

Chapter 3

COMPLEXITY OF INDIAN DIASPORIC CONDITIONS IN THE WORKS OF JHUMPA LAHIRI AND KIRAN DESAI

The present chapter focuses on the contested repositioning of the male immigrants in general and many unanswered questions which are brought by the intercontinental engagements and the hysteric anxieties they produce reflecting the colonial past and the ambivalence of the postcolonial and neocolonial present particularly in the formation of identity and the status of people at home and abroad. The fictions of Jhumpa Lahiri and Kiran Desai namely – *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), *The Namesake* (2003), *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008), and *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) – put emphasis on the journey of Indian diasporas in the colonial time as well as in the postcolonial and globalization period. Although migration takes place due to economic reasons, it has also affected the cultural and other attributes of life. The fictional works taken up for discussion have highlighted the position of a migrant in the host country by exploring varied problems that a migrant has faced during his stay in the hostland and the incursion of cross-cultural influences on the existence of the diasporic community that brings forth a number of contradictions. Here, the emphasis will be laid on the select male characters and their relationships to expose the subsurface challenges that shape the inner consciousness of people on the move. This section disentangles the characters who endured the tension and anxiety of living in bicultural space and their constant fight for the acceptance of and resistance to the assimilation process. Besides, it will further deliberate on the discourse of emergence of new nationalist movements and the mushrooming of demands for new states in the aftermath of colonialism.

While tracing the theme of migration in the Indian context, the history and legends of India had borne witness to the distressing tales of internal migration in the two great Indian epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* that had discussed in details the narration of exile and expulsion. Thus, the narrative on exile if it refers to the Indian diaspora there is no escape until and unless we mention the two great epics that particularly deal with the exile and banishment from one's kingdom and reclaiming the origins. Many theorists on the Indian diaspora have repeatedly mentioned the exile in these two epics that have given the hope of return and jubilation in reclaiming home and lost kingdom after the end of the exile. The issues having to do with the migration might have gained momentum in the 21st century but it is not the thing of the present. The roots of Indian diaspora, according to Gabriel Sheffer, can be documented only in the fifth century B.C. The death of Gautama Buddha in 483 B.C had seen a large number of migrations eastward undertaken by his disciples for the propagation of his teachings but the migration was only for cultural or religious purpose rather than economic or political motivation (2003: 62). Satendra Nandan believes that the real epic of the Indian experience is the Indian diaspora that starts with the *girmit* experience in the 1830s. Soon after the abolition of slavery, the indenture system was conceived and executed by most of the western imperial forces. The *girmit* journeys encompassed many parts of the world – the movement of labour forces from the underdeveloped Asian countries, the plantations in the Caribbean and the two Americas, and European countries (2001: 304).

The phenomenon of immigration has made a huge impact on the contemporary culture due to the transnational movements of people, economy, and politics that has created a global village usurping nations. It investigates the experiences of immigrants who are enduring dislocation and displacement of identity, home, nations, and cultures through diasporic lens. The sequential

study of Indian history will lay bare the various instances of Indian diasporas beyond the sub-continent like the export of slaves, the employment of indentured labourers during the colonial time, the banishment of criminals, and later on the IT professionals. The Indian diasporic movement is divided into varied phases. As given by O. P. Juneja, the different phases of Indian diasporas are – i) indentured labourers in the 19th century, ii) skilled workers who migrated in the 1960s and later to the UK, the USA. and Canada, and iii) the migration in the mid-nineties mainly to the industrialized, developed economies and this phase includes the success story of the Indian diaspora in the Silicon Valley as well as the other professionals mainly settled in the UK, North America, and Europe (2005: xi-xii). The current migration takes place due to globalization that exhibits different patterns of movement. The illegal migration becomes a serious issue with the porous borders.

The mobilization of diaspora in the transnational age is becoming complicated due to the trouble-free travel, transportation, and connections. In a true sense, they do not occupy any fixed location. In the earlier time, it was not possible to maintain close ties with the homeland due to unavailability of the communications. The estrangement from the motherland is quite acute and intense. However, owing to the transnational networks, the immigrants are closer to their diasporic communities as well as to the homeland. The subsequent generations despite their unwillingness to associate with the ethnic community are pulled towards it. The transverse boundaries and cultures have become major issues in the contemporary history. The fictions of Lahiri and Desai indicate the poignant twinge and affliction of migration involving those who migrated as students to get the colonial education, those who migrated with their high degrees to achieve triumphant lives for themselves and for their children, and those who migrated as illegal migrants. The problem related to the weakening of ties with the hostland and the homeland is the

question of loyalties and identities of individuals who are inflicted with the transnational relationships that they persistently endeavour to maintain. This chapter dwells on the issues pertaining to shifting loyalties, and the conflicting stands of the migrants who are standing on the threshold of a new culture.

This chapter engages in a debate on the negotiation of identity mostly by the male characters and their undertaking to survive the brutality of separation from home as seen in the fictional works of Jhumpa Lahiri and Kiran Desai. They struggle to adapt themselves to the new environment and attempt come to terms with the tensions, and trauma of an oppressive past which they have left. The characters grapple with the loss of home, loved ones, and individuality when they come into contact with the adoptive culture. The receptive culture expects the migrants to integrate into the receiver culture by shedding their cultural characteristics. When the migrants prolong their ties with the homeland, such prolongation creates a benefit of the doubts and skepticism in the assimilative culture. They put up with the nostalgia of home and psychological trauma of loss. Identity formation for the migrants becomes an important issue due to the integration into the receiving culture. The balancing act becomes more complex which leads to the individual and cultural isolation of immigrants. Though the integration process takes place in varied levels to different generations, it brings with it the conflicts of belongingness. The *Inheritance of Loss* shows the breaking down of the multicultural society where different ethnic communities stand against themselves to get their rights and separate ethnic identity. The frequent linkage with the original culture, the associative lives, the resistance of material culture of the recipient culture, the failure to absorb completely to the adopted nations, and the psychological aberration are the reminders of how the concepts like melting pot concept, cultural relativism, salad bowl concept, and multiculturalism have failed to incorporate, assimilate, integrate, and tolerate the lives of migrants by the host countries. Under the melting pot

through the process of assimilation, the immigrants were asked to assimilate into the American culture with the intention of becoming Americans sharing a single common culture. From the late 1960s onwards, social philosophy began to change its perspective as it could clearly discern that the different cultural groups were not simply abandoning their original cultural characteristics. Thus, salad bowl notion was introduced as a culinary metaphor in which different constituents in the dish retained their distinctive flavours but showed the dish as a whole i.e. blending of culture as a whole. In the USA and Britain, the endorsement of multiculturalism occurred in the mid-1960s with the arrival of immigrants in abundance from the Commonwealth nations that advocated laws and norms which saw no need to abandon the religious traditions or the cuisines or the languages. Such endorsement led to the realization that assimilation was not the only means of incorporating immigrants into the society but it also offered a practical approach to accept the ethnic community. The late 1960s and 1970s had witnessed the immeasurable international migration of Asians that questioned the government policies. The accommodation of large migrant populace would mean to understand their culture which was not practicable and they could not be incorporated into the existing structure. The cultural relativism “a belief that no single culture is better than any other and that there are no transcendent criteria to which one can appeal for justifying the imposition of one culture’s norms on another” failed to propagate its ideology as liberalism was influenced by the western thoughts and upheld the traditions as rich (Watson 2002: 1-17). Thus, the laws and policies of the host countries keep on changing that affect the diasporic community. The national crossing of people and diversity of cultures are full of paradoxes. The problems are not only about the United States or about England but also for every recipient culture. The issues surface while dealing with the divergent ethnic groups in different parts of the world. The nations that embrace the migrants acknowledge and regard the ethnic communities of immigrants, yet the problem arises when the

abounding populace endangers the already established communities. Thus to recognize each settler population from nook and corner would mean to make space for everyone that is not feasible and unacceptable. The majority of the host nations has opposed the invasion of continual immigration as a step towards economic growth. With globalization and enormous manufacturing reformation, numerous indigenous citizens are apprehensive of the future of their children.

The sub-sections of this chapter will thoroughly analyze the escalating problems arising from living in the cross-cultural contexts. The blueprint of relocation that has been exhibited by the characters in the fictions of these two writers will unknot the different phases of migration and movement. The discussion also focuses on the crossbreed identities who have integrated into the host country but occupy a marginalized position that compels them to lead contemptuous and unsettled lives. This chapter further discusses in detail the quandary of first and second generations who reveal different views regarding home, identity, and culture. Jhumpa Lahiri's characters juggle hard to fit into the American culture that is racially rooted thereby exposing the disruptions and adjustments that they make in the process of forging a new identity. She addresses not only the issue of displacement but also of adjustment that is taking place concurrently at numerous levels; of place and space, of culture, of temporariness, of means of existence, of relations, of imaginary home, of internal liberty, of identity, of expectation, etc, that define the diasporic existential being.

Kiran Desai, on the other, deals with the issues of loss of identity, of home, of breaking down of multicultural world, of resistance movement, of globalization, of racism, of colonialism and postcolonialism, of self-discovery, and so forth, through the narratives of Jemubhai Patel and Biju which run parallel to the Gorkha movement. The uprising of the Gorkhas punctures the

peaceful existence and seizes the society in national fervour. Desai further exposes the conflict that is brought by the new social order of the postcolonial chaos because of the psychological dominance of the European power that comes in the appearance of the European learning. She further explores the infiltration of colonial history that shapes the postcolonial present and the political, economic, and cultural imperialism of the United States that results from globalization that ultimately leads to the economic disparities between nations and people.

I

Conflict, Migration, Globalization, and Postcolonial Ambivalence in *The Inheritance of Loss*

Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* has captured the lives during and after colonialism and the impact of the American dream, lifestyles, and culture on people in the underdeveloped countries. The novel is smeared with postcolonial tinge. It illustrates the unexpected transformation of society during the postcolonial time, and globalization that creates havoc in the lives of people associated with it. It deals with the influence of European culture and learning which comes into collision with the outlook of the Indians. It exposes the circumstances leading to the imposition of colonial influence that obstructs the living conditions of the present day and affects the relationship between those who have access to the western learning and those who are at the periphery.

The Inheritance of Loss addresses not only the persistent struggle to break the colonial/postcolonial entanglement but also the ethnic assertion of identity by people at the margin. The scramble for cultural identity is comingled with the struggle for personal distinctiveness. The question of individual and ethnic identity becomes one of the significant issues in the

contemporary society due to the ethnic differences brought about by the multicultural aspects of the society that are rooted in the unified state or nation with diversity. This condition tends to pose the most serious threat to the political stability and national sovereignty thus breaking down the semblance of placidness and normalcy. The clash over the ethnic line when carried to the extreme has become one of the root causes of terrorism, violence, intolerance, and ethnic cleansing.

Along with the problems previously mentioned, Kiran Desai in this novel astutely deals with the marginalization of the minorities and their demand for statehood in the form of Gorkhaland in the northern part of West Bengal. The dialogue on global economy has opened the debate on the politics of secessionist movement and the fight for the right to self-determination in different states of India especially the Northeast India in the form of reconstructing the past history by touching both the local and global community. This book narrates the impasse of people who become outsiders or residues of the colonial thoughts and the static life that they live which neither permit them to travel backward nor forward with time. The novel shuttles between the first and the third worlds thereby showing simultaneously the plight of immigration, and exile in the backdrop of the mounting insurgency problems in India.

The story sets in the mid 1980s in Kalimpong, high in the northeastern Himalayas when the Gorkhas' uprising marred the serene life of the hill and "...here was a report of new dissatisfaction in the hills, gathering insurgency, men, and guns" (9). Kiran Desai has articulated the turbulent situation in the very beginning of the novel this way, "It was the Indian-Nepalese this time, fed up with being treated like minority in a place where they were the majority. They wanted their own country, or at least their own state, in which to manage their own affairs" (9). Kalimpong is inhabited by multi-ethnic,

multi-cultural, and racially mixed ethnicities that have been the legacies of colonial history. The comingling of cultures due to colonialism, immigration, and globalization has led to the power relations where numerous cultures are amalgamated in the name of varied banners of civilization that has broken down the façade of peace and harmony. The new dissatisfaction and discontentment brings forth the new environment where people are displaced and forced to live in deplorable conditions.

As parallel to the social uprisings and violence, there runs a story of a retired judge, Jemubhai Popatlal Patel, whose life is caught in the conflict-ridden society that mocks his lost status. The novel opens when some Nepali youths came for the judge's hunting rifles that disclosed the real conditions of the judge's fortified life. The dilapidation and discontentment in the society is exposed simultaneously to show the dishonoured and ruined life of Jemubhai, a colonial servant. He lived with his sixteen years old granddaughter Sai in Kalimpong, a small hill station in the Himalayan foothills. The only companions they have in Cho Oyu are the dog Mutt, and the cook. The group of anglophile characters in their vicinity includes Uncle Potty, their nearest neighbour, who had bought his land from the judge, a gentleman farmer and a drunk; and his friend Father Booty of the Swiss diary; and finally Noni and Lola, the two sisters who lived at Mon Ani. Gyan, Sai's Maths tutor and lover, represents the Nepali misguided youth who is grappling with history of his ancestors and his present state of perplexed identity. Away from Kalimpong, the parallel story reveals the life of Biju, an illegal migrant, who represents the flimsy side of the globalization. The story travels back and forth in England, the United States, and India to reveal the characters who are trapped in the collision of cultures.

