name is Gogol. But Gogol introduces him as Nikhil. On being asked by Brandon is Gogol his first name or last, Gogol replies, “Actually, that's my middle name, Nikhil is my first name. It got left

out for some reason” (Lahiri, *Namesake* 103). He is so fed up with his name that he has to pretend that Gogol is a separate person. Gogol of course changes his name to Nikhil, but Nikhil does not even exist for his parents and relatives living in India, it is impossible for them to remove Gogol name from their mind. On reaching college, Gogol discards his name and resorts to his original name Nikhil that he himself had rejected once, but the consequences of accepting Nikhil name back also bring challenges. “At times he feels as if he’s cast himself in a play, acting the part of twins, indistinguishable to the naked eye yet fundamentally different. At times he still feels his old name, painfully...” (Lahiri, *Namesake* 105).

In his adult life, Gogol intentionally alienates himself from his family. His visits to his parents and phone calls are less frequent. At times he tries to avoid meeting them. When Ashoke is about to go to Ohio University to spend a semester there, Ashima requests Gogol to pay a visit to home, but Gogol is reluctant. He responds, “Why do I have to see him off? Baba and I already live in different states. I’m practically as far from Ohio as I am from Boston” (Lahiri, *Namesake* 144). He knows that for his parents, the distance and travel is not as important as the relationship and family reunion is. Ashima tries to persuade Gogol to visit home by saying, ‘That’s no way to think. Please Gogol. You haven’t been home since May’ (Lahiri, *Namesake* 144). Gogol’s act of isolating himself from his family increases the loneliness of his parents. Thus feelings of alienation become permanent for Ashima and Gogol in the diaspora. Although they assimilate with the host culture and adopt liberal ways, they can’t get rid of their alienation.

### **3.1.3 Memory and Nostalgia**

The physical distance from India to the US does not affect the sympathy and feelings of Ashoke and Ashima towards their family members living in India. They maintain contact with their family members living in India through letters and telephone but crave their company and are often nostalgic about it. The first exposure of western world to Ashima is not a promising one. The cold weather and disconnection from the family become traumatic for her. She could not associate herself with American society in her initial days. She feels homesick, cries when alone and remembers her parents and their house in Calcutta. She calculates Indian time in her mind and through her inner eyes she could see the happenings of her parents’ house:

It is nine and a half hours ahead in Calcutta, already evening, half past eight. In the kitchen of her parents' flat on Amherst Street, at this very moment, a servant is pouring after-dinner tea into steaming glasses, arranging Marie biscuits on a tray. Her mother, very soon to be a grandmother, is standing at the mirror of her dressing table, untangling waist-length hair, still more black than gray, with her fingers. Her father hunches over his slanted ink-stained table by the window, sketching, smoking, listening to the Voice of America. Her younger brother, Rana, studies for a physics exam on the bed. She pictures clearly the gray cement floor of her parents' sitting room, feels its solid chill underfoot even on the hottest days...For an instant the weight of the baby vanishes, replaced by the scene that passes before her eyes... (Lahiri, *Namesake* 4-5).

Being idle at home, Ashima's feelings of loneliness increase and she takes shelter of memory and nostalgia. She reads and rereads Indian magazines and Bengali novels which she has brought with her. The letters from her parents are like a treasure of memory and she reads them again and again. Her pain of memory aggravates when she becomes pregnant. She fears that her motherhood without help, care and affection of parents will become worthless. She also feels weird that she will give birth to a child in a place most people come either to suffer or to die (Lahiri, *Namesake* 4). She direly needs the company of her parents and relatives in the hospital. After Gogol's birth, her worries increase; she cannot imagine raising her child alone in the alien country and shows desire to return to India. On the other hand Ashoke does not feel such intense feelings for home country. Of course he exhibits Indianness through a variety of things such as preferring Bengali foods, eating with hands, friendship with Bengali friends and listening Bengali songs but he doesn't feel the pain of memory and nostalgia. The only memory that haunts him is the tragic memory of his train accident that happened while he was travelling to Jamshedpur to pay a visit to his blind grandfather.

The first generation immigrants feel it troublesome to adjust with foreign culture in their initial time in diaspora. The hesitation to mingle with western people and their culture delays the process of assimilation. After Gogol's birth, Ashima begins to realize the sense of belonging when against her expectation the American people admire her baby and her neighbours extend helping hands. Gradually she begins accepting cultural aspects of America mostly for the sake of her children. Ashima herself throughout her life follows native culture, wears sari and Bata shoes, cooks Bengali food and eats with hands.

Immigrants usually tend to move towards places where there are a substantial number of people from their own community, so that it brings them familiarity and comfort zone. Ashoke and Ashima move to Cambridge where they come in contact with many people from their native land. The novel has mention of various such Bengali families such as Nandis, Mitras, Banerjees, all from West Bengal. Ashima is approached by young Bengali bachelors who bashfully inquire about her origin. Like Ashoke, these boys fly back to Calcutta and return with wives. Thus, Ganguli family's relationship with other Bengalis living nearby continues growing. They frequently organize gathering, celebrate Bengali festivals, cook Bengali dishes and talk about India so as to reduce their feelings of alienation and cherish collective memory:

The husbands are teachers, researchers, doctors, engineers. The wives, homesick and bewildered, turn to Ashima for recipes and advice.... The families drop by one another's homes on Sunday afternoons. They drink tea with sugar and evaporated milk and eat shrimp cutlets fried in saucepans. They sit in circles on the floor, singing songs by Nazrul and Tagore, passing a thick yellow clothbound book of lyrics among them as Dilip Nandi plays the harmonium. They argue riotously over the films of Ritwik Ghatak versus those of Satyajit Ray. The CPIM versus the Congress party. North Calcutta versus South. For hours they argue about the politics of America, a country in which none of them is eligible to vote. (Lahiri, *Namesake* 38)

There are several occasions on which the immigrant Bengali families organize gatherings like Durga puja (the act of worship), naming and rice ceremony of children, marriages, birthdays and deaths. They try to preserve their native culture on alien land by obeying Bengali traditions and following rituals as are followed in their native land. Though they are not related to each other by blood relation, they perform roles of *mashis* and *meshos* (aunties and uncles) for various rituals. Indian priests are called to perform ceremonies who chant Sanskrit verses. Each ceremony is celebrated with enthusiasm with small variations. They sit cross legged on the floor and eat Indian food like biriyani, vegetables, samosas (rissole), yogurt, fish curry and shrimp cutlet.

Both Ashoke and Ashima lose their parents within one decade of their migration. The letters of bad news always reach in time unlike others. The news about deaths of their family members and relatives living in India make them cry a lot, but Gogol and Sonia,

who are hardly connected to their grandparents, feel little sympathy. The distance of place is responsible for the distance of feelings as the text describes, “Gogol and Sonia are woken by these deaths in the early mornings, their parents screaming on the other side of thin bedroom walls. They stumble into their parents’ room, uncomprehending, embarrassed at the sight of their parents’ tears, feeling only slightly sad” (Lahiri, *Namesake* 63).

Ashoke and Ashima’s nostalgic feelings and memories of native culture can also be observed in the way they decorate their house. A watercolor portrait sketch by Ashima's father of a caravan of camels in the desert of Rajasthan is hung on the living room wall by Ashima. For Ashima, it’s not just a painting but it represents memory and feelings for her father. The other things they keep in their house like photographs and so on are typically about India. The second generation youngster Moushumi also exhibits cultural heritage by using Kashmiri crewelwork mat, silk pillows from Rajasthan and cast iron idol of Nataraj to beautify her house. The food habits of immigrants also demonstrate their Indianness. The first generation people prefer Indian foods and eat with hands. The second generation children mostly choose hamburgers and pizzas, but they too sometimes cook Indian food so as to make their parents happy.

Jhumpa Lahiri has skillfully depicted immigrants’ memory and nostalgia for the country and the customs left behind. The confusing and conflicting feeling of living in a place but not belonging to it is described through first generation immigrants like Ashima who cannot bear the pain of disconnection from the family and native culture. Lahiri explores the intricate situation of Indian immigrants who are caught between two countries and two cultures. The inherent native culture is left behind and the encountered alien culture is not easily acceptable to them. The connection with the homeland is kept alive by following practices of homeland and making trips to homeland regularly. Their trips to home land not only gratify their nostalgic urges but also unite them with their past. But as the time passes, the trips to native land and practices of native culture begin to subside and it paves a path for settling down in the host country by welcoming assimilation.

### **3.1.4 Cultural Assimilation**

The first generation immigrants generally do not show desire to assimilate with the western culture in their initial time after migration and they keep their cultural heritage intact.

However modest attempts they make to preserve their native culture, at a certain point of time they feel the need to assimilate with the culture of the host land to establish belongingness. The cultural assimilation process achieves rapid progress when the second generation children become part of western world by way of their school education and vocation. Ashima, throughout her life clings to native culture and values and she tries her best to impart the same to her children. She keeps herself away from westernization. Ashoke and Ashima never got influenced by western culture. While Ashima is in hospital, she finds other people pay visit to their near ones or dear ones in the hospital, they bring garlands, whereas 'it never occurred to Ashoke to buy his wife flowers.' (Lahiri, *Namesake* 12) For Ashima, Indian culture, her family and relationships are integral. She fears losing her culture being disconnected from it and is very much anxious for her children's adherence to western world. But she is not orthodox as while raising her children, as a mother she is conscious for the need of being with time and place that is why her children receive influence of western culture and way of life and it is accepted by her but with little hesitation. While raising Gogol, she teaches him poems of Tagore, shows him photographs of family members, names of deities and so on, simultaneously at every afternoon before she takes a nap she switches television on channel no. 2 and suggests Gogol to watch Sesame Street and Electric Company, in order to keep up with English, he uses at Nursery.

Ganguli family's acceptance of western culture can also be seen in their celebration of Indian as well as American festivals. For the sake of their children, Ashoke and Ashima celebrate Christmas and Easter. During puja, Gogol and Sonia are dragged from school to participate in puja, but they like Christmas more than puja (Lahiri, *Namesake* 64). Their efforts demonstrate the process of assimilating with host culture. The cultural assimilation also creates a dilemma of binary values among second generation children for example, from childhood Gogol like other immigrant children grows up with double languages, double traditions and double cultures and all these things ultimately confer him dual identities.

The first time Ashima feels connected to Cambridge is when she loses a bag of goods she purchased from the market and forgets in a train and the next day she gets it back from MBTA Lost and Found service. It was beyond her expectation to get her lost luggage back, when she tells her story to friends, they are amazed at her luck and Maya Nandi says '*only in this country*' (Lahiri, *Namesake* 43). It shows that the kind of reliable services found in the West is considered incomparable to them. Towards the end of the novel, Ashima has

learned to do things on her own. She still wears saris, puts her long hair in a bun, but she is not the same Ashima who had once lived in Calcutta. She was 19 years old when she laid her feet for the first time in the US, but she is able to befriend with American women for the first time only when she is 48 years old at the time of accepting a job at a Library. After her husband's death, she becomes alone but she has not broken her bondage with culture and relationship. She decides that for half of the year, she will live with her brother's family in India and for the other half of the year, she will live in America. Even though she had a strong concept of home, what she is left with is homelessness. Jhumpa Lahiri writes,

For thirty-three years she missed her life in India. Now she will miss her job at the library, the women with whom she's worked. She will miss throwing parties. She will miss living with her daughter, the surprising companionship they have formed, going into Cambridge together to see old movies at the Brattle, teaching her to cook the food Sonia had complained of eating as a child. She will miss the opportunity to drive, as she sometimes does on her way home from the library ... She will miss the country in which she had grown to know and love her husband. Though his ashes have been scattered into the Ganges, it is here, in this house and in this town, that he will continue to dwell in her mind. (*Namesake* 279)

Though Sonia's character is not fully developed by Jhumpa Lahiri, her gradual assimilation with American society without much difficulty is depicted by Lahiri. After her school education, she lives on her own, does a job at an environmental agency and prepares for the Law exam. Later she marries her American boyfriend named Ben and it is also accepted by Ashima. Sonia doesn't feel alienation or identity confusion as Gogol feels. One of the reasons could be her name that is recognizable by American society. She is able to lead a cheerful life in America with minimum experience of diasporic dilemmas.

The cultural assimilation process affects the concept of relationship especially among the second generation children. The narratives of the novel present a variety of relationships. Relationship combines loyalty and responsibility; it also brings dependence and restrictions as well. Concept of marriage in Indian culture conveys stable life for husband and wife, where both are loyal to each other, live for each other and care for each other. There is no scope of giving way to the third person in between. Ashoke and Ashima are flag bearers of this bondage, where marriage is a union of souls for lifetime. Ashoke and Ashima throughout their life are loyal to each other and are equally loyal to native culture and

native country. On the other hand, in western culture, the concept of marriage is assumed to have evolved as a union of bodies, which, if infatuated by the third person shifts to it. Gogol and Moushumi are apt examples of western influence. Moushumi after getting married is determined never to be dependent on her husband. Everyone in the west wants to cherish freedom, give way to desires and everything is subject to change, but there is no stability. Divorce is an ordinary thing, which is not given any deeper thought. The second generation characters depicted in the novel lead such a liberated life, where there is no familial aspiration and no regret.

In his teen age, Gogol doesn't date anyone in high school. He suffers quiet crushes, which he admits to no one, on this girl or that girl with whom he is already friends. For his parents, it is nothing to worry about as they themselves have been brought up in the same way, the novelist writes, "His parents do not find it strange that their son doesn't date, does not rent a tuxedo for his junior prom. They have never been on a date in their lives and therefore they see no reason to encourage Gogol, certainly not at his age" (Lahiri, *Namesake* 93).

In his adulthood, Gogol makes and abandons many relationships which are sometimes somehow linked with his identity and name. For the second generation, relationships mean a bundle of responsibilities and duties, which they do not wish to tolerate, instead they choose free life. When Ashoke and Ashima come to know about Gogol's affair with Ruth, they believe that Gogol is too young to get involved in this way. They also give him examples of Marriages of Bengali men who have married Americans and have ended in divorce. "It only makes things worse when he says that marriage is the last thing on his mind" (Lahiri, *Namesake* 117). After his graduation, Gogol tries to keep distance from his parents and makes attempts to absorb himself into American culture. His love affairs with Ruth, Kim and Maxine are indicative of his desire to retreat from his parents' world and traditional values. Gogol's love affairs with American girls demonstrate his wish to be part of an open minded American society where relationships are not given deeper thought.

The interaction of native culture with the host culture changes the aspects of relationship and marriage institution among diaspora groups. Gogol indulges in many love relationships and finally unites with Moushumi in bondage of marriage. Moushumi also possesses Bengali heritage as Gogol does. Their union as a couple is organized by their families. They are attracted to each other and marry within a year. In fact neither of them thought of

marrying a Bengali person ever in life and their marriage, in fact, doesn't turn out to be a bed of roses. Gogol does not feel comfortable with her friends Donald and Astrid and their company bore him. At times, he wonders what he and Moushumi share and have in common. At one of the parties, Moushumi, half drunk, consciously reveals Gogol's name change before her friends, which infuriates him and also becomes a moment of embarrassment for him.

Though Gogol loves his wife and enjoys being with her, he feels distance between them. Gogol searches for the reasons for the changes in her behavior which alienates him from her, but there doesn't appear any reason on the surface. They do not argue, have sex and yet he wonders what is it that makes him unhappy? She also accuses nothing, but Gogol senses that the distance between them grows. One day Gogol comes to know about Moushumi's affair with a professor named Dimitri. Once again Gogol feels that his existence has become meaningless. The knowledge of his wife's extra marital affair shatters him completely and their marriage comes to an end. Lots of ups and downs in his life make Gogol broken down emotionally and psychologically. A sense of failure shakes him. Jhumpa Lahiri writes, "In so many ways, his family's life feels like a string of accidents, unforeseen, unintended, one incident begetting another" (Lahiri, *Namesake* 286). Moushumi's ultra modern lifestyle and extra marital affair is nothing but the result of her cultural assimilation. For the second generation children, accepting western culture is an easier way than to choose the native culture of their parents. Moushumi not only assimilates with American culture but also embraces French culture by learning French language.

The novel realistically presents the assimilation process that immigrants undergo with passage of time in diaspora. The process is not simple always as the immigrants are often caught in the dilemma of choosing between traditional values and liberal American culture. The first generation immigrants find it difficult to assimilate with mainstream American culture easily, whereas for the second generation they grow up amid the mainstream American culture so their struggle is less acute. What affects the second generation more than the first generation is their realization of losing the essence of native culture at a certain point of time as mentioned in *The Namesake* through Gogol. Furthermore, the second generations' complete assimilation with the mainstream American culture and their notion of belonging to it create issues of identity crises for them.

### 3.1.5 Identity Crisis

The identity confusion, tension between two different worlds and conflict between two different cultures mark intense diasporic feelings of both the first and the second generation characters of the novel. The issues of cultural conflict are severe for the first generation immigrants like Ashima, whereas the forces of dual identities are acute for the second generation immigrants who also face cultural pull of two contradictory cultures right from their childhood.

Gogol is unable to understand his father's association with his name Gogol, he feels embarrassed by his name and struggles with himself. He ignores the real motive that drove his father Ashoke to give him the name of a famous Russian writer instead of anything else. As a child he did not care, but during the school years he slowly begins to feel a growing annoyance that often touches the embarrassment and even the shame. Ashoke gifts him a book *The Short Stories of Nikolai Gogol* with a hope that Gogol would understand his father's affiliation with the writer and his name, but Nikolai Gogol's story *The Overcoat* has no place in Gogol's life. Ashoke remarks that "we all came out of Gogol's overcoat" and hopes that one day Gogol will understand what this means (Lahiri, *Namesake*, 78).

Gogol lives with two names as per Bengali tradition and it embodies his dual identity. Sometimes after his fourteenth birthday, he is fed up with his name; he doesn't find any meaning in his name. He hates signing up his name at the bottom of his drawing in art classes and he hates wearing a sweater with his name tag. He hates that his name is both absurd and obscure. The novelist reveals his state of mind in following words:

At times his name, an entity shapeless and weightless, manages nevertheless to distress him physically, like the scratchy tag of a shirt he has been forced permanently to wear. At times he wishes he could disguise it, shorten it somehow, the way the other Indian boy in his school, Jayadev, had gotten people to call him Jay... Other boys his age have begun to court girls already asking them to go to the movies or the pizza parlors, but he cannot imagine saying, 'Hi, it's Gogol' under potentially romantic circumstances. He cannot imagine this at all. (Lahiri, *Namesake*, 76)

He repents an incident that might have changed his fate: had he chosen 'Nikhil' name on the first day at kindergarten, his life would have been different and Gogol name could have remained limited to his family only. His act of rejecting his two names at a very tender age and desire to be called by a single name inside or outside the house changed his life. In one sense, it was his first effort to reject dual identity, but resulted in years of alienation.

To coin a new identity, Gogol desires to change his name. He hopes that his new name will refashion his individuality, bestow him a sense of self respect and last but not the least it will remove his inner sense of alienation. His experiment with 'Nikhil' name turns fruitful and he makes up his mind to change his name. Once he goes out with his friends for a party, he meets a girl named Kim and lies to her that his name is Nikhil. It is the first time he takes shelter of the Nikhil name. He even kisses her. When his friends exclaim that they can't believe Gogol kissed a girl, he nearly replies, "It wasn't me." He doesn't tell them that it hadn't been Gogol who'd kissed Kim. That Gogol had nothing to do with it.' (Lahiri, *Namesake* 96). Change of name is change of persona. Gogol, a Bengali boy, is soon transformed into an American boy Nikhil. Ashoke and Ashima are disappointed at Gogol's demand of name change, but they sanction it half heartedly.

At eighteenth year, Gogol finally changes his name to Nikhil. When he appears before a judge to make representation regarding his name change, he is able to convince him that his name is strange and he finds it difficult to associate himself with such a name that alienates him. The novelist narrates whirls of thoughts in Gogol's mind when he is in courtroom:

He wonders whether to tell the judge the whole convoluted story, about his grandmother's letter that never made it to Cambridge, and about pet names and good names, about what had happened on the first day of kindergarten. But instead he takes a deep breath and tells what he has never dared to admit to his parents: "I hate the name Gogol", he says, "I always hated it". (Lahiri, *Namesake* 101-102)

With the change of name, his entire personality is changed. He feels free and soon loses his virginity. He goes through the moments of refusal of everything that belongs to his parents and their traditions including the Bengali origins. He keeps distance from ABCD (American born confused desi) friends. "He has no ABCD friends at college. He avoids them, for they remind him too much of the way his parents choose to live, befriending

people not so much because they like them, but because of a past they happen to share” (Lahiri, *Namesake* 119). On being asked why Gogol is not a member of Indian Association, he replies passively that he doesn’t have time. He keeps himself from Indians and talks of Indians, because he wants to be known all American. He leaves home for the purpose of education and internship. With his departure from home, he feels free and relieved that he is no more in the network of Bengalis including his parents and he is happy that nobody will call him Gogol anymore. His desire to enjoy independent American life becomes possible. He makes a girl friend, indulges in sexual relationships and enjoys partying with people he hardly knows. Gogol’s act of changing name reveals that he is not satisfied with his cultural identity and by choosing a new name and new personality he disconnects himself from his past and coins a new identity to begin a fresh start.

To remove his alienation Gogol enters in relationships with girlfriends and dives into several love affairs and intimate relationships without any guilt. As a Gogol, he is unable to think of any romantic relationship with a woman, but the shelter of Nikhil’s name makes him a womanizer. He has a short relationship with a fellow student called Kim. He loses his virginity at one of the parties at New Haven without knowing anything about the girl he has sex with. His friendship with Ruth also paves path for a sexual relationship. Later he begins an affair with Maxine and spends quite a good deal of time with her and her family. During his frequent visits and stay at Maxine’s house, he observes how different Maxine’s parents behave than his own parents. Gogol’s relationships with Kim, Ruth and Maxine show his desire to move away from the cultural restrictions of his parents and establish a new and individual American identity. During summer vacation, he prefers to join Maxine’s family instead of spending time with his own parents. Here he feels free as nobody knows him, nobody knows his past and nobody knows anything about his name, he is cut from the outside world and it is something he enjoys a lot.

At parties, Gogol observes differences the way his parents behaved and the way parents of Maxine enjoy. Whenever Ashoke and Ashima throw parties at their home, they are always busy with preparing food and serving each and every guest like caterers. It was the joy they were receiving by feeding others and providing them comfort. On the other hand, at Maxine’s house, Gogol observes that her parents remain in the center of the party and are not bothered by anything at all. At Moushumi’s friend Donald’s house too, he enjoys parties and also helps them in the kitchen, but in his own life he never had voluntarily helped his parents at Bengali parties. Partying with strangers doesn’t make him

uncomfortable, instead it provides him opportunities to get attracted to and be a part of American culture and society. He finds a huge difference in each and every aspect of the lifestyle of his parents and Maxine's parents. For instance, for Ashima and Ashoke, vacation is the time to meet their family members and relatives in India. Both Gogol and Sonia never enjoy their time in India, a country they have no affiliation with. For Maxine's parents, vacation means to enjoy nature, indulge in activities which give them joy and get relaxed. Gogol who always wants to avoid family happily embraces western phenomena of vacation.

