Exploring the Shifts from Self to Other in

Jasmine, The Namesake and *The Mistress of Spices*

By

Sushmitha. P

(15PEN017)

A thesis submitted to

Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women,

Coimbatore – 641043

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master's Degree in English

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Supervisor

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Postcolonialism is concerned with the construction of Colonial and Postcolonial subjects with literary and theoretical discourses. Just as the idea of representation is important in Postcolonial studies, that related idea of construction is also very important. In *Literary and Cultural Theory: From Basic Principles to Advanced Applications*, D. Hall (2001) puts it thus, "an analysis of race, ethnicity, and/or Post-coloniality begins with the recognition that the social meanings ascribed to categories of race and ethnicity have led to profound injustices" (267). Postcolonialism is also concerned with how subject conceives itself with relation to Other, with how groups of "us" and "them" stand with relation to each other.

Postcolonial literature emerged at the time when many colonies were fighting their way to independence. It really began picking up as a coherent literary movement in the mid-twentieth century. Many classical Postcolonial texts were published between 1950s and 1990s. While drama and poetry are important in Postcolonial literature, it is indeed the novel that defines the movement. This implies that Postcolonial literature in one way or the other is about categorization of center and margin. Al-Saidi (2014) endorses it as follows:

> Postcolonial novels are written to present the unequal relations of power based on binary opposition: 'Us' and 'Them', 'First World' and 'Third World', 'White' and 'Black', 'Colonizer' and 'Colonized', 'Self' and 'Other', 'Powerful' and 'Powerless', 'Torturer' and 'Tortured', 'Master' and 'Slave', 'Civilized' and 'Savage', 'Superior' and 'Inferior', 'Human' and 'Subhuman'". (96)

Postcolonialism is a study of the structures of power relations between the colonizers and the colonized; or to put it more simply, it is relations of domination and

submission and though it may seek to dismantle the oppositional, colonial, Eurocentric binaries of the Centre and the Margin, the Self and the Other, the elite and subaltern, the West and the East, tantalization and fragmentation and essentialization and dispersal; what it has really done is to retain the binaries but to turn them upside down in respect of discursive power.

In India, Postcolonialism would have us believe that it has been a radical intervention in our way of life, that it has given voice to the subalterns, women included, that it has brought about a paradigmatic shift in the relations of the centre and the margin, self and alterity and that it has brought in multiculturalism, the basic phrase of which is hybridity and diversity. However, it is not to forget that the subalterns are the interpellations of the foreign rule, that there is no mention of untouchables in our works/ texts till the days of King Harshavardhana and that philosophically and culturally, unlike that of Enlightenment reason, there is no binary opposition of the Self and the Other for us and that we have always sought unity through diversity since the beginnings of our civilization. Besides, there is no need for any Postcolonialism to teach multiculturalism and syncreticism as they have been the history by itself.

Postcolonialism becomes mere verbiage if it does not lead to decolonization and decolonization is conceptualizing itself only in bits and pieces. The more we try to radicalize our political relationship with the West, the farther we appear to be from a transnational, multicultural world, based on differences and tolerance, connection and communication, recognition and recovery. As most Postcolonialists agree it is difficult to recover the pre-colonial past: so, it is better to structure our present syncretically by building bridges between a cultural heritage and the non-dominative and non-compelling knowledge's discourse of others, especially of the West.

In India even today English is alive, not as the sight of colonialism but as a transnational language and a space for what Paul Jay (2001) calls, “facilitation of economic and cultural globalization” (35). But this transnational approach to English that avoids colonizing the literature of the ‘Other’ is highly problematic. Though the use of English has greatly increased in India, it is still the language of the centre with the inherent colonial power-discourse. So if we wish to decolonize ourselves we will have to enrich our other Indian languages and their literatures and to take recourse to translation in order to transcend the national spaces and borders. According to Daphne Grace (2007), “the Postcolonial experience and especially the diasporic experience is often characterized by a co-existence of opposites which is a feature of consciousness, which exists along with other co-existence of silence and dynamism, singularity and multiplicity, manifest and unmanifest” (4).