The judge is a cynical, angry old man with a horrifying past of shattered relationships. Egoistical Jemubhai gulped down the past golden

days, but had buried the mortification and embarrassment of his Cambridge past. He had broken his ties with his parents, extended family, and the community of Patels who had seen him off on his voyage to the Cambridge University with great fanfare and hopes of general betterment. Through his character, the novelist scrupulously studies the consequence of colonialism and the education system introduced by Thomas Babington Macaulay to the Indians. His 1835 *Minute to Parliament* was a crucial document in the Indian history that disdained the oriental culture, advocating the imitation of English learning and knowledge in India. The main aims were to reform the Indian society and to educate the colonial subjects who were considered as “degenerate and barbaric” (Chatterjee 2009: 118). With the introduction of western education awakened the mentality of people who were under the debris of harsh religious orthodoxies. Macaulay declared in his “Minute on Indian Education”, 1835:

We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern – a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, opinions, in morals, and in intellect. (1995: 430)

According to Homi Bhabha Macaulay’s “Minute” “makes a mockery of Oriental learning” as it is nothing but to raise a mimic man ““through our English School’, as a missionary educationist wrote in 1819, ‘to form a corps of translators and be employed in different departments of Labour’” and he says, “to be Anglicized is empathetically not to be English” (1994, 2009: 124-125). It was part of this scheme that many Indian men were imparted the European education. The person who got such high standard education was respected in the society. Jemubhai Patel was one among them. He was a mimic man. Throughout his life, he upheld his European styles of living only

to be mocked and thwarted by the locals. His status and dignity are trashed. The loss is about the loss of trust and faith in the colonial culture which makes an individual, a mere mimic and a facsimile of English values. He has adopted the European standards that make him an ambivalent character. The propagation of colonial discourse is to encourage “the colonized subject to “mimic” the colonizer, by adopting the colonizer’s cultural habits, assumptions, institutions, and values” and the result of such attempt is the “ ‘blurred copy’ of the colonizer” and it becomes a parody in whatever they mimic (Ashcroft, *et al.* 1998: 139). The judge becomes a burlesque of the colonial learnings and behaviours. Laura Albritton also writes that Judge Patel comes close to that type of anglophile as found in a number of postcolonial novels. She expresses:

These characters, who have embraced the education, manners, and values of Britain (or more recently, the United States), embody the type of Westernized “native” that Lord Macaulay advocated in his infamous “Minute on Indian Education” in 1835. (2007:170)

An arrogant anglophile Jemubhai Patel travelled to England during the colonial rule. Being an immigrant, he carried with him the baggage of Indian culture and tradition which made him the laughing stock in England. The time when he landed on board his real journey of life began. When his granddaughter Sai (a convent educated girl) came to stay with him after the death of her parents, he could see the image of him in her. He became conscious of the fact that his own journey “of his own arrivals and departures, from places far in his past” (35) was quite similar to Sai. It was in the year 1939 that he left his ancestral home of Piphit. He was accompanied by his father in the platform. It was clearly divided into “Indians only” and “European only” which demarcated the perimeter that was not allowed to

cross. Sai's arrival at Cho Oyu made him melancholic as it triggered the "revisitation of his past" (37).

Many years have passed in a blink, yet the past returns to him vividly rather cruelly. Jemubhai Patel is inflicted with the British culture that ensnared him in the times of yore. His apathetic behaviour is the result of his mixed emotions that he feels for the British life and manners. When he left India, he was twenty and a one-month married man. His relationship with his wife was momentary. He could not even see her face and he knew it properly that everything would change upon his return. The wish to become white upon his arrival in England was welcomed with derision from the British that visibly demarcated 'white as white' and 'black/colored people as black'. He could notice racism ingrained deeply in the colonialist system. During that time, Britain was disfigured by racial discrimination, by phobia about cultural differentiation and by unrelenting social, economic, educational, and cultural disadvantages. Race as a marker of human identity has functioned as powerful instrument for discrimination. People having similar physical characteristics form a ghetto in the hostland because of it the migrants are backfired by the recipient nation. He experienced British racism against the coloured immigrants in an insensitive form. In the cabin, he felt ashamed of his foods that included "a bundle of puris; onion, green chilies and salt in a twist of newspaper". It was his mother's love for him but he took it as another factor of his humiliation in front of his cabin mates. "He was furious that his mother had considered the possibility of his humiliation and thereby, he thought, precipitated it. In her attempt to cancel out one humiliation she had only succeeded in adding another" (38). Thus, he threw the package which his mother had given to him and considered it as "undignified love, Indian love, stinking, unaesthetic love" (38). Salman Rushdie showed how the migrants were stripped of the past slowly while on their journey. They stood in stark

naked when they encountered another culture which seemed more enriching than the previous one. In *Shame* (1983, 1995), he said:

All migrants leave their pasts behind, although some try to pack it into bundles and boxes – but on the journey something seeps out of the treasured mementoes and old photographs, until even their owners fail to recognize them, because it is the fate of migrants to be stripped of history, to stand naked amidst the scorn of strangers upon whom they see the rich clothing, the brocades of continuity and the eyebrows of belonging – at any rate... (63-64)

The excitement and hope of becoming part of the colonialist culture brought to him a mixed reaction – an amalgam of fear and loneliness. When he registered himself in Fitzwilliam which was more a tutoring place than college, he worked day and night and “he retreated into a solitude that grew in weight day by day. The solitude became a habit, the habit became the man, and it crushed him into a shadow” (39). Nobody spoke to him and sometimes his throat was jammed with words unexpressed. The consequence of the entire disgraces amounted to a boiling point which gave way to a perverted attitude, barely individual, that persisted throughout Jemubhai’s life in India where he failed to forge any relationship.

His exit from India was linked with a sense of pride, arrogance, and triumph as with nervousness. It was an apprehensive life which was replete with the unnecessary fear for the modern and advanced world full of privileged people with an English education and the horror for transforming into a new life with its apparent social and moral evils. He became a stranger to himself. He felt he was an odd one among the white people and “found his own skin odd-colored, his own accent peculiar”. The apprehension of being

ridiculed by the white was so radical that “he forgot how to laugh, could barely manage to lift his lips in smile, and if he ever did, he held his hand over his mouth, because he couldn’t bear anyone to see his gums, his teeth” (40). For colonized people, England is a dark country – unexplored and hidden from the reality comprising full of surprises. It is a dream alluring yet distasteful. The illusion of England as a place of rich people, civilized life, and highly developed country turns into disillusionment. Jemubhai’s dream of grandness encountered the reality that even in England people could be poor and live unaesthetic lives. He was unimpressed by the sights of tiny rooms that were glued together. He had migrated during the colonial time to become part of the English culture and to be an English servant through ICS after that “a journey once begun, has no end” (111).

Jemubhai’s repugnance toward the Indians was a masquerade to hide his shamed conscience as it alleviated him to overcome his sense of inferiority in relation to the British. Deriding his own people and lowering them to the status of lower class rescued his own self-esteem of his affiliation with the British, the dominant class. His appreciation of England was fraught with the association that he was inclined to have with England that epitomized the superiority and power. His desire to identify with the white culture was shown in his desperate attempt to make his skin fairer by applying powder. When most of the students at Cambridge were involved in the nationalist struggle and rooting for independence, he abandoned his inferior race and discarded Indian relationship and culture. He was jubilant with the colonial job in the idea of getting ten pounds a month. After he was recruited in the service, he avoided the other Indians as a revenge ‘on his early confusions, his embarrassment gloved in something called “keeping up standards.... He found he began to be mistaken for something he wasn’t not – a man of dignity’ (119). His own low standard among whites made him loathe his own people and he disassociated himself with the Indians to defend his false pride. He

lives like the Englishman with Mutt his dog as his companion in Cho Oyu which was built by a Scotsman who saw potential in the environment but the judge was not interested in the surroundings but the words of the Scotsman. His mentality is such that “he envied the English. He loathed Indians. He worked at being English with the passion of hatred and for what he would become, he would be despised by absolutely everyone, English and Indians, both” (119).

Ngugi wa Thiong'o in his *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* rightly said that “imperialism is total: it has economic, political, military, cultural and psychological consequences for the people of the world today”. He further said that the oppressed and the exploited of the world retain their defiance: liberty from theft. The weapon used by the imperialism to subdue the defiance is the “cultural bomb”. The consequence of cultural bomb is “to annihilate a people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves”. The impact is so huge that the exploited see “their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland. It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves: for instance, with other peoples’ languages rather than their own” (1987, 1994: 2-3). The judge knew that he could live in Cho Oyu “in this shell, this skull, with the solace of being a foreigner in his own country, for this time he would not learn the language” (29). Gyan’s words also aptly described the life of both Jemubhai and Sai. He said “It’s clear all you want to do is copy... Copycat, copycat. Don’t you know, these people you copy like copycat, THEY DON’T WANT YOU!!!!!!” (164).

The return to one’s homeland appears as fascinating as many migrants might have thought. Jemubhai upon his return to India has been subjected to

alienation and isolation. He is an outsider-insider in India. Every bit of him screamed “he was a foreigner – a foreigner” (166). He is perplexed because of his encounter with the two ethnic or cultural constructs. He feels like an outsider and foreign to both cultures. In spite of his Indian lineage, his contact with two cultures prevents him from identifying directly to one culture. The mortification of his shifting loyalties displaces him in both cultures. The position of Jemubhai can be suitably described from the lines of Derek Walcott’s “A Far Cry from Africa” that decipher the enigma of the European educated man and the split personality he possesses. It talks about the native who could not side with neither England nor Africa. He expresses:

I who am poisoned with the blood of both,
Where shall I turn, divided to the vein?
I who have cursed
The drunkard officer of British rule, how choose
Between this Africa and the English tongue I love?
Betray them both, or give back what they give? (1986:18)

Jemubhai found himself displaced from both cultures due to his affiliation to the European learning and the Indian blood. His failed relationships were the result of his lost and fragmented identity. He could not live with his wife because he thought she was not suitable for the high-class English educated person like him. He broke ties with his family. His father cursed him and considered it a mistake to send him away as he said, “You have become like a stranger to us” (306). He could not imbibe the Indian culture and finally he cut himself off from everyone. He thought:

He had been recruited to bring his countrymen into the modern age, but he could only make it himself by cutting them off entirely, or they would show up reproachful, pointing out to him the lie he had become. (306)

When his only companion Mutt was lost, the agnostic judge was “undoing his education, retreating to the superstitious man making bargains, offering sacrifices, gambling with fate, cajoling, daring whatever was out there” (301). He was kind of redeeming himself from the “sins he had committed that no court in the world could take on” (301). When his colonial education and life forsook him, he questioned his decision to abandon his family and started thinking of “his father, whose strength and hope and love he had fed on, only to turn around to spit on his face. Then he thought of how he had returned his wife, Nimi” (302). He was truly the servant of the colonizers. The lost root, the lost identity along with the loss of love created a void, a huge abyss that no relationship could fill. At the end, he introspected, “if he had killed his wife for the sake of false ideals. Stolen her dignity, shamed his family, shamed hers, turned her into the embodiment of their humiliation” (308). What he inherited was the vacuum of power and lost pride after the British left India.

When Jemubhai’s old friend, Bose, from his ICS time visited him after thirty-three years, his sham pride fell to pieces. Unlike Bose, Jemu’s old friend, who harangued about the changing time and treatment of white people for reducing the former loyalists like him to the inferior positions, the judge would not like to be called the Englishman’s friend nor wished to allow himself to be dragged through filth. He was silent when Bose ridiculed the white, as he did not want Bose to destroy his dignified silence for “he wouldn’t tumble his pride to melodrama at the end of his life and he knew the danger of confession – it would cancel any hope of dignity forever” (208). Bose’s visit had forced him to confront certain facts about the artificial constructs that he had built around him. His past and present had been built on lies. He realized that:

When you build on lies, you build strong and solid. It was the truth that undid you. He couldn't knock down the lies or else the past would crumble, and therefore the present [...] But he now acquiesced to something in the past that had survived, returned, that might without his paying too much attention, redeem him. (210)

Sai, his granddaughter, became the “only miracle fate had thrown his way” (210). She in a way restored his deceitful self that was built on lies and distorted reality. The judge who thought of living a peaceful life in Kalimpong was blighted by the violence which not only exposed his ramshackle status but also forced him to revisit his past and his own journey. He came to realize what Bose's son had said, “it was a different age with different rules, but it had turned out to be only a different version of the same old” (204).