The identity of Nikhil enables him to get rid of his past associations. He prefers to celebrate his twenty-seventh birthday with Maxine's family at her house instead of his own parents. Maxine's family organizes a dinner party to celebrate the birthday. The party becomes a kind of trial for Gogol's identity. He is introduced to Pamela, a middle aged woman by Maxine's mother Lydia. However modestly Gogol introduces himself as American, Pamela insists on Gogol's Indian origin. She even asks him where he is from. Gogol's answer that he was born and brought up in the US doesn't satisfy Pamela. She remarks that travels to India will never make Gogol sick and Gogol of course denies it. Pamela responds, "But you're an Indian. I'd think the climate wouldn't affect you, given your heritage" (Lahiri, *Namesake* 157). Lydia corrects Pamela informing her that Gogol is American yet she is not convinced about Gogol's birthplace. Gogol's act of changing name, his American lifestyle and relationships with American people do not assure him American identity. Even his American citizenship doesn't make him American in the eyes of Americans. He considers himself American, but the outside world considers him as an Indian immigrant only considering his racial attributes. His struggles with his identity bring him frustration and a relentless feeling of alienation.

Ashoke's death in America is the culmination point for Ganguli family's diasporic predicament. Lahiri highlights psychological consequences of the death of an immigrant on his family. Ashoke came to America leaving behind everything but his sudden death on the foreign land poses a question whether he came to the US in search of a better life or just to die. His death brings behavioral changes in the life of Ashima and Gogol. Throughout her life in the US, Ashima could not affiliate herself with the US. But after Ashoke's death, she is reluctant to desert the land where her husband has lived his life. Her emotions and bonding with family compel her to spend at least half of her retired life in the US. Gogol's nomad life and his relationships with various girls bring him nothing but loneliness. He is

also shaken by the death of his father and resorts to family values. He could realize the struggle and affection of his father through his memories only after his father's death.

Ashoke's death creates a sense of repentance in Gogol. He begins to understand that by moving away from his roots he actually has been duping himself. Loss of father shakes him and turns towards his original identity of Bengali son. Throughout his life he feels uncomfortable in his family and social background. He makes efforts to isolate himself from his parents' culture and traditional values but he doesn't find solace in this isolation. His father's death brings him closer to his family and he carries out responsibility towards his family. His move towards his native identity disconnects him from his American identity and as a result, he breaks up with Maxine. It is also under the shelter of his native identity that he comes to terms with implication of his name and cultural heritage. Gogol could comprehend Ashoke's revelation of the story behind his name only after Ashoke's death. He assumes a Bengali son's duty to shave his head on the occasion of his father's death. He begins to realize that instead of feeling alienated he should accept the fact that his personality is embodiment of two rich cultures. He belongs to a hybrid culture that contains influence of eastern as well as western culture. However modest attempts he makes, he may not be able to get rid of either of two cultures. Values of both the world will co-exist in his life and by accepting this fact he could decrease his dilemmas.

Gogol's realization of his identity conveys a significant message that identity is not only formed from name and citizenship, but it also conveys deeper meaning that relates to values of one's cultural heritage. Identity cannot be discarded or adopted but it is a sum total of values among which a person grows. The values of two different cultures give birth to dual identity, but the original or native identity of a person can never be completely removed.

### **3.1.6 Generation Gap**

Jhumpa Lahiri portrays the intergenerational gap in *The Namesake* which comes into existence with the change of time in diaspora. The diasporic dilemmas do not remain same for both the first generation and second generation. The first generation immigrants struggle against odds of cultural conflict, keep themselves away from the influence of host culture and gradually learn to assimilate with the host land. The situation of the second generation children appears to be upside down as they find themselves comfortable with

the culture of host land and keep distance from the traditional culture and values of their parents. It is arguable whether the mainstream culture of the host land accepts them or not. The ideology of the first and the second generation mostly stand in contrast to each other mostly on the cultural ground and it adds oil in the diasporic dilemma of the first generation.

In *The Namesake*, both Gogol and Sonia grow up as American adults against the expectations of their parents. Sonia goes to dance parties with her American friends which include boys also and she follows her American friends in each activity. Sonia's assimilation with the American society becomes less difficult compared to Gogol's and it also appears that Gogol paves a path for Sonia's assimilation. For instance, celebration of Christmas starts in Ganguli house on Gogol's insistence and foods like pasta and pizzas are already brought in the house, so Sonia doesn't need to demand such things which are already available to her. Gogol moves to New Haven for higher studies then goes to Columbia to study architectural program and then reaches New York to work in a firm with a team on designs for hotels and museums and corporate headquarters. Gogol's act of moving from place to place in pursuit of career paves a path for Sonia to do so soon. Sonia moves to California and then to San Francisco where she prepares for a Law program and does a job at an environmental agency. So there is less importunity on Sonia's part in following American lifestyle that her elder brother has already done and her parents' shock are also less intense compared to Gogol's time. Both Sonia and Gogol's vagabond lives stand in contrast to their parents' stable life. Migration within diaspora becomes a traumatic experience for Ashima when they move from Cambridge to a university town outside Boston, whereas the second generation children keep on changing their houses year after year.

The second generation immigrants generally do not follow their parents in any field whether it is food, traditions, education and profession. Children in the west learn to be independent and take their decision on their own just after their schooling. The Indian children of immigrant parents follow their American counterparts and rarely pay attention to their parents' instructions. Mostly Indian immigrants choose career opportunities in the field of engineering or medical science. Ashoke is an electrical engineer who comes to Boston to earn a Ph.D. degree in fiber optics and becomes a university professor. Ashoke expects that Gogol would choose MIT after his graduation, but to his disappointment

Gogol chooses an Architecture program at Columbia University. Gogol's unconventional notion of career creates anxiety in his parents; their concern is revealed in the text:

They are already distressed that he [Gogol] hasn't settled on a major and a profession. Like the rest of their Bengali friends, his parents expect him to be, if not an engineer, then a doctor, a lawyer, an economist at the very least. These were the fields that brought them to America, his father repeatedly reminds him, the professions that have earned them security and respect.

But now that he's Nikhil it's easier to ignore his parents, to tune out their concerns and pleas. (Lahiri, *Namesake* 104-105)

As soon as the second generation immigrant children step out from the house like American children do, their physical distance from the house creates emotional distance as well. Both Ashoke and Ashima crave the company of their children on weekends and at festivals, but Gogol tries his best to stay away from his parents' house. A visit to his parents' house is like a step towards the past where he finds himself surrounded by Bengali people and their rituals which he doesn't like at all. Instead Gogol roams with his new friends and enjoys parties. In one of such parties, he meets Maxine and makes her his girlfriend. Actually, Maxine was a girlfriend of another person Russel, but she was fed up with him so she also turns to Gogol. She is a beautiful blond working at a publishing house. She grabs Gogol's attention at the party and the very next day Gogol gets an invitation from her for dinner at her place. Her parents do not mind Maxine's relationship with boyfriend. As a result, Gogol frequently visits Maxine, stays at her house and indulges in sexual relationships with her. And it is not the first time that Gogol is in a relationship with a girl, earlier he had affairs with other girls named Kim and Ruth. Gogol's relationships with American girls stand in sharp contrast to his parents' notions of love and marriage. They hope to arrange marriages following Bengali tradition for their children but Gogol's romantic adventures are beyond their comprehension.

After lots of up and down in his life, Gogol finally marries Moushumi as per expectation of his parents, but this marriage doesn't turn fruitful on account of Moushumi's extra marital affair. Sonia also has a secret boyfriend named Ben, a half-Jewish, half-Chinese, raised in Newton, close to where Gogol and Sonia grew up. Their parents' warnings about such relationships have no effect on their ears and helplessly they have to surrender before their

children's choices. Ashima accepts Sonia's engagement and their wedding is planned in Calcutta as per Bengali tradition. For the first generation immigrants like Ashoke and Ashima marriage is an important part of life, a sacred union between husband and wife bonded for life, and love happens post the marriage. On the other hand for second generation youngsters relationships of love changes like seasons and a stable concept of marriage is also missing among them.

*The Namesake* also depicts how cultural heritage is sustained by the first generation immigrants through memories, nostalgia and cultural practice. They also keep their connection with their family living in India through letters, phone calls and infrequent visits. They wait for letters from their family and after receiving such letters they reread them several times and connect themselves with their family members. They also make efforts to pass on their cultural heritage to their children so that they grow up with the essence of native culture. They compel their children to learn Bengali language and take part in Bengali ceremonies. The novel states about Ashima's efforts to impart literature and religious values of India to Gogol. "She [Ashima] teaches him [Gogol] to memorize a four-line children's poem by Tagore, and the names of the deities adorning the ten-handed goddess Durga during pujo: Saraswati with her swan and Kartik with his peacock to her left, Lakshmi with her owl and Ganesh with his mouse to her right" (Lahiri, *Namesake* 54).

Considering the requirement of their participation in the western world the parents also become liberal with a little hesitation. The western customs and festivals like Christmas, Thanksgiving and Halloween are celebrated in Ganguli house along with Indian festivals. The second generation's involvement in the Bengali rituals and customs are often forceful but once they become young, they get rid of Bengalism. The first generation immigrants on the other hand continue celebrating the essence of their native land for their lifetime.

The first generation immigrants maintain strong sentiments for their native country, but the second generation immigrants lack such affiliation with roots of their first generation parents as they do not have direct access to it. They become familiar with native culture and traditions only through their parents. On the other hand they have direct access to western culture without need of any mediator. They grow up with influence from both the cultures but by the time they are adults they have the option to choose either of two cultures and western culture definitely seems more promising than the native culture on account of liberty and unconventional lifestyle. The native culture imposes restrictions

whereas the western culture provides liberty, individuality and freedom of expression, thought and sexuality. Both Gogol and Sonia embrace the western world happily. Moushumi goes too far beyond the cultural milieus of India and America as she embraces European culture by showing interest in French literature. She was born and brought up in the US like Gogol but she learns French and prefers to read French books. Learning a new language is like accepting its culture for her. She moves to Paris for some period. And after returning to the US she is a candidate for a Ph.D. in French literature in New York University. She develops numerous affairs with French, German, Persian, Italian and Lebanese men (Lahiri, *Namesake* 215). Even after her marriage with Gogol she maintains her affair with Dimitri, a German scholar. Thus, Moushumi easily turns her back on the two cultures and countries which could claim her and she becomes a highly global citizen for whom there doesn't exist any border or bondage.

Jhumpa Lahiri explores forces of resistance working between the first generation and the second generation in each aspect of life in a diasporic setting. The perceptions of both the generations always stand in contrast to each other. The first generation accepts their existence as "Indian American" whereas the second generation chooses their destiny as "Americanized Indians." The first generation undergoes the pain of displacement and discontentment and fear the loss of culture while living in diaspora. On the other hand, the problems of the second generation are different as they suffer the pain of rootlessness, forces of two cultures and end up possessing the identity of ABCD – American born confused desi.

## **3.2 Diasporic Approach to *The Lowland***

### **3.2.1 Introduction**

Jhumpa Lahiri's latest novel *The Lowland* (2013) has won her DSC Prize for South Asian Literature in 2015 at Jaipur Litfest and this novel was also shortlisted for US National Book Award 2013 and Man Booker Prize 2013. The novel explores the lives of Bengali immigrants reaching to the US either to seek education or by call of destiny. Loneliness and repentance for vanished relations with family and the native country haunt these immigrants. The first part of the novel *The Lowland* delineates story of a political rebel that took place during 1960s in some parts of India known as Naxalite Movement and the

second part of the novel highlights the long term consequences of the Naxalite movement particularly on Mitra Family in the backdrop of diasporic setting. Uprooting and assimilation are basic themes of the novels. The novel is more focused on individual characters and his or her destiny instead of shared values in the diaspora.

*The Lowland* basically tells the story of two brothers who have an age gap of just fifteen months, but are always together from childhood till young age. The elder brother Subhash is realistic and careful whereas the younger brother Udayan is rebellious by nature. When they become young, they come to know about the beginning of Naxalite movement. The epicenter of this movement was Naxalbari village of Darjeeling district of West Bengal. The condition of the peasants was very pitiable in Naxalbari because of feudalism. They were deprived of revenue from the yield and many of them were left starved. The peasants' revolt in Naxalbari village against injustice of landlords and feudalism took the form of Naxalite movement. Members of communist revolutionaries of West Bengal helped in organizing revolt in Naxalbari and numbers of protests were demonstrated in Calcutta supporting the peasants. Charu Majumdar, a forty nine years old communist was the leader of communist revolutionaries, who were about to form a party CPI (Communist Party of India) two years later. They were working towards abolition of the feudal system in the rural areas and free the poor farmers from the oppressive treatment of the landlords. This revolution took violent forms as there were several incidents of fights with police and political rivals, a few people lost their lives and some landowners were kidnapped and also killed. Udayan sees Naxalite movement as an inspiration and a stimulation to change the country. He finds it disgusting that the government has made the victims into criminals. Even though Subhash attends a Naxalite meeting with Udayan and helps in painting slogans on the walls, he doesn't approve the ideology of solving the problem by opposing the Government through violent acts. Thus the path of both the brothers begins to divide.

The rising of Naxalite movement in Calcutta during the 1960s created a great chaos and commotion; therefore Subhash leaves the troubled city and goes to the US in order to pursue Ph.D. in Marine Chemistry. The younger brother Udayan led by notions of equality and justice takes part in the Naxalite movement. His short love affair with Gauri who is a student of Philosophy and possesses revolutionary ideology like Udayan, unites them in a love marriage. Udayan's involvement in various violent activities results in his death. He is shot dead by police in the lowland just behind his house. On getting news about Udayan's death, Subhash comes back home. Out of his desire to help Gauri, who is pregnant with

Udayan's baby, Subhash remarries her and takes her to the US with him so as to save her from hardship of a widow's life. The remaining portion of the novel reveals the consequences of choices made by two major characters Subhash and Gauri and their struggle to cope with guilt and past memories which not only affect them but also affect their second generations. Stephanie Merritt writes her review on *The Lowland*: "*The Lowland* is a sweeping, ambitious story that examines in intimate detail the intersection of the political and the personal, encompassing nearly 50 years of Indian and American history through the lives of one family".

### 3.2.2 Alienation

*The Lowland* stands different in comparison to the other works of Jhumpa Lahiri as its characters pass through feelings of displacement and alienation not only because of diasporic setting but also because of their individual choices and consequences. A person feels alienation when he or she migrates from a known place to an unknown place. Subhash experiences a sense of alienation in the early period of his migration to America. During his journey to America on the ship with other students and scientists, he felt isolation as he was gradually heading far away from his home in Calcutta. In his early days in Rhode Island, he misses his family and life in his hometown and it increases his loneliness. The novelist writes Subhash's dilemma: "For a year and a half he had not seen his family. Not sat down with them, at the end of the day, to share a meal. In Tollygunge his family did not have a phone line. He'd sent a telegram to let them know he'd arrived. He was learning to live without hearing their voices to receive news of them only in writing" (Lahiri, *Lowland* 63).

For Subhash, letter writing is the only medium of maintaining contact with his family. He and Udayan share their whereabouts through letters. Udayan's earlier letters contain news about Naxalite movements and often slogans are written at the end of the letter. Subhash has to hide such letters from his roommate and is very much conscious that such letters describing involvement of his brother in Naxalite movement must not come to anyone's notice so he used to destroy such letters. After a few months, Udayan's letters stop referring to the movement and communicate only general news about Calcutta and his family. Udayan often ask about Subhash's studies, about his plan to return to Calcutta and about his plans to get married. Subhash tells his parents that his marriage is up to them to

arrange and also expresses his eagerness to meet them in his letters. Days pass one after the other, but it appears that Subhash has cut off from his family and he keeps on ignoring them. By doing so he also intensifies his loneliness.

Subhash develops an affair with an American married woman Holly who is about ten years older than him and has a ten years old child. Holly lives separate from her husband. Subhash occasionally meets her and makes love to her. She leads an isolated life same as Subhash. While spending a good time with her at her house, Subhash looks at the calendar and the following day is 15<sup>th</sup> August The Indian Independence Day. This date intensifies Subhash's loneliness. He compares this day with his present life and feels nostalgic. The novelist writes his state of mind: "The following day was August 15, Indian Independence. A holiday for the country, lights on government buildings, flag hoisting and parades. An ordinary day here" (Lahiri, *Lowland* 78).

In his initial time in America, Subhash secretly appreciates and embraces a free lifestyle that American culture imparts. He indulges in love making to a married woman older than him without any guilt. He knows well that his affair is not going to continue longer and is also aware that nobody in his family would ever imagine such acts, but his status of an immigrant without any root and family background in an alien place, his attraction towards that woman and his physical urges prevent him to pay attention to cultural values. The novelist writes

He thought of Narasimhan as an ally now; Narasimhan and his American wife. Sometimes he imagined what it would be like to lead a similar life with Holly. To live the rest of his life in America, to disregard his parents, to make his own family with her.

At the same time he knew that it was impossible. That she was an American was the least of it. Her situation, her child, her age, the fact that she was technically another man's wife, all of it would be unthinkable to his parents, unacceptable. They would judge her for those things.

He didn't want to put Holly through that. And yet he continued to see her on Fridays, forging this new clandestine path. (Lahiri, *Lowland* 77)

His involvement with a woman without intention of marriage could become a shock for his family. He continues to enjoy Holly's company not out of love of course, but on account of his complex feelings and physical urges.

During his first stay in Rhode Island, he gets completely engrossed in American lifestyle and enjoys being identity-less. But Udayan's death is like a call of duty for Subhash. He comes home after a period of three years to console the family. He is a generous person. He remarries Udayan's wife Gauri who is six months pregnant so as to save her from the hardship of a widow life. He brings her to Rhode Island so that she can start a new life on the new land where no one knows of her past and about her previous marriage. Subhash shows his maturity when they arrive in Rhode Island. He is very much aware that it would take time for Gauri to wholeheartedly accept him, so Subhash patiently provides her a space to settle down and not to pressurize her to be active in the new relationship.

Subhash's decision to marry Gauri and take her to America to give her a new life doesn't turn fruitful, instead it worsens his alienation as what he gains out of this marriage is mere loneliness. Within a few months of their arrival in America, Bela is born. As a mother, Gauri is unable to take care of Bela may be due to her desire for privacy or obsession for study of philosophy, she cannot connect with either Subhash or Bela. The marital life of Gauri and Subhash is devoid of love and physical pleasure. Subhash expects to have a baby of his own through Gauri with a hope that the baby will unite them and give Bela a companion. Subhash's attempts and hopes are never fulfilled as Gauri secretly starts taking birth control pills. Within a few years he realizes that Gauri doesn't desire to conceive Subhash's child nor is she able to love Bela or care for her. Gauri's love for liberty and individual independence are easily attainable on American land. Had she been in India, she would have been leading a widow life devoid of any colors and happiness. But observing the level of liberty and opportunities that American society offers her, she easily discards whatever values and responsibilities she has without any guilt and moves ahead in her life in pursuit of personal advancement. Gauri's being irresponsible as a mother stays at the core of the novel. Her preoccupation with the study of philosophy prevents her from taking care of her daughter and husband. Though philosophy has much to do with human existence, human being's problems, love and god, she is so absorbed in philosophy that she fails in what philosophy teaches. Her passion for philosophy alienates herself from her own family and becomes unconcerned about real human life and relationships. Step by step

Gauri isolates herself and diverts her energy to a single direction towards doctorate in philosophy.

Gauri's preoccupation with her interest in academic life and her abrupt departure from Subhash's life burdens him with the responsibility of raising a child alone. After a few months of arrival in Rhode Island, she shreds her hair and discards saris and puts on American style of dressing. On being asked by Subhash, she casually responds that she is tired of those. Manju Kapur describes immigrant awareness in terms of clothing:

As immigrants fly across oceans they shed their old clothing because clothes maketh the man and new ones help ease the transition. Men's clothing has less international variations; the change is not so drastic. But those women who are not used to wearing western clothes find themselves in a dilemma. If they focus on integration, convenience and conformity they have to sacrifice habit, style and self-perception.

Gauri embraces philosophy and in one sense embraces alienation. It is her guilt and choices due to which she is not able to settle in any place. After Udayan's death, she was an unwanted person in her in-law's house and when Subhash brings her to Rhode Island, she is misfit in Subhash's life. She only finds a soothing space in her pursuit of research in philosophy.

When in India, Subhash informed about his decision to marry Gauri to his parents, his mother told him that Gauri would never love him. Her saying comes true and Subhash realizes finally that her marriage to Gauri was a big mistake. Subhash's intentions behind this marriage were generous. He married Gauri for the sake of his attachment with Udayan and for better prospects of Gauri and her unborn child. What Subhash receives out of this marriage is nothing but alienation that psychologically makes him feel displaced. Their unhappy marriage unofficially comes to an end after twelve years. After his father's death, Subhash and Bela go back to India for six weeks. When they return to Rhode Island, they don't find Gauri in the house. Gauri has left the house leaving behind a letter informing that she has got a job in a University and is going to California. She composed the letter in Bengali, it reads,

I have not made this decision in haste. If anything, I have been thinking about it for too many years, you tried your best. I tried, too, but not as well. We tried to believe we would be companions to one another.

... I hope that in time my absence will make things easier, not harder, for you and for Bela. I think it will. Good luck, Subhash and good-bye. In exchange for all you have done for me, I leave Bela to you. (Lahiri, *Lowland* 211-212)

Subhash feels an acute sense of loneliness in his old age. He looks back to his life and finds that when he first came to America, he was about 27 years old and felt loneliness being away from his family and now he is in his 60s and still he is deprived of warmth of family, he has lost confidence and there is no aim in his life. Throughout her life Gauri is never able to get rid of her past memories. It appears that she is trapped in history and it alienates her from her family and present life. Udayan's death has brought a deep effect on her psyche. It is possible that she might be feeling guilty for Udayan's death as she had a helping hand in the notorious activities Udayan undertook, that resulted in his death or maybe it is her anger towards Udayan that he left her too early and her clinging to his memories demonstrates that Udayan is still alive in her memory and she still craves his love.

After Gauri leaves the house, they never meet over again. Absence of her mother is unbearable for Bela who is never able to grasp the situation and what is going on between their parents' relationship, as a result she becomes a victim of depression. From a very young age, she experiences alienation. When she grows up young, she leads a nomadic life, disconnects from her father, and decides never to marry. Her mother's unconventional and averse behavior displaces her emotionally and psychologically. When Bela is thirty four years old and is a mother of a child, she comes to know about the fact of her parentage. She doesn't blame Subhash as it was only him who looked after and loved her since childhood, but she is not in a position to forgive Gauri. Thus, choices made by Subhash and Gauri make them and Bela lead lonely lives devoid of love in a diasporic setting.

### 3.2.3 Memory and Nostalgia

Memory and nostalgia haunts the two major characters of the novel Subhash and Gauri. Subhash's nostalgic feelings are expressed in letters he writes to Udayan. When Udayan's first letter arrives in Rhode Island, it appears that Subhash is reconnected to Udayan. Lahiri writes, "Subhash reread the letter several times. It was as if Udayan were there, speaking to him, teasing him. He felt their loyalty to one another, their affection, stretched halfway across the world. Stretched to the breaking point by all that now stood between them, but at the same time refusing to break" (Lahiri, *Lowland* 43).

Udayan's mention of his meeting with Comrade Sanyal and other updates on Naxalite movement disturbs Subhash. Although the letter is composed in Bengali, he is afraid thinking if the letter comes to the wrong hand, it will create troubles for him and also for Udayan. Considering Udayan's suggestion to destroy the letter as an appropriate one, he burns the letter, though he wanted to keep it. He writes a reply letter and expresses his fond memory of home town. He writes, "As strange as it sounds, when the sky is overcast, when the clouds are low, something about the coastal landscape here, the water and the grass, the smell of bacteria when I visit the mudflats, takes me home, I think of the lowland, of paddy fields" (Lahiri, *The Lowland* 43).