Indian writing in English has an aspect other than that of neocolonialism. It has become India’s passage to the West, an effective channel for cultural interaction and exchange. Language and literature can be means of colonization but they can also be means of connecting people and of transnational cultural formations. Writing about India makes India more comprehensible to the West and enables both of them to enter into an intimate dialogue and pursue true globalization. It is undeniable that much more has been written about India in English by Indians in recent times than has ever been done.

Postcolonial theory is a literary theory or critical approach that deals with literature produced in countries that were once, or are now, colonies of other countries. It may also deal with literature written in or by citizens of colonizing countries that takes colonies or their peoples as its subject matter. This theory is based around concepts of Otherness and Resistance. Postcolonial theory became part of the critical toolbox in the 1970s, and many practitioners credit Edward Said’s book *Orientalism* (1978) as being the founding work.

Typically, the proponents of the theory examine the ways in which writers from colonized countries attempt to articulate and even celebrate their cultural identities and reclaim them from the colonizers. They also examine ways in which the literature of the colonial powers is used to justify colonialism through the perpetuation of images of the colonized as inferior. However, attempts to come up with a single definition of Postcolonial theory have proved controversial, and some writers have strongly critiqued the whole concept.

Postcolonial theory is built in various concepts and many theorists have conveyed their ideas on different concepts. The foremost important concept is the 'Otherness' theory. There are however problems with or complexities to the concept of Otherness, for instance: Otherness includes doubleness, both identity and difference, so that every 'other', every different from and excluded by is dialectically created and includes the values and meaning of the colonizing culture even as it rejects its power to define.

The concept Otherness sees the world like, "if the West is ordered, rational, masculine, good, then the Orient is chaotic, irrational, feminine, and evil. This construction of the Other is a process of demonization, which in itself expresses the ambivalence at the very heart of authority" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 3). Simply to reverse this polarizing is to be complicit in its totalizing and identity-destroying power (all is reduced to a set of dichotomies, black or white, etc.); colonized peoples are highly diverse in their nature and in their traditions, and as beings in cultures they are both constructed and changing, so that while they may be 'Other' from the colonizers, they are also different from one another and from their own pasts, and should not be totalized or essentialized -- through such concepts as Black consciousness, Indian soul, aboriginal culture and so forth. This totalization and essentialization is often a form of nostalgia which has its inspiration more in the thought of the colonizers than of the colonized, and it serves give the colonizer a sense of the unity of

his culture while mystifying that of Others. The famous theorist Edward Said emphasizes in *Orientalism* (1978) that, unfortunately, the standardized molds and culturally stereotyped images of the Orient still permeate the Western media, academia, and political circles, thus intensifying "the hold of the nineteenth-century academic and imaginative demonology of 'the mysterious Orient'" (26).

In short, the Orientalists' effort to obliterate the Oriental as a human being is, for Said (1993), important both academically and intellectually, and it is totally wrong to separate literature and culture from politics and history, and therefore it is necessary to study and understand society and literary culture together. That is why Said refers to specific examples of books written by Orientalists and analyzes them in a detailed study, showing how these supposedly subtle works of art have not only distorted the East with its values, cultures, traditions and languages, but also encouraged, overtly or covertly, the dispossession process that the imperial West has practiced against the East. In other words, the Western fabricated image of the Orient was a preface and a reinforcement of the Western imperial rule over the Orient.

'Otherness' can also be seen as a shared theme of issue in seeing and feeling from the Other's perspective, a practice which may cultivate an understanding of how Others are also Selves. On the one hand, imagining oneself into the experiential lives of Others may involve a Self seeking its mirror image in the Other, presupposing and projecting a sameness in mental and emotional states, claiming a common ground that is in fact under the jurisdiction of the Self.