Apart from the journey of Jemubhai, Kiran Desai has discussed another form of immigration in this novel that is the migration of the Nepalese in India. Not only Jemubhai and Bose but Gyan's family also paid the price of their loyalty to the British imperialism that failed to recognize their contributions. Gyan's ancestors had left their village in Nepal and arrived in Darjeeling. They were lured by promises of work on a tea plantation. His great-grandfather was recruited to the Imperial Army as the British offered them more money than any tea planter could make. “So he swore allegiance to the Crown, and off he went, the beginning of over a hundred years of family commitment to the wars of the English” (142). Despite fighting for the British and showing their allegiance to them, the entire generation of Gyan's family and many Nepalese lived in an impoverished condition without any assistance from government. Instead of giving rewards for their contributions the British government spit on their faces. In order to get their rights, the Nepalese are fighting for a separate state. In a demonstration, a man shouted when India got

independence in 1947, the British left granting freedom not only to India but also to Muslims-Pakistan, granting special provisions for the scheduled castes and tribes except the Nepalese of India. They demanded a Gorkhasthan but was ignored. He said,

We are labourers on the tea plantations, coolies dragging heavy loads, soldiers. And are we allowed to become doctors and government workers, owners of the tea plantations? *No!* We are kept at the level of servants. We fought on behalf of the British for two hundred years...We are soldiers, loyal, brave. India or England, they never had cause to doubt our loyalty. (158)

The slogans of the Gorkhas movement like “We are stateless”, “It is better to die than live as slaves”, “We are constitutionally tortured. Return our land from Bengal”, “LIBERATION”, and “Gorkhaland for Gorkhas” (126) form a part of social realities which in turn affect the characters in the novel. The word like “LIBERATION” was the talk of town and the young members of the GNLF were ready to sacrifice their lives for the formation of their homeland, Gorkhaland. New state was in the making. The Indo-Nepal was burnt. The Gorkhas were not supporting the prevailing government. The black flag day was announced on April 13. Non-cooperation movement was launched that pledged not to celebrate Republic Day, Independence Day, Gandhi’s birthday, boycott of elections, non-payment of taxes and loans. Every family had to send a male representative to every procession and everybody. Nepali or non-Nepali had to contribute something to the movement. It is evident that the colonial pandemonium has refused to go after the British colonialism had left. Most of the politico-socio-economic problems continued to haunt many regions of India. The uprising of numerous liberation revolutions from the minority groups marks the postcolonial India. They challenge their subjection that deprives them of exercising their rights freely.

Gyan's love affair with Sai never bloomed as they were caught in the insurgent movement. He became a member of the GNLF group despite knowing that the patriotism was false and it was surely just frustration. He marched with the members shouting "*Jai Gorkha!*" He detached from Sai because he was ashamed of mingling with an anglophile girl.

With the exception of the disconcertion of Indian Gorkhas's demand for a distinctive Indian identity and for the Gorkhaland, the novel also accentuates the migration as the result of the pursuance of American dream that unravels another pitiable narrative of those illegal migrants fighting for their identity in the host country. Kiran Desai questions the fundamental aspects of new nationhood and identity that arise due to the globalization and transnationalism which negotiate the borders and boundaries. The reasons for the transnational migration at the end of the 1980s are due to the "various flows of people, ideas, objects, and capital across the territorial borders of state". Randolph Bourne had used the term "transnationalism" in order "to describe the transborder relations of immigrants to the United States" in the early 1916. This new shift has enabled many to see the multiple, cross-border relationships of many migrants and also to analyze the migration in term of transnational process (qtd. in Schiller 2007: 119). The later part of the 20th century that had witnessed the rise of the United States as the world's most powerful country with its industrial power, had attracted millions of workers from the economically stagnant countries. It has become the most sought after country for the migrants – refugees, asylum-seekers, and irregular or illegal migrants. Many youths from the third world countries immigrate to the United States every year to achieve an American dream. To them America is a destination for their visionary of a contented life. The American dream is generated through a discourse so as to attract people from all over the globe.

The narrative on illegal migrants follows the growing disillusionment of the American dream through the journey of Biju who harbours the dream of a successful life in the United States. He does not belong to the skilful itinerants but an illegal immigrant who ventures out to the U.S. due to lack of stability and opportunities at homeland. To Lola and many Indians “India is a sinking ship” (47). He escapes from the sordid Indian environment in search of living to avoid the poverty of homeland. The cook is unaware of the illegal migrant’s life in the US, he dreams of living a happy and prosperous life after his son Biju comes back to India. The American dream and standards to make it something big in the U.S. and ideals for a contented and flourishing life which every American dream offers, make Biju the victim of racism and many other unseen problems. Through Biju we could see how people belonging to different ethnic communities mostly from the third world countries confronted a common problem of illegal migrancy.

Migration is always presented as a heroic act of living a good life with good money without thinking that opposite could also happen. Biju does not belong to the fortunate immigrants. The advantaged few could afford a life of poise and grandeur as they have got good money for the frequent mobility and transportation. But Biju changed his jobs frequently like an absconder on the run. His letters to his father traced a string of jobs about the same thing each time. He did not stick to one particular job and always fled from the uncongenial environment. His father ignorant of his ever-changing jobs started dreaming of an improved life and his dreams became bigger with each letter. Although the time might have died in the house, his vision of a better future transcended him to another world beyond the mountaintop. During the first year of his stay in America, he would stand in queue in a counter along with a row of men who were illegal migrants like him. His father took pride in the illusion of his son working for the Americans. “Angrezi Khana only, no

Indian food, and the owner is not from India. He is from America from America itself.” “He works for the Americans”, said the cook (14). His father boasted, ‘My son works in New York’ and that ‘He is the manager of a restaurant business’. He would further claim that “ ‘New York. Very big city’ ... ‘The cars and buildings are nothing like her. In that country, there is enough food for everybody’ ” (84). However, in actuality, Biju could not get a proper job and an accommodation because he overstayed in America as an illegal migrant without a green Card. In addition to it, his employers exploited him by giving him minimum possible wages. Even though, he tried to fit into the American Dream, he, in reality, finally appeared to be a social misfit.

During Biju’s second year in America at Pinocchio’s Italian Restaurant, the owner’s wife complained of his smell. He stayed at the basement and became part of the men camping out in the basement which looked like a fuse box. The dreams of having a prospective life in America had been greeted by the social realities which were based on the divisions of class, race, and background. Even in America, Biju could discern the class division between rich and poor that the world did not go in a linear manner and had its cracks. When he went to deliver hot-and-sour soups and eggs to some Indian women, his stark poverty was exposed when they gave him an extra tip and told him to buy muffler-gloves for the winter. He tried to comprehend the words of shiny-eyed girl which conveyed from every angle – “that he might comprehend their friendliness completely in this meaning between Indians abroad of different classes and languages, rich and poor, north and south, top caste bottom caste” (50). In actuality, even fellows from the same country could not acknowledge one another even if they shared the same culture and country as there existed a hierarchy between them and heterogeneous differences. The condition of Biju was so worst in winter that even the chill of snow pricked him from within which was overwhelming.

When Biju came to America for the first time, Nandu, his father's friend, neither opened the door nor answered his phone. He hid when Biju arrived at his doorstep and opened when Biju left. He told him that there was no jobs and later on deserted him among foreigners. His own counterpart welcomed Biju in a very unfriendly way. This is the harsh and callous truth that like borders the relationship also becomes porous and there is nothing left to absorb.

Biju met Saeed Saeed who was from Zanzibar at the Queen of Tarts bakery. He became the man he dreamt of in America. For him, he was the only one who was flourishing. He wanted to become his friend "because Saeed Saeed wasn't drowning, he was bobbing in the tides" (76). He knew how to survive in America as "he relished the whole game, the way the country flexed his wits and rewarded him; he charmed it, cajoled it, cheated it, felt great tenderness and loyalty towards it". There was something in him that brought America to his knees that "he would pledge emotional allegiance to the flag with tears in his eyes and conviction in his voice. The country recognized something in Saeed, he in it, and it was a mutual love affair" (79). He loved Saeed Saeed because he was a Muslim but not Paki. The irony of Biju was that he himself was a coloured man but he was judgmental about the Africans whom he thought were uncivilized, of bad characters, and lived like monkeys. He hated all the black people except Saeed Saeed. The white people for him were attractive and civilized. His desire to be among the civilized whites permeated his mind with so much revulsion that he detested all that was black and "this habit of hate had accompanied Biju, and he found that he possessed an awe of white people, who arguably had done India great harm, and a lack of generosity regarding almost everyone else, who had never done a single harmful thing to India" (77). Despite living together and sharing the same space of melancholy and misery, he prejudiced other ethnicities and

disdained people who came from the third world nations. The instinctual desire to relate to the dominant culture had found a new victim in Biju.

The illegal migrants like Biju, Saeed Saeed, and many others harbour dream of holding a green card and struggle to accumulate unprecedented wealth by working in pathetic conditions. Another irony was that he came without a green card but he could not leave without it. “To leave he wanted a green card. This was absurdity. How he desired the triumphant After The Green Card Return Home, thirst for it – to be able to buy a ticket with the air of someone who could return if he wished, or not, if he didn’t wish [....]” (99). The destiny of illegal migrants was such that many died illegal in America even without meeting their families. Biju becomes the emblematic persona for the illegitimate and unlawful immigrant. Another fact about the illegal migrants is that they do not have fixed place to stay. The diasporas are like ‘migratory birds’. They are “strangers from elsewhere who, without a sense of belonging, never feel at home in a new country yet unable to return to their homeland” (Zhang 2008: 9-10). They unceasingly change places, jobs, and relationships from one to another and the connection that they form is always transient. Due to the multiple relationships within the cross-cultural space, they do not occupy any singular space. Saeed found another relationship, another job, and left. Biju by now figured out that:

You lived intensely with others, only to have them disappear overnight, since the shadow class was condemned to movement. The men left for other jobs, towns, got deported, returned home, changed names. Sometimes someone came popping around a corner again, or on the subway, then vanished again. Addresses, phone numbers did not hold. The emptiness Biju felt returned to him over and over, until eventually he made sure not to let friendships sink deep anymore. (102)

Biju could not endure the perpetual struggle in the U.S. and “couldn’t help but feel a flash of anger at his father for sending him alone to this country, but he knew he wouldn’t have forgiven his father for not trying to send him, either” (82). The pangs of living a lonely life with the flickering hope of becoming part of American dreams make Biju encounter the grimy side of the false opportunities that this global village is promising. On the other hand, his father who is not conscious of his son’s predicaments is dreaming of going to America and without his son’s knowledge, he promises each person in Kalimpong that his son will take them to America. The preference of the U.S. over England is also highlighted when Biju’s father tells Mrs, Sen that ““Best country in the world. All these people who went to England are now feeling sorry [...]” (85). Achootan, a fellow dishwasher of Biju also exclaims that ““...at least this country is better than England’. ‘At least they have some hypocrisy here. They believe they are good people and you get some relief. There they shout at you openly on the street, ‘Go back to where you came from’ ” (134-135). Indeed, as Narendra Khandait says:

Desai has handled this American dream part most astutely. She first projects America as the most preferred destination for the jobless youth from the Third World countries. This, on the one hand, could be seen as an acknowledgement of America’s success in selling its dream to the world and, on the other, could also be a critique on American policy of exploiting the poor countries for cheap labour. (2008: 174)

The repositioning process had confounded Biju. The uncertainty of life had engrossed him. He came to the U.S. just like other illegal migrants. He lied to the visa office about his family, his bank accounts, and that he was going as a tourist. When he got visa, a man proclaimed him, “You are the luckiest boy in the whole world” (187). His condition after three years from the day he

received his visa was that in the Gandhi Café, “luckiest boy in the whole world skidded on some rotten spinach in Harish-Harry’s kitchen...and fell with a loud popping sound. It was his knee. He couldn’t get up” (187). He remained unattended by anybody for it was his responsibility. Harish-Harry who hired him with no papers and treated him like his son had rebuked him for repaying him by adding burden to him. He exploited his employees by allowing them to stay rent-free and giving them less money. He even refused to call the doctor. The pretense of Harish-Harry was exposed. In a volcanic explosion in his physical pain, Biju lambasted him and said, ““Without us living like pigs’... ‘What business would you have? This is how you make your money, paying us nothing because you know we can’t do anything, making us work day and night because we are illegal. Why don’t you sponsor us for green cards?’” (188). Biju knew his fate and millions like him were shamed and lost in the despondency of leading a productive life in America where everything was devoid of a horizon with skyscrapers and buildings but no place for human emotions.

America is a dream destination for many underprivileged classes with the strongest democracy and high standard of living. Behind this veil of prosperous nation is the existence of the poor mostly the coloured people who suffer the worst forms of injustice. While trying to live his American dream with so much trouble, Biju was reminded of his mistake for leaving India when he overheard two businessmen discussing the prospect of Asia. The businessmen said to each other, ““It’s opening up, new frontier, millions of potential consumers, big buying power in the middle classes, China, India, potential for cigarettes, diapers, Kentucky Fried, life insurance, water management, cell phones...this country is done, Europe done, Latin America done...Asia is the next frontier...” (136). The shifting of power structure from England to the United States and then to the emergent of Asia as another super power is also highlighted by the writer.