Nature connects Subhash with his home. He compares the geographical situation of Rhode Island with that of Tollygunge. When rain falls at night, he wakes up. The noise of rain drops pelting windows wonder him. He questions himself is it a sign of something to happen, another juncture in his life. He remembers the heavy rain fall on the first night he spent with Holly and also remembers heavy rain on the day Bela was born. The memory of rain takes him to Tollygunge. "He thought of the monsoon coming every year in Tollygunge. The two ponds flooding, the embankment between them turning invisible" (Lahiri, *Lowland* 260).

Subhash fondly remembers days he passed with Udayan in Calcutta. He remembers those evenings he and Udayan trespassed into the Tolly Club. Subhash feels nostalgic on occasion of Indian Independence Day and Durga Pujo. The absence of holiday didn't matter to him in his earlier days in America. But after a period of two years or so, he felt like going back to home. One afternoon observing a wedding ceremony at a church, he is moved back to the past. The novelist writes, "For some reason the church reminded him of

the small mosque that stood at the corner of his family's neighborhood in Tollygunge. Another place of worship designated for others, which had served as a landmark in his life" (Lahiri, *Lowland* 39). Once he enters an empty church. He feels a strange urge to embrace it. It shows his desire for assimilation with American culture. His admiration for American culture and his obvious escape from Indianness help him assimilate with American culture without any hesitation or guilt. "He was proud to have come alone to America. To learn it as he once must have learned to stand and walk and speak. He'd wanted so much to leave Calcutta, not only for the sake of his education but also – he could admit to himself now – to take a step Udayan never would" (Lahiri, *Lowland* 40).

For Gauri, America is a right place to escape from her past and forget about what has happened in India. However tactful attempts Gauri makes to divert all her attention towards the study of Philosophy to forget her past, memories of Udayan and Calcutta never get removed from her mind. At various occurrences, she feels nostalgic for Calcutta and her companionship with Udayan. Though Udayan had died, he stays alive in her memory. Maybe it was the reason she could never love Subhash. Gauri's love for Udayan is tinged with feelings of anger, as the text describes:

Nor was her love for Udayan recognizable or intact. Anger was always mounted to it, zigzagging through her like some helplessly matting pair of insects. Anger at him for dying when he might have lived. For bringing her happiness, and then taking it away. For trusting her only to betray her. For believing in sacrifice, only to be so selfish in the end. (Lahiri, *Lowland* 164)

Gauri admired the space American culture provided and she happily embraced it without guilt. Her desire to get completely assimilated in American culture is now and then confronted with her past memories. It is her nostalgia that prevents her from starting a happy married life with Subhash. As a consequence of her nostalgic feelings, she never attains peace of mind and in pursuit of spiritual peace; she deserts her husband and daughter.

While living in California on her own, she fondly remembers the time she spent with Udayan. She is able to easily forget Subhash and Bela but the image of Udayan always stays in her mind. She correlates any small immaterial object or experience with her past. Once she comes across a catalogue of furniture and purchases a round wooden table meant

for outdoor use. On receiving the table at her house, she observes it, puts her hand on the table, smells the strong odor of the teak wood used and it takes her to the realms of memory of her love making with Udayan in Calcutta. The novelist narrates,

She put her face to the table's surface, inhaling deeply her cheek against the slats. It was the smell of the bedroom furniture she'd left behind in Tollygunge, the wardrobe and dressing table, the bed with slim posts on which she and Udayan had created Bela. Ordered from an American catalogue, delivered off a truck, it had come to her again. ... A concentrated peppery smell that reduced all distance, all time. (Lahiri, *Lowland* 242)

Gauri is able to lead an accessible and comfortable life while working as a Professor in California. She could use the computer and internet at the campus library and then she gets her own laptop with a wireless internet at her house. Access to technology excites her, she can unveil any mystery, look at any maps, visit hotel websites, check flight status, connect with famous or anonymous people, unite with them or fall in love with and even get a job. Her thoughts about the internet connect her with Udayan and how he would have responded to it. The novelist writes about her thoughts on the internet: "A revolutionary concept, already taken for granted. Citizens of the internet dwell free from hierarchy. There is room for everyone, given that there are no spatial constraints. Udayan might have appreciated this" (Lahiri, *Lowland* 276).

She also thinks the about library that some of her students no longer go to the library on account of easy access to information. Her laptop has become a library itself. She remembers the days when she had to rush to obtain particular chapters in the book and get a photocopy or request to libraries. Her thoughts again take her to Calcutta as the novelist writes

She remembers standing on a balcony in North Calcutta, talking to Udayan. The library at Presidency where he would come to find her sometimes, sitting at a table barricaded with books, a giant fan rustling the papers. He'd stand behind her, saying nothing, waiting for her to turn around, to sense that he was there.

She remembers reading smuggled books in Calcutta, the particular stall to the left of the Sanskrit College that carried what Udayan like ... (Lahiri, *Lowland* 276)

Gauri is never able to completely forget her past. Her nostalgic feelings about Udayan and the Naxalite movement keep haunting her now and then. Environment plays a key role in connecting Rhode Island with Tollygunge for Gauri also. After a heavy rain of night, one morning Gauri is taking Bela to the school bus stop. The air is humid; the earth worms in huge numbers have emerged from the soil to die. Bela is afraid to see the sight and was hesitant to go to school, but Gauri doesn't pay any attention to her wish. Gauri remembers how happy Subhash had been last winter as it snowed heavily and they stayed home for a week playing with Bela and making it a mini vacation. Suddenly the weather and the memories take her back to Calcutta. The novelist writes, "Then she remembered another thing. How, at the height of the crackdown, the bodies of the party members were left in streams, in fields close to Tollygunge. They were left by the police, to shock people, to revolt them. To make clear that the party would not survive" (Lahiri, *Lowland* 169).

Gauri's companionship with Udayan lasted only a few years. Though they had a love marriage, she began to know him only after the marriage. Udayan died before she could completely understand him, but in one way she knows him practically well in all her life. Gauri's internal knowledge about Udayan came from remembering him. More than thirty years after his death, Gauri is in California but an image of Udayan dwells in her psyche; in her mind she attempts to create an aged version of Udayan. The text describes her thoughts: "She wonders what he might have looked like now. How he would have aged, the illness he might have suffered, the diseases to which he might have succumbed. She tries to imagine the flat stomach softening. Gray hairs on his chest" (Lahiri, *Lowland* 231).

The nostalgic feelings of Subhash and Gauri provide them fragmented opportunities to reconnect with what they have left behind. Their cultural heritage also surfaces in the form of collective consciousness. In his early days at Rhode Island, he meets Professor Narasimhan from Madras at the university campus. He was a professor in Economics. Narasimhan has married an American woman named Kate. It was a surprise for Subhash to see an Indian married to an American he also imagines how Narasimhan's family would have reacted to his act of marrying an American girl against their rights to choose a suitable girl from Madras for him. His ethnic heritage has certain limitations beyond which he cannot imagine things. He psychologically criticizes Udayan's action of love marriage as he didn't give opportunity to his parents to find a suitable bride for their son as per tradition and also he didn't even wait for his elder brother to marry first. Gradually he

begins to widen his horizon and grabs the opportunities American society provides him to make a better future by assimilation. There are a number of instances in the novel which show how Subhash, Gauri and Bela assimilate with American culture.

### 3.2.4 Cultural Assimilation

The theme of cultural assimilation is interwoven skillfully in the plot of the novel in the backdrop of political movement and diaspora. The protagonist of the novel Subhash Mitra moves from Calcutta to Rhode Island to pursue a Ph.D. degree. He migrates purposefully to get rid of political upheaval and commotion going on in West Bengal due to Naxalite movement. He disapproves his brother's idea to join the movement and departs from home. Cultural assimilation in a diasporic situation becomes easy for Subhash as his migration is a move to escape from the situation and to get a new space in the new country where nobody cares about anybody that can provide him a chance to start a new life. Of course he feels nostalgic about Calcutta and the time he and his brother Udayan spent in Tollygunge particularly. On reaching Rhode Island, Subhash observes huge dissimilarity between his homeland and Rhode Island. The novelist narrates his experience:

The difference was so extreme that he could not accommodate the two places together in his mind. In this enormous new country, there seemed to be nowhere for the old to reside. There was nothing to link them; he was the sole link. Here life ceased to obstruct or assault him. Here was a place where humanity was not always pushing, rushing, running as if with a fire at its back. (Lahiri, *Lowland* 34)

Subhash's encounter with a nurse Holly, a French Canadian origin and born in Massachusetts shatters his cultural notions and compels him to embrace western culture. Holly was ten years older than Subhash and was a mother of a child but living separately from her husband. Her physical charm attracted him. Though Subhash is reluctant in the beginning, he comes closer to her and indulges in a sexual relationship with her. He dreams of marrying her like Professor Narasimhan's marriage with Kate and in spite of the fact that Holly is already married and is a mother of a nine years old child. At the same time, Subhash was very much aware that it was not an easy path. His parents would never approve it as it is unthinkable and unacceptable for them. His affair remains a secret and soon ends on account of Holly's reconciliation with her husband. It is also beyond his imagination how Holly could pair with her husband, who left her once without any

acrimony. His short affair with Holly reveals how he is able to assimilate with American culture discarding his cultural heritage without any hesitation. At subconscious level he knows well that his actions are illegal and unpardonable, yet his physical urges, desires to embrace American life, his anonymous status on the alien land pave path for his assimilation with American lifestyle.

After Udayan's death, his parents obliged Gauri to live an ascetic life a Bengali widow should lead. At this juncture, Subhash's proposal to marry her and take her to America shows his open mindedness. He reveals his thought to her: "In America no one knew about the movement, no one would bother her. She could go on with her studies. It would be an opportunity to begin again. ... the child needed a father. In America it could be raised without the burden of what had happened" (Lahiri, *Lowland* 119). Against his parents' desire, Subhash marries Gauri and takes her to Rhode Island. The level of liberty and unorthodox attitude of American society become reasons for migration and acceptance for American culture.

Neither Subhash nor Gauri show any strong bonding with values of their native culture on the new land. As Subhash and Gauri have opted migration as a way of escape, they can easily discard culture and values of native land and get used to new ones. There aren't any instances of celebration of Indian festivals, Bengali ceremonies or social gatherings in *The Lowland*. The Bengali custom of taking a meal only after the husband has finished it doesn't exist in their house in the US. On the contrary Gauri finds American society quite suitable to fulfill her passion for academics. She roams around the university campus, attends random classes without admission or anyone's notice. She gets excited by such experiences and finally enrolls herself for research in philosophy. Thus, she puts cultural milieus aside and focuses on career goals and it becomes possible by way of her integration with American academia.

In his initial time at Rhode Island, Subhash avoids meeting Indian people or community gathering so as to hide his identity and his or his brother's involvement in Naxalite movement. But at the same time he is able to develop an affair with American woman. Instead of making friends with Indian people, he finds it comfortable to mingle with American. The reason behind his preference lies in freedom American culture offers without any kind of restriction. According to Edward Said, expatriates choose to live in an alien land either for personal or for social reasons. Said writes, "Expatriates may share in

the solitude and estrangement of exile, but they do not suffer under its rigid proscriptions. Emigres enjoy an ambiguous status” (187). This statement is suggestive of two kinds of immigrants; the first kind consists of those people who constantly suffer from the feelings of homelessness and they adhere to values of their native land in the new land and show strong bonding with their cultural heritage, while the second kind includes those people who merge with the main stream in the alien land, they show respect to conventional beliefs of homeland but they are not rigid about it and they easily assimilate with cultural values of the alien land. Subhash belongs to the second category and is a follower of Indian traditionalism and American modernism side by side. Considering his background, had he been in India, he would have never thought of sleeping with a woman before marriage. And it could have been completely unimaginable to have a sexual relationship with a woman already married and ten years older than him. Late in his old age, Subhash develops a relationship with Bela’s teacher Elise Silva. Bela doesn’t approve their relationship in the beginning, but finds that Subhash is finally able to feel ‘homely’ with Elise’s company at the final stage of his life.

Gauri’s personality somewhat resembles Moushumi Mazoomdar of *The Namesake*. Like Moushumi, Gauri too rejects the idea of cultural values of India and easily assimilates into American culture. American society imparts her liberty, which she perfectly enjoys while living alone in California. Generally it is perceived that people lead independent life even after marriage in America. The degree of loyalty, dependency and belongingness found in the Indian concept of marriage are sometimes lacking in American concept of marriage. Gauri easily deserts her husband and daughter for her quest of living a free life. She accepts western dressing, takes interest in western academics, learns German language and also indulges in lesbian relationship with a graduate student at California University. She is so obsessed with California City that she desires to get swallowed in California, she wants to disappear there. Throughout her life, there had been no place to which Gauri considered as Home, but California becomes a ‘home’ for her, as the novelist writes, “In any case, California was her only home. Right away she had adapted to its climate, both comforting and strange, hot but seldom oppressive” (Lahiri, *Lowland* 235).

The only second generation character in the novel is Bela, Gauri and Udayan’s daughter. She was born in Rhode Island and brought up with foreign language and foreign culture. She is never pressurized to follow native culture. In *The Namesake*, the mother Ashima is

always conscious about following Indian culture and forces her son Gogol and daughter Sonia to strictly adhere to home culture, but in Bela's case, the absence of mother, there is no one in her family who follows Indian culture or passes on heritage. Her step father Subhash being open minded never interferes in Bela's life and allows her to lead her life in her own way. Bela learns Spanish language when she is in seventh grade and entering in the teen age, she attempts to create her own world. Her first job as an agricultural trainee at a Farm starts when she is 21 years of age. She leaves her father's house and her residential address is never certain, she moves from place to place and comes to meet Subhash only on certain occasions. Many times Subhash is unaware about her whereabouts. Subhash's concern about Bela is revealed in the text: "Her dedication to bettering the world was something that would fulfill her, he imagined, for the rest of her life. Still he was unable to set aside his concern. She had eschewed the stability he had worked to provide. She'd forged a rootless path, one which seemed precarious to him. One which excluded him" (Lahiri, *Lowland* 224-225).

Subhash accepts such an unconventional life of Bela and he never raises objection. She becomes pregnant but doesn't reveal the name of the father of the baby. Her life is uncertain and devoid of love. The consequences of Bela's assimilation with American culture are not admirable as what she is left with is a rootless nomadic life with a fatherless daughter.

From the above discussion, it appears clear that diasporic characters of *The Lowland* assimilate with American culture without any hesitation. They are global citizens and active partners in multi cultural scenarios. Though they show dedication to American culture, they are not able to completely remove Indian culture and customs from their psyche. The names given to new born babies by Subhash and Gauri and later by Bela demonstrate the effect of their heritage. Unlike the Bengali tradition of naming the child by the grandparents as mentioned in *The Namesake*, Subhash and Gauri and later Bela enjoy liberty to name their child as per their own choice. But the names they choose are of Indian origin. The name 'Bela' is a Bengali word for 'span of time'. The name Bela chooses for her daughter - 'Meghna' is also an Indian name which means 'cloud'. The novel has mention of various letters, many of these letters are written in Bengali by Subhash and Gauri. It shows that they could express themselves wholeheartedly in their mother tongue. The reason behind choosing Bengali language could have been their intention to keep the

letter as secret and out of understanding of any other person in America. Though Gauri completely transforms her life, she still maintains her habit of drinking tea at night and while travelling, she used to take Indian shawl with her for warmth. Subhash learns to cook for himself but his dishes contain only Indian food. Discussing about immigrants' affiliation with the home country and culture Victor Ramraj writes, "Yet though diasporans may not want actually to return home, wherever the dispersal has left them they retain a conscious or subconscious attachment to traditions, customs, values, religions and language of ancestral home" (qtd. in Gouse 331-332). Thus, even maintaining some of the attributes of native culture, the characters of the novel are largely Americanized. The process of assimilation becomes easy for them on account of their desire to discard native culture. But on a deeper level, less or no desire for preservation of native culture hints at the gradual loss of native culture in diaspora.

### 3.2.5 Identity Crisis

*The Lowland* addresses complicated identities of the characters who possess split personalities and have become members of diaspora by their fate. Almost all the characters in *The Lowland* appear simple in nature except Gauri. Similar to Moushumi of *The Namesake* Gauri is able to alienate herself regardless of any purpose and it results in identity crises for Gauri that intensifies her diasporic feeling. The past is always present in Gauri's memory and she is never able to get rid of tragic memories of Udayan's death. A feeling of guilt also haunts her. An image of the ideal Indian woman that we find in Ashima in *The Namesake* is somehow missing in Gauri. She never attempts to be a model wife or an affectionate mother in her life. She shatters society's perceived notions of ideal woman and embarks on her journey to discover herself without any justification. Subhash and Udayan on the other hand are guided by ideology and responsibility. Udayan is a revolutionist by nature but somehow his notions of ideal country and justice are misguided and ultimately it brings catastrophe to his family. Subhash being a cautious and responsible person dedicates his life to the wellbeing of others but becomes helpless as what he receives in return is loneliness.

After Udayan's death, Subhash proposes to marry Udayan's wife Gauri with three intentions, firstly to save her from hardship of widow life, secondly to stay connected with Udayan through Gauri and thirdly to give name and better future to Gauri and Udayan's

unborn child. For Gauri, the acceptance of a proposal has multiple benefits. She can get rid of a widow's life, future of her unborn child can be secured, she can lead an independent life in America, her own interest in academic can be evolved in America and last but not the least she can connect herself with Udayan through Subhash by accepting Subhash's proposal. The moment Subhash marries her and takes her to the US, it becomes the starting point from when the identities of major characters evolve and negotiate with one another. Within a very short period of her marriage with Subhash, she comprehends worthlessness in her new identity as a wife of Subhash as the novelist writes, "She had married Subhash as a means of staying connected to Udayan. But even as she was going through with it she knew that it was useless, just as it was useless to save a single earring when the other half of the pair was lost" (Lahiri, *Lowland* 127-128).

Gauri is unable to identify herself with Subhash's wife. She cannot bring herself to love him and simultaneously she also fails to give justice to her role and identity as a mother. She is able to fulfill her personal desires only overlooking responsibilities of a mother and of a wife. On account of the secret of Bela's parenthood, Subhash and Gauri experience alienation from Bela. The fear of revelation of the past and their guilt of hiding it bring emptiness in their relation. Her casual attitude towards Bela is the result of her conflict with her identity. The novelist illustrates her treatment towards Bela in the following words:

Though she cared for Bela capably, though she kept her clean and combed and fed, she seemed distracted. Rarely did Subhash see her smiling when she looked into Bela's face. Rarely did he see Gauri kissing Bela spontaneously. Instead, from the beginning, it was as if she'd reversed their roles, as if Bela were a relative's child and not her own. (Lahiri, *Lowland* 159)

Gauri is able to get used to American life quickly. American society provides her enough freedom to widen her philosophical insight. Discarding the conventional identity and role of a loyal wife and a responsible mother, Gauri establishes a new identity in the diasporic backdrop. The American culture gives much importance to individual freedom that became supportive to Gauri to fulfill her aspiration for study of philosophy overlooking duties and responsibilities of wife and a mother. Her pursuit of philosophy helps her escape from domestic duties. The liberty that American society offers her deprives her of emotional engagement with her daughter. She succeeds in embarking on an intellectual journey but at

the cost of maternal affection towards Bela and loyalty towards Subhash. As a result, her personality is unpredictable. In spite of all these, she is able to coin her new identity in the alien land that is dedicated to academics. On her way to discover herself, she comes across forming lesbian relationship with a student named Lorna. Throughout Gauri's life, there are many ups and downs which make her identity complex. Her identity started changing after her marriage. She was Udayan's wife and therefore Subhash's sister-in-law, but afterwards from sister-in-law she becomes his wife. Coming to Rhode Island, she becomes a mother and soon her choices make her a childless mother. Gauri has produced alternative versions of herself. At the end of her voyage to discover herself she finds herself lonely at the core.

Immigration paved a path to sharpen Gauri's interest in philosophy and to empower herself with new ambitions. Her professional achievement is obviously seen when she becomes a Professor in Philosophy in California. Even after attaining professional success, her heart is never at peace. Her past memories never allow her to enjoy her present. Her choices make her life empty. It can be argued that she might have made harsh choices to punish herself possibly for her involvement in naxalite activity with Udayan that resulted in his death. Her escape from Bela's life can be interpreted as an act of avoiding feelings of guilt and burden of secrecy about Bela's real father. All these complexities in Gauri's life result in her identity crises.

Subhash's generous feelings towards Gauri and Udayan's child burden him with identity conflict. In his initial days in America, he enjoys being anonymous. He doesn't make any attempt to create his individual identity rather he prefers to merge with the stream. But after his marriage with Gauri, he confronts identity issues as Gauri fails to reciprocate love and responsibilities. He is insecure about Bela's acceptance of him as a father. He dedicates his life to others by way of losing his own individual identity. The complicated relationship scenario disconnects him from his family in settled country America and also in home country India. This disconnection marks his intense diasporic feelings. In the absence of Gauri, he raises Bela with utmost care and love. He fears that Bela might break the relationship with him on knowing about her real father. To his surprise, the revelation of Bela's real parenthood brings her closer to Subhash. Bela stays united with Subhash with a bond of love and care. The revelation eliminates Gauri forever from her life. Gauri's

being insensitive and irresponsible as a mother generates hatred in Bela's mind against Gauri.

In *The Lowland* we do not find any strong cultural pull that makes the character toll between native identity and American identity as we find in *The Namesake*. The second generation character Bela feels severe identity confusion. In Bela's case, she is just twelve years old when her mother leaves the family and her absence creates deep psychological effects on Bela. Her academic performance becomes poor; she befriends with no one and even attempts to commit suicide. Subhash has to take her to a psychologist once a week to calm her down. She grows up motherless and when she becomes young, she keeps distance from her father and does odd jobs at various farms out of her love for the environment. She leads a rootless and aimless life like a gypsy. Bela impulsively revolts against her parents and rejects the lifestyle their parents led. She alienates herself; she is outside the periphery of family or relationship and leads a lonely life without any identity on American soil.

Had Bela been in India, she could have been raised without any trouble by her grandparents and other family members even in absence of mother or father, but the diasporic setting makes the situation worse. In her teen age, she doesn't develop much interest in academics and soon she leaves her studies. On account of her interest in farming activity, she moves from places to places to work various farms. She leads a nomad life on American soil. She plants trees, looks after animals, maintains beehives, teaches cultivation methods and puts together so much effort to make the earth a better place to live. Bela's struggle can be interpreted as an act of establishing an individual identity. Bela is rebellious by nature, same as her real father Udayan. Both the father and the daughter have a revolutionary mindset and both dedicate their life to the soil that created them. The Naxalite movement was basically a rebel against landlords who oppressed farmers. Udayan joined this movement to help farmers and to bring changes into the system. Like Udayan, Bela is also idealistic and rebellious in nature. She works for the American soil where she was born and brought up. She helps convert deserted land into gardens and trains people how to change ruins ground into vegetable beds. She reproaches Subhash for buying vegetables and fruits from the supermarket and suggests him to buy such items from farms so that the farmers are economically benefited. She also scolds Subhash for throwing out vegetable scraps and suggests him to compost them. Rootless and motherless, Bela focuses all her endeavors on her work.

The unsound relationship between Subhash and Gauri has huge effects on Bela's psyche. She is not able to establish romantic engagement in her life and she can't even make strong bonding with anyone. She becomes pregnant but does not reveal the name of the father and she also does not show any intention to get married. The parents have huge influence on their children, observing the unhappy homely environment in the family, Bela chooses never to marry. In one sense she doesn't have any concept of home or family in her life. Later when Subhash marries Elise in his old age, Bela is able to develop a romantic relationship with Drew, a farmer from Rhode Island. She admits that her mother deserted her and it is the grounds she refrains from being with one person or staying in one place (Lahiri, *Lowland* 299).