The Self and the Other are in some sense mirror images of each other, each different yet somehow the same and therefore, connected by their reflection. The tension between the Self and the Other is more predominant than the Other lives outside the dominant social group. In this case the Other often needs to be recognized.

The binary of Self and Other is perhaps one of the most basic theories of human consciousness and identity, claiming, in short, that the existence of an Other, a not Self, allows the possibility or recognition of a Self. This concept seeks to go beyond binary thinking to explore what happens when one relates to the Other, seeing one's Self in another's image, or when one behaves differently than one would typically act, causing the Self to appear as Other to the Self.

In addition to an Other-Self occurring in relation to a separate person (physically or non-physically present) with whom the Self-identifies, Other-Self can also manifest cognitively as the Self-behaving as Other. In this case, the triangulation occurs not because of an actual third person or image of a person, but via the force of a connection/identity factor which the Self sees as a void between the Self and Other. In this instance, in an attempt to either fill the void for connection or extend the void for protection, the Self behaves in a way that feels mentally and physically other than typical self behaviour.

Postcolonial theory is also built around the concept of resistance, of resistance as subversion, or opposition, or mimicry. As well, the concept of resistance carries or can carry with it ideas about human freedom, liberty, identity, individuality, etc., which ideas may not have been held, or held in the same way, in the colonized culture's view of humankind.

The revolution in the fields of transport and communication has made the world smaller and facilitates the movement of human populations, especially from the East to the West, in the form of immigrants or exiles or refugees or the new age nomads called the 'global citizens'. Displacement is thus a common phenomenon in the world today. It has effectively changed the face of the West through the influence and symbiotic relationship with the diasporic communities that have become parts of the multicultural Western society. Writers like Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Sunetra Gupta and Jhumpa Lahiri,

who themselves belong to the Diasporic Indian community, have depicted varied pictures of the West in their fiction. Their perspectives of the Occident are definitely different from each other because of their distinctive individual diasporic condition.

During the Postcolonial period, Indian writing in English has crossed the boundaries of nation, language, and culture. An important feature of this period is the emergence of many woman writers. Significant space has been created for women to discuss their peculiar problems and issues. The social, cultural and literary definitions accumulated over the past by the patriarchal tradition were redefined from alternate and, especially, from feminist point of view. With more and more women taking part in the public life and the steady increase in the number of independent women, there is a significant rise in women's writings across the globe. The study of Bharati Mukherjee and Chitra Banerjee's works discusses how these prominent woman writers of the Diaspora deal the problems of the transnational women.

Normally, Indian Diaspora means writers of Indian birth or ethnicity living abroad, who may be first generation expatriates, for whom India was home of nourishment, values, inclination, love and affection though it may not be a universal case, with distant dissonance. Here the migrants keep in touch with their homeland through something like 'the myth of return', their identities are twofold—that of the homeland and that of the land of adoption, that is, originating from and belonging to; it further helps in the formation of ethnicity, different ethnic groups and likewise.

Etymologically, the term 'diaspora' is derived from the Greek composite verb 'dia' and 'speirein' (infinitive), literally meaning 'to scatter', 'to spread' or 'to disperse'. It was originally used to refer to the dispersion of Jews after the Babylonian exile in 586 BC and to the aggregate of Jews or Jewish communities scattered in exile outside Palestine. In

current parlance, however, the term is applied to describe any group of people who are dispersed.

Languages and cultures are transformed when they come in contact with the others. The diasporic writers are often preoccupied with the elements of nostalgia as they seek to locate themselves in new cultures. They write in relation with the culture of their homeland and at the same time adopt and negotiate with the cultural space of the host land. However, looking at the diasporic literature in a broader perspective, it is seen that such literature helps in understanding various cultures, breaking the barriers between different countries and even spreading universal peace. Most of the diasporans consciously choose to migrate to an alien country of their choice, with the hope of living there. They migrate to live a happy life, yet in reality they struggle a lot for survival. The diasporic experience is influenced by the context of immigration, and so we find the difference between the neo-colonial diasporic experiences.