Biju's problem worsened each day with each revelation. He had seen people thriving in front of his eyes relocating the recipient culture by changing their traditions. He had noticed the Indians eating beef in defiance of their customs. He had a glimpse of turning holy cow into unholy cow in order to survive. He had also encountered people who did not give up their religions, the principles of their parents, no matter what. Job or no job they stuck to their dignity. He had seen myriad of characters that confused him more and more. Biju left another restaurant "as a new person, a man full to the brim with a wish to live within a narrow purity" (137). Some like Harish-Harry (two names or hyphenated name) whose personality indicated a deep rift with his constant change in attitude towards his fellow Indians and white patrons. The situation was that:

... it wasn't just Harish-Harry. Confusion was rampant among the '*haalf n haf*' crowd, the Indian students coming in with American friends, one accent one side of the mouth, another the other side; muddling it up, wobbling then, downgrading sometimes all the way to Hindi to show one another: Who? No, no, it was not they pretending to be other than who and what they are. They weren't the ones turning their back on the greatest culture the world has ever seen [...]... And the romances – the Indian-White combination, in particular, was a special problem. (148).

The hyphenated people are struggling hard to become like Americans and at the same time Indians pretending to be preserving both the values. Everything is in muddle and Biju sees no purity and clarity in anything.

Biju understood by now that he belonged to "a shadow class" (102) of illegal immigrants who spent most of their time in search of a better life away

from family. They were living in a place where they aspired to become something big, where relationship was made and unmade, where people disowned their own people overnight, where men left jobs and were condemned to live in a low condition. He met people with different values holding varied opinions regarding the homeland and the hostland. Harish-Harry stuck to the Indian values – called his café as Gandhi café, expected his daughter to behave like an Indian girl, made donations for the cow shelters, etc. Another fellow Rajnibhai, a Gujarati, acculturated into the American culture perfectly. Each one of them had to suffer from different crisis. Among the hybridized immigrants, who were adulterated by the interaction of cultures and varied people, Biju lost himself in the crowd. The mounting anger of finding no stability and the fruitless struggle for green card makes Biju more susceptible. The class distinction between the illegal migrant and the green card holders becomes more poignant and evident. Thus:

All the NRIs holding their green cards and passports, looked complacent and civilized... Fortune piled on more good fortune. They had more money and because they had more money, they would get more money. It was easy for them to stand in line, and they stood patiently, displaying how they didn't have to fight anymore; their manners proved just how well taken care of they were. (298)

When the news of violence in Kalimpong reached him through Mr. Iype, the newsagent, he had made up his mind to leave New York for he knew if he continued his life in New York, he might never get to see his father alive. He knew it always “happened all the time; ten years passed, fifteen, the telegram arrived, or the phone call, the parent was gone and the child was too late. Or they returned and found they'd missed the entire last quarter of a lifetime, their parents like photograph negatives” (233). These are the

tragedies faced by the migrants. After some time people, become used to its absence. Biju could not endure the lifelong separation from his father, friends, home, cyclical journey of hardship, danger, deterioration, and physical pain.

Finally, regardless of Mr. Kakkar's advice not to leave New York, Biju decided to return home. When he reached India, he could feel everything shifting. Suddenly "the enormous anxiety of being a foreigner ebbing—that unbearable arrogance and shame of the immigrant" (300) was lessened by the feeling of a sense of belongingness at home. However, this gratifying experience of being at home was soon turned into horrendous experience where he was greeted by the political commotions that had gripped Kalimpong. Nobody paid attention to him and he was almost non-existent to anybody. On his way to Kalimpong, he remembered how his father hatched a plot to send him to America and how he followed his instruction in his innocence. He pondered, "What could his father have known? This way of leaving your family for work condemned them over several generations to have their hearts always in other places, their minds thinking about people elsewhere; they could never be in a single existence at one time" (311).

The homecoming of migrants is to face a mixture of falsehood and deception that is full of shame and embarrassment. Biju's heart-rending description of sufferings followed him to Kalimpong when the men robbed him of his material possession one by one leaving him uncovered and unprotected, an exotic version of him standing stark naked in the false splendour of American dream which indeed stripped him of his identity and belongingness. "He's come from America. How can he go and see his family naked?" (317). On the part of Biju, the futility of living a life of illegal migrant makes him realize his blunder of living an American dream. "Darkness fell and he sat right in the middle of the path—without his baggage, without his savings, worst of all, without his pride. Back from America with

far less than he'd ever had" (317). Infused with the national spirit Biju returned home after a laborious attempt. His own journey to Cho Oyu was full of pathos as he was deprived of all his belongings. His tattered clothes reminded him of his own fate which left him with nothing. To end with, he is homeless and of poorer quality than before he left the country to chase the American vision.

Thus, Kiran Desai has effectively attempted to capture the pain of exile, loss of home, culture and identity, the postcolonial ambivalence, the loss of human values in the conflict-torn area, the disenchantment of pursuing the American dream, poverty, economic disparity, bitterness of home-coming, and failure of multicultural society. Through the narrative it is learnt that Jemubhai, Biju, and to some extent Gyan and his ancestors encounter the same struggle, incertitude, humiliation, identity crisis, and loneliness. They are in pursuit of their dreams and aspirations which are lost due to their exposure to two contrasting cultures. They are lost in the translational phase and they are trapped in-between cultures. They fail to get themselves absorbed in any culture. Jemubhai, Biju, Gyan, and the other hordes of characters are confined to the process of swift modernity and their histories are cohered to renegotiate their identities, finding new connotation of life which compels them to live a life of dejection, seclusion, and estrangement mentally, socially, and physically. Through this novel, it is learned that immigration is not only the western issue but it is true of every nation and every place.

II

Displaced Male Migrants in *Interpreter of Maladies*

The *Interpreter of Maladies* is the first collection of short stories by Jhumpa Lahiri. It consists of nine stories out of which only five will be taken up for discussion in this section. "A Temporary Matter", "When Mr. Pirzada Came

to Dine”, “Interpreter of Maladies”, “This Blessed House”, and “Third and Final Continent” encapsulate the riveting narratives of displaced male migrants. This collection will give an insight into some of the poignant truths about the immigrant men and how they survive the estrangement without showing their emotional agony to their female counterparts. It unravels the conflict in cultural identification, the accord between two ethnic groups, the formation of associative lives, and the fulfillment of dream by overcoming the hindrances in the adoptive nation. The title story “Interpreter of Maladies” shows how a native attempts to interpret the maladies of the NRI couple during their short sojourn to their birthplace.

Shukumar in the first story, “A Temporary Matter”, in the collection of *Interpreter of Maladies* is the second-generation migrant. Shukumar had not had many remembrances of his association with India. He preferred sailing camp or scooping ice cream during his summer break instead of accompanying his parents to Calcutta. He had not spent much time in India as his parents who settled in New Hampshire used to go there without him. He said:

It wasn't until after his father died, in his last year of college, that the country began to interest him, and he studied its history from course books as if it were any other subject. He wished now that he had his own childhood story of India. (12)

However, it was only a fascination and his sense of association with his original root remained hidden inside the history books. His affiliation to his roots was nothing more than a child who seemed to be amused by the adventurous fairy tales that he heard as a child. He wished to possess those fairy tales and wanted to keep them inside his closet to claim those books, and when time came he would show and display them to others. Thus, his yearning for home is to create an imaginary and adventurous tale to narrate it

to others to boost his culture but not to live with it. He could no longer claim the past traditions and customs that were buried deep with the death of his father who acted as the only link to the homeland.

After Shukumar's parents, Shoba (his wife) was the only person whom he could call his own and his only connection to his roots. When Shukumar got married, he was living a student life, a research scholar who had been working at home to complete his dissertation on agrarian revolts in India. When his wife was pregnant, he was only thirty-five and to become a father at such juncture was the last thing that he had on his mind. He was jobless and he was dependent on Shoba and did cleaning, cooking, and washing when Shoba worked extra hours to support him. The biggest fear he had was that Shoba "didn't respect him for being thirty-five and still a student" (16). In that state of dependency, to welcome a child in his life was unimaginable. However, he accepted the reality of parenthood and was eager to welcome the new member. They were leading a happy life until the death of their baby which altogether shook their belief and trust in each other. Shukumar was at an academic conference in Baltimore when Shoba went into labour, three weeks before her due date. He did not want to go but she insisted. It was that incidence that became a cause of disagreement for life. When she went into labour he was supposed to be by her side, but fate had other plan for them. "Each time he thought of that moment, the last moment he saw Shoba pregnant, it was the cab he remembered most..." (3). He was at the convention when the staff handed him a telephone number but he knew it was from the hospital. "When he returned to Boston it was over. The baby had been born dead" (3). The birth of the child might perhaps revitalize their connection to native culture. With the death of their child, not only was their relationship ruined but their only expectation of retaining the ritualistic customs also came to an end.

Although the setback they suffered was quite normal, it was their relationship and trust for each other that had been weakened. The independent life that they were leading did not prepare them for such disaster in life. Instead of bridging the gap they had “become experts at avoiding each other in their three-bedroom house, spending as much time on separate floors as possible” (4). The problem with them was not the mourning over the loss of child in the actual sense but the real predicament was their inability to adapt themselves to the American culture. It was due to the influence of this culture that had deteriorated their relationship. The failed marriage was not a new thing in the alien culture. The stability that had to be there in their relationship had loosened.

The five days without electricity for one hour every day brought enlightenment to the things which they had lost and were about to lose in their lives. The exchange of confessions in the darkness could symbolically be viewed as their sub-conscious state or desire – the desire to claim the truth about their fragmented lives or the truth about the life-long struggle awaiting their future. With every confession that they exchanged when the lights were off, they drifted apart. They disclosed each other’s secrets and disappointments every night. From their conversation, it was clear that they were adjusting themselves to each other’s lives. “Somehow, without saying anything, it had turned into this. Into an exchange of confessions – the little ways they’d hurt or disappointed each other and themselves” (18). When the light came, it was time to know the reality. Shoba declared, “I’ve been looking for an apartment and I’ve found one” (21). Apparently, Shukumar was convinced that she wanted to live separately and it had appalled Shukumar, “knowing that she has spent these past evenings preparing for a life without him” (21). They had never admitted the apprehensions but the way they dealt with the tragedy in their life showed that they could no longer find solace in

the American space. The anxiety of being part of an advanced culture could not provide them with the consolation and comfort which they were yearning for.

Shukumar was blamed for all the misfortunes in their marriage. It was he, who had given shock to his wife. He said he had arrived early enough to hold his baby before they cremated him. He revealed the secret that he had sworn he would never tell. He disclosed, "Our baby was a boy, His skin was more red than brown. He had black hair on his head. He weighed almost five pounds" (22). Shukumar was suffering silently along with Shoba but nobody understood his afflictions not even his wife. He struggled hard to do things that interested Shoba. He tried to amuse her, cooked the food that she loved, and did everything but what he got was a long pause from his wife. Eventually, he gave up everything and "he learned not to mind the silences" (12). The marriage, love, sharing, and bonding became temporary for them. Their bonding had never been strong and they could not stand the test of life. Such things are evident in the life of second generation. Nothing is permanent for them. He promised himself that he would never divulge the truth to Shoba out of his love and respect for her but ultimately he revealed it. Shoba realized her fault and she "had turned the lights off" (22). Finally, they "wept together, for the things they now knew" (22) but it was too late for Shoba to reconsider her decision. Shukumar's love was never reciprocated and not only did he lose his wife but also his baby. Besides, he bore the blame of their failed relationship.