Towards the end of the novel, Gauri makes up her mind to confront Subhash after being away from him for more than two decades. She gathers courage to sign the divorce papers and handover to Subhash. When she reaches his house, she finds that Subhash is away with Elise, and she confronts Bela and Bela's daughter. This confrontation is shocking for Bela and Gauri. Gauri attempts to initiate conversation with Bela and Meghna by making a remark that Meghna looks like her mother, Bela stops the conversation by agitatedly telling Meghna that her grandmother had died and Gauri is just an aunt. Bela's words for Gauri are full of hatred even she feels like killing Gauri. Bela couldn't resist her anger mounted for nearly thirty years and showers her disgust on Gauri. Fragments of her dialogues are as under

How dare you set foot in this house? ...

Why have you come here? ...

Get out. Go back to whatever it was that was more important...

I can't stand the sight of you... I can't bear listening to anything you have to say...

I know why you left us... I've known for years about Udayan, I know who I am...

And it doesn't matter. Nothing excuses what you did... Nothing will ever excuse it.

You're not my mother. You're nothing. Can you hear me? I want you to nod if you can hear me...

You're as dead to me as he is. The only difference is that you left me by choice.

(Lahiri, *Lowland* 312-313)

Bela's words hit Gauri like bullets. She is speechless and stunned by Bela's anger. Of course, Gauri is guilty of whatever she has done to Bela therefore she listens to everything silently. Her throat dries out but she cannot dare ask for water. She leaves an envelope containing divorce documents and departs. Gauri's brief presence in the house has shocked Bela as a dead body might. She remembers the day she and Subhash came back from Calcutta and found Gauri missing in the house.

This brief visit leaves Gauri depressed. She cancels her journey to Europe and goes to Calcutta instead. She observes the changes made to the city. She visits the lowland, where Udayan was killed by the policeman, but finds that the lowland doesn't exist anymore instead houses are built there. Her intention to return to Calcutta was to unite with Udayan again. At the guest house, she stands in the balcony and imagines Udayan and attempts to commit suicide so as to join him. She visualizes past memories through her inner eyes. Revealing her inner turmoil the novelist writes

Then one by one she released the things that fettered her. Lightening herself, the way she'd removed her bangles after Udayan was killed. What she'd seen from the terrace in Tollygunge. What she'd done to Bela. The image of a policeman passing beneath a window, holding his son by the hand.

A final image: Udayan standing beside her on the balcony in North Calcutta. Looking down at the street with her, getting to know her. Leaning forward, just inches between them, the future spread before them. The moment her life had begun a second time.

She leaned forward. She saw the spot where she would fall. She recalled the thrill of meeting him, of being adored by him. The moment of losing him. The fury of learning how he'd implicated her. The ache of bringing Bela into the world, after he was gone.

She opened her eyes. He was not there. (Lahiri, *Lowland* 323)

It is already morning, and the routine movement of the street vendor just below the balcony starts, her maid Abha also reaches to make breakfast for her. This hustle bustle disrupts her link with Udayan and her spontaneous feeling to end her life vanishes. She plans to leave Calcutta at the end of the week and to join her routine. After a few months, she receives a

letter from Bela. Bela informs her that Meghna is asking about her. Bela tells her that may be one day when Meghna is older enough to comprehend the facts; she would explain everything about Gauri to her and the reason why she left them. And if, then, Meghna desires to know about her, they will meet again (Lahiri, *Lowland* 324-325). On the other hand Subhash starts a new life with his new wife Elise. Bela begins her life journey with Drew. Thus, after lots of ups and down, Subhash and Bela are about to coin new relationships which may satisfy their quest of identity. On the other hand, Gauri continues her individual and independent role, she has designed for herself.

### 3.2.6 Generation Gap

Even though half of the novel deals with the story of Indian socio-political movement of Naxalite and its consequences on Mitra family, it deals with the complexities involved in the relationship in a diasporic setting that creates a gap between them. So far as the fifth attribute generational gap is concerned, there are a few instances in the novel in which ideology of the first generation opposes the second generation to the extent diasporic setting is concerned. Apart from diasporic setting, the generation gap is observed between the beliefs and lifestyle of two sons: Subhash and Udayan and their father in India. Udayan's involvement in the Naxalite movement is strongly opposed by his father. His father possesses an opinion that his generation has built the nation with huge efforts and sacrifices and there isn't any requirement of further disruption. Subhash and Udayan's parents strictly adhere to Bengali customs to each and every aspect of life whether it is about marriage, treatment of widows, celebrating *pujos* and so on. Both the brothers do not show respect to the custom of marriage. Udayan makes love marriage with Gauri and Subhash remarries Gauri after Udayan's death, their action deprived their parents a right of choosing a suitable bride for them.

Generation gap is also observed in the path Bela chooses for her life. Subhash comes to the US with a view to making his life prosperous and stable. Contrary to this, Bela rejects the stability in life and lives like a nomad with limited means. Bela's inability to read and write in Bengali language also creates a gap between her and her parents. It is a general tendency of immigrant parents to pass on cultural heritage to their next and subsequent generations to keep alive their Indian part of identity. In *The Lowland*, the absence of mother in Bela's life doesn't offer her little opportunity to know or imbibe traditions and

values of Indian culture. Furthermore, it is only her father Subhash with whom she keeps a little interaction. Subhash being generous doesn't interfere in Bela's life. So we do not find much conflict between the first generation and the second generation so far cultural practice and lifestyle is concerned, but ideological gap is surely found between two generations in the novel.

### 3.3 Summary

The present chapter has attempted to critically analyze *The Namesake* and *The Lowland* in the framework of five major attributes of diasporic sensibility viz. 1) Alienation 2) Memory and Nostalgia 3) Cultural Assimilation and 4) Identity Crises and 5) Generation gap. In the final examination it can be said that both the novels authentically deal with the nuances of the diasporic sensibility. Shubha Mukherjee points out the difference between Jhumpa Lahiri's earlier writings and later writings. She opines that her previous short stories and novel depicted the desperate struggle of the first generation immigrants in the settled land. The parents were anxious in maintaining and passing on the cultural heritage to the second generation who was very much influenced by the foreign lifestyle. The later writings of Jhumpa Lahiri including *The Lowland* demonstrate such mass of people who are away from the place of their origin but are comfortable with the culture and customs of the settled land. Instead of social and cultural dilemmas, the works focus more on individual's desires and their outcomes (105).

The diasporic dilemmas felt by Ashoke and Ashima in *The Namesake* are somewhat different from the experiences of Subhash and Gauri in *The Lowland* provided that there are differences in the story and purpose of migration. In *The Namesake*, Jhumpa Lahiri has effectively represented the experience of immigrant family as she has touched philosophical and psychological aspects of migration. The twin cultured ultra modern diasporic space imparts a promising environment to the immigrants but at the same time it makes them aware of their alien status and invokes a sense of emptiness in their hearts. The east-west conflict bothers them but they learn to march ahead in the direction of a better future and gradually learn to overcome feelings of alienation. *The Lowland* on the other hand explores intricate personalities and complicated relationships in the diasporic space. The sense of alienation decreases with the passage of time on account of the process of integration with the western world but memory of their past life and nostalgic feelings

bother them. There is no strong bonding with native culture but their unhappy relationships govern their lives. Lahiri makes an in-depth analysis of loneliness and guilt experienced by the protagonists in *The Lowland*. In both the novels, the cultural assimilation of the first generation immigrants is like a creation of access to the alien world and their nostalgia is a link to their past. On the other hand the influence of the western world compels the second generation children to prefer only western notions of life though they are raised with Indian traditions and values. The second generation characters of Lahiri in both the novels prefer to live life as per parameters of western world when they grow up. Both the first and the second generation immigrants in Lahiri's novels feel pressures and demands of two contradictory cultures. Ultimately there arises a need to mediate between cultural identity and cultural reality to resolve the diasporic dilemmas.

Jhumpa Lahiri also depicts the emotional dilemma of the characters who constantly urge for emotional link and mutual understanding among them. The themes of familial relationship, displacement, alienation, identity crises and choices are interwoven expertly in the stories of both the novel. According to Meera Bharwani, Jhumpa Lahiri attempts to record reactions of the first and second generation immigrants on the past situation of their place of origin and describe how homelands affect diasporics in the settled land (qtd. in Aasha and Reena 319).

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## CHAPTER 4

# Diasporic Approach to Selected Works of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

### 4.1 Diasporic Approach to *The Mistress of Spices*

#### 4.1.1 Introduction

There is a blend of Indian myths and American reality and their relevance to women in the novel *The Mistress of Spices*. The novel is set in Oakland and presents a story of a mistress of spices named Tilo who runs a grocery store having signboard SPICE BAZAAR. The day to day problems of Indian immigrants in America are revealed and are attempted for cure by magical treatment of spices by Tilo. She has been taught remedial attributes of spices and her own magical powers enable her to perceive problems faced by her customers without talking to them. She chooses appropriate spice for each of her customers to relieve him or her from predicament. The novel encompasses several stories of Indian immigrants and their struggle to ascertain their roots, problems of acculturation, racism and identity crises. Their diasporic dilemmas are revealed and to some extent healed by Tilo and charms of spices. Tilo herself also passes through identity confusion as throughout her life she changes her identity multiple times. The novel was adapted into a film with the same title in 2005.

Divakaruni employs magic realism in the novel to explore the psyche of immigrants' experience. Tilo's magical power enables her to probe into the minds of her customers. Readers are taken to secret realms of immigrants to trace the feelings of pleasure, sadness, expectation, reality, struggle and frustration through Tilo's inner eyes. Tilo can communicate thoughts of her customers to the readers and she takes help of spices to cure their troubles. The spices have been portrayed as entities possessing supernatural abilities and Tilo can communicate with them also. People from different cultural and religious backgrounds visit the store not only for groceries but also for individual fulfillment.

Divakaruni introduces many characters in the canvas of the novel but her sympathy mostly lies with women characters. She addresses problems faced by women characters on account of patriarchal attitude and cultural conflict. Her characters belong to ordinary working class who face a range of issues in diaspora including racial attacks. Divakaruni's female characters demonstrate how to lead their lives comfortably and withstand the troubles boldly. The quest for individual identity is a predominant aspect for her characters. Her women break the barriers of worn out traditional values and live independent lives.

#### **4.1.2 Alienation**

Most of the characters in the novel *The Mistress of Spices* belong to first generation immigrants, who come to the US with a hope to achieve happiness and prosperity, but the harsh reality of immigrant life makes them feel depressed. They compare their internal state of mind with that of external condition. The difference between these two may lead them towards feelings of being displaced. Throughout the course of the novel the protagonist Tilo passes through feelings of homelessness and thus she is alienated in each situation and place. She possesses a variety of names and each of her names is specific to each situation she is in. Actually Tilo was not her birth name as she was born as Nayan Tara (star of the eye) in an Indian village. Her birth was considered nothing but a dowry debt by parents. Fortunately, the unattended girl indeed becomes the 'star of the eye' for her parents when it is discovered that she is born with the ability to see the future. Her supernatural ability provides her fame and prosperity, but she feels that joy and excitement are missing in her life. She feels un-homed in her own home. Her parents and siblings follow her commands due to immense wealth gained by her in the form of gifts, but she experiences loneliness as the novel reads

How tiresome my life had become, the endless praise, the songs of adulation, the mountains of gifts, my parents' fearful deference. And these unending nights lying sleepless among a gaggle of girls who groaned out the names of boys in their dreams.

I would turn my face into my pillow to escape the emptiness opening like a black hand inside my chest. I would focus my attention on my discontent until it

glittered sharp as a hook, and then I would cast it out over the ocean in search of my pirates. (Divakaruni, *Mistress* 17)

Later her thoughts invite pirates who abduct her to become rich with her supernatural ability. She becomes a pirate queen and pirates follow her commands. She is given a new name 'Bhagyavati, Bringer of Luck' (Divakaruni, *Mistress* 19). But here once again, Tilo lacks happiness or purpose in her life. Once again her thoughts invite a calamity in the form of a typhoon drowning ship and all the pirates. Mythical sea serpents appear to rescue her. They inform her about the spice island where women are trained in the use of spices and become mistress of spices. The serpents also offer her to join them and she will be given the title of 'Sarpa Kanya, snake maiden', but she chooses the spice island (Divakaruni, *Mistress* 22-24). She reaches the island of spices and gets training in spices from the old mother, the trainer.

On completion of the formal training of spices, each mistress is given a new name by the old mother; here she expresses desire to be called by Tilo short for Tilottama. The name is coined from a sesame seed, which is better known as a spice of nourishment. Each mistress is assigned to a place by the old mother to serve the people with the help of spices. Tilo wants to dedicate her life in the service of the South Asian community living in America, so she chooses Oakland as her destiny. She is transported to Oakland through magical 'Shampati's fire'. It is a bonfire in which a mistress steps in and is transformed into a new body at a new place. As per myth Shampati is a bird of myth and memory who dived into fire and rose a new from ash (Divakaruni, *Mistress* 56). The Shampati's fire signifies Tilo's rebirth, transformation of herself into a new form but in the guise of an old woman. The rules set forth for the mistress confine her in the store and frequently she feels alone by heart. Her feelings of alienation are aggravated when for the first time she steps out of the store and feels a strong urge for a place to name home. Her moving out of her store is a step towards assimilation with the settled land but internally she feels alienated.

Tilo's transformation bestows her new role and a new identity as she is turned into an old lady who looks after the store in the street of Oakland. She appears a traditional aged Indian woman, unattractive and ageless, her original self and desires are suppressed due to her duties as mistress of spices. Her distress is often revealed in her thoughts: "This disguise falling like old snakeskin around my feet, and I rising red and new and wet-gleaming" (Divakaruni, *Mistress* 49). Sometimes she feels uncomfortable in the shop as

she is unable to consider it as her home in the real sense of the term. The feeling of displacement is experienced for the first time by Tilo in Oakland only. In her earlier identities as Nayan Tara, Bhagyavati and a trainee on the spice island she never felt unhomed, but it is only in Oakland the disturbing feelings of homelessness appear to her. In one way, her earlier roles can be seen as stages in her journey to reach the culmination point. But her ultimate destined place does not soothe her. It is a symbolic revelation of a sense of alienation and identity crises felt by immigrants in the new land. In voluntary migration, a person is generally attracted by the prosperity and liberty of the new land but the actual experience as an immigrant makes him/her realize his / her inability to become a part of the social structure of the host land. The feeling of displacement ultimately leads towards identity confusion.

With her supernatural power, Tilo is able to make out reasons for emotional, physical or spiritual discomforts of her customers. Whenever customers enter her store, she is able to read their mind and understand their urges. She is always conscious of her supernatural ability to cure people through magical charms of the spices. She is proud of her duty as mistress of spices, she says, “I who can make it all happen, green cards and promotions and girls with lotus eyes. I Tilo architect of the immigrant dream” (Divakaruni, *Mistress* 28). As a mistress, she is given the task to serve the immigrants who struggle to survive in the US or face cultural conflict or identity crises, but while serving her customers, she is forbidden to interfere in the lives of any of her customers and she is also forbidden to invoke any desire. However, unintentionally Tilo breaks several rules set forth for the mistresses and gets involved sympathetically and emotionally with fellow citizens. She is prohibited to touch her customer or to leave the shop, she does the both. Her love affair with an American man named Raven is also against the ordinance set by the old mother. In all these instances it appears that Tilo is constantly in search of certain affiliations and cures her own alienation.

Tilo perceives the idea of racism and how it affects the identity of the immigrant community through experiences of her customers. She observes detrimental effects of racism on lower middle class mass. The racial attitude of whites towards South Asian origins in the US formulates an idea of the space it offers to South Asian immigrants. Tilo detects the brutality of racism when two white men severely beat Mohan, a working class Indian immigrant. While beating Mohan, the young white men shout, “Son of a bitch

Indian should stayed in your own goddamn country” (Divakaruni, *Mistress* 170). Tilo experiences his pain and suffering of many others, she says,

O Mohan broken in body broken in mind by America, I come back from your story in pieces, find myself assembled at last on the chill floor of the shop. My limbs ache as after long illness, my sari is damp with shiver-sweat, and in my heart I cannot tell where your pain ends and mine begins. For your story is the story of all those I have learned to love in this country, and to fear for. ...

Yes, the stories are there. Peeling page off page, going back into the months and years, I discover them slowly. The man who finds his grocery windows smashed by rocks, picks up one to read the hate-note tied around it. Children sobbing outside their safe suburban home over their poisoned dog. Woman with her dupatta torn from her shoulders as she walks a city pavement, the teenagers speeding away in their car hooting laughter. The man who watches his charred motel, life’s earnings gone, the smoke curling in a hieroglyph that reads *arson*.

I know there are other stories, numerous beyond counting, unreported unwritten, hanging bitter and brown as smog in America’s air. (Divakaruni, *Mistress* 172-173)

Tilo’s monologue very well reveals the situations immigrants confront frequently which break their notion of belongingness and make them feel alien in the host country. The brutality inflicted on the immigrants by whites in order to establish their superiority conveys that immigrants are unwanted in American society. The attributes of power and economy are incorporated by the majority group in the treatment with the minority immigrant groups and they are made aware of their alien status. The minority groups are compelled to believe that their existence in the settled country is subject to the mercy of the majority groups.

Tilo’s another patron Jagjit is battered at school by white students who make fun of Jagjit’s turban and his language. While they are assaulting him, they yell “Talk English son of a bitch. Speak up nigger wetback asshole” (Divakaruni, *Mistress* 39). Jagjit is unable to understand why he is called ‘nigger’ as he is not black and belongs to India. Such racial discrimination is common to South Asian community and being non white they are often

put in the category of black community which links the status of black community as slaves and subject of whites during colonial period. Irrespective of the way in which South Asian immigrants identify themselves, they become subject to prejudice and racism in the diasporic setting. Observing racial discrimination, Tilo's perception of her race is changed; she recognizes the bitter experiences of minority groups in the US which are continuously struggling for identification and respect. Tilo reveals experience of workers who pass by her store:

No one told us it would be so hard here in Amreekah, all day scrubbing greasy floors, lying under engines that drip black oil, driving the belching monster trucks that coat our lungs with tar. Standing behind counters of dim motels where we must smile as we hand keys to whores. Yes, always smile, even when people say 'Bastard foreigner taking over the country stealing our jobs.' Even when cops pull us over because we're in the wrong part the rich part of town. (Divakaruni, *Mistress* 62)

When people from middle class or from lower middle class migrate to the US, they come with hope to get a better life by earning in dollars and send money back to their native land for remaining family members there. But their American dream soon shatters when they face the hardship of reality. The types of jobs offered to semi skilled or unskilled working class do not give them complete sense of job satisfaction and racism adds oil to their predicaments, yet they learn to make compromises because of their helplessness.

There is also another side of racial identity prevailing among South Asian immigrants, which Tilo observes through her customers. The racial discrimination as discussed above is faced by working class immigrants mostly whereas the wealthy Indian people are shielded from racism. They identify themselves completely with whites. Tilo describes her rich Indian customer:

The rich Indians crane their necks and lift their chins high because they have to be more always than other people, taller, handsomer, better dressed. Or at least richer. They have their bodies like moneybags out the door and into their satin cars, leaving the crumbly odor of old banknotes behind.

Other rich people send lists instead, because being a rich person is a busy job. Golf cruises charity luncheons in the Cornelian Room shopping for new Lamborghinis and cigar cases inlaid with lapis lazuli.

Still others have forgotten to be Indian and eat caviar only. (Divakaruni, *Mistress* 76)

There are instances in the novel which show that working class Indian immigrants are often insulted and ill-treated by rich Indians in the US. The rich Indians as described in the novel are governed by a sense of superiority, class distinction and bossism. Haroun, who drives a Rolls for Mrs. Kapadia is fed up with her behaviour, he experiences that his master who is also Indian by birth as he himself is, treats him as if he were mean or alien. His frustration is revealed when he talks to Tilo “All these rich people, they think that they’re still in India. Treat you like *janwaars*, animals. Order this, order that, no end to it, and after you wear out your soles running around for them, not even a nod in thanks” (Divakaruni, *Mistress* 28-29). Haroun’s words clearly explain his everyday struggle and humiliation he confronts. Later in the novel he is robbed and badly hurt with an iron rod by American robbers. So he becomes a soft target not only for Rich Indians but also for Americans. Haroun, Mohan and several other lower-class immigrant people suffer ill treatment on account of their racial identity and economical condition. Such experiences make them feel neglected by society, which ultimately brings realization of their alien status.

The feelings of displacement may sometimes become intense for women unlike men. They may suffer geographical as well as emotional dislocation in a diasporic setting. Orthodox traditions and beliefs of the patriarchal culture displace them. Elders’ strict Adherence to cultural tradition may sometimes also become a reason for alienation for youngsters. In Geeta’s case, her desire to marry Juan, a Mexican American results in breaking of her family. Her parents and grandfather do not approve idea of her marriage with non-Indian suitor. When her parents disapprove her marriage proposal, she leaves her home and begins to live with her friend. Being born and brought up in the US, Geeta leads American lifestyle and wants to enjoy liberty the American culture offers, but disapproval from her family’s side makes her feel alienated.

Marriage in male dominant society results in submissive suffering for women not only in India but also abroad. Ahuja’s wife Lalita becomes a victim of patriarchal power in the US.

Her husband's suspicious nature and brutal sexual attacks breaks her emotionally and psychologically. There is no one in America with whom she can share her situation and get help. She finds herself dissatisfied with her new life on account of the conflict with the contradictory culture and continuous contemplation of being trapped. Her desire to have a baby to get rid of her lonely feelings doesn't get fulfilled because of her husband's infertility. Later when she seeks shelter at an organization working for battered women, it doesn't provide her comfort emotionally. She could not decide whether to go back to her husband or accept the offer of help by the organization to start her own tailoring business. Thus Divakaruni represents real life problems of immigrants especially of women in vivid details. They try to assimilate with the host culture which provides new dimension to their lives, but they cannot completely discard their native culture. The clash of culture, traditions, customs and their own hesitation to disregard male dominance gradually create feelings of alienation in them.

#### 4.1.3 Memory and Nostalgia

The titles given to each chapter in *The Mistress of Spices* are names of spices and Tilo links each spice with particular human sense. Various characters mentioned in the novel often experience alienation, identity crises and often feel nostalgic. They are frequently saddened by their present conditions and dilemmas they feel, but the spices have the power to heal their memories. Sujith Kumar Rath opines,

Spices are not mere taste enhancers in this story by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni – nor are they medicines. They are real characters with emotions. Spices, here, possess powers that are real – they heal, soothe, enhance, possess, enliven, energize on the positive side and wreck vengeance, take offence, be mean, and strike on the negative side. (qtd. in Murugarajan 351)

The Spice Bazaar attracts Indian immigrants because it is this place where they feel like a home. Aroma of spices and reference to various items in the store like rajma (red kidney beans), basmati rice, *kheer* (pudding), pudina leaves, pakodas (fritters), papads and the mention of popular Indian brand goods like Mysore sandalwood soap, Singer Machine, Bedekar Pickles and Bata shoes, etc. stir up a native spirit and make immigrants feel nostalgic about their homeland and past associations with the goods they were accustomed to use. There are so many things in store which remind one of the past such as Indian

sweets, vegetables, varieties of pulse, music cassettes and video tapes of Indian movies and several other things which echo India. Tilo proudly says that her store has all the spices and even the lost ones. She remarks, “If you stand in the centre of this room and turn slowly around, you will be looking at every Indian spices that ever was – even the lost ones – gathered here upon the shelves of my store. I think I do not exaggerate when I say there is no other place in the world quite like this” (Divakaruni, *Mistress* 3). There is mention of other such stores in California, but most of them appear to be ordinary grocery stores. In Spice Bazaar, the variety of spices and Tilo’s miraculous ability make the store special one. The store not only contains spices and grocery but also houses culture and traditions, which cannot be separated. For a large group of Indian immigrants in California, her store becomes reminiscent of home. People come to her store in search of happiness and it becomes an oasis in their struggling diasporic lives. Lalita, Jagjit and his mother, Daksha, Haroun, Geeta, and several other Indian immigrants regularly come to her store to buy Indian grocery and spices. A group of young women to whom Tilo calls ‘Bougainvillea girls’ occasionally visit Tilo’s store to purchase spices and rice to make biryani. Tilo says, “All those voices, Hindi, Oriya, Assamese, Urdu, Tamil, English layered one on the other like notes from a *tanpura*, all those voices asking for more than their words, asking for happiness except one seems to know where” (Divakaruni, *Mistress* 78). Divakaruni effectively represents that memory and nostalgia play pivotal roles in the lives of people who feel displaced. Nostalgia becomes a soothing place for such people and it becomes an instrument to peep into their past life and homeland. It not only relieves them from their present problems but also strengthens their affiliation with roots.