Studies of the diasporic writings reveal that the common features in the writings of the old diaspora and the new diaspora are nostalgia, homesickness, and the sufferings due to being far off from their homeland. The basic problem of diasporic writings is the feeling of dislocation without roots. The diasporans feel homeless and alienated in the foreign land.

The writers of the diaspora are situated in a complex space between two worlds and two cultures: they can neither forget the world/culture they have come out of and which would be different if they return to it now; nor they can fully assimilate into and be acculturalised by the world/culture they have adopted because they cannot subvert their own identities totally. The diasporic writers may be writing about their homelands but the problem of human constructs that they navigate in their Postcolonial discourses are very much those of their present situation as migrants.

In the diasporic writings, we can detect subaltern voice, alien pang, feminist cry, repressed utterances, desperate discriminatory articulations, anxious helpless pronouncements, etc. Here Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) becomes relevant, which says, "survival, in fact, is about the connections between things" (336).

The flourishing pattern of diasporic writing, which is substantial, significant and complex, makes it necessary to revise the cultural theories of nation, race, and identity that has been termed, in recent times, as diasporic studies and transnational studies. It covers the writers of Indian origin settled in countries such as the US, Canada, England, Australia, Caribbean, Africa and other parts of the world. These writers have come to terms with the diasporic spaces they inhabit and relate to the Indian inheritance and their writings put the core issues of diasporic discourse in bold relief.

The chief characteristic features of the diasporic writings are redefining the Self, quest for identity, uprooting and re-rooting, insider and outsider syndrome, nostalgia, nagging sense of guilt etc. Looking at it optimistically, diasporic literature also helps in spreading values, virtues and universal peace. With the entry of women writers like Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakurani, Jhumpa Lahiri and others, the English language has widened its umbrella in Diasporic writing. The diasporans' feelings are truly documented by the Indo American diasporans like Bharati Mukherjee and Chitra Banerjee Divakurani in their novels by placing their central character on different contexts.

Most of these writings are nostalgic recollections; a primitive reversion of old practices left behind in the homeland especially since liberal multiethnic settings they live in make space for the 'Other'. It also leads to custom-package ethnic practices for the curious western readers. In some writings we find inalienable affiliation with the distinct regional Indian culture, as that of Bengal in the case of Jhumpa Lahiri, Amit Chaudhuri, Amitav Ghosh, Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakurani and Sunetra Gupta; they

reconstruct the old places and practices with the help of memory and desire, which is poignant and intense, though they do not induce India through standard cultural signifier, similar to the writers of the regional language. Such women writers may have the impact of the cultural split, caused by dislocation, defining her as 'a new being in the Diasporic setting', away from the indigenous traditions, folklore, cultural values and social practices. With a sense of loss and homelessness comes the fortitude and indomitable spirit of dislocation, disjunction, instability and double vision as the distinguishing characteristics of the Diasporic writing, an attempt to redefine the Self and redraw the boundary.

As such, Diasporic writing reviews history for its lost identities and missing links and dwells heavily on the 'Presence of Past', in order to create a space for the marginalized and fractured and decentered Self, which is why Ghosh admits, "history is profound in my thought and in my novels", and this is possible for him by probing anthropology, geography, sociology, psychology and a bit of science. The best instance of such synthesis is Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1998) where history is employed as a tool to interpret and understand the present. The character Tridib in *The Shadow Lines* furnishes his felt essence to the unnamed narrator and it is true to great extent when he says:

> One could never know anything except through desire, real desire, which was not the same thing as greed or lust; a pure, painful and primitive desire, a longing for everything that was not in oneself, a torment of the flesh, that carried the one beyond the limits of one's mind to other times and other places and even if one was lucky to a place where there was no border between oneself and one's image in the mirror. (29)

Bharati Mukherjee, one of the major diasporic writers, was born into a wealthy Calcutta family. She attended an anglicized Bengali school from 1944 to 1948. After three years abroad, the family returned to India. Mukherjee attended the University of Calcutta

and the University of Baroda. She then entered the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop, earning an M.F.A and a Ph.D. in 1969. From 1966 to 1980 she lived in Montreal, which she found provincial and racist. She then moved to the United States in 1980 and began teaching at the university level. She became a US citizen in 1989 and that year accepted a position of teaching Postcolonial and world literature at the University of California at Berkeley.