The next story "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine" goes back and forth to the memories of the past and the present day. Mr. Pirzada was seen as a man who used to come at Lilia's place (the narrator) with the hope of ascertaining the life or death of his family. Mr. Pirzada left his wife and seven daughters behind at Dacca, Bangladesh. It was a time when a civil war

between India and Pakistan was going to break out. He was in America for a year as he was awarded a grant from the Pakistan government to study the foliage of New England. From his features, Mr. Pirzada resembled any Asian. He lived in a graduate dormitory and did not own proper stove or television set because he came to America for study. He used to come to Lilia's place to have meals, and watched TV for the evening news like any other Indian acquaintances. Lilia observed that her parents had the habit of searching for people belonging to similar communities who lived the same life just like them. She noticed that:

In search of their compatriots, they used to trail their fingers, at the start of each new semester, through the columns of the university directory, circling surnames familiar to their part of the world. It was in this manner that they discovered Mr. Pirzada, and phoned him, and invited him to our home. (24)

However, it is also a reality that cultural identity at the exterior level does not dissolve the heterogeneity that is embedded in the shared identity. When reality strikes, it breaks down the whole concept of secular life. History interweaves with the geographical boundary that intertwines the human emotions but at the same time exposes the demarcation between two ethnicities. It is also a fact that two different cultures have little or no resemblance in ideology, religion, and societal system. In spite of erasing the geographical borders in the shared way of life, the relationship of immigrants shows evidence of loyalty issues towards their homelands. Sharing the same social space does not necessarily approve one of belonging to the same culture. For fear of vilification from the dominant culture, they believe it obligatory to connect themselves to show their solidarity. As marginalized identities cannot attain their aspirations in the host countries without altering the dominant culture, they form a communal identity or a strong cultural force

to stand against any form of discriminations. Even with the collective consciousness, the particular diasporic group may significantly vary in terms of race, habits, customs, gender, class, or ethnicity. And this cultural gap has become more evident when Lilia's father said, " 'Mr. Pirzada is no longer considered Indian' ... 'Not since Partition. Our country was divided. 1947' ... Hindus here, Muslims there" (25). What Lilia's parents and Mr. Pirzada had shared were the memory, history of partition, collective identity of coming from the same continent, yearnings for home, dreams of return, etc. To the second-generation child like Lilia such disclosures crumbled the very idea of ethnic consciousness and active associative life which her parents had endorsed throughout their stay in the adopted country. Lilia's father insisted her on knowing the difference and he led her to a map of the world to understand it. All the make believe stories of collective ethnic consciousness on the basis of identicalness of cultural elements constructed a suspicious attitude to what her parents had preached throughout. Lilia cogitated:

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

Their difference exposes the struggle that exists within the varied ethnic groups that further reveal the invisible group boundaries that are visible only on the map. The borders and boundaries that are necessary for the formation

of a sovereign nation are quite evident on the map thereby altering the transnational relationships that are based more on the blurring and crossing of nation-state borders. It shows the cartographies are not blurred but rather existed in a very clear manner in the human minds. Lilia's father trailed his fingers across the Atlantic map to show the lines that demarcated one nation from another. As Lilia said, "Various cities had been circled with lines drawn between them to indicate my parents' travels, and the place of their birth, Calcutta, was signified by a small silver star" (26). Personal feelings are removed when a situation creates a rift within the political ideologies involving two countries. Man could not divide the culture but clash in the political relations did sever the relationships for no man could compromise the historical past. The fissure in ideologies is evident from Lilia's father's statement, "Mr. Pirzada is Bengali, but he is a Muslim Therefore he lives in East Pakistan, not India.... As you see, Lilia it is different country, a different colour..." and that "Pakistan was yellow not orange" (26). Lilia's parents do not wish to pollute the sanctity of their belongingness to the Indian race and thus would like to maintain the cultural and political territories that are different from the place of Mr. Pirzada's origin. They come into contact with different people whom they resemble exclusively based on their features but as far as their ethnicity is concerned, they make it sure not to get away from any specificity of their edifying practices or legacies. Thus, Indira Nityanandam presumes:

There is a palpable conflict between political ideology which insists on the disparateness of two countries, on the fact of Partition, and the tangle of feelings and relationships of being one. (2005: 32)

When the Indo-Pakistan war broke out, Lilia's parents and Mr. Pirzada were worried about their respective families back home. War was declared on

December 4, 1971. During those twelve days of war, Lilia was not asked to watch the news, Mr. Pirzada no longer brought candy for her, and her mother refused to serve anything. Lilia could feel the commotion and observed that:

... my parents called our relatives in Calcutta to learn more details about the situation. Most of all I remember the three of them operating during that time as if they were a single person, sharing a single meal, a single body, a single silence, and single fear. (41)

They were bonded emotionally due to the traumatic journeys they undertook as migrants. In January, Mr. Pirzada left for Dacca to see what was left of the war. He, who did not want to accept the ‘thank you’ words, now understood the meaning these words conveyed. He thanked Lilia’s parents for their hospitality in his letter. On one occasion in the story when Lilia said ‘thank you’ for giving her peppermint lollipop, he had demanded why people said ‘thank you’ in every point of time. He might be perturbed by such words as it made him a stranger. He believed that we did not say ‘thank you’ to our own people. Being an outsider himself, such gesture constantly reminded him of his otherness. Nevertheless, at the end he realized his sense of outsidership in the life of Lilia’s family as well as in America. He pondered, “If I am buried in this country I will be thanked no doubt, at my funeral” (29). Thanking him for being part of Lilia’s family and the culture that he could never call his own. Eventually he returned and united with his family. Several months later, Lilia’s parents received a card commemorating the Muslim New Year from Mr. Pirzada in which he wrote he was united “with his wife, children. All were well, having survived the events of the past year at an estate belonging to his wife’s grandparents in the mountains of Shillong” (41-42).

The story of Mr. Kapasi in “Interpreter of Maladies” is about a tourist guide who also happens to be an interpreter in the doctor’s office. He became

the interpreter accidentally when his first son contracted typhoid at the age of seven. He knew his wife had little regard for his career as the interpreter because it reminded her of the son she had lost. His job was to interpret the maladies of patients who could not communicate due to language barrier but when he was expected to interpret a human emotional malady then his job of interpreter became difficult. That is what has happened to Mr. Kapasi. In one of his tours, he met an affluent NRI couple on a visit to India. Hailing from New Brunswick, New Jersey, Mr. and Mrs. Das, who were on the mission of reclaiming their roots, found a tour guide in Mr. Kapasi to whom they turned for an interpretation of their own culture. Mr. Kapasi noticed that Mr. and Mrs. Das's rite of passage to India was nothing more than a superficial trip. He could easily perceive that the couple was caught between the Indian-American cultural elements. There was nothing new to recount their actual presence to their offspring as they knew nothing about their roots.

While encountering the homeland that was almost equivalent to non-existent as the roots never sprouted, their life suffocated in the ambience that was familiar yet not identifiable. The roots attracted them and at the same time distanced from them. This pull and push action kept them attached to their roots. The maladies began while on their way to see the Sun Temple at Konarak. To Mr Kapasi, "The family looked Indian but dressed as foreigners did, the children in stiff, brightly coloured and caps with translucent visors" (44). Though Mr. Kapasi had guided many tourists, the Das family was little abnormal. He was cleared about one thing that they were Indian in their physical attributes but were tintured with the American behaviour. When Mr. Kapasi had pressed his palms together in greeting which was the Indian custom, Mr. Das squeezed hands like an American. They appeared as if they had been to India for the first time and they explored it with the help of guide books. From Mr. Das, he came to know that they (Raj and Mina) were born and raised in America. Mr. Das announced with an air of sudden confidence,

“Oh, Mina and I were both born in America”, and were “Born and raised. He said, “This is Tina’s first trip to India ...” (45) but it seemed they were in India for the first time just like their daughter, Tina. Mr. Kapasi noticed the incompatibility of the family. To him, “Mr. And Mrs. Das behaved like an older brother and sister, not parents. It seemed that they were in charge of the children only for the day; it was hard to believe they were regularly responsible for anything other than themselves” (49). Looking from the outsider’s point of view such casualness of relationship is never acceptable to the Indian culture thus alienating Mr. and Mrs. Das from the Indian frame.

Mrs. Das admired Mr. Kapasi’s profession and told him that to be an interpreter was “so romantic” (50) but “to him it was a thankless occupation. He found nothing noble in interpreting people’s maladies ...” (51). Romantic here could also connote the romanticized version of India. Mrs. Das’s curiosities over Kapasi’s life and the topless sculptors of the Sun Temple romanticized the beauty of India. Kapasi said, “She had also used the word “romantic”. Monika Fludernik comments:

The exotic orientalist cliché of India comes to serve as a substitute for expatriates’ real experience of their home country...Expatriates are therefore caught in a web of false images of India since the experience of the source has been lost to them. (2005: 79)

The expatriates end up giving an orientalist account of their home country and could not remove themselves from the West and the orientalist discourse it imposes on them and their culture. This leads “to a schizophrenia of sorts” which often unsettles their stands towards homeland and hostland (*ibid*: 79). As Mr. Das and Mrs. Das did not have any access to the real India they were in awe with everything that they saw or came across in their journey.

In the story “Interpreter of Maladies”, Jhumpa Lahiri, according to Alessandro Monti, “evokes the act of translation in terms of a failed act of speech, a fantasy of fulfillment and desire that ends however in anxiety and defeat” (2002: 86). When Mina took interest in his life, Mr. Kapasi fantasized being with her discussing their problems. Mr. Kapasi’s fascination showed the orient’s fascination for the occident. However, his act as an interpreter could not interpret the malady of Mrs. Das’s secret about Bobby’s real father. This incident had made Mr. Kapasi re-imagining his role as an interpreter but also shocked as to how Mrs. Das misinterpreted his profession. He felt humiliated by Mrs. Das’s confession. The more insulting was the fact that despite the difference and lack of compatibility Mr. and Mrs. Das were brought together by the sense of hostility and displacement that they both put up at native soil for being outsiders. The truthfulness neither to personal relationship nor to their integrity towards their homeland might not be there but what Mr. Kapasi had discerned was that they were both haunted by their Indian moral sense which was still rooted in traditions. The subsequent generations may be westernized but they are attracted towards everything about Indian to a certain degree, their sense of being seems so fluid and impermanent as their association with both the countries is so shallow that it gives forceful blow at their personal life. Mr. Kapasi’s illusionary relationship with Mrs. Das shows the ineffectiveness of connection between the east and the west which has no meeting point.

The next story “This Blessed House” shows the journey of two immigrants –Sanjeev and Twinkle whose encounter with the edifying relics and remnants of the host nation in their new house brought stupefaction in their lifestyle. Sanjeev has got married to a second-generation immigrant, Twinkle. They have met only four months before their marriage. Twinkle’s parents live in California and his parents are still in Calcutta. They are old friends and across the boundaries, they have arranged the marriage for their

children. At twenty-seven, Twinkle has been abandoned by an American boyfriend due to which she accepts Sanjeev's proposal. Sanjeev, on the other hand, is a lonely man with a generous income and has never been in love. They get married in India in the midst of hundreds of well-wishers whom Sanjeev hardly knows. After his graduation, he moves from Boston to Connecticut to work for a firm near Hartford. He is a successful businessman, and "at thirty-three he had a secretary of his own and a dozen people working under his supervision..." (138). He signifies those immigrants who have migrated and lived a prospective life in America. When his wife starts discovering Christian devotional items in their new house, Sanjeev is not thrilled like his wife but rather puzzled by the taste of his wife. Those relics mean nothing to him but something to his Americanized wife. The sight of those artifacts irritates him. When Twinkle finds a watercolour poster of Christ and insists on putting it up on the wall, Sanjeev flatly rejects it saying, " 'Now, look, I will tolerate, for now, your little biblical menagerie in the living room. But I refuse to have this' " (139). He protests all the Christian paraphernalia that engulfs their lives.

Though both of them are Indians – one is hyphenated and another, a first-generation immigrant, their relationship falls apart due to their contrasting upbringings which are marked by divergent cultural inheritances. Their house has all the elements of other culture but nothing of the original culture that Sanjeev as a first generation has longed for. She insists Sanjeev that they should have a statue of Virgin Mary on the lawn like any other American households. Sanjeev keeps on reminding her that they are not Christians. He realizes that "he was getting nowhere with her, with this woman whom he had known for only four months and whom he had married, this woman with whom he now shared his life" (146). His proclivity towards his ethnic roots incapacitates him to acculturate easily to the material culture of the acquired country unlike his wife whose connection to the American

culture is more prominent. Twinkle's powerlessness to disassociate herself from the Christian artifacts frustrates Sanjeev. When he removes the Virgin Mary from the lawn, Twinkle resists as if a significant element of her life is being separated from her. "In the end they settled on a compromise: the statue would be placed in a recess at the side of the house, so that it wasn't obvious to passerby, but was still clearly visible to all who came" (149-150).

Sanjeev's affirmative gesture to keep the Christian relics signals the adjustment he is to make with the American culture if he wants to continue to exist there. There is no physical evidence of the cultural objects and artifacts of his original country in his house. Despite abhorring the material infringement of other culture, his house is crammed with the antics of the new culture thus people who have come for his housewarming party have asked him whether they are Christians. But in fact he never wishes to accept the material culture including the ideas, objects, and symbols of the adoptive country. Consequently, he even thinks of sweeping "Twinkle's menagerie into a garbage bag and get in the car and drive it all to the dump, and tear down the poster of weeping Jesus, and take a hammer to the Virgin Mary while he was at it" (155). The presence of these religious symbols somehow appears to erase his cultural identity.

Living in a country by leaving one's home country is to make a series of compromises and adjustment. Sanjeev is torn and caught between the values of a traditional home culture and an existing one. In spite of living in another culture, his adaptability to the dominant culture is fragile. However, at the end of the story he is no longer able to resist the intrusion of other cultural elements and has to accept them to be part of his cultural identity. He compromises with Twinkle and agrees to display a solid silver bust of Christ on the mantel. Such a life of the immigrants is seen against a continual process of acculturation and assimilation. When absorption takes place

accepting the dominant culture, the other group dissolves itself and becomes part of the mainstream culture. Sanjeev unwillingly melts his identity accommodating the western culture that has encroached on his space in the form of Christian objects.