Tilo herself comes across a variety of problems in relocation. Her migration from home to seas as a pirate queen and from seas to the island of spices as a trainee and finally from island of spices to California as the mistress of spices generate questions of belongingness and identity confusion. It is only when she moves to California she experiences the concept of homeland, nationality and cultural values. Her training of spices paves a path to generate a sense of affiliation with spices and their origin i.e. India. As a mistress of spices, she has to follow certain rules and remain loyal to spices. By showing loyalty towards spices, Tilo demonstrates loyalty towards Indian traditions and culture.

The immigrant customers come to the store to cherish their cultural heritage and for many of them it offers feelings of homeliness and identity. In one sense, the store becomes a

representative of Indian culture. A visit to the store takes the customer to their past in India. They look at various materials at the store and it invokes memories about the past, the ways things were used. The narration of certain immigrant customers and their purchase by Tilo shows that they buy the same things time and again which substantiates that they are consciously affiliated to their roots and keep it alive. The influence of the west cannot wipe their heritage and connection to roots. Furthermore, cuisines and cooking habits of the immigrant community demonstrate their efforts to preserve their heritage and traditions. The food habits attach them with their roots by memory and nostalgia.

In distressed circumstances, the memory and nostalgia keeps the immigrants' life moving. For Ahuja's wife Lalita, shelter of past memories only provides her comfort. She was a talented tailor before her marriage in India. Her marriage with NRI brings her no solace. She has to keep her passions for tailoring profession aside in the US on account of her husband's patriarchal attitude and frequent abuse. Tilo is able to understand her talent. When Lalita comes to the store, she looks at the fabric counter where Tilo keeps embroidered sari, the stitches on the fabric creates nostalgic feelings in Lalita. Tilo questions her if she stitches, she enthusiastically replies, "I used to [stitch] a lot, once. I loved it. In Kanpur I was going to sewing school, I had my own Singer machine, lot of ladies gave me stitching to do" (Divakaruni, *Mistress* 15). But at the very next movement her reality in the US makes her depressed. Her passion for tailoring comes to end soon after her marriage. Her arranged marriage with Ahuja took place only with a limited knowledge that he lives in America and earns dollars. Furthermore, Ahuja looked completely different from his photograph sent to Lalita's family. After marriage she comes to America but soon her dreams are shattered. Ahuja is a watchman at docks and possesses orthodox mindset. Her marriage ends her passions and makes her talent useless as Ahuja doesn't approve her idea of working woman. Each day most of the time she remains idle at home. Lalita longs for a baby that may relieve her from distress, but it doesn't become possible due to Ahuja's infertility. The situation becomes worse when it comes to his knowledge and he doubts Lalita instead and she becomes the victim of physical abuse. Finally she gathers courage and leaves her house to seek shelter at an organization which helps abused women. Her story is just an epitome of several other immigrant women, whose talent and life become worthless and devoid of any interest due to patriarchal dominance. Only memories and desires bring them temporary consolation.

The narratives of the novel reflect racial tension at various points. Marginalization, racism and tolerance are interwoven skillfully by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni to demonstrate complex social relationships in multi cultural and multi racial scenarios. Jagjit, a Sikh boy of 10 years is frequently bullied by white boys at school. Jagjit doesn't know English language so other students make fun of him. They harass him, pull his turban off and drag him down. The racial discrimination is not uncommon for immigrants. As a result, Jagjit appears to be shy and feels displaced in the US. He tries to omit school, but is often rebuked by his mother at home for his behaviour. He misses his days in India and finds solace in it: "At night he lies with his eyes open, staring until the stars begin to flicker like fireflies in his grandmother's *kheti* outside Jullunder. She is singing as she gathers for dinner bunches of *saag* green as his turban. Punjabi words that sound like rain" (Divakaruni, *Mistress* 39).

Haroun, a poor taxi driver from Kashmir comes to Tilo's store with a hope to fulfill his American dream through Tilo's magical power. He suffers from the pain of memories. When he was in India, his family was in the business of boating, they rowed *shikara* (boat) for the tourists. One day a rebel started in his village, young men were kidnapped and many people were killed including Haroun's father and grandfather. In Haroun's case, the unhappy past memories add oil to his struggle in the alien land. Tilo gives him *chandan* (sandalwood) powder to rub on his palms to relieve him from the pain of remembering.

Another remarkable character in the novel is Geeta's grandfather who dwells in a nostalgic past. He is an ex-army man from India. He comes to spend his old age at his son's house in America. He is often frustrated and disappointed due to his incapability to cope up with American culture, food habits, lifestyle and indifference of granddaughter Geeta. His dissatisfaction is obvious in his words "But mental peace I am not having, not even one iota, since I crossed the *kalapani* and came to this America" (Divakaruni, *Mistress* 85). He finds it difficult to assimilate with American culture and clings to orthodox Indian traditions. At times he becomes nostalgic. Before coming to America, whatever expectations he possessed about America collapsed like a card house. Compared to the unusual and unpleasant life in America, a lonely life in home country seems a better option to him. He is annoyed to see cross cultural influence on his granddaughter who follows American lifestyle. Annoyance starts when her grandfather intervenes and tries to teach her Indian ways. He shares his frustration with Tilo:

That girl, this Sunday she cut her hair short-short so that even her neck is showing. I am telling her, Geeta what did you do, your hair is the essence of your womanhood. You know what she is replying? ...

‘She is laughing and pushing all those messy ends back from her face, saying, Oh Grandpa I needed a new look.’

... how much make-up she is using all the time. *Uff*, in my days only the Englishwomen and prostitutes are doing that. Good Indian girls are not ashamed of the face God is giving them. You cannot think what all she is taking with her even to work. (Divakaruni, *Mistress* 86)

Geeta’s grandfather’s warning to Geeta to obey native culture suggests that he cannot identify his family with American culture and it continuously disturbs him. The people who come to America for a shorter period cannot suddenly accept American culture; rather they stick to their traditional practice. His granddaughter’s love affair with Juan, a Mexican American becomes unbearable for him. He always talks about customs and traditions of India and cannot approve Geeta’s individual choice of love marriage. It results in breaking of family; fortunately Tilo helps to reunite them with counseling and charms of spices. In Geeta’s grandfather’s case, physically he lives in America but at subconscious level he dwells in India.

One of the major characters of the novel is Raven. He is not an immigrant in the US but belongs to native ethnic population of the US. He lives with unpleasant past memories and struggles to trace his roots. The secret about his mother’s parentage makes him uneasy. Her mother hid her identity and her pretentious lifestyle was not acceptable to Raven. It remains a secret for Raven why her mother left her relatives. When Raven tells his childhood story to Tilo, he gives graphic descriptions of each and every trifle thing skillfully as if all the things of the past were in front of his eyes. Tilo observes hatred in his words for his mother and says, “I see the memory of it in his eyes. It is a strange emotion, not the wild and stormy hatred one would expect a child to feel, but as though he had been pushed in to a frozen lake and now, having emerged, saw all things with a changed, deliberate, icy vision” (Divakaruni, *Mistress* 206).

#### 4.1.4 Cultural Assimilation

Immigrants are always conscious of their native culture and customs irrespective of the places they are placed in. With the passage of time, a significant change is found in their attitude towards foreign culture; there appears a mode of acceptance for foreign culture and way of life. At a social level premarital and marital relationship, dressing styles and food habits get changed. Such changes may lead towards loss of native identity, but it also offers a new identity. For male partners of the society, changes are not so drastic, but they are noteworthy for female partners. There are chances that an immigrant woman transforms completely in a new personality to get rid of troubles arising on account of her adherence to native culture and customs. There can also be cases of Indian women who preserve their Indianness and confront the outside influence and gradually adjust themselves in the frame of western society by process of assimilation. A positive attitude towards foreign culture helps them retain their cultural identity and maintain balance between cultural identity and cultural reality.

By her own experience and magical powers, Tilo is able to see through the lives of her customers and derives meaning in immigrant life. The rules set for mistresses and her fidelity to spices prevent her from influence of American culture but at certain occasions, she shows desires to embrace American life and break rules either to help others or for personal fulfillment. When for the first time, Tilo puts on an American outfit, she feels an unusual shift between states of mind. She feels double consciousness; the first one compels her to believe herself to be an American and the second one at the same time reminds her of being a foreigner in America. She uses a phrase “I and not – I” (Divakaruni, *Mistress* 131) for her, which reflects her dual consciousness. She heartily accepts the idea that she can fit in American culture and be a part of it. At the bus stop, she enjoys the reality that her being different among the group of Americans is no longer a marker of her racial identity, she feels a part of them.

The spaces spices occupy in the novel demonstrate that though setting is America, the importance of Indian spices and recipes have their own significance. India has been known for its spices since ancient times and spices are continuously used not only by Indian immigrants but also by western people. Tilo prescribes spices not only for cooking purposes but also as remedy for homesickness. The relevance of spices in diasporic context shows immigrants’ unintentional way of maintaining Indianness. Tilo is able to awaken

secret charms of spices and calls each of them by their real proper names. Divakaruni admits twofold forces of the spices in an interview; she says, “In Indian folk belief, spices are used for more than flavorings. They have magical powers all their own, and they provide remedies for physical maladies as well as cures for spiritual ills”.

In using the knowledge of spices, Tilo steps into a series of integrating processes by way of shedding self restraint to help her customers. Her act of stepping out of the store links her with America; she creates a space in the outside world and it acts as a link between the internal world (the store) and the external world (America). Tilo breaks several rules to help Haroun, Geeta, Kwesi and Raven. As a mistress of spices, Tilo is forbidden to leave the store, but her acts of leaving the store and stepping into the outside world demonstrate her urges for assimilation with the outside world.

The journey from alienation to assimilation brings multiple challenges; Divakaruni skillfully highlights this process through various character sketches in her novels. Her characters do not discard their native culture but they rather integrate with the host culture. Cultural distinctions do not fade away but it leads towards cultural fusion. Ahuja’s wife Lalita’s taking shelter in an NGO and her desire for individual liberty to occupy space in America shows her integration in America. Jagjit, a timid school boy who is bullied by white students at school befriends with American boys but from the underworld. Here Jagjit’s assimilation shows that negative aspects of the host country can also influence and attract diasporics. Jagjit’s transformation from a shy boy from Jullunder to an American drug trafficker suggests the dark side of assimilation. Tilo hopes for his return to a good path and gives him some money to join Kwesi’s karate school.

Though racial apprehension surfaces at several points in the novel, Divakaruni tackles the racial tension and tolerance to reveal the complex nature of human relationship in multi racial and multi cultural society. Racial attacks such as bullying, misbehavior or sometimes physical attacks are attempted by whites on non whites with contempt and sense of superiority and majority. Haroun, a cab driver, is attacked and badly injured. A food vendor named Mohan is severely beaten up and crippled. Such racist approaches by majority group on minority groups of immigrants poses challenges for immigrants to integrate with the host society. Divakaruni provides relief to such marginalized masses by recognizing their dilemmas and advocating alliance among them.

A Muslim lady Hameeda's story demonstrates that social realities of India are sometimes not desirable compared to America. When Hameeda was in India, she was given divorce by her husband as a girl child was born to her. To give her a new life, her brother brings her to America. Here she could get education from college and hopefully derive meaning in her existence. In America, no one accuses her daughter as "bad luck". The process of assimilation with host land becomes easier for people like Hameeda due to unorthodox and liberal values of host land.

Tilo's union with Raven and Geeta's union with Juan suggests anticipated cultural meeting points of globalization. Coming from an orthodox family, Geeta does not discard her values for her love. She leaves her parent's house but does not marry Juan without her parents' consent. Her union with Juan, who is Chicano (Mexican American), can be considered a hybrid condition, which is a significant element of American culture. Tilo and Raven are able to connect with each on the grounds of shared spiritual bent of mind against the materialism of America. They could unite to create earthly paradise. Tilo's transformation into Maya gives her a new identity and liberty to make love to Raven. Both Tilo's and Geeta's union with their lovers can be seen as alliances with the host culture to create a new space. Yet the process of assimilation with mainstream American culture is not uncomplicated for Geeta, Tilo and even Hameeda. In this process of assimilation, while accepting ways of host culture, they consciously attempt to retain their native culture and native identity. The assimilation of culture gives some sort of relief to diasporic dilemmas and paves way for creation of multicultural spaces.

#### **4.1.5 Identity Crisis**

The novel pays attention to lives of Indian immigrants, many of them feel displaced and suffer from identity crises and racial discrimination. They so often feel nostalgic about their homeland and come across cultural conflicts. The memories, customs and culture of their native land are never removed from their mind and that is why the process of assimilation becomes difficult for them. As a result they dwell in 'in-between' places and completely belong neither to the homeland nor to settled land. Such diasporic dilemmas become the theme of the novel and Tilo tries to heal their suffering with the power of the spices. Tilo believes that for each person there is a special spice that can help him or her achieve fulfillment. She possesses true knowledge and properties of each of the spices and

she has an ability to discover the secret urge of her customers. She can permit them their wishes and can even influence their fate. As the novel progresses, it also appears that Tilo herself, like her immigrant customers, is entangled in the unrest of being and becoming, a conflict through which the most immigrants pass while they move from their old identity to new identity. Regarding identity confusion experienced by women characters as depicted in the novel, Saifee and Sharma write: “Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni focuses on the diasporic Indian women caught between two opposing worlds. They find themselves in an in-between state, struggling to carve out identities of their own. They try to discuss their own lives amidst joy and heart-break” (241).

Haroun, Lalita, Jagjit, Daksha, Geeta and Geeta’s grandfather are some of the immigrant characters who seek Tilo’s spices and her sympathy for their problems which mostly arise due to diasporic setting. Tilo demonstrates sympathy for Haroun, a miserable cab driver who longs to settle down in the US, but has difficulty in earning livelihood due to bossism and racism. He wants to become rich with Tilo’s magical power. Tilo is not a magician to fulfill anyone’s desire but she has a power to foresee the future. She is worried about impending danger on Haroun and gives him *kalojiro* spice to protect him from evil eyes. She also helps him uniting with Hameeda in bondage of love by prescribing lotus root spice. Tilo sympathizes with Ahuja’s wife – Lalita who is entangled in unhappy married life and longs to escape from the bondage. The couple is unable to conceive a child due to Ahuja’s infertility but instead Lalita becomes a subject for torment. Tilo’s advice and charms of her spices help out Lalita to achieve emancipation by moving out of the marriage and find solutions for her predicaments.

Tilo also helps Jagjit, a school boy whose name implies world-conqueror but he becomes victim to the ill-treatment of white students in the school. Unable to speak English well, Jagjit is mocked by his classmates for his inability, shyness and his traditional turban. Tilo slips cinnamon spice – a friend maker and destroyer of enemy in his turban secretly so that he can get rid of daily abuse. Tilo listens to the inner voice of Daksha, a nurse in an AIDS ward, whose life is worn out by demands of her work at hospital and home. “Daksha to whom no one listens so she has forgotten how to say” (Divakaruni, *Mistress* 80). Tilo gives her black pepper in order that she can learn to say ‘No’. She also gives her *amla* for resistance to help bear the pain which cannot be changed.

The dilemma of identity is poised differently for the second generation youngsters like Geeta. She struggles continuously for identification against the patriarchal traditions. Her love affair and plan to elope with a white man Juan Cordero brings chaos to her family. Geeta's notions of liberty stand in sharp contrast with orthodox mindset of his grandfather. Tilo intervenes to help and bring peace to Geeta and her grandfather who have conflicting ideology due to cultural and generation gap. Thus, each of Tilo's customers is entangled in the realities of diasporic life. The major causes for their sufferings are cultural barriers, racism, identity confusion and generation gap. They lack individuality and become subject to suffering on account of their native identity or gender role. Tilo tries to bestow them the true essence of individuality through the power of spices.

Like her immigrant customers, Tilo herself is also in constant quest for a new identity as she passes through multiple identities in one lifetime. Each of the names she adopts possesses different attributes which shape her personality accordingly. It appears that her identity has multiple layers which are unfolded one after the other and each of them conceives numerous possibilities. Her long journey of discovering herself doesn't end even after becoming a mistress of spices. Although she voluntarily accepts to become a mistress of spices, she is not fully satisfied with her life. She constantly finds something missing in it. As a mistress of spices, Tilo is in the guise of an old woman who is forbidden to raise personal desire. She has been assigned duty only to solve problems of her customers and not those of hers. If she invokes any human desire or goes out fulfilling sensual pleasures, she will lose her powers and the spices will turn against her. It appears that as a mistress of spices, Tilo's young soul is trapped in an old body. On realization of the urges of her younger soul, she wants to come out of the shell of the old body and establish her individual identity as a young woman who falls in love with an American man, Raven. Attracted by Raven's good looks, Tilo becomes ready to follow her heart against the rules. She is even ready to accept punishment if her desires for love are fulfilled. Whenever Raven comes to her shop, she is unable to read his mind as Raven's presence invokes in her feeling of love. Raven also falls for her. One noticeable thing is that Raven's love for Tilo is actually for her aged oriental appearance as he doesn't realize that she is a young lady in the guise of an old woman. Raven's interest in Tilo grows on account of his fascination in magic since childhood. The secret about his mother's roots have created identification problems for him right from his young age. On the other hand Tilo is also looking for her individual identity. Both Tilo and Raven have the same bent of mind and

they both identify themselves with each other's company. To fulfill her sexual desires, Tilo takes help of *Makaradwaj* spice to transform her old body into a beautiful younger self for temporary time. As a young woman her beauty has no boundary. She hears a voice "By tomorrow night Tilo, you will be at beauty's summit. Enjoy well. For by next morning it will be gone" (Divakaruni, *Mistress* 263). She is able to achieve her new individual identity in a younger version of herself and she is free to fulfill her desire. She reaches to Raven's house for love making; her pleasure as well as uncanny feelings is expressed in following words:

I move as through deep water, I who have waited all my life – though I see it only now – for this brief moment blossoming like fireworks in a midnight sky. My whole body trembles, desire and fear, because it is not for Raven alone I am doing this but for myself also. And yet.

With my hand on the doorknob I freeze. (Divakaruni, *Mistress* 280)

Tilo is prepared to face whatever punishment spices decide for her act of disobedience to spices. She becomes ready to jump again into Shampati's fire, the result may be uncertain this time. The spices may destroy her or may send her back to the island and in any case her immigrant life may come to an end. Fortunately, the fire doesn't engulf her and she is transformed again into the body of an old woman. At this point, a terrible earthquake hits Oakland creating unpredictable destruction in the region. Tilo thinks that it is the anger of the spices against her for breaking several rules and it will end her immigrant life. Against her thoughts, the earthquake doesn't kill her and she is rescued by Raven. Tilo couldn't understand why spices have not punished her or deserted her. The spices respond to her and inform her that they are satisfied with her repentance and there is no need for further punishment. She adopts a new name 'Maya' and starts her new earthly life as a South Asian immigrant. The meaning of Maya is explained in Tilo's own words "In the old language it can mean many things. Illusion, spell, enchantment, the power that keeps this imperfect world going day after day. I need a name like that, I who now have only myself to hold me up" (Divakaruni, *Mistress* 317).

The quest for self identity is a predominant aspect in the novel *The Mistress of Spices*. Almost all the characters of the novel feel displaced and urge for a cultural or an individual

identity. K.S. Dhanam describes the issue of cultural conflict and identity confusion experienced by Divakaruni's women characters:

Divakaruni's books are directed mainly to women of all races and faiths who share a common female experience. All her heroines must find themselves within the contrasting boundaries of their cultures and religions... she also contrasts the lives and perceptions of first generation immigrants with that of their children born and raised in a foreign land. And inevitably, it includes the Indian American experience of grappling with two identities. (qtd. in Sharma 235)

The protagonist Tilo throughout her life possesses multiple identities. Right from her childhood she is in constant search of her individual identity, which she finally attains in the identity of Maya at the end of the novel.

#### **4.1.6 Generation Gap**

It is a general tendency that the first generation immigrants follow values and customs of their native land. They show desire to assimilate with the culture of host land but usually they do not completely discard their own cultural values and traditions. Their lifestyle, food habits, religious practice and even ideology exhibit Indianness in diaspora. The second and successive generations, in most cases show least affiliation with cultural practice of their parents' native land since they are born and brought up in the settled land and hence consider settled land as their native land. The ideology of the first generation clashes with the second generation on the grounds of individuality, liberty and traditions. In *The Mistress of Spices*, Geeta's story reveals how youngsters like her come across complicated situations due to expectation and beliefs of their parents. She is a second generation immigrant who has completed her college and works in an engineer firm. Her parents give her liberty to do what she likes and do not object to her job. Her grandfather comes to the US on his son's request to live with them. On reaching the US, her grandfather is startled to observe her granddaughter's lifestyle. He disapproves Geeta's freedom, her working with other men, coming home late and cutting hair. When she reveals to her family that she is in love with Juan, a Mexican American and intends to marry him, her parents and grandfather are stunned to hear that. They cannot accept their daughter's desire for love marriage. Listening about Geeta's love affair, her grandfather is

deeply shocked; he is not able to grasp how a girl could talk about love in front of her parents. He says,

*Chee chee* [slang use for shame], no shame at all, making talk of love in front of her parents, in front of me, her grandfather. ...

*Hai bhagaban* [Oh! God], I say. She is marrying a white man. ...

You are losing your caste and putting blackest *kali* on our ancestor's faces to marry a man who is not even a sahib, whose people are slum criminals and illegals, don't say *O grandpa you just don't understand*, you think I don't see TV news.

Sheela is crying and wringing her hands, saying I never thought you'd do this to us, is this how you repay us for giving so much freedom even though all our relatives warned us not to (Divakaruni, *Mistress* 89-90)

Geeta's father also feels betrayed by Geeta's choice of marriage. Being born and brought up in America, she wants to take decision about her life on her own, but her parents and grandfather who have lived most of their lives in India following Bengali culture and traditions cannot willfully allow their daughter to marry a man about whom they know nothing and whose cast and culture are completely contradictory to them. Her parents have given her freedom in her life but marriage is something which they cannot take for granted. Geeta leaves her home in despair and informs her family that she is going to live with Juan. When her grandfather tells everything to Tilo and asks for her help, Tilo intervenes and attempts to unite the family. Tilo even breaks rules set forth for the mistresses and goes outside the store to meet Geeta to counsel her. To the great relief of the family, they come to know from Tilo that Geeta has not married yet and she stays with her friend not with Juan. Geeta desires to marry Juan but with her parents' consent. A meeting has been organized by Tilo to unite Geeta with her family, and Tilo succeeds in it. Her father is so happy to return home with Geeta and tells her to invite Juan to their home. Here her family has to succumb against their daughter's desire for peace of mind and happiness for her and for all of them. It is also a step towards assimilation and acceptance of alien culture.