Mukherjee's writing career began in 1971 with *The Tiger's Daughter* (1971) which was followed by *Jasmine* (1989), *Wife* (1975), *Days and Nights in Calcutta* (1977), *Leave it to Me* (1997) and *Holder of the World* (1993). However, she came into literary limelight with *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1998), which bagged the National Book Critics Award of America in 1988. The book is remarkable in that it attempts to dramatize the "immigrant experience" in America. In an interview, Mukherjee stated that:

> We immigrants have fascinating tales to relate. Many of us have lived in newly independent or emerging countries…. When we uproot ourselves from those countries and come here, either by choice or out of necessity, we suddenly must absorb two hundred years of American history and learn to adapt to American society. I attempt to illustrate this in my novels and short stories. My aim is to expose America to the energetic voices of new settlers in this country. (*The Times of India* 1 Oct, 1989)

Mukherjee's work features not only cultural clashes but also undercurrents of violence. Her first novel *The Tiger's Daughter* (1972) tells of a sheltered Indian woman jolted by immersion in American culture, then again shocked by her return to a violent Calcutta. *Wife* (1975) details the descent into madness of an Indian woman trapped in New York City by the fears and passivity resulting from her upbringing. *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988) centres on immigrants in the United States who are from developing

countries, which is also the subject of two later novels, *Jasmine* (1989) and *The Holder of the World* (1993). The latter tells of a contemporary American woman drawn into the life of a Puritan ancestor who ran off with a Hindu Raja.

Mukherjee's later works include *Wanting America: Selected Stories* (1995) and *Leave It to Me* (1997), which traces the journey of an American woman abandoned in India as a child and her return to her native land. *Desirable Daughters* (2002) attracted considerable acclaim for its intricate depictions of Indian caste relations and the immigrant experience of reconciling disparate worldviews. Mukherjee explored further into the family history of the characters from that novel in *The Tree Bride* (2004), broaching issues of the time-spanning ramifications of colonialism.

Bharati Mukherjee deals with how migration and expatriation complicate the lives of Indian- American women in the USA. She also breaks with the conventional presentation of the stereotypical archetypes, and her characters are in contrast with the underbelly immigrants who exist in the luminal waiting room between East and West. Through intertextual elements Mukherjee examines the tension immigrants feel in the luminal space between cultures as well as they agency this "betweenness" affords them.

For these writers, homeland and home are two separate factors. Bharati Mukherjee writes,

> I have joined imaginative forces with any anonymous driven underclass of semi-assimilated Indians with sentimental attachment to a distant homeland, but no real desire for permanent return… Instead of seeing my Indianness as a fragile identity to be preserved against obliteration…I see it now as a set of fluid identities to be celebrated…. Indianness is now a metaphor, a particular way of comprehending the world. (Indian Literature, Sep.-Oct.1999)

In a highly perceptive essay, analyzes as how Bharati Mukherjee portrays the immigrant women's attempts to assimilate themselves, to find a place in the mainstream of the life of the adopted land, abandoning the former lifestyle of their country. Secondly, it also attempts to examine in what way, in this process, they have to pass through torturous physical, mental and emotional agony, which affects their personality largely turning them into a whole new being. Niranjan Mohanty writes about the diasporic imagination which can never free itself from the question or problem of identity. Mohanty feels, out of the three very commonly used term- 'Self', 'Personality' and 'Identity'- it is 'identity' that has generated widespread, deep-rooted debates almost over three decades.

Most of the diasporans consciously choose to migrate to an alien country of their choice, with the hope of living there. They migrate to live a happy life, yet in reality they struggle a lot for survival. These writers begin by mapping the contours of their own transited identity that are in constant negotiation and transformation because of the interaction between the past and the present.