The last story in the collection “The Third and Final Continent” allegorizes the transition of an immigrant’s life from the preliminary restraints to the assimilation. It is a narrative of an immigrant/ narrator’s association with the two cultures that have contrasting value systems and also of his successful assimilated life in the hostland. The narrator left India in 1964 with a certificate in commerce and the equivalent. He belonged to the second phase of Indian diaspora who left voluntarily. His first destination was England where he lived in North London, in Finsbury Park with some penniless Bengali bachelors. He worked in the library along with his studies. He shared his single room with his fellow Indians and many of them moved out every now and then to live with some women whom their families have arranged for them. The narrator was thirty-six years old when his family had arranged his marriage. During that time, he got a full time job in America and his salary was enough to support his wife. He came back to Calcutta to attend his wedding and after that, he flew to Boston to join his new job leaving his wife. He spent his first night at the YMCA in Central Square, Cambridge to save money. During his journey, he noticed that the British lifestyle was quite different from the American life though to the third world natives of both cultures were identical.

It is an expedition of knowing the particulars of American traditions as the narrator on his flight to Boston in America discovers that “Americans drove on the right side of the road, not the left side and that they called a lift an elevator and an engaged phone busy” (174). Even the simple chore like buying milk was new to him. In London, he said, “we’d had bottle delivered

each morning to our door” (175). He had cornflakes and milk for breakfast in the morning, and at night, he ate some bananas. He started searching for an accommodation because after a short time his wife would join him once her passport and green card were ready. Finally, he found a room in Mrs. Croft’s house and stayed there for six weeks before his wife arrived. In his first meeting with Mrs. Croft, he was forced to accept the American achievement in the world in a rather strange way. Mrs. Croft said, ‘A flag on the moon, boy! I heard it on the radio! Isn’t that splendid’ (179). When the narrator answered in affirmation, Mrs. Croft was not pleased with the answer and forced him to say ‘splendid’. The narrator said:

I was both baffled and somewhat insulted by the request. It reminded me of the way I was taught multiplication tables as a child, repeating after the master, sitting cross-legged... It also reminded me of my wedding, when I had repeated endless Sanskrit verses after the priest, verses I barely understood....
(179-180)

It became his routine to say ‘splendid’ whenever Mrs. Croft asked about the American flag. As the story progressed, it became the narrator’s habit to sit on the bench near his landlady. He bonded very well with her and he was the first boarder whom Mrs. Croft called a gentleman. The narrator sympathized Mrs. Croft’s situation for in her late nineties she was living alone. He was attached to Mrs. Croft more than before and started doing the things which made her happy like giving her rent in time, checking on her whether she sat upright or not, and so forth. These were the only gestures which he could do for her as he was not her son and he said “apart from those eight dollars, I owed her nothing” (189). He would always remember her, as she was the one who helped him in his adaptation phase in America even though she did not help him of her own accord.

Another dilemma for the narrator was the adjustment that he had to make with his wife Mala when she arrived. He hardly knew Mala and they had spent only a couple of days in each other's company after the wedding. He expressed that:

I regarded her arrival as I would the arrival of a coming month, or a season – something inevitable, but meaningless at the time. So little did I know her that, while details of her face sometimes rose to my memory, I could not conjure up the whole of it.
(189)

He thought it was his obligation to look after her. He could visualize how Mala would survive in the foreign country. It baffled him more when he saw an Indian woman struggling to cross her path and an American woman who walked quickly crossing the path. He could see the clear difference, thus, he said, "Such a mishap, I realized that morning would soon be my concern. It was my duty to take care of Mala, to welcome her and protect her" (190). After the arrival of Mala, he shifted to a furnished house leaving Mrs. Croft's place. He was accustomed to everything like having cornflakes with milk, talking to Helen (Mrs. Croft's daughter), and sitting on the bench with Mrs. Croft. He was not used to coming home to an apartment that smelled of steamed rice, finding the cleaned bathroom with two toothbrushes lying side by side, a cake of Pears soap from India, the fragrance of coconut oil, the sound of bangles, and so on. Regardless of eeriness, he knew in his heart that one day her death would affect him and his would affect her. Mala was the one who consoled him when he was mourning the death of Mrs. Croft.

This story is a complete voyage of a migrant from a third world country to the first world country. The integration requires the participation of the migrants. As Sheffer has said:

The integration process involves adaptation by the migrants who have rights and responsibilities in relation to their hostland. It involves, of course, the hostland society and government, which should create the proper opportunities for the migrants' full cultural, social, political, and economic participation. (11: 2010)

As the narrator and his family have integrated into the American culture, they have been provided with the rights, the opportunities, and the economic assistance in protection of their lives in the hostland. The arrival, settlement, going through the process of parenthood, and later reconciliation of the past, present, and future are portrayed through the lives of the narrator and his wife. As they have acculturated completely, they get the security from the host government and now the narrator admits blissfully that:

We are American citizens now, so that we can collect social security when it is time.... We have a son who attends Harvard University. Mala no longer drapes the end of her sari over her head, or weeps at night for her parents, but occasionally she weeps for our son. So we drive to Cambridge to visit him, or bring him for home for weekend, so that he can eat rice with us with his hands, and speak in Bengali, things we sometimes worry he will no longer do after we die. (197)

The narrator could see the same ambition in his son's eyes. He will be a graduate after a few years and pave his way unaided and unprotected. This is a sign of an independent child which is quite normal in America. However, the narrator reminds himself that his son "has a father who is still living, a mother who is happy and strong. Whenever he is discouraged, I tell him that if I can survive on three continents, then there is no obstacle he cannot conquer" (197-

198). The narrator is sometimes bewildered at his achievements of living in a new world for nearly thirty years, crossing each mile, travelling in different countries, meeting each person, and occupying each room, that are ordinarily extraordinary. He said, “As ordinary as it all appears, there are times when it is beyond my imagination” (198).

Anca Mihaela Dobrinescu rightly puts that the collection *Interpreter of Maladies* makes an effort “to offer an interpretation of the maladies of the contemporary society and of the individual inevitably caught between here and there and yet belonging neither here nor there”. Just like Mr. Kapasi who interprets the maladies of the disoriented Mrs. Das, a migrant woman, Lahiri is in a way an interpreter of nations as well as the interpreter “for the modern individual’s anxieties and torment” (107).

III

Gogol Ganguli in *The Namesake*

Jhumpa Lahiri’s second fiction *The Namesake* (2003) is a novel that endeavours to penetrate into the vexations of diasporic Bengali family through the lives of two generations – Ashoke and Gogol Ganguli. This section will focus on the vagueness of hybrid existence with reference to Gogol Ganguli. Gogol’s father, Ashoke, belonged to the first-generation migrant who migrated to give a prospective life to his children and wife. In one of his train journeys in India, he met Mr. Ghosh, his companion on train, who told him, “Before it’s too late, without thinking too much about it first, pack a pillow and a blanket and see as much of the world as you can. You will not regret it. One day it will be too late” (16). That insinuation was enough to pack his bag and to start his journey to pursue his dream. After his graduation, despite his parents’ disapproval, he came to pursue his engineering. Ashoke Ganguli was a doctoral candidate for electrical engineering at MIT and afterward moved in with his Indian wife, as there was nothing to hang on to India that was

crammed with dirt and filth. Contrary to his wife, Ashima Ganguli who was antipathetic to the new culture, he gave reverence to the new life which endowed him with the optimism for an utopian hope. Once Ashoke got the job, he decided to make permanent home in the United States. Regardless of his sporadic visits to India, he never considered India as his home. He continued to exist between the two concurrent lives balancing both. The itinerary that follows the reorganization and relocation from Calcutta to Boston has been an integral part of the exilic life that the family has lived. His memory of his early life in India was replete with pains of nearly losing his life in a train accident and this train accident was connected to the naming of Gogol's namesake.

The first generation men are the pillars of strength both for their wives and for children. They do not display melodramatic emotions. Their public and private displays of emotions often contradict. The behaviour of men as fathers and husbands gives an insight into the roles of men as the supporter as well as the provider of bread and butter to women and children. They control women and children and do not show their softness in order to balance the home and the outside world. They are the dominant figures in a family. Ashoke Ganguli never exhibited his pains and sufferings even when he was on his dead bed. When he died, he was alone and did not even inform his wife about his illness. He was never seen crying over the loss of his dear ones. He had anticipated such inevitable loss when he left India and such loss was beyond his control. He was always shown as a man of few words and even his gestures and indignations towards his children's behaviours were revealed in an unspoken manner.

Gogol Ganguli suffers the confusion of being born to the Bengali parents and leading a hyphenated life that ruptures his existence. Due to the hybrid space he occupies, his identity formation is never absolute. John

McLeod avers that the hybridization process assists in explaining the subjectivity of a person that is deemed to be “composed from variable sources, different materials, many locations – demolishing forever the idea of subjectivity as stable, single, ‘pure’ ”. The concept of hybridity forming on the diasporic peoples deconstructs the very perception of identity as fixed. It opens the route for a way of thinking which is “beyond exclusionary, fixed, binary notions of identity based on ideas of rootedness and cultural, racial, and national purity”. Hybrid identity, thus, “is never total and complete...they remain perpetually in motion, pursuing errant and unpredictable routes, open to change and reinscription” (2010: 219).

The time when Gogol was born the struggle for existence began. As for name, his parents had decided to let Ashima’s grandmother, who had named each of her other six great-grandchildren, do the honour. As Ashima’s grandmother did not have a telephone, she had sent a letter containing the name. Unfortunately, the letter of Gogol’s great-grandmother was lost in the journey and never arrived. Not only did they lost the letter but also their son’s identity. “Names can wait” (25), said his parents without realizing that name is what identity is in America. Their perception that an infant did not really need a name led to the conflicting identity. Gogol had to endure the conflicting situations between the tradition of home and the hostland that instilled a sense of independence immediately after a child saw the light. They thought they would give a pet name instead of giving a proper name. As they reflected:

In Bengali the word for pet name is *daknam*, meaning literally, the name by which one is called, by friends, family, and other intimates, at home and in other private, unguarded moments. Pet names are a persistent remnant of childhood, a reminder that life is not always so serious, so formal, so complicated. (25-26)

His subsistence was never taken seriously just like his name. Unintentionally his parents made him conscious of his dual personality by giving him a private and public name. “Every pet name is paired with a good name, *a bhalonam*, for identification in the outside world” (26). Gogol has been living two lives since his childhood—one at home that is traditionally bent towards homeland; other, the outside world among his American peers. His father, Ashoke, christened him Gogol after Nikolai Gogol’s book which he was reading on a train in 1961, a page of which he still clutched after a derailment that nearly killed him. However, what his parents failed to comprehend was that it aggravated the already confused individuality of Gogol.

The naming of Gogol is nothing more than a farce. His parents do not approve the fact that he could be named after them which any American parents would do. For them such tradition does not exist for the Bengalis to name a son or a daughter after his/her father or mother. Notwithstanding their integration to the host culture, they are perturbed by its culture. Naming after the parent is considered respect in America but they are perplexed as, “This sign of respect in America and Europe, this symbol of heritage and lineage, would be ridiculed in India. Within Bengali families, individual names are sacred, inviolable. They are not meant to be inherited or shared” (28). Jhumpa Lahiri is also puzzled by the predicaments akin to Gogol. She claims that:

I’m like Gogol in that my pet name inadvertently became my good name. I have two other names on my passport and my birth certificate (my mother couldn’t settle on just one). But when I was enrolled in school the teachers decided that Jhumpa was the easiest of my names to pronounce and that was that.”
(Das 2008 : 179)

When Gogol started going to school he was baffled by his parents' declaration that he would be called Nikhil and instead of being called Gogol he would be called by a new name, a good name. Suddenly he felt dispossessed of his own identity. "He is afraid to be Nikhil, someone he doesn't know. His parents tell him that they each have two names, too, as do all their Bengali friends in America, and all their relatives in Calcutta. It's a part of growing up, they tell him, part of being a Bengali" (57). Although he was known as Gogol out of his preference at school, the vagueness of his name confounded him. Identity consists of one's self construction but also the outcome of what communities enforce on one as customs and his inescapable connection with his associative life with people having similar backgrounds. Without the imprint of a community, his sense of self goes baffling. Lahiri writes:

He hates that his name is both absurd and obscure, that it has nothing to do with who he is, that it is neither Indian nor American but of all things Russian. He hates having to live with it... 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. (76)

Constant inquiries about his name displeased him. He felt that it was a forced name, a forced identity. He could sense the rootlessness of his self. He became more detached when he heard the story of Nikoloi Gogol who was his namesake. It distressed him and he felt annoyed.

When Gogol is fed up with constant nagging by his peers regarding his name, he decides to change his name into Nikhil again. The renaming of Gogol into Nikhil symbolizes the rebirth or second baptism, a pure integration into an American life devoid of the Russian or the Indian lineage. His parents

who are obsessed with the Bengali culture have objected to his decision to change his name but he sees no harm in it as many American youths change their names and legally “it was a right belonging to every American citizen” (99). As he was an American, he could change the name to intimate his association to the host culture. He thought that he could separate his connection with the place of origin of his parents but the name he chose ultimately sealed his linkage to the Indian roots as “the name, Nikhil, is artfully connected to the old. Not only is it perfectly respectable Bengali good name, meaning he who is entire, encompassing all” (56).