## 4.2 Diasporic Approach to *Queen of Dreams*

### 4.2.1 Introduction

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's novels mostly address dilemmas confronted by immigrant women and the way they struggle with their problems boldly. The pursuit of identity is first and foremost concern in her novels. The novel *Queen of Dreams* depicts the protagonist Rakhi's efforts to define her identity and trace her roots in a diasporic setting. She is an immigrant daughter and a divorced mother who constantly attempts to establish her individual identity. Her quest for her cultural heritage, secrets about her mother's past life, benevolence of her father, affection of her ex-husband Sonny, love and care for her daughter Jona and disgust against racists are interpreted vividly by Divakaruni in the novel. Rakhi's mother Mrs. Gupta is a dream teller; she can see dreams of others and can also interpret others' dreams and help them overcome their problems. Rakhi wishes to be like her mother, but her mother is unable to pass on this gift to her. By profession Rakhi is an artist and runs a Chai House (a tea shop), which doesn't work well. In her attempts to improve her business she comes closer to her father and her husband. Despite several complications in her life, she is able to make peace with her life with help of others and finally patch up with her husband. The racial assault on her store by American men after the terrorist attack on WTC on date 9/11/2001 drastically challenges her notions of identity and nationality.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni uses dream as a medium to enter into the land of enchantment where an ordinary person cannot understand anything easily yet this dream land has its values and relevance to real life. Mrs. Gupta can interpret the dream and show the right direction to her clients. She doesn't charge her customers as dreaming is a gift to her meant to help people who are in adversity. The employment of the supernatural element of dream gives the novel an added dimension. The novel becomes a fusion of reality and fantasy. Simultaneously the contrast between reality and fantasy moulds the personality of the central character Rakhi. The narrative of the novel toggle between Rakhi's viewpoint, third person's standpoint and Mrs. Gupta's point of view as depicted in her dream journal, it gives the novel versatile aspect to the reality and altering face of reality. The mention of 'white man', 'black car' and it's number plate stating 'Emit Maerd' whose reverse version spells 'Dream Time', 'silent patron' and 'yoga lesson' all these things remain unexplained

and complex for Rakhi. There are several other things which are beyond understanding and logical explanation yet their occurrences have special magical charm. The dreams and interpretation of dreams is also mysterious in nature. Mrs. Gupta defines dream as “A dream is a telegram from the hidden world. Only a fool or illiterate person ignores it” (Divakaruni, *Queen* 38).

#### 4.2.2 Alienation

The novel *Queen of Dreams* depicts immigrants’ external as well as internal struggle to deal with sense of isolation and identity confusion. Rakhi, the second generation immigrant feels isolated even in her home as her mother could not share anything about Indian culture and her past with Rakhi. Her mother Mrs. Gupta is an interpreter of dreams who is fondly called as Queen of Dreams. Mrs. Gupta’s contact with the outside world is superfluous in nature as inwardly she chooses a secluded life, which is suitable for a dream teller, yet she attempts to create a conducive environment for Rakhi to get absorbed into American culture. She never forces Rakhi to follow Indian culture or tradition. The situation is completely uncommon here as most first generation immigrants try their best to pass on cultural heritage to their children and expect that their children and even grandchildren follow Indian culture and Indian traditions. But Mrs. Gupta doesn’t interfere in Rakhi’s life, which becomes the first and foremost reason for Rakhi’s alienation. Rakhi is attracted by her mother’s gift of dreams, but it is only this gift that creates distance between the mother and the daughter. Rakhi is well aware of her mother’s strength that once her mother is set on a goal, she definitely achieves it. But when her mother becomes sick, Rakhi becomes conscious of the fact that she knows only a few things about her mother. Mrs. Gupta uses a plastic box with a blue lid to keep important things in it, when Rakhi sees it, she feels that her relation with her mother is also like a box which is closed with a lid which needs to be opened and understood.

Rakhi experiences inner alienation on account of mystery about her mother’s native land and upbringing. Mrs. Gupta’s aloofness from her husband and daughter results in breaking down of family bondages in which Rakhi unsuccessfully craves her parents’ attention. Mr. Gupta’s being alcoholic prevents Rakhi’s interaction with her throughout her childhood. Her mother’s secret life makes Rakhi believe that her mother’s main concerns lie in the world of secrets rather than with her own family. Rakhi’s unfamiliarity with Indian culture

becomes the root cause for her alienation. Her parents never share anything with her about India or Indian culture which gives birth to a feeling of rootlessness in Rakhi. She is compelled to live with mono centric identity by her parents. They want her to detach herself from Indian culture in order to possess a single American identity and American culture, but it doesn't come out fruitful. Her mother confesses to Rakhi, "It is my fault. I see now that I brought you up wrong. I thought it would protect you if I didn't talk about the past that way you wouldn't be constantly looking back, hankering, like so many immigrants do" (Divakaruni, *Queen* 99).

Rakhi's husband Sonny is a DJ in a night club. She has divorced him she could not tolerate the harsh memory of sexual assault on her in the night club by a troop of men in the presence of her husband. He was so engrossed in the music that he couldn't notice wrong things happening to his wife. When she reveals about her rape to Sonny a week later, he doesn't believe her, which infuriates her and she divorces him. Rakhi's alienation from her husband is due to differences in their mindset. Sonny is a music lover who loves to enjoy parties and make attempts to follow American culture. On the other hand Rakhi doesn't approve such a fashionable lifestyle. Rakhi too follows American culture but she attempts to perceive Indian culture in order to trace her roots. Sonny makes many efforts for reconciliation with Rakhi but in vain. The emotional distance between Rakhi and Sonny is very similar to Rakhi's detachment from her parents which she has been experiencing all through her life. Sonny continues to visit Rakhi and their six years old daughter Jona, but still there remains a huge emotional gap between Rakhi and Sonny. The trauma Rakhi faced at the club haunts Rakhi now and then and Sonny's incapability and non compliance results in a feeling of acute alienation in her. She is already alienated at home on account of her parents' not sharing Indian culture with her and her marriage with Sonny increases her alienation. She feels totally cut off from familial relationships and cannot establish her identity.

For Rakhi, her mother's life is an enigma. She could unveil secrets about her mother's life only after her mother's death. Mrs. Gupta has written a Dream Journal to tell about her stories to her husband and Rakhi when she is gone. Mrs. Gupta's character can be envisaged as a link between dreams and reality. In her young age in India she obtained training to become a dream teller in the caves. The old women give the novices like her training on dreams from *Brihat Swapna Sarita*, *Swapna Purana* and other legendary books

on dreams. It resembles to *The Mistress of Spices* in which Tilo obtains training from the old mother to become a mistress of spices. There are also rules set forth for the dream tellers such as they cannot indulge in family life. But as Tilo falls for Raven in *The Mistress of Spices* against the rules, Mrs. Gupta too falls in love with Mr. Gupta and she marries him and the couple comes to the US. She loses power of a dream teller and leads an ordinary life. Soon after spending some months in the US she feels homesick and alienated. She longs to return to India and go back to caves. To meet her travel expenses, she does odd jobs at an Indian grocery store. She continues loving her husband, but soon she is exhausted by her feelings of alienation without her dream ability. In fact, her ability to dream started weakening just after her marriage in Calcutta, but in the initial period of her marriage, she was full of happy emotions that she indulged in day dreaming which didn't require sleep. In the US, the quietness of the outside world and lack of interaction with alien culture makes her aware about her disconnection with the dream world. She shares,

It was only in America, its nights stagnant as the Sargasso Sea, that I was forced to face the magnitude of my problem. Sometimes I would feel a thin, sickly tendril pushing itself out of my body. But when it found nothing outside to connect with, it shriveled and fell back into me. For a while, the bag of earth my aunt had given me staved off my despair. But each time I dreamed, there was less in the bag. And one night it was gone. With it the dream too went.

How can I put into words the emptiness of being without my dreams...?  
(Divakaruni, *Queen* 312)

When she gets pregnant, it doesn't bring her joy. She agonizes over what to do about pregnancy for seven days. She discards the idea of abortion with knowledge that the baby's birth would completely end her chances to return to India. She accepts the way it is without any feeling. One day when her baby kicks inside, she feels that it is like a return of her power. She begins to stay calm and notices that her ability of dreaming comes back to her. She dreams of others with directives on how to help them. In order to preserve her power, she stops talking much with people, breaks physical relations with her husband because she is very much aware that if she invokes any sort of desire, her dream power will go forever. She raises Rakhi but absent mindedly. She confesses her guilt:

I was not a good mother to Rakhi. I loved her, but not fully. To love someone fully is to give up selfhood, and I could not risk that. She knew this. Perhaps that is why she constantly longed to understand who I am, to become who I am. I did not have the power to give her the latter, even if I wished such fate on her. If I gave her the former, it would have destroyed me. (Divakaruni, *Queen* 328)

The reason why Mrs. Gupta detaches herself from familial relationship is well explained in her mental agony described in above dialogue from her dream journal. Mrs. Gupta doesn't reveal about her past life or anything about India to Rakhi when she is alive. She used to write Dream Journal with a hope that when she dies, her husband and Rakhi will be able to understand what she could never explain to them. The dream journal includes her life journey and how she became a dream interpreter. It is only because of her vocation of dream teller, she could not come closer either to her husband or to her daughter. Of course, she performs all of her responsibilities but without heart and it resulted in alienation not only in her life but also in the lives of her husband and Rakhi. Mr. Gupta accepts Mrs. Gupta's desire to choose a dream world and he takes shelter of alcohol to relax and often dwells in nostalgia. Her mother's secret life becomes indigestible for Rakhi and her father's too much drinking creates distance between the father and the daughter. As a result Rakhi develops grudges for her parents and that is why her character becomes complicated.

While living in diaspora, usually the immigrants have a tendency to establish relationships with the populace of their homeland. Such alliances help them in removing their loneliness and it also paves a path for sharing and maintaining cultural heritage. Such Indian communities celebrate Indian customs and festivals in the settled land so as to bring them familiarity togetherness. We find similar phenomena in many diasporic fictions. In *Queen of Dreams* Mr. and Mrs. Gupta of course exhibit their Indianness through their language, dressing and food habits but they do not show any strong bondage with Indian culture or Indian people. They do not force Rakhi to follow Indian culture, which Rakhi badly craves. Except Sonny and Rakhi's only friend Belle (Balwant Kaur) there aren't any instances in the novel which show Gupta family's social relations with Indian community in the US and it is because of this, the family is alienated externally and internally as well. After Mrs. Gupta's death in a car accident, only a handful people come to the funeral home. Rakhi says, "My parents didn't have much of social life. If there were relatives, I didn't know of them. The priest from the Indian temple gave a brief speech about how my mother had

been a virtuous wife, mother and homemaker, and an asset to the community. (It was obvious he knew nothing about her)” (Divakaruni, *Queen* 128).

Rakhi’s daughter Jona imbibes traits of her mother as well as her grandmother. Like Rakhi she can paint and like Mrs. Gupta she can dream. It is only because of Jona, Sonny stays connected with Rakhi. Jona feels closer to Sonny than Rakhi. The imaginative stories of Jona are often beyond Rakhi’s understanding. Though she is just six years old and towards the end of the novel she reaches eight years, her ideology resembles an adult which often baffles Rakhi. At times Rakhi feels excluded from everywhere, she lacks cultural heritage, cannot comprehend her mother’s world, cannot love her father, cannot connect with Sonny and her daughter’s world is also inaccessible for her. She says, “She (Jona) who had come out of my body, tiny and crumpled and containable-even she now has parts to her life that I can’t enter. It doesn’t matter whether they’re real or imagined. I feel excluded all the same. Like the rest of my family – my mother, my father, Sonny – she too has become an enigma” (Divakaruni, *Queen* 74).

Rakhi comprehends relationships and ways of life after her mother’s death. Her mother’s death brings her closer to her father; though she is hesitant in the beginning, she realizes her father’s affection. It is only through her father, Rakhi comes to know about her mother’s past as her father reads and translates the journal for Rakhi. The Dream Journals are written in Bengali language which Rakhi cannot read or write. She also begins to feel Sonny’s affectionate and caring nature which gradually creates a growing relationship with Sonny.

Expatriate sensibility can be judiciously communicated through immigrants’ experience of alienation, exile, and displacement, but the effect of such feelings on the psyche of immigrants cannot be elucidated. The assimilation process on the alien land requires gradual detachment from the past, but complete avoidance of the past is not easy. The persistent shadow of the past involuntarily intermingles with the present and hinders the assimilation process. Rakhi is kept away from the influence of native culture so as to boost her assimilation with settled land. But the situation is overturned as Rakhi continuously desires to know about native land and native culture and she voices against cultural alienation. Rakhi’s acute feelings of alienation generate forces that guide her to bring necessary changes in her life to bring it back on track. Her attempts to acculturate with

settled land ends her unpleasant and painful memories and gradually she comes closer to her family.

#### 4.2.3 Memory and Nostalgia

Immigrants stay connected to their roots and home which they have left behind through memory and nostalgia. They construct 'home' based on their individual as well as collective memory. They recreate and maintain India in America for the sake of self fulfillment and to pass on heritage to their children. The most unusual fact about *Queen of Dreams* is the memory of her parents' native land, to which Rakhi has no access. As a result, Rakhi builds an imaginary place of her mother's native place and also paints them on canvas. The text describes: "Until now, most of her paintings had been about India – an imagined India, an India researched from photographs, because she'd never traveled there. She'd painted temples and cityscapes and women in a marketplace and bus drivers at lunch..." (Divakaruni, *Queen* 11). Her quest to know about India makes her create imaginative reminiscence about India. Mrs. Gupta's Dream Journals can be considered a collection of her memories she stored in a book which Rakhi can use as a medium to unveil the past and re-discover her family with new perception.

When people migrate to an alien country in search of better life, the feelings of displacement and alienation are the prices they get in return. Mrs. Gupta feels displaced during her initial time in the US; she feels that her dream ability will diminish in the new land. The feeling of displacement lays a significant impact on Mrs. Gupta. She sustains memory and myth about her native land. She says, "Dreams would not come to me in California because it was too new a place. Its people had settled there only a few hundred years ago, and neither its air nor its earth, the elements from which we most draw sustenance, was weighted yet with dreams" (Divakaruni, *Queen* 197). She feels displaced at times; the freedom and opportunities offered by new land do not reduce her estrangement. Physically she moves from one country to the other, but she longs to live only in one country that exists in her memory. Her past which is full of supernatural elements and secrets favors her and she is able to retain her past in her present. The constant pull between reality and desirability and between modernity and tradition can be observed in her transformed life.

Immigrants' feelings of homesickness are often expressed involuntarily through the lifestyle they lead in the alien land. The cultural aspects of immigrants can be observed through their dressing style, food habits and use of language. Mrs. Gupta herself preserves Indian culture by cooking Indian food and dressing in Indian style. Rakhi remarks, "At home we rarely ate anything but Indian; that was the one way in which my mother kept her culture" (Divakaruni, *Queen* 8). In her dressing pattern, Mrs. Gupta either puts on *saree* or *salwarkameez* exhibiting her Indianness.

Generally immigrants search for opportunities to articulate their memories and sentiments for their homeland. Major characters in Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams* are committed to land of their origin. The conditions under which people migrate temporarily or permanently separate them from their roots, but a small thing or incident that reminds them of their native land revitalizes their bondage with native land. Divakaruni employs music along with myths and stories about the past to give a touch of nostalgia to understand the intricate situation of diasporics. Music of their native land can do magic to unite them with their roots and recreate their native identity. Singing songs becomes an act of revisiting native land by means of memory. Rakhi's father is fond of Indian songs. He often plays songs on stereo and he also sings and hums Hindi songs of famous Indian singers such as Sehgal, Rafi and Kishore Kumar. In fact the title of the novel derives from translated version of one of the Hindi songs he sings and the words are: "*mere sapno ke rani...*" The line means 'queen of my dreams' (Divakaruni, *Queen* 37). In her attempts to know about India, Rakhi always grabs anything that gives her a glimpse of India and Indian culture. When she goes to college, she borrows a tape with Bengali songs about Bengal monsoons from the South Asian Library. The songs describe "how the skies grow into the color of polished steel, how the clouds advance like black armies, or spill across the horizon like the unwound hair of beautiful maidens" (Divakaruni, *Queen* 90-91). Rakhi loves such songs, even though she could understand only half of the words. She takes help of the pamphlet that provides translation and listens to the songs over and over.

After Mrs. Gupta's death, Rakhi feels apathy in her life. Her mother was a thoughtful person and had been a link between Rakhi and her father. Direct interaction between the father and the daughter begins after her mother's death. Mr. Gupta relishes his wife's memories. He shares with Rakhi his own memories of his days in Calcutta. He tells Rakhi about his school days and his part time work at a tea shop to meet expenses. He learnt to

make various tasty foods from Keshto, the tea shop proprietor. He could become more famous than his master Keshto by his art of cooking. Mr. Gupta shares such unknown information with Rakhi when her Chai House struggles for survival due to fierce competition with new coffee chain Java. Mr. Gupta provides a solution to restore her business by serving a new variety of Indian cuisines which he can cook himself. Mr. Gupta makes a list of Indian items he can prepare well such as *pakora* (fritters), *singara* (samosa/rissole), *jilebis* (syrup filled rings), *sandesh* (paneer based dessert), mihidana (motichur, a sweet dish), nimki (crunchy snack) and son on (Divakaruni, *Queen* 185). The store is renamed to 'Kurma House'. So in their struggle to survive their business they seek shelter of their past. Rakhi could also establish a completely new relationship with her father that she missed in her childhood. The name of the store and the food items they serve attract Indian immigrants who feel homesick and are always in search of things which unite them with India.

At Kurma House, while working in the kitchen Mr. Gupta enjoys humming Bollywood songs. One day a man of Indian origin comes to the store and asks Mr. Gupta if he would like to sing Hindi songs for him and his friends. The man once heard Mr. Gupta humming songs and he stopped to listen to the whole song. Mr. Gupta is overjoyed as he gets the opportunity to sing songs in front of the audience and Rakhi also gets new customers for her store. He tells Rakhi that they (Indian people) love songs from movies especially the old ones and there is no place in the US where they can hear them sung live (Divakaruni, *Queen* 216). A new crowd mostly consisting of old men from India start coming to the store who purchase good amounts of food from the store, but their main concern is to listen to Hindi songs. Mr. Gupta sits among them and sings various Hindi songs. They enjoy songs and also request him to sing songs from the Hindi movies like *Guide*, *Anand* and so on. Rakhi's describes the performance:

And my father, who has sung only for himself until now (we had merely been backdrops for his vocalization) launches into the melody, his voice made truer by the hopes of strangers. The men nod their heads to the beat – clearly, they know the words, too, but they defer to my father's talent. After a few minutes, one of them takes a mouth organ out of a pocket, while another lifts a small, two-ended drum out of a bag I hadn't noticed. When my father starts on another song ("Sing us a gana from *Sholay*, Bhaisaheb!"), they accompany him, filling our shop with gaiety,

causing Jona to sit up with a sleepy smile. They've forgotten our presence – even my father. The music continues for the next couple of hours, song after song, without break. When the tune is particularly catchy two or three of the men get up and dance, their steps unhurried, unself-conscious, the bright handkerchiefs that materialize in their hands like magician's scarves rising and falling in slow motion. (Divakaruni, *Queen* 217-218)

The musical performance continues in the store every evening and it is not less than a festival for them. The enjoyment to play and take part in the music provides them opportunity to experience like discovering hidden talent in them. The musical performance creates an imaginary native ambiance for them and their diasporic status and issues of alienation and identity crises fade away for temporary time. The music at the store brings other immigrants as well. An African American with a carved drum, A South American with his flute, a hippie with a braid and a tambourine, and many other people start coming and enjoy Hindi songs even though they hardly understand them but surely enjoy the music. Rakhi describes, "I guess good music crosses all boundaries, like good food. ... But what comes across most powerfully as they make music is their joy at discovering, like an unexpected oasis tucked into an arid stretch of dunes, something they thought they'd never find here in America. It's a pleasure to watch their pleasure" (Divakaruni, *Queen* 219-220). The varied manifestation of culture revealed through customs, dress, food and music stimulate Indian sensibility.

Soon after Kurma House picks up pace, a disaster in the form of a fire accident happens in its kitchen. It doesn't hurt anyone but destroys the kitchen. Without losing spirit, Mr. Gupta suggests routinely opening the store. He suggests preparing dishes at home and serving at the store. Their customers understand the situation and help them in various types of repair work and supplies at discounted rates. It is a surprise for Rakhi to see people helping them selflessly. It is only because of their Kurma House that they could create a space where people can unite and form a community. Rakhi appreciates their help and optimism. Her customers say, "The shop will be in mint condition before you know it. Meanwhile, we'll keep coming. Whatever food you can manage to make, we'll buy. And we'll sing and play and keep your spirits – and ours – up. We're all brothers and sisters here, after all, bhai-bahen" (Divakaruni, *Queen* 266).

The Kurma House has a new set of customers who are music lovers. A group of people with a request to put a small stage for musicians approach Rakhi. Their offer is accepted and the Kurma House gets its new face. Musicians and music lovers from various countries begin to come to Kurma House with their musical instruments and other artifacts. From now the store has a variety of music and customers. Rakhi says,

Someone puts an enameled box filled with breath-freshening masala on the counter. And as if that's a sign, people begin to bring in other things – a Tibetan bell, a small Persian rug in jeweled colors, an African mask, a woodcut from Afghanistan, a jade figurine, a beat-up mirror that looks Russian, with carved metal doors you can open and close. I can't guess the value of these items, but it's clear that they're precious to their owners, who carried them all the way to this country from their past lives. (Divakaruni, *Queen* 267-268)

The joy and companionship the people share while enjoying music reflect their entrenched memories of their far-away native land. The music and lyrics of their native culture revitalize their affiliation with their native culture. Rakhi is astonished to see what her store has become. Rakhi takes her paintbrush and adds the word 'International' to the title of her store. The 'Kurma House International' becomes a global place for global citizens. Now it is a place where immigrant people from various countries interact with one another sharing their experience and emotions and revive their past through music.

Food, clothes and music instinctively reflect an immigrant's memory and create nostalgic effects for the past that is lost forever. The immigrant people who visit Kurma House International have migrated to the US but unconsciously they bring with them an image of their nation that reoccurs on their conscious level now and then as a memory or nostalgia. Simple clothing, a little food and bygone songs draw out Indianness in them which they keep concealed in their attempts to learn new ways. Immigrants cling to their past by adoring objects and values which they have brought from their native country and by incorporating old traditions and beliefs in their routine. A sociologist N. Jayaram calls it 'sociocultural baggage' (27) which the immigrant people carry with them wherever they go. The immigrants stick to the things and values of their homeland and this sociocultural baggage acts as a defense mechanism for them against the feeling of alienation in a diasporic setting.