This transformation is seen in the novels of Bharati Mukherjee, who is one of the most celebrated writers of the Asian immigrant experience in America. In the novel *Jasmine,* Jasmine used to be a traditional Punjabi girl from the village of Hasnapur who was haunted by the partition of Pakistan and India dragging from family down from Paradise. The story is absolute anti-exotic concept from the Western perspective. Jasmine always faces unexpected events: gets married at very young age, her father dies by the bull hit, her husband died from the terrorist explosion, and after illegally entering into the United States she was raped by the seaman whom she killed when he was asleep. The reason why she comes to America is to burn Prakash's clothes as he could not fulfill his dream of coming to America.

The transformation in characterization takes place when Jasmine wants to forget her pasts and question its beings, as it is visible in this novel when she is talking to Darrel, in search of a particular word for an Indian equivalent: “You mean Hindi, not Indian. There is no such thing as Indian” (10). Such writing use their diasporic status as a ploy to keep their identity separate, they dislike to recognize in India distinct cultures represented by several Indian languages—a multicultural phenomenon. Diasporic writing directly reflects the immigrant experiences that come out of immigrant settlement.

The story telling was not in order, it starts somewhere in the middle and then it comes back to the beginning of the story, so there is no continuity and it can be understood only when fully read. The story started in Iowa when Jasmine was the banker’s wife who got one adopted Vietnamese child. Later Jasmine thinks about the past of how she has survived. Around chapter 23, it turns out to be a romantic novel when Jasmine gets a job as an Au-pair with the couple who get an adoptive daughter. The young girl called her a ‘day mummy’. She was told by the wife that Taylor loved her from the first day. Jasmine kept this secret for two years, and she felt that this is her real family even though the child is not her genetic child. When she sees the guy who murdered her husband she just runs away fearing that her beloved would be harmed.

The conflict is that Jasmine, in the last part of the story, has to choose between two men. One is the man whom she decides to spend the rest of her life with, and the other one is the one that she truly loves. Finally, she decides to be with the one she loves and moves to California. After she has killed Half-face who raped her, she thinks that her mind (or her previous identity) has already died. There is no more Jyoti(former name). After that day, America is her big real school. It seems that the Americans treat her so well but sometimes they unintentionally hurt her by words. She tried to re-think again of how god could protect

her father. Her conclusion is that there is no fate as she is in the free society that she can make a decision for everything.

While writing about the two invariables of the transnational conditions exile and homeland, Mukherjee, in her novels, captures the temporal and spatial dynamics of immigrant sensibility lost in the space between home and location. The estranging consciousness of relocation is haunted by some sense of loss, an urge to reclaim or to look back at the transgressive grounds of the past. To quote Maya Manju Sharma's (1993) view in on Mukherjee's novels, "in her fiction Mukherjee handles Western themes and settings as well as characters who are Westernized or bicultural. Yet she is forced to admit that the very structure of her imagination is essentially Hindu and essentially moral" (18).

Bharati Mukherjee depicts a fluid society in her novels, a society in a flux. It is a society of constant flow, the flow of migrants, the flow of machines, flow of criminals and flow of exterritorial. Bharati Mukherjee seems to establish that India is a land of spiritual values, stability, variety of languages and traditions that the American society would never be able to appreciate.

Jhumpa Lahiri is another famous diasporic writer. She is a famous Indian-American author of Bengali origin. She was born in July 1967 in London. She is an alumnus of Barnad College, where she received B.A. in English Literature, and of Boston University, where she received an M.A. in Comparative Studies in Literature and the Arts and a Ph.D. in Renaissance Studies.