As Nikhil, Gogol cuts off his roots legally but not emotionally and psychologically. However, it gives the freedom to betray the expectations of his parents who have expected him to carry forward the inheritance of the Bengali culture by becoming an engineer, or a doctor, or an economist, or a lawyer because his father has repetitively informed him of the occupations that have earned them protection and admiration. He becomes an architect thus challenging the customs. Though he has transformed into and accommodated himself to an American life, he is pestered by the impediments that:

... the people who now know him as Nikhil have no idea that he used to be Gogol. They know him only in the present, not at all in the past. But after eighteen years of Gogol, two months of Nikhil feel scant, inconsequential. 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 and without warning (105)

He has embraced a new name, a new identity, but he is incapable of acknowledging the new name wholeheartedly as it makes him unacquainted with his own people. He instructs his parents to call him Nikhil in the

presence of his friends but the same truth perturbs him. He experiences a kind of estrangement from his parents as he feels “he is not related to them, not their child” (106). As Nikhil, he starts living the life of an American youth and indulges in dating, sleeping with girls, drinking, going for night outs, going for movies, first kiss, losing virginity, etc. He dated Ruth without his parents’ knowledge and after that his relationship with Maxine ended with his father’s death as he refused to include her in his Bengali community. His effort to absorb into the American way by becoming Nikhil has aborted again when he ends up marrying an Indian woman, Moushumi, who knew him as Gogol through arranged marriage. It further reinforces his connection to the old self.

Gogol’s consciousness of his being an ABCD (American Born Confused *Deshi*) came when he went to attend the conference on Indian novels with one of his cousins, Amit. The panel discussion on identity and marginalizing positions of the immigrants baffled him. He himself was a confused *deshi* as he really did not realize where he stood and where he belonged to. *Deshi* which symbolized countrymen/Indian and *desh* which meant India, his parents would have referred, did not invoke any sense of confusion to him as “he thinks of it as Americans do, as India” (118) meaning thereby he was an American and for him India was another country but not his own. He pondered over certain things that he had failed to understand earlier like:

... he can understand his mother tongue *Bengali* (emphasis added), and speak it more or less, he cannot read or write it with even modest proficiency. On trips to India his American accented English is a source of endless amusement to his relatives... Living with a pet name and a good name, in a place where such distinctions do not exist – surely that was emblematic of the greatest confusion of all. (118)

Despite his Indian lineage, he avoided Indians as they reminded him of his parents' lifestyles. He was unwilling to associate with any Indian organization as he thought it was of "no greater hypocrisy than joining an organization that willingly celebrates occasions his parents forced him, throughout his childhood and adolescence, to attend" (119). His constant attempt to become an untainted American reinforces his sense of being a hyphen i.e. an Asian-American or an Indian-American because of his exposure to two distinctive cultures. Trinh-Minh-ha says:

The becoming Asian-American affirms itself at once as a transient and constant state: one is born over and over again as hyphen rather than a fixed entity, thereby refusing to settle down in one (tubicolous) world or another. The hyphenated condition certainly does not limit itself to a duality between two cultural heritages. (qtd. in Kamala Visweswaran 1994: 119)

The children of immigrants grow up in "vacuum culture". Because of 'their vacuum upbringing', they are very much cognizant of the "relationship between diasporas, ethnicity, the nation-state and of struggle to possess the 'hyphen' ". They struggle to occupy "the space of hyphen...the problematic situating of the self as simultaneously belonging 'here' and 'there'" and "the politics of the hyphen itself is hyphenated because, in the name of empowering people, the classification indeed disempowers them; it makes them, to use a hyphenated term, 'empoweringly-disempowered'" (Mishra 2007: 184-185).

Gogol grows up thinking that he is part of the white people that in the end leads to the harrowing self-discovery, sense of understanding, and identification that brings in counter with the ethnic ways of life. His father's death entangles him deeper in the conflicts as he starts comprehending how it

feels to lose somebody in life, how his parents have been living guilt ridden lives and how they have learned to cope with the guilt of not being able to do anything when their parents have died in India. Until his father's bereavement, he is incapacitated to appreciate the values and customs of the family, but now he is cognizant of "the significance, that it was a Bengali son's duty to shave his head in the wake of parents' death" (179). Unexpectedly, he experiences the pain of losing someone so dear. It is the first time in his life that he has heard the bad news. The rituals that never seem significant to him suddenly engulf him. As a son, he has to observe the same thing that his father used to observe silently at the time of their elders' demise back in India.

Gogol's personal identity is not defined properly due to his name which is neither Indian nor American. His social identity does not evolve due to his failure to be an Indian, a good son, and a good brother and as far as his human identity is concerned, he fails to understand himself. Besides, he cannot establish any relationship with anybody. His identity flickers until the end. He fails to comprehend who he is and how he is going to lead the hyphenated life which makes him a recluse. Thus:

Without people in the world to call him Gogol, no matter how long he himself lives, Gogol Ganguli will, once and for all, vanish from the lips of loved ones, and so, cease to exist. Yet the thought of this eventual demise provides no sense of victory, no solace. It provides no solace at all. (289)

Ultimately, he belongs to nowhere and understands the superficiality of the life he is living. When his mother decides to leave the States and when he has been betrayed by Moushumi, he is flabbergasted by the brevity of relationships and the place called home: the briefness of the place that after some days will be occupied by the strangers. The place that his parents called

home would not even acknowledge their presence and achievement. There would be no traces and evidences of their dwelling. He contemplates his parents' perpetual longing for home. He wonders "how his parents had done it, leaving their respective families behind, seeing them so seldom, dwelling unconnected, in a perpetual sense of expectation, of longing" (281). He becomes apprehensive of his life devoid of his own people. The life that his parents have chosen "in spite of what was missing, with a stamina he fears he does not possess himself" (281). Throughout his life he spends years maintaining distance from his origins that his parents attempt to bridge. Despite his abhorrence, he is bewitched by the quietness of life that his parents once lived. He stands at the threshold of the life that interlaces him to the community and family that he once derides. His discomfiture of his Indian lineage and the failure to disown his inherited roots make him the representative character of hyphenated life of second generation.

IV

Second-Generation Migrants in *Unaccustomed Earth*

Lahiri's third fiction *Unaccustomed Earth* is another collection of short stories which is an extension of the theme of immigrant's experiences. The title *Unaccustomed Earth* conveys dual meanings. Firstly, it is suggestive of the world of first generation immigrants who are now not accustomed to the new world of their children. Secondly, the children who are not familiar with the old culture of their parents occupy the different world. The territory between the parents and children, the "real home" and the "imaginative home", time and space, past and present has widened and become blurred.

The *Unaccustomed Earth* is divided into two parts. The first part of this collection comprises five unrelated stories with independent premise on migrant lives. The second part consists of three intertwined stories of Hema

and Kaushik that will be studied thoroughly in the later part of this section. But before discussing the second section of the collection, the attempt is being made to have a brief glance at all the stories in this collection. The stories in the first part – “Unaccustomed Earth”, “Hell-Heaven”, “A Choice of Accommodations”, “Only Goodness”, and “Nobody’s Business” sparingly demonstrate the description of wide-ranging immigrants through the lived experiences of first and second generations with special concentration on the subsequent generations. With time, the first generations seem to move on with their lives where estrangement, death, loneliness, and loss of roots do not have much impact on them as compared to the time when they first landed on the alien shore.

Ruma’s father in “Unaccustomed Earth” resembled an American in his old age. Like any other transnational people, he does not stay at one place. After the death of his wife, and his retirement, he visited France, Holland, and Italy. At his old age, he contemplated how he turned his back on his parents by settling in America “in the name of ambition and accomplishment, none of which mattered anymore, he had forsaken them” (51). As his children are living independently, he knows he cannot be a burden to them and that is the way how any American family works that is to live separately. He rejected Ruma’s offer to live with her, as he knew “that it was not for his sake that his daughter was asking him to live here. It was for hers” (53). He did not want to be part of “the mess, the feuds, the demands, the energy” which he had overcome over time. He did not want to live at the margins of his daughter’s life. Rather he wanted to move on from his past life that he had tried so hard to forget. He remembered how his children were annoyed and intolerant with him and his wife and sought after their newfound entities disregarding their anticipations. He also reflected the fact that:

The more the children grew, the less they had seemed to resemble either parent – they spoke differently, dressed differently, seemed foreign in every way, from the texture of their hair to the shapes of their feet and hands. (54)

Though he knew that Akash, his grandson, would forget him and treated him like any stranger, he could not sever his blood and strangely, it was Akash to whom he felt he had a direct biological connection. He could see that loss for Ruma as well. He predicted that Ruma's children "would become strangers, avoiding her". He wanted to protect her from that loss and other numerous things. He desperately wanted "to shield her from the deterioration that inevitably took place in the course of marriage, and from the conclusion he sometimes feared it was true: that the entire enterprise of having a family, of putting children on this earth, as gratifying as it sometimes felt, was flawed from the start" (54-55). He too became a stranger to his children. At the end, he chose Mrs. Bagchi's companionship with whom he found solace amidst solitary moments in his trips.

The "Hell-Heaven" follows the story of the Indian immigrant family that befriends another fellow migrant. The second generation Usha narrates the story who witnesses her parents—Aparna and Shyamlal, and their relationship with Pranab Chakraborty who later on drifted apart when he married an American woman. It showed the associative life of Usha's family which was hampered by the infusion of other culture in the form of Deborah which led to the collapse of their collective life. The story "A Choice of Accommodations" shows the journey of Amit, an Indian husband and Megan, an American wife. Amit and Megan went back to Langford Academy, Amit's old school, to attend the wedding of Pam, his old friend. His visits to his old school reminded him of his past life and remembered how his parents went back to India due to his father's growing restless on the faculty of Harvard

Medical School and shifted to Delhi leaving him unaccompanied and unaided amidst the strangers. His journey at Langland was a lonely one and none of his parents attended his graduation ceremony. He married Megan despite his parents' objection and had two daughters, Maya and Monika, who "looked nothing like him, nothing like his family, and in spite of the distance Amit felt from his parents, this fact bothered him, that his mother and father had passed down nothing physically, to his children" (94). Amit realized that apart from their names, they resembled nothing like him. They were in every respect Americans. It was the choice of accommodation that they had made when they had gone for a friend's wedding. However, in actuality it was the choice of existence they had made for them and for their children in America.

The next story "Nobody's Business" reveals the life of Sangeeta alias Sang who was in love with Farouk, but cohabited with her fellow Americans – Paul and Heather. Paul admired Sang secretly but never told her as they belonged to different cultures. Sang did not believe Paul when he told her about Farouk's betrayal with another woman named Deirdre. Nevertheless, Paul stood for her and helped her in the disclosure of Farouk's truth. The last story in the first section "Only Goodness" is a story of Sudha and Rahul who were weighed down by the demands of their parents who expected them to excel like other Bengali children in the foreign soil and the repercussions of such unwarranted demands. Although Sudha could not voice her anger for her parent's constant nagging, Rahul, her brother, was a dissenter who always stood in opposition to his parents. He never helped his parents and considered his parents' separation from India as an opportunity to get rich. Rahul's father who had no patience for failure, for indulgences was not happy with him. Rahul was alcoholic which his parents overlooked. He was perturbed with his life and impositions of his parents who were not acknowledging the fact that their children were suffering internally, as the word like "depression was a foreign word to them, an American thing" (144). They were blind to the

things that plagued their children. They did not know how their children suffered at college among their American peers for their skin colours and features. Rahul's parents were ashamed of Rahul's failure to become a successful man like other Bengali children. He became "what all parents feared, a blot, a failure, someone who was not contributing to the grand circle of accomplishments Bengali children were making across the country, as surgeons or attorneys or scientists, or writing articles for the front page of *The New York Times*" (151).

The second section of this collection discloses the story of Hema and Kaushik and their cyclical journey from being the children of immigrants forming a collective community that consists of their parents and a handful of Bengalis, how Kaushik and Hema met, and later the death of Kaushik. "Once in a Lifetime", "Year's End", and "Going Ashore" collectively form the second part of the collection and concentrate meticulously on the lives of Hema and Kaushik from the time their parents became friends and the breaking down of the familial ties which they had shared in a group. The three connected stories are full of pathos and animosity that are overpowered with the extremity of loss of life, love, and conjoined destinies of two people who have shared childhood, house, and dreadful life.

"Once in a Lifetime" shows the formation of relationship between the two families and the arrival of Kaushik's family after seven years in India. It is narrated by Hema who witnesses the growing fondness of both the families and how she comes to know about Kaushik as a teenager. It is learned that Kaushik's family left Cambridge and returned to India in 1971 forsaking the struggle which many Bengalis had set out only to come back in 1981 which Hema's parents considered "a wavering, a weakness" as they knew that, "they should have known it's impossible to go back" (227-228). Moreover, they thought that the opportunity to have an established life was once in a

lifetime. The chance never came twice. They considered it significant to stick together as immigrants, they should not flee, and if they fled they should have attempted to adhere to their decision and should not come again as it displayed a failure at both ends. The families attached to each other for the simple reason that both the families belonged to the same place and they collectively shared the pain of living an abandoned life. That was enough reason to cling to each other's lives and to bear with the destiny in which their lives were entrenched. The familiar alienation, displacement, the impossibility of return to the homeland along with the enigma of integration process has brought the families together. Despite sharing commonalities, Hema's family called Kaushik's family as acquaintances that confirmed the encumbrance of the forced intimacy which at any cost should be maintained. While they were in Cambridge, Hema and Kaushik grew up like siblings until Kaushik's family left for India. As a child, Hema used to wear the unused clothes of Kaushik that in a way linked their destinies, as Hema could not forget Kaushik because of these bits and pieces that became inseparable parts of her childhood. Fate destined them to meet again when Kaushik's family decided to return.