#### 4.2.4 Cultural Assimilation

Globalization has reshaped the social and cultural aspect of almost all countries. In diaspora, it influences the cultural values of immigrants and compels them to broaden their cultural values by way of assimilation. A step towards assimilation with the culture of the host land is a step towards reducing alienation and identity crises. The process of assimilation is not an easy one; it brings with it multiple dilemmas. The cross cultural interaction brings native culture of the immigrant at risk. The story of Rakhi becomes an appropriate example of this statement. Mrs. Gupta always wanted that Rakhi should pay attention to her American life only without any influence of Indian culture and it was one of the reasons she never shared anything about her past or about India to her. She says, “I didn’t want to be like those other mothers, splitting you between here and there, between your life right now and that which can never be. But by not telling you about India as it really was, I made it into something far bigger” (Divakaruni, *Queen* 99).

The Chai House and later its new version Kurma House become embodiment of fusion of culture in which food and music act as active agents of the assimilation process. On a visit to Rakhi’s Chai House which doesn’t run well, Mrs. Gupta says “This isn’t a real cha shop – but a mishmash, a Westerner’s notion of what’s Indian. Maybe that’s the problem. Maybe if you can make it into something authentic, you’ll survive” (Divakaruni, *Queen* 99). Mrs. Gupta’s remark represents the actual trouble of the diaspora. The immigrant people are unable to totally give up their own culture and are also not able to wholeheartedly accept the new culture; as a result they linger between them to create a hybrid culture. The problem with Rakhi’s Chai shop is that though it is supposedly an Indian shop in the US it doesn’t look Indian at all. Mrs. Gupta’s statement hints that assimilation is welcoming but authenticity of one’s culture is essential. After her mother’s death, her father joins Rakhi’s business and makes it authentic by preparing Indian dishes and serving Indian songs to the music lover. At the Kurma House International, along with Indian food they serve muffin and cupcakes. Mr. Gupta proposes to adopt an ‘Honor system’ to make their customers feel trusted. Rakhi doubts people’s integrity and is hesitant to adopt the honor system. At this moment her father says, “But now we’re in a different country, with different people. We can’t just follow old ways. We’ve got to be flexible, no?” (Divakaruni, *Queen* 269) Her father’s statement denotes positive aspects of the western society which is welcoming.

A small but notable feature of assimilation is the way people accept change in their names. The first generation people preserve their names as they are but changes take place in the names of subsequent generations. The young people choose modern names which are in tune with American lifestyle. The typical Indian names are given new shortened versions such as Balwant becomes Belle, Rakhi becomes Rikki or Rikks, Jonaki becomes Jona or Jo and Sundance becomes Sonny. Changing one's name though appears to be a simple thing; there is a phenomenon of entire change in behind it. It possesses power to transform one's personality and generate hybrid space. Name is the first and foremost aspect of one's identity and an indicator of one's origin therefore changes in name may also result in loss of identity. In spite of complications involved in the changing one's name, immigrants' offspring willfully accept it as a step towards integrating with the mainstream. The nature in which the names get change in the process of assimilation suggests dissolving boundaries.

Rakhi is unwilling to attend parties and club nights with Sonny in the beginning of her married life. Later observing Sonny's caring and affectionate behaviour, she makes up her mind to reconcile with Sonny. She goes to his club to watch him play the music and enjoy the club night. Here Rakhi shows a desire to assimilate with American culture of music and dance. To her surprise the music in the club makes her steps move. The power of music compels her to dance and she loses herself among unknown troops without a bit of hesitation. "She's beginning to understand, a little, what the club scene means to Sonny... She likes how music surprises her as it moves from ethnic to techno to drums" (Divakaruni, *Queen* 339). It appears that by accepting and enjoying music and dance of the club, Rakhi is showing desire to integrate with western culture and lifestyle.

#### **4.2.5 Identity Crisis**

Culture plays a crucial role to bestow identity to a person. It is through cultural identity, one is able to comprehend his or her existence in the society. The immigrants' experience of displacement creates an identity crisis in their conscience. Identity crisis can be considered a crucial period in a human being's life as it poses questions on an individual's existence. Identity crisis leads an individual to devise numerous self-satisfying impressions, justify failures and produce a new personality. The novel *Queen of Dreams*

represents universal experience of the immigrant community's quest for identity, emotional satisfaction and versions of their identity.

Mrs. Gupta keeps her Indian identity intact throughout her life. Personally she keeps herself away from influence of American culture and doesn't attempt to assimilate with it and thus retains her social and cultural identity as Indian. As an immigrant, she adjusts herself to the circumstances around her but without altering herself. She preserves Indianness by way of clothing, dressing and thinking. It is through her Indian perspective she identifies the problem with Rakhi's crumbling Chai House that it lacks authenticity. She advises Rakhi to give authentic Indian touch to her shop to survive. Rakhi's reply to her mother reveals her identity confusion: "And whose fault is it if I don't know who I am? If I have warped Western sense of what's India?" (Divakaruni, *Queen* 99) Rakhi's question challenges her upbringing. Mrs. Gupta has built a wall between America and India for Rakhi and she expects her to focus only on American side of the wall so as to avoid a mixture of two contradictory cultures and attitudes, but Rakhi always longed to see what is behind the other side of the wall. As a result, Rakhi feels that her identity is incomplete because the heritage aspect of her identity is missing.

Rakhi begins to trace her cultural identity through Dream Journal after her mother's death and re-establishment of her business as Kurma House implies the negotiation of her cultural identity. The Kurma House is made of a combination of both the Indian and American culture. The food, music and customers at Kurma House make it a hybrid space where immigrant people from different cultures come together and interact with one another. The night club where Sonny is DJ also becomes a multi cultural space where a variety of music and songs are played altogether. Fragments from Bollywood songs are also mixed up with western music. Immigrant people from different countries perform a variety of dances including bhangra (Indian folk dance). By working as a DJ in such a club, Sonny establishes his American Identity, but the touch of Indian music and song demonstrate that a part of his Indian identity also comes on the surface now and then.

Rakhi swings between two cultures right from her childhood. Her birth in America bestows her American culture and she receives Indian culture in blood through her parents. In her young age, she doesn't like Indian food but eventually she begins to like it when she becomes mature. The food habits of the person not only describe a person's taste but also his or her mental state. Rakhi always chose pizza and pasta instead of aloo parathas. Mrs.

Gupta by no means opposes Rakhi's choices since she is conscious that Rakhi's integration with American culture would be probable only when she accepts each and every aspect of American lifestyle. Preferring western dishes is like affirming her self-identity which she connects with the US.

There are instances in the novel which show that the characters of the novel have become global citizens. Mrs. Gupta's clients are not only Indian immigrants but also American citizens and customers at Rakhi's Chai Shop and later Kurma House International are from various countries who have settled as immigrants in the US. Both Mrs. Gupta and Rakhi succeed in creating a global platform where people from multiple cultures and countries interact with one another. However, their global identity remains limited to their vocation and hobbies because the first and foremost identity they possess and attempt to preserve is cultural identity.

Belle, a second generation Indian immigrant is Rakhi's best friend and partner in business. Unlike Rakhi, Belle's situation is completely different as Belle's parents force her to follow Indian culture, which Rakhi craves badly. But Belle is tired of Indianness. She doesn't like her Indian identity and prefers mainstream American identity. The idea of Indian dress and food is like travelling backward for Belle. When their Chai House business fails, Belle is scared of thinking that her parents will soon force her for marriage. She is distressed to imagine that soon her parents would arrange her marriage with one of the young Indian farmers and within ten years she would grow fat and dress herself in polyester salwaar kameez and cook Indian food for her in-laws (Divakaruni, *Queen* 30).

Clothing and external appearance of a person has much to say about identity. In fact a person's notions about his or her identity are very well reflected in the way he or she represents herself to the outside world. In Belle's case, she always puts on jeans, t-shirts or other western dresses; the thought of wearing traditional dress appears to her as an end of her identity. On the other hand, traditional clothes are cultural assets for Mrs. Gupta, Jespal, a second generation Sikh immigrant and several other immigrants who are customers at Rakhi's store. Mrs. Gupta always wears Indian attire. Whenever she goes out she puts on a scarf. It appears that her scarf stands for culture and traditions which she puts on herself to blanket and preserve her from outside influence. Through her clothing she establishes her Indian identity before the onlookers. When America is hit by terrorist attack on 9/11, customers at Kurma House International who are mostly South Asian immigrants

consciously give up their traditional clothes and wear jeans and t-shirts with a view to hide their cultural identity and demonstrate their loyalty and patriotic spirit towards America through their clothing. People are even suggested to put America's flag at their business, house and at prominent places. Indian organizations in the US send emails to their community members suggesting them not to wear native clothes. Rakhi who mostly puts on pants and t-shirt, wonders at such suggestions and asks, 'what native clothes?' (Divakaruni, *Queen* 304) This question challenges her perception of self identity and even though being American, she feels like an outsider.

Jespal, a young man of Belle's age proposes to her to marry him. They both are attracted towards each other, but when the marriage proposal is laid before Belle, she gives a double thought to the proposal because of Jespal's being traditional and hers being modern. She fears her union with Jespal may not turn fruitful because of a huge difference between their ideologies. Belle describes differences between her and Jespal's personality to Rakhi in the following words.

He believes in living according to the Granth Sahib: physical purity, discipline, putting the family first, being a respectable gurdwara going member of the community. Rules my parents pushed down my throat every day of my life until I escaped to college... values mean the world to him. He didn't just accept them because he grew up with them. He thought about them and struggled against them, but finally he was convinced they fitted him better than Western ways. And me – well, you know me! We'll disagree on everything – and after sometime, we'll get tired of compromising. That's what I'm afraid of. I don't want us to end up hating each other. (Divakaruni, *Queen* 244-245)

Jespal surrenders to the force of native cultural values and maintains cultural identity intact. On the other hand Belle always tries to escape from the influence of Indian culture and follows her American identity. Belle fears that their union will result in a clash of their identities.

The terrorist attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 completely changes Rakhi's notion of American Identity. The native Americans' reaction towards immigrants post the collapse of WTC makes immigrants realize their actual position in America. The angry Americans move around the streets of America with frenzy notions to show

patriotism and teach lessons to Non Americans who may belong to the country of the terrorists. The routine Indian customers at Kurma House International come to the store in Jeans and T-shirts, they do not put on loose pants and dashikis and fez hats which make them Indian. To show their loyalty and patriotism towards America they discard their native identity and take shelter of American identity. At Rakhi's store, they chant prayers in honor of those who lost their lives in the terrorist attack. Four American men with baseball bats, chains and other instruments, who consider them patriots, reach the store listening to the chants of people. They mistakenly perceive the chanting prayers as celebration and attack the store. This shows the gap between Indian culture and western culture. Rakhi responds to the crazy troops that they aren't celebrating but mourning and adds that they are also American. One of the angry men abuses with contempt: "Looked in a mirror lately? You ain't no American! It's fuckers like you who planned this attack on the innocent people of this country. Time someone taught you faggots a lesson" (Divakaruni, *Queen* 296-297). The incident obliges Rakhi to reframe her identity. Rakhi, Sonny, Belle, Jespal and several other second generation people are citizens of America by birth but their Indian origin and racial attributes mark their identity as Indian American and not just American. No matter where you are born and brought up, but your appearance and color of the skin becomes your identity. Rakhi's notions of American identity are shattered and at the same time, she cannot identify herself with other Indian people in the store or in America because she knows nothing about them. As a solution to her dilemma, Rakhi finally attempts to identify herself as an Indian immigrant. Ratus and Jeffrey remark: "when the self identity is threatened by disease, tragedy, personal crisis or awareness that our actions are inconsistent with our values, we may experience anxiety, panic, a sense of loss of self and feeling of being cut adrift from life's purpose and meaning" (qtd. in Mishra 90).

Indian immigrants are not considered American because their origin lies in separate race and culture. Though second generation people like Rakhi, Belle and others are born in America and are technically citizens of America, they are not easily accepted as Americans. Their names, color of skin and clothing make their native identity conspicuous. Regardless of their desire to maintain their native identity or not, they are identified by the outside world as Indian. The problem arises when their Indian identity fails to protect them in the time of commotion. As a result, they become conscious to demonstrate their American identity which can save them from any revengeful attacks. For safety purposes,

they have to put on American clothes and install American flags at their homes and business to show their love for America and establish their American identity, which in reality isn't accepted. So it can be said that it is not enough how a person identifies himself based on his or her values and cultural heritage, the situation and the outside world have power to shape or alter a person's identity.

#### 4.2.6 Generation Gap

Indian immigrants usually face the conflict of East-West as inherent characteristics of the both are contradictory. The same East-West conflict is found between two generations of the immigrants. The first generation people generally confine themselves within restricting limits of native culture and religion which is a comfort zone for them. On the other hand, second generation youngsters usually try to break such restrictions and have a tendency to step out of their comfort zone to establish their individual identity. The differences between these two generations are not limited to culture or identity only, disparities can be observed in their thinking, choices, hobbies, profession and relationship. In *Queen of Dreams*, Rakhi's perception of the world is completely different from her father and mother. The conflict between their ideologies represents the generation gap which Indian immigrants go through in an alien country. Mrs. Gupta's migration and settling down in the US shows the compromises she made with her internal conflicts and external reality. Rakhi is full of doubt while reading her mother's dream journals. She considers her mother's move from India to the US a wrong choice. She says to herself,

Did my mother make the wrong choice in deciding to come to America with my father? Reading her journal, I begin to see what she hid from us so craftily: her regret, her longing for community, her fear of losing her gift. Ironic that her ability to tell dreams stayed with her: it was love that she lost – the love for which she'd crossed the forbidden ocean. (Divakaruni, *Queen* 236)

Throughout her life Mrs. Gupta didn't share her regrets with anyone, but Rakhi could realize her loss and pain after her death. The memories and longings of Mrs. Gupta for native land are absent in Rakhi because she was born and raised in the US. Mrs. Gupta feels displaced but she is firm with her Indian identity, whereas Rakhi doesn't feel any displacement but she is not sure of her identity.

Interpretation of dreams is a science in western world which requires expert help from a psychologist. On the contrary in India dream interpretation is a magical gift. Mrs. Gupta is passionate about her supernatural ability to explore the realm of dream and help others through this gift. She cannot share this power with others or she may lose it. Rakhi is fascinated by her mother's talent and aims to be like her mother. She says, "I wanted to be an interpreter. But when I turned twelve, I grew obsessed with the idea. I saw it as a noble vocation, at once mysterious and helpful to the world. To be an interpreter of the inner realm seemed so Indian" (Divakaruni, *Queen* 39). Rakhi aspires to acquire dream interpreting skills scientifically as being American she needs logic and reason behind everything. In her mother's work as dream interpreter, she surprisingly observes absence of science. Ultimately Rakhi ends up her crazy notions of becoming a dream interpreter like her mother. The reasons behind Rakhi's choices lie behind her American mind-set. The American individualism stands in contrast to Indian communitarianism. The belief system of the first generation is completely different from the second generation. Rakhi compares her position with her mother and opines, "Thank God my world is simpler. Even my tragedies are simple ones..." (Divakaruni, *Queen* 47). Thus, choices of the second generation immigrants are completely different from that of the first generation.

Similar kind of difference is also found in the business strategies of Rakhi and that of her father. As a chef in Kurma House, Mr. Gupta is pleased to prepare a variety of dishes for two reasons: to help her daughter in business and to serve delicious dishes to customers who are mostly fellow Indians. He derives pleasure from feeding people and singing songs for them. On the other hand, Rakhi cannot bring any kind of feelings to her business and she views it from a monetary angle only. The reason she cannot attach herself with her business and customers lie in her American outlook. Western people's professional work attitude does not allow personal perspective and emotions in the business. On the other hand, people like Mr. Gupta are guided by 'people first' attitude and demonstrate feelings and sympathy for fellow citizens; their work is worship for them.

After the fire accident at Kurma House's kitchen, several customers contribute as much as they can to rebuild the kitchen. They offer to come in and do the repairing work at nominal charge. They help in repair, supply and inspection certification. Rakhi is happy to accept their help but is reluctant to trust them wholeheartedly. She says, "I appreciate their sentiments, but don't quite believe them. This is my fatal flaw, as my mother often

informed me: I'm suspicious and pessimistic, quick to think the worst of people" (Divakaruni, *Queen* 266). Her suspicious nature maybe the result number of reasons: her wrong upbringing by her parents, her mother's mysterious life, the sexual assault she experienced at club or her struggle to divine her identity.

On the day of attack on WTC, both Rakhi and Mr. Gupta propose to open Kurma shop for their routine customers even though Sonny suggests keeping it close for safety reasons. The intention of Rakhi to keep the store is different from her father. She wants to open the store for a number of reasons: firstly to show boldness that such terrorist attacks will not defeat American spirit, secondly she does not want to face business loss and thirdly she has a tendency to oppose anything that Sonny suggests. Mr. Gupta's reasons to keep the store open are completely different. According to him, their store is the only meeting place for their customers, so if it is open, they can come and discuss the incident and can help each other if required. Their store can valuably provide community service and help people deal with the shock (Divakaruni, *Queen* 286). Thus there appears an observable contradiction in the attitude of Rakhi and her parents. Cultural Differences and upbringing are surely responsible for the generation gap found in the novel.

### 4.3 Summary

The present chapter has attempted to evaluate *The Mistress of Spices* and *Queen of Dreams* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni in the light of diasporic sensibility. All five chosen attributes of diasporic sensibility have been applied to both the novels. Divakaruni's fictions focus on day to day dilemmas of the working class immigrant community which is trapped in the pull of modernity and tradition. Her works mostly tell stories of female characters and their struggle to ascertain their identity. Her own experience of migration to the US and sense of displacement she went through are reflected through her characters. The pursuit of identity, conflict between Indian culture and American culture, choice between desire and tradition are some of the prominent themes in her novels. The immigrant characters in her novels try to assimilate with alien culture so as to reduce their feelings of displacement and alienation. Their struggles to retain their cultural identity or choice to coin individual identity mark their diasporic feelings. Divakaruni employs supernatural elements in both of her novels *The Mistress of Spices* and *Queen of Dreams* to

grab the attention of the readers and presents stories of diasporic dilemmas underneath the realm of magic.

Divakaruni presents a more complex and realistic situation of immigrants in two of her novels. *The Mistress of Spices* primarily explores Tilo's pursuit of self identity and there are several substories of other immigrants in the US who fight against problems of adjustment, east-west conflict, patriarchal dominance and racism. *Queen of Dreams* examines complexities of immigrant experience and the second generation's struggle to establish identity by tracing roots. The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center pose a threat to the very existence of the immigrants and alter their notion of identity and belongingness in the novel. Both the novels focus on ups and down in the social and professional life of women protagonists. Divakaruni skillfully addresses the emotional and psychological journey of women and their ways of dealing with circumstances to achieve emancipation.

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## CHAPTER 5

### Conclusion

#### 5.1 Implication of the present Research

With increasing globalization in the last few decades, a growing diaspora has been witnessed. The phenomenon has been continuously manifested in the literature by expatriate writers. Various aspects of diaspora have been continuously expressed through short stories, fictions, poetry and dramas. It has given a boost to the growth of Diasporic literature. The present research has evaluated fictional works of contemporary and worldwide recognized writers Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni therefore it will certainly benefit students of literature.

Both the writers chosen for the present research originally belong to West Bengal, India and have produced the fictions, which are selected for the research, while they were in the US as immigrants. There appear certain similarities and dissimilarities in their expression of diasporic sensibility in their work. The common features of diasporic literature such as feeling of displacement, alienation, memory, nostalgia and identity confusion are common in their works but variations occur in their writing owing to their age difference as Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is ten years older to Jhumpa Lahiri and also due to generation gap as Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni belongs to the first generation immigrant group whereas Jhumpa Lahiri belongs to the second generation immigrants group.

A study of the variety of dilemmas of the immigrant community as reflected in the works of two writers demonstrates that major problems of an immigrant occur due to cultural conflict. Their displacement from known culture to unknown culture creates issues of adjustment. Indians have been migrating to various parts of the world from ancient times and the colonial period has witnessed mass forced migration of Indian people to several British colonies across the world. The problems of those who were forced to migrate were acute compared to voluntary migration of present days. The diasporic dilemmas start for

immigrants soon after their realization of their disconnection from homeland. They long for their native country and cling to native culture to keep alive their native spirit. Butler writes, “The relationship with homeland does not end with the departure of the initial group. Not only does it continue, it may also take diverse forms simultaneously, from physical return, to emotional attachment as expressed artistically, to the reinterpretation of homeland cultures in diaspora” (205). The present flow of Indian immigrant community has made a mark in settled land by earning name and wealth, but they undergo a psychosocial dilemma that arises due to clash of cultures. As a result, the generational gap, domestic violence, loss of values, divorces, etc. have been increasing. The modern Indian immigrants cannot escape from cultural conflict in the alien land. This conflict is capable enough to generate further issues of alienation, identity crisis and tension between east and west among the immigrant community.

A person’s unique identity derives from his or her native culture. It becomes complicated to survive without culture. The culture generates an identity, creates attitude and nurtures hobbies among human groups. When a person is uprooted from indigenous culture, it becomes problematic for him or her to fit into alien culture. In diaspora, immigrants learn to assimilate themselves with the culture of host land in order to survive. The memory of their native land often hinders their process of assimilation. They feel themselves split between two cultures and end up possessing dual identity.

The first generation immigrants partially feel contented with the idea of getting identified back in their native land, but the second generation children have no such option of recognition in native country of their parents as they cannot consider it as their own native country. The native country of their parents becomes an alien country for them and they cannot give a thought to live or adjust in it because it is like a backward movement for them. The host country of their parents is native country for them. In the case of Indian immigrants in America, the first generation immigrants maintain their native Indian identity and by the process of assimilation they partially attain American identity. The problem of identification starts with the second generation as they cannot fit themselves in the frame of ‘Indian American’ identity considering the fact that they are American by birth:

Indian children, born and brought up in America, seem to go through a cycle of identification with the Indian and American culture and simultaneous exclusion

from the Indian and American culture. They acknowledge different cultural perspectives and learn to work effectively within the boundaries that are comfortable for individuals and family, while sharing views of the larger culture to increase their understanding and improve the ability to negotiate a balance of two cultures. (Hanson et. al 112-113)

Right from the birth the second generation immigrant children imbibe the culture of the host country and regard it as their own. The problem arises when the host country doesn't accept them and consider them as immigrants only. Racial discrimination further makes them aware about their status of alien even though they are born in the host land. They cannot completely discard their own perception of identification with host land but being rejected by host land they search for their identity. They have the option whether to seek shelter of cultural identity or to establish a hybrid individual identity.

An analysis of various predicaments of immigrants in works of Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni reveals that the feeling of displacement that immigrants face in diaspora is not a new experience. In fact the two earlier phases of migration movements demonstrate that in history a large number of Indian people had migrated to several parts of the world either voluntarily for trade and religion or forcefully as indentured labourers. As their migration was done mostly due to monetary crises, their troubles were different. Their exploitation at the work place was so intense that the problems of cultural conflict or identity crises seemed less acute. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the modern diasporas are geared up to fit into any place they are put in. Most migration in the present time happens for betterment of life so immigrants adjust themselves and make compromises. The qualified Indian immigrants become successful in gaining decent career and business opportunities and they also acquire substantial economic growth in the host countries. With India's growing political image and rich cultural heritage, Indian immigrants possess respectable spaces in host countries. Kimenyi opines, "Asian Americans are labeled the model minority by the media and politicians because unlike other minorities, they are seen as very close to the majority by their work ethic, family values, success in business and education and as law-abiding citizens".

The focus of modern Indian immigrants is on their goal of economic prosperity that encourages them to cope with the opposite forces, which migration generates. They face different kinds of dilemmas such as psycho-social troubles which derive mostly due to

cultural conflict and problems with identification. They learn to survive in the new environment among new people and places. In this age of internet and wide spread communication, the immigrants are very well aware about the problems they may confront in the alien land in advance, so they are mentally prepared to face such dilemmas. Far and more, cultural conflict is common for each kind of migration whether forceful or voluntary; the intensity may vary. The modern immigrants give priority to their purpose of migration and not to the side effects of migration. They consciously remain aware of their alien status and feelings of displacement, memory and nostalgia trouble them, but they learn to survive and rise above odds.

Yogita Verma compares works of Jhumpa Lahiri with Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and observes that Divakaruni's works primarily deal with various shades of experience of Indian immigrant women. Through her immigrant women, Divakaruni presents a fine exposure of different shades of identity crises, their dependence and quest for freedom. Jhumpa Lahiri's works demonstrate her obsession with the diasporic world of Bengali families who have migrated to the US. Her stories deal with individuality, familial relationships, emotional gaps, Indian American identity and diasporic experiences of immigrant families. (243)

Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni have addressed a wide range of conflicts immigrants withstand in diaspora in their works. The present research work **A Diasporic Study of Selected Works of Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni** brings forth reality of Indian immigrant community which survives amid the problems of alienation, nostalgia, cultural clash, identity confusion and generational gap in the diasporic landscape. A summary of general traits of works Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni will help formulate the final outcome of the present research and will pave the path for future research in the field.

## **5.2 General Traits of Jhumpa Lahiri's Works**

Being a second generation member of the diasporic community, Jhumpa Lahiri is firmly ingrained in the American culture. She sympathizes with the feelings of the immigrant community as she is born and raised by immigrant parents and has witnessed and experienced how it is to be an immigrant in an alien land. Her writing echoes her personal

experience. Her parents' conscious efforts to pass on cultural heritage to their child and Jhumpa Lahiri's own perception of American identity always stood in contrast and the same is reflected in her works. As a diasporic writer she touches a wide range of issues concerning the diasporic community. Intricacy of human relationship, issues confronted by the second generation of the immigrants and formation of hybrid identity are some of the major features of her writing.

Jhumpa Lahiri has compellingly revealed that the first generation immigrants cling to cultural roots and revive their affiliation with the native land through nostalgia and memory and the second generation immigrants make efforts to establish their roots in the settled land by way of assimilation. The assimilation process gradually forms a new identity for immigrants. Her fictions bring to light the inclination of second generation children who desire to break the restriction of native culture and tradition of their parents.

As a novelist, Jhumpa Lahiri is a realist in dealing with events and actions. The description of the setting is always memorable in her works. Location is as significant as people in fiction. Her novels are set in the US, but it is Calcutta that becomes unforgettable in terms of narration of incidents that occur there. Her style is rich and descriptions are attractive. Plots in her novels are well organized in the backdrop of a diasporic setting. Jhumpa Lahiri's art of creating memorable characters and detailing of each event and object whether significant or insignificant make her a great story teller. She captures memory of her characters and gives it flavor of colour, texture, sound and overwhelming words to exhibit earnest emotions. The narration of intricate dialogues, depiction of memories, pangs of separation and death of relatives in native land enable readers to explore the interior realm of the characters. Her characters struggle to deal with troubles of relationship and emotional twists. There often occurs a need of improved emotional communication to decipher difficulty of mutual compromise and conflicts among her characters. Her characters are highly individual in their outlook and are not just entangled in the complexity of culture but move beyond that as Lahiri explores the mindscapes of her characters which are jumbled up with human predicament.

It is obvious that most of Lahiri's characters are Indian immigrants in the US who constantly feel pull of two cultures altogether, but her focus is not to dive deep into any of the culture, indeed she tries to present a universal phenomenon of conflict that any immigrant will face in any part of the globe. Lahiri asserts in her interview with New

Yorker in 2013 that in her works she tries to explore people and difficulties of existence; though stories differ from one another but are universal. In the present research, it is observed that Lahiri competently handles influence of cross cultural interface and emotional pangs of her characters. She presents immigration situation in which characters are caught between forces of east and west. Indian traditions and cultural values stand in contrast to the modern way of life and liberty which America provides and to choose one between these two becomes complicated for the immigrant community. Her works reveal how the socio-cultural aspects generate alienation, nostalgia, anxiety, breaking of relation, problems with identification and the way they make adjustments and come to terms with their immigrant status.

### **5.3 General Traits of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Works**

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is the first generation expatriate writer of Indian diaspora, her fictional works typically address the struggle of women against patriarchal force and racial prejudices. Divakaruni was born in Calcutta, India and moved to America when she was nineteen; therefore she is able to compare patriarchal forces in society's treatment towards women in India and America. Her natural awareness of Indian culture and Indian psyche and her own immigrant experience enable her to incorporate binaries of east and west in her works. Bonding and relationship between women, alienation and their quest for personal fulfillment are some of the significant aspects in women's life in diaspora which Divakaruni uses as motifs in her fictional works. Her social work with 'Maitri' an organization working for battered Asian women in California provides her real picture of women's predicament arising due to unhappy marriages. Through some of her minor characters she represents the plight of immigrant women who surrender to patriarchal power and lead aimless life. But her major women characters are not traditional women who cannot bear the pangs of displacement and pass their days in suffering. Her women are powerful enough to adjust and adapt to the new land and bring meaning to life. They are highly individual and do not show dependence on male partners. They are not silent sufferers but are capable to fight against odds and can take bold decisions.

Plots in Divakaruni's works are mostly centered on women's struggle. She gives a painstaking account of issues instead of development of character. Through her writing she attempts to portray conflict arising in the lives of women who are struck at the crossroads

between native land and alien land and past and present. Her plots are realistic and miraculous elements are highly symbolic. The ordinary lives of dislocated women in an alien land are recreated with minute detailing and magical touch. Her plots aim at reclamation of culture to fight against diasporic forces. She incorporates mysteries and myths with tools of magic in her novels which need to be comprehended by the readers. She also gives a lyrical touch to the prose and uses several Bengali words to give Indian flavor. Her plots do not develop characters but the circumstances to which the immigrants have to come term with. She presents a wide range of characters in her works including non Indians. One remarkable aspect of Divakaruni's novel is that Indian myths and magic are interwoven with the plot of her fictions. Her own childhood memory of Indian mythical stories and beliefs of dreams facilitate her to create characters which can see the future and interpret dreams. Such elements give added value to her novels and attract readers to unveil the mystery behind the stories.

Divakaruni primarily focuses on the lives of the first generation immigrants and the theme of cultural divergence. Her characters migrate to alien land with hope of a better future but struggle with cultural conflict that migration puts forward. The women characters often feel disappointment on realizing their narrow space in diaspora and their disconnection from their family and native land further increase their predicament. The feeling of alienation, nostalgia and racism are experienced by immigrants as a byproduct of migration. The idea of home and desire to return are prominently depicted in her work. Her first generation characters restrict themselves to accept the US as their home and the second generation characters though consider the US as their home, they feel homeless due to cultural diversity and intergenerational gap they experience with their parents. The racial attack on immigrants by Native American is also one of the prevalent themes in Divakaruni's work. With the passage of time there appears an ultimate transformation in the minds of her characters and they recover from the feelings of displacement and alienation and get accustomed to the new land.

#### **5.4 Major Findings**

(1) The titles chosen by Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni for their works are suggestive of not only stories contained in them but also of the writers' approach to deal with those stories. Lahiri's titles *The Namesake* and *The Lowland* are symbolic and they

are directly linked with the plots. Divakaruni's title *The Mistress of Spices* appears to tell about the mythical ability of the mistress and thus invokes curiosity. The title *Queen of Dreams* is used to glorify the supernatural ability of Mrs. Gupta who is capable of interpreting dreams.

(2) Jhumpa Lahiri's plots ponder upon conflict arising in the minds of first generation immigrants in dealing with issues of alienation, cultural contrast, generation gap, memory and their instinctive desire to return to India. Ashima in *The Namesake* is homesick most of the time. Her separation from her family members living in India is unbearable for her and she seeks shelter of cultural heritage to cope with her diasporic issues. The same is the case of Subhash Mitra in *The Lowland* as he dwells in a nostalgic past to connect with his family and Calcutta. His choices make him alienated in settled land and his cultural heritage prevent him from complete assimilation with the host land. The first generation immigrant parents are compelled to negotiate with their cultural beliefs and accept the second generation's concept of life. *The Namesake* and *The Lowland* show Ashima and Subhash's liberal yet anxious efforts to mend ways with their children Gogol and Bela respectively. Gogol's detachment from family and his relationship with American girlfriends are accepted by his parents hesitantly. On the other hand, Subhash has no influence on his daughter Bela who leads a nomad life in her efforts to save nature.

(3) Divakaruni's novels contain a fusion of reality and fantasy. *The Mistress of Spices* presents the story of Tilo's magical power to see through the lives of her customers and help them with charms of spices. On the other hand *Queen of Dreams* presents Mrs. Gupta's insightful power to dream for others and interpret dreams. Divakaruni incorporates mythical elements to indicate significance of values of cultural heritage to solve issues experienced by immigrants. The visions of Tilo in *The Mistress of Spices* and dreams of Mrs. Gupta in *Queen of Dreams* save their fellow immigrants from upcoming danger.

(4) Narrative techniques employed by Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni in their works are noticeably different. Divakaruni gives poetic touch to her prose. She uses first person narration technique in *The Mistress of Spices* and three fold narrations in *Queen of Dreams*. In *Queen of Dreams*, the chapters bearing 'Rakhi' in the title present Rakhi's point of view in first person narration technique, the chapters bearing the title 'From the Dream Journals' present Mrs. Gupta's point of view in first person narration technique and the chapters without any title present third person view point. The

supernatural elements and sensual descriptions of sound, taste and images make her style lucid and delight the readers. On the other hand Jhumpa Lahiri's writing style is somberly simple and devoid of poetic touch. She uses third person narration technique in both of her novels *The Namesake* and *The Lowland*. What makes her prose attractive is her ability to present minute accounts of each and every aspect whether expression of feelings or depiction of objects. With her mastery over language Jhumpa Lahiri conveys deep meanings through simplicity.

(5) It is rightly said that calamity has its own significance; we find depictions of calamity that decide the fate of the immigrants in both of Divakaruni's novels. In *The Mistress of Spices* an earthquake happens towards the end of the novel but Tilo is saved and it is perceived that spices have forgiven Tilo. It is a culmination point of the novel and turning point of Tilo's identity as she begins to start her new life with Raven and adopts a new name Maya. In *Queen of Dreams* the real catastrophic incident of the attack on the World Trade Center on 9/11 is depicted. This tragedy at the climax of the novel changes Rakhi's notions of her American identity and she is reminded of her basic Indian identity. The racial attacks following the tragic incident made immigrants realize their alien status in the US.

(6) Divakaruni's novels contain elements of irony tied with its plot to convey immigrant fretfulness. Tilo in *The Mistress of Spices* can help her immigrant customers with her magical powers and spices, but she becomes helpless when it is her own turn to achieve happiness. Similarly Mrs. Gupta's dreaming ability in *Queen of Dreams* becomes an obstacle in making a happy family life. Her characters seek shelter of magical powers to resolve diasporic dilemmas, but the restrictions of their magical power prevent them from personal fulfillment. Both Tilo and Mrs. Gupta undergo psychological conflict on account of their limitations in fulfilling personal as well as familial expectations. But they are able to connect with their culture and inner self to derive meaning in their existence.

(7) Divakaruni flourishes her prose with Indian terms and words such as *cha* (tea), *pakora*, *biryani*, *dokan* (shop), *mataji* (goddess), *didi* (sister), *beta* (son), *bhai-bahen* (brother-sister), etc. and bestow Indian flavor to her writing. The titles given to all the chapters in *The Mistress of Spices* are names of Indian spices and herbs such as *Turmeric*, *Cinnamon*, *Fenugreek*, *Asafoetida*, and so on. The meanings and significance of all these spices and herbs are explained through their medicinal properties by Tilo and she prescribes each of

these spices as an aid to her customers to cure their predicament. In *Queen of Dreams*, the names of various snacks and sweets Rakhi and Belle write on their café's menu such as *pakora* (fritters), *nimki* (crunchy snack), *singara* (samosa/rissole), *jilebis* (syrup filled rings), *sandesh* (paneer based dessert) and so on not only provide exotic Indian flavor but also convey deeper realization of one's native identity with the aim of creating a significant space in multicultural scenario of America. Jhumpa Lahiri on the other hand sparingly uses Bengali words because of her Americanized outlook. She tries to give touch of Indianness to her novels through her characters' memory and their cultural practice. In *The Namesake*, there are instances of following Bengali traditions of naming a child, rice ceremony, celebration of Indian festivals, *pujo* (religious prayer) and frequent community gatherings which glorify Indian values. Jhumpa Lahiri uses Bengali words mostly to address the relationships like *maa* (mother), *baba* (father), *masi* (aunty), *mesho* (uncle) and *jamai* (son-in-law). Simplicity, dressing and food habits of both Ashoke and Ashima exhibit their Indianness. *The Lowland* conversely does not describe diasporics' strong ties with their culture, but through characters' feeling of alienation, memory, nostalgia and desires to return Lahiri connects the characters with their roots.

(8) Jhumpa Lahiri extensively uses motifs in *The Namesake* to signify a shift from one stage of life to the other. The motif of the train is effectively knitted with the plot of the novel. Ashoke's train accident in India connects him with Russian author Nicolai Gogol and later he chooses 'Gogol' name for his baby boy. Gogol befriends Ruth and Maxine on the train. Gogol comes to know about his wife Moushumi's extra marital affair while travelling by a train. Most of the ups and downs of the story happen while the protagonists are on the train. The motif of food is also incorporated by Jhumpa Lahiri in this novel. The first generation immigrants Ashoke and Ashima prefer Indian food and eat with hands. They frequently throw parties and invite their relatives and friends and make Indian dishes. Cooking and serving Indian food is delightful for them. Their eating habits represent their cultural adherence. On the other hand the second generation children Gogol and Sonia give preference to American food that become symbolic in terms of cultural assimilation. Lahiri also uses 'death' as a motif in both the novels. Ashoke's death in the US in *The Namesake* and Udayan's death in India in *The Lowland* bring remarkable changes in the lives of other characters in both the novels. The deaths govern the behaviour and fate of the major characters.

In *The Lowland*, the quest for knowledge is a recurrent theme that decides the destiny of the characters. Right from childhood, Udayan and Subhash crave for worldly knowledge. They listen to the news of various countries on radio. Later Udayan makes his own radio and tunes in various channels of Moscow, America, Central Europe, Athens and others on which they listen to news bulletins and programs in various languages, though they hardly understand completely. It is only through this worldly knowledge Udayan learns Marxist philosophy and about the Naxalite rebel. To escape from the situation, Subhash goes to the US in pursuit of higher education. Udayan connects himself with Gauri who has the same bent of mind and desire to explore philosophical studies. When Gauri reaches the US with Subhash, she frames her goals and embraces the study of philosophy discarding the family. It is the quest of knowledge that brings loneliness for Subhash, Gauri, Bela and Subhash's parents.

(9) Food is used by Divakaruni as a recurrent image in her works. Traditional Indian food is used as an influential metaphor in *Queen of Dreams* to assert significance of cultural heritage to survive in the alien land. Rakhi and Belle have to embrace their authentic cultural heritage in form of introducing Indian dishes in their store with the help of Mr. Gupta to survive the business competition. The immigrant people, especially second generation, lose the true essence of their culture because of the assimilation process. Further in absence of a conducive environment to sustain values and authenticity of native culture, they start building up imaginative notion of native culture that is actually fusion of native culture and culture of the settled land. In *The Mistress of Spices* the names of all the spices, Indian sweets and Indian dishes are also symbolic to keep alive the Indian spirit by cherishing Indian food.

(10) Jhumpa Lahiri's portrayal of character is in-depth, detailed and individualistic. Most of her characters belong to West Bengal and share similar culture and customs. Her characters are mostly limited to a particular family such as *The Namesake* tells the story of Ganguli family and *The Lowland* is about Mitra family. Of course, there is mention of various other Bengali families in *The Namesake* but they do not play any significant roles except assembling at parties. Apart from Ganguli and Mitra families, both the novels accommodate some Native American people with whom Gangulis and Mitras develop relationships. The protagonists of both the novels develop affairs with these American people mostly. In *The Namesake* Ashoke, Ashima and Gogol are three major characters

and in *The Lowland*, so far as diaspora is concerned, three characters hold the front: Subhash, Gauri and Bela. By incorporating a limited number of characters Jhumpa Lahiri gives justice to development of the characters. Their struggles with the outside world as well as inner self are given insight. Characters like Gogol in *The Namesake* and Gauri in *The Lowland* explore life away from the restriction of traditions. They reserve space in the reader's mind even after the end of the story. The plots of the stories are evolved by the thoughts and action of such characters. Lahiri presents psychological analysis of her characters' consciousness. Gogol's conflicts with his name lead his life on an uncertain path and he tolls between dual identities. Gauri's obsession for philosophy uplifts her professional life but at the cost of loneliness. Lahiri's characters are highly Americanized.

(11) Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni presents a wide range of characters in her novels. Her characters are not only Indians and Americans; she also introduces other immigrants in the US like martial artist Kwesi in *The Mistress of Spices* and a number of customers in Rakhi's Kurma house who resemble to have come from Afghanistan, Russia, Africa, South America and so on. In one sense, Divakaruni creates a global space in her work and doesn't stick to a single community; even her Indian characters are also from different parts of India and belong to different backgrounds and religions. In *The Mistress of Spices* Haroun a cab driver is from Kashmir, Lalita is from Kanpur (Uttar Pradesh), Geeta's parents and grandfather belong to Jamshedpur (Jharkhand), Jagjit and his family belong to Jullunder (Punjab) and there are also other characters including Tilo whose specific native place are not disclosed but they come from India. Also in *Queen of Dreams*, Mr. Gupta's family is from west Bengal, Belle and Jespal belong to Punjab and there are several customers at Rakhi's store whose specific native places are not revealed but they are Indian American. There isn't any single religion, community or custom which binds such different groups of people, yet it is Indianness that unites them all.

(12) Both Divakaruni and Lahiri present broad ranges of diasporic dilemmas in their novels. Divakaruni's novels are mostly women centric and predominantly focus on women's struggle for creating new identities via memories and cultural heritage of homeland and merging them with pressures of new land. Her women are powerful enough to fight against the influence of patriarchal dominance. The generational gap affects women's self awareness as some of her first generation women are habituated to cultural practice of native land and are often submissive to patriarchal dominance for example

Lalita and Daksha in *The Mistress of Spices*. On the other hand Tilo in *The Mistress of Spices* and Mrs. Gupta in *Queen of Dreams* are unhindered by male dominance. The second generation women characters are highly independent, educated and professional. Geeta in *The Mistress of Spices* and Rakhi in *Queen of Dreams* are suitable examples. They are determined to embark on professional journey and simultaneously give justice to cultural heritage.

Jhumpa Lahiri's themes demonstrate a distinct shift from the issues concerning the first generation immigrants to their second generation youngsters. She also projects women empowerment by showing her women's efforts in getting educated and assimilated with the mainstream to occupy significant spaces in the host land. Ashima and Moushumi in *The Namesake* and Gauri in *The Lowland* are highly liberated in terms of domestic as well as professional choices. Unlike Divakaruni, Lahiri is not women-centric; in fact she is gender neutral. Lahiri significantly voices inner struggle and issues faced by male characters in diaspora. Furthermore, even though her characters feel alienation in their early period of immigration they are not traumatized by it. Lahiri's characters adjust themselves wherever they are and accept the influence of settled land. They are also away from racial discrimination, abuses which is recurrent in Divakaruni's works. It could be the reason that Lahiri's characters belong to rich or upper middle class strata of the society and are therefore away the nuances of racism and discrimination. Lahiri also doesn't introduce such themes in her novels; instead she chooses individual's conflict with self, issues related to identity and cross cultural influences faced by immigrants. She incorporates her personal experiences of immigration in creating Gogol's character in *The Namesake*. The feelings of isolation, alienation, nostalgia, conflict between culture roots and cultural reality and identity confusion are some of the major themes in *The Namesake* and *The Lowland*.

(13) The second generation immigrants undergo identity confusion mostly due to pull of two cultures at the same time. They experience attraction of American culture and at the same time their first generation parents expect them to follow native culture, as a result they feel it difficult to belong to only one culture. The situation is different for first generation immigrants as they remain affiliated to only native culture. The struggle of second generation immigrants is labeled as ABCD (American Born Confused Desi). Gogol and Moushumi in *The Namesake* and Rakhi in *Queen of Dreams* are appropriate examples.

(14) The writers have demonstrated through their work the intense influence of Western culture and western lifestyle on the second generation immigrants, who disregard their own culture and sometimes family too. Later they suffer due to dominance of white people and their culture and have no choice except returning to native values. Gogol in *The Namesake* pays a great price for his affiliations only with western world. Rakhi in *Queen of Dreams* is actually deprived of native culture and becomes part of western world, but she has to return to native values after the traumatic experience of racial attacks post 9/11 incident. Jespal's conflict between native culture and western culture finally compels him to accept traditional life.

15) So far as the climaxes of the novels are concerned, both the novelists end their fictions in open-ended style. No resolutions are provided to the characters' problems and we do not find any sort of happy or sad ending in any of the four novels. The series of incidents developed by the novelists towards the end of the novel create impressions that the characters have made up their minds and accepted whatever situations they are in. Their acceptance of their diasporic status and the compromise they make with their lives end their diasporic dilemmas to some extent. Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices* ends with Tilo's loss of her super natural power and it is hinted that she would lead an ordinary life of as an immigrant woman. At the end of *Queen of Dreams* Rakhi and Belle are left resisting the distressed consequences of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. *The Namesake* ends in unhappy circumstances of Ashoke's death and Gogol's divorce. Gogol comes to term with his life in quest of contentment. *The Lowland* ends with bitter meeting between Gauri and Bela and Gauri's trip to India where she attempts to commit suicide. Although all the novels have open endings, there are undercurrents of optimism in the ends of all the novels which form impressions that the characters have learnt ways to make compromises and attain peace of mind. In *The Mistress of Spices* Tilo is able to live a liberated life without any restriction of rules of spices. In *Queen of Dream*, Rakhi comes to terms with her husband Sonny and her Indian identity. In *The Namesake*, Gogol realizes the significance of life his parents have lived and hopes to start a new life. In *The Lowland*, Gauri joins her routine in California, Bela unites with Drew and Subhash marries Elise in his old age.

## 5.5 Scope for Further Research

The present research work paves path for further research works as mentioned below.

- 1) Cultural aspects remain crucial for the diasporic community. However modest attempts immigrants make, their native culture is sure to face influence of the host country. On one hand cultural assimilation enables immigrants to accept the culture of the host country but on the other hand there are chances of losing native culture, a question arises in this regard: Is loss of native culture compensated by cultural assimilation in diaspora?
- 2) The second generation immigrants are often found struggling with themselves to create a space for them in the host land. A psychological study of diaspora fiction can be adopted to explore characters' thoughts, emotions and behaviour.
- 3) The Indian concepts of ideal family and relationship change in the diaspora. Diaspora paves the way for creation of new alliances and at the same time traditional relationships sometimes lose their essence. The negotiating nature of relationships in the backdrop of diaspora needs to be studied.
- 4) Diaspora affects women differently as is observed in the works of Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. The women characters like Ashima, Moushumi, Gauri, Tilo, Mrs. Gupta and Rakhi fight against diasporic odds but are not submissive. In fact they sustain their individual spaces in domestic as well as professional environments. A feminist study of diasporic women characters can be explored.
- 5) A stylistic study of diaspora fictions can be undertaken to study how various elements of language can influence the content and have effects on the readers.

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