Upon the return of Kaushik's family in Massachusetts, the families all over again started sharing their associative lives. Kaushik's family requested Hema's family to let them stay in their house until they found an accommodation. That way, Hema had to let go her room to Kaushik who was by now had grown into a man. Hema's mother did not like the way Kaushik's mother behaved, as she was not helping her out in daily chores and she did not like the extravagant visions of Kaushik's family. Despite her parents' complaints, Hema secretly started liking Kaushik and she was the only one who did not mind them staying at her place. Hema and Kaushik further bonded when Kaushik shared the secret of why they left India. He told her that his mother had a breast cancer so they decided to leave India as his

mother was suffocated by the attention from her parents and relatives. She did not want them to see her decline. For the first time in Hema's life, she heard of somebody's dying who was so close to her. She felt betrayed and started hating Kaushik for letting her know the secret. When Kaushik's mother was about to die, they left Hema's house and shifted to a new house on the North shore in Massachusetts. On the other hand, Hema's parents felt humiliated for not confiding anything to them about the disease after doing everything for them. This way, Hema and Kaushik lost contact only to be together again in the last story.

In "Year's End" Kaushik narrates his life after his mother's death and the shifting values of relationship when his father remarried a widow named Chitra with two daughters. He said, "I did not attend my father's wedding. I did not even know there had been a wedding until my father called early one" (252). After the death of his mother, Kaushik drifted apart from his father. He could not come to terms with the death as well as the news of his father's wedding. His emotional thread was closely attached to his mother who turned out to be his only anchor. Kaushik had no control over his destiny and his mother's death aggravated the condition. He had lost the home which he signified with his mother. Both the loss of mother and home (real or imaginary) disarrayed his life.

Freud in his article "Mourning and Melancholia" says, mourning is often taken as "the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on". He adds mourning involves "a painful process that might include psychic denials of the loss of the loved object – dreams or fantasies in which they still live". With time, the loss is accepted and the mourner's psychic emotion is lessened (as qtd. in Thurschell 2000: 89-90). The mourning in the life of immigrants is not only the loss of somebody close to

them rather it covers the loss of home, linkage, ethnicity, etc, that in the course of time is comprehended and reconciled to the realization of the reality that remains the true absence.

All the family members including Kaushik's grandparents were in a state of shock. For Kaushik's grandparents, the departure from home was almost like a death which had no valid time for homecoming. They had already lived in a state of mourning when his parents got married. When Kaushik's mother died, his grandparents believed it to be a momentary loss as they thought it "was only a matter of time and that she would board a plane and walk through the door once again" (253). When Kaushik was overcoming with the loss of his mother, he was informed of his father's remarriage which shattered him all over again. He was forced into a new relationship and a new role in which he was to act as a brother to his step-sisters, and as a step son to his new mother who was closer to his age than his father's. Moreover, the girls had taken his room, the new woman usurped his mother's place, and even his father had given away his mother's stuffs. After his mother was gone, all relationships also were kaput. One last time he remembered Hema when he had stayed at her place which Kaushik said, was "the last place that had felt like a home" (291). It was the house which gave a dim hope to Kaushik that his mother would continue living among her own people who were not even aware of her disease. The second house in which his mother died, had never been able to occupy properly because of the bad memories. At the end, his father decided to sell the house and moved to a less isolated suburb of Boston. On his graduation day, he told Kaushik that " 'We are both moving forward, Kaushik' ... 'New roads to explore' " (293). His father had already moved on with his new life but Kaushik could not forget the past and every space in the house reminded him of his mother's presence. He remained only as a legacy of his mother's existence. He meandered in a meaningless way without knowing which road he had to take. He said:

I had never traveled alone before and I discovered that I liked it. No one in the world knew where I was, no one had the ability to reach me. It was like being dead, my escape allowing me to taste that tremendous power my mother possessed forever. (290)

He ran off from his family in search of his own self. Memories, the old photographs, and his mother's belongings pulled him backward until he buried them in the ground. He cut off his ties from the past and looked forward to new road.

In the final story, "Going Ashore" Hema was engaged to Navin, an Indian, through arrangement but she refused to accept an arranged marriage. She was seen drifting apart from her family and had gone to Rome for her further studies. She lied about the reason for her leaving to Navin and her family but she invented a story that she had a visiting lectureship program at an institute of classical studies. The reason for her flight was her marriage to Navin. She considered it was unacceptable for an American like her to fall into the trap of an arranged marriage like her parents. To the American youth like her, the notion of arranged marriage is "doing something outrageously stupid or thrillingly bold" (313). Even with her unwillingness, she had given in to the pressure as she was touched by the gesture of Navin who treated her like a teenage girl at thirty-seven. At the same time, "she had not had a boyfriend until she was in graduate school, and then she was too old for such measured advances from men" (297). Notwithstanding her continual struggle to resist the family values and norms, she succumbed to the pressure of her family. Later on, due to her "inability, ultimately, to approach middle age without a husband, without children with her parents living now on the other side of the world" (298) forced her to accept Navin. Another reason for accepting Navin was Julian, Hema's lover, who was a married man. Later, she was delusional about her own life with Julian who was not ready to leave his

wife for Hema and Navin, her new found Indian fiancé, so she migrated to Rome that was in a way escape from the past to the freedom of doing anything in the future away from her stuffed Indian environment. She told Julian that she was engaged and told Navin that she was going for an academic purpose that way “she was free of both of them, free of her past and free of her future in a place where so many different times stood cheek by jowl like guests at a crowded party” (299).

It was while she was running away from the past that she met Kaushik again at Edo’s place. Edo was the friend of Giovanna, Hema’s friend. He invited her to have lunch with his family. Edo’s wife Paola, a photo editor, was a colleague of Kaushik. By the time Hema met Kaushik, he was a photojournalist. He wandered in different places covering varied life-threatening events. The demands of his job did not allow him to visit his family thereby permanently disconnecting from his past. He avoided the depressing trips to Massachusetts as he could not see his father’s new life. Through e-mails, he had learned that Rupa (the eldest stepsister) got married to an American and Piu (the youngest) was in a medical school. He never went to meet the family. The photo credit in one of the newsmagazines his father read was the only way through which his father knew the whereabouts of Kaushik.

Kaushik and Hema met each other on the street of Edo’s house. Kaushik instantly recognized Hema. The guests at Edo’s place assumed they were couple due to their familiarity. Hema started remembering all those days that they spent together in the past. However, what Hema failed to see was that she could not dissociate herself easily from her past and social identity. She was running away from the past only to be landed on the lap of the past memories which came vividly in the form of Kaushik.

Individual's every action bears a trace of the past memories. The past is carried forward unknowingly or intentionally into the present. With individuals, one word that determined the present by the past is "habit" and along with that, there are social habits that are embedded in our existence. Sometimes in addition, it seems as if old formations suddenly resurface, uncannily, the past flaring into life (Daring 2005: 52). Hema runs hither and thither searching for a new self but what she cannot comprehend is, the migrants carry with them the past experiences and memories that cannot be cut off. Due to their shared past, Hema and Kaushik instantly clicked together. They came to a strange land and found solace in each other's company even though they had no future.

For the first time in her life, Hema who could not until now decipher the depth of their parents' relationship which bonded over the shared memory, started understanding the significance of the collective memories. She meditated upon their parents who "had liked one another only for the sake of their origins, for the sake of a time and place to which they'd lost access" (315). She was never drawn to a person for that reason until she met Kaushik in Rome. After the meeting, they started going out together. They started recalling the times they had together and how she had shared a special bonding with Kaushik's mother. It was an unspoken words that "if anything it bound them closer together, and Hema knew, without having to be told, that she was the first person he'd ever slept with who'd known his mother, who was able to remember her as he did" (313). And Kaushik also knew that "she was the only person he'd met in his adult life who had any understanding of his past, the only woman he wanted to remain connected to" (326). The simple fact for including Hema in Kaushik's life might be the reminiscences that they had for Kaushik's mother other than that their relationship was superficial as they both knew that they had no future together. Hema was very

clear from the beginning that this relationship would end one day as she was already engaged and Kaushik was always on move. She knew that he would disappear without any notice as she observed, “he lived in a rented room with rented furniture, rented sheets and towels. In the corner his camera bags and tripods were always packed, his passport always in his pocket” (316). Though Kaushik told her not to get married to Navin, he had not also asked her to marry him which Hema thought was an unfair trade. Her own infidelity betrayed her. They got separated and finally she married Navin and led a superfluous life with no residue from the past.

Through Hema and Kaushik, the story takes forward to portray their confounded existence, they meet only to be separated due to the ambivalent nature of their lives which on no account maneuver them to the permanent settlement. Kaushik’s choice of profession that is to become an international photographer taciturnly captures his transnational persona. “As a photographer, his origins were irrelevant. And yet, in Rome, in all of Europe, he was always regarded as an Indian first” (310). Regardless of his reluctance to bond to his earlier life, the remnant could not do away with his origin.

Kaushik becomes a nomad or vagabond who is a traveler always en route to somewhere else but never anywhere in particular. Zygmunt Bauman in “From Pilgrim to Tourist – Or a Short History of Identity” asserts that the vagabond is the bane of early modernity. Vagabonds are so terrifying for “their apparent freedom to move and to escape the net of heretofore locally based control”. He has no set destination. “You do not know where he will move to next, because he himself does not know nor care much”. For a vagabond, each place is a stop-over and he never knows how long he will stay in one place, “... this will depend on the generosity and patience of the residents, but also on news of other places arousing new hopes (the vagabond

is pushed from behind by hopes frustrated, and pulled forward by hopes untested". He further points out, "wherever the vagabond goes, he is a stranger, he can never be 'the native', the 'settled one', one with 'roots in the soil' (too fresh is the memory of his arrival – that is, of his being elsewhere before)" (1996: 28).

Kaushik refuses stability and fixed identity. He is always in transit from one place to other. The journey from one country to another and from one life to another forms a circular movement in his life. He affiliates to many places not align to one place. Liberation from the cultural forces that constantly push and pull his life to varied nations finally gives solace in his own death, a kind of epiphany that a migrant does not have a permanent life. When he died, a small obituary ran in the newspaper. That was the fate he was destined to, an unknown death in which nobody wept. Satendra Nandan, Fijian-Indian writer, in his poem rightly said:

Yet homeless, nameless between earth-sky
A race without a place must die forever die;
Uprooted, transplanted lives grow in pain,
To live, must their generations die again?

(qtd. in Pandey 2005: 37)

If we closely examine the characteristics of diaspora in the second generation (both men and women) in the context of these stories, we come across an erasure of the diasporic attributes in the characters. They no longer feel that they are a part of the land of origin although they are pulled back and forth to this world. They no more take interest in the myths of original root as they are assimilated into the American culture. They are not comfortable with the associative and shared lives. They do not acknowledge the existence of their relatives on the other side of the world. The question of the eventual return to

the land of origin does not arise in them. Even though they experience racism in the host country, they do not wish to separate themselves from this culture as they consider themselves Americans. They have realized that they have to live with these fragmented identities throughout their lives.

To sum up, Jhumpa Lahiri highlights the individual journey of the immigrant and many problems that come out from the interaction with the adopted culture. The complacency of her characters draws attention to the idyllic life of the immigrants which is full of pomp and grandeur. Along with the magnificent life, she also shows how each character pays the price of living in a foreign land. On the other hand, Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* is heaving with numerous issues and she failed to stick to one theme. The oscillation of the storyline from Kalimpong in India to the United States somehow sieves the important issues like the problem of secessionist movement, the insider-outsider syndrome as faced by the foreign returnee, the shifting power structure, the problem of xenophobia, and the inclusion-exclusion of minorities in the multicultural India. The silent voices of the subaltern linger in the background and never surface prominently.

As this chapter has discussed in details the themes of migration, conflict, postcolonial ambivalence, and globalization with particular reference to the select male characters, the following chapter will focus on the representation of women across the boundaries. It will make inquiries about the varied positions of women by delving into the conundrum of immigrant women by highlighting the different generations of diasporic women as found in the novel and short stories of Jhumpa Lahiri. It will also scrutinize the treatment of female subjects in the two novels of Kiran Desai. The subsequent chapter will discuss thoroughly the diverse positions of women in the fictions of Jhumpa Lahiri and Kiran Desai. It will deliberate on the female sufferings and their constant negotiation with the new environment to assert their identity.

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