Much of Jhumpa Lahiri's fiction deals with the lives of Indian-Americans, particularly Bengalis. Her debut collection *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) won the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for fiction. It was a collection of nine distinct short stories addressing the sensitive dilemmas in the lives of Indians and Indian immigrants. She is known for her craft of inventing and creating fictional accounts of Indians living abroad. She herself being

an American, born to Bengali immigrant parents, is able to fictionalize the lives and experiences of immigrant Indians in America. Her works such as *The Namesake* (2003) and *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) portray the living experiences of Indian immigrants and their children in America.

In the novel *The Namesake*, Lahiri enriches the themes that made her collection an international bestseller: the immigrant experience, the clash of cultures, the conflicts of assimilation, and, most poignantly, the tangled ties between generations. Here again Lahiri displays her clever touch for the perfect detail--the fleeting moment, the turn of phrase --that opens whole worlds of emotion.

The Namesake takes the Ganguli family from their tradition-bound life in Calcutta through their fraught transformation into Americans. On the heels of their arranged wedding, Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli settle together in Cambridge, Massachusetts. An engineer by training, Ashoke adapts far less warily than his wife, who resists all things American. When their son is born, the task of naming him betrays the vexed results of bringing old ways to the new world. Named for a Russian writer by his Indian parents in memory of a catastrophe years before, Gogol Ganguli knows only that he suffers the burden of his heritage as well as his odd, antic name.

The Ganguli family in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* includes the mother and father, who are traditional Bengalese from Calcutta, and who are not particularly interested in assimilating into the United States, their adopted home. Gogol, their son, however, was born in the United States and is somewhat embarrassed by his parents' Bengalese practice. Gogol is also uncomfortable with his name; it is neither a Bengalese nor an American name. No one he knows has a name like his. In school, kids make fun of it. But the conflict goes deeper than that.

Gogol's father tries to explain why he gave that name to his first born child, but Gogol, in his attempts to get out from under the Bengali culture, even tries to completely dissociate himself from his family. But when his father dies, Gogol is surprised by how much he misses him. Slowly he turns back to his mother and sister. His new closeness makes Gogol's American girlfriend question why he is acting so differently. The strain breaks down their relationship.

As Gogol slowly realizes the importance of his family and his culture, he falls in love with Moushumi, a Bengalese woman. The story appears to have finally come to a happy conclusion. Gogol and Moushumi are married. But their happy married life does not stay for a long period of time. She was a quiet and shy young teen, has tasted the freedom from her parents and their strict Bengali ways. Now Moushumi feels confined in her marriage, no matter how well Gogol treats her. She turns away from him in the only way she knows how, she has an affair.

Lahiri brings great empathy to Gogol as he stumbles along the first-generation path, strewn with conflicting loyalties, comic detours, and wrenching love affairs. With penetrating insight, she reveals not only the defining power of the names and expectations bestowed upon us by our parents, but also the means by which we slowly, sometimes painfully, come to define ourselves. *The New York Times* has praised Lahiri as a writer of uncommon elegance and poise. *The Namesake* is a fine-tuned, intimate, and deeply felt novel of identity.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is another popular award winning novelist and poet. Though she writes on a wide variety of themes, she directs much focus on the immigrant experience of the South Asian women in the US She delineates the experiences and struggles involved in women trying to find their own identities. She is centrally concerned with giving shape to South Asian women's lives the United States. Living in San

Francisco, Divakaruni works as a writer to express a more complexly contoured politics of the oppressed and also, within her South Asian community, to improve the living-conditions of women. In academic as well as popular reviews of her work, Divakaruni has been praised for her literary creativity and personal sensitivity in dealing with cross-cultural complexities of self-identity, family relationships and community values. Most notable has been her continuing concern with these issues in connection with the experiences of Indian and Indian-American women.

The themes Divakaruni explores in her poems and short stories are developed in her novels, *The Mistress of Spices* (1997) and *Sister of My Heart* (1999). *The Mistress of Spices,* her first novel, became one of the top-selling books on the West Coast in 1997, not only listed among the "Best Books of the Year" by Los Angeles and Seattle reviewers, but also chosen as one of the "100 Best Books of the Twentieth Century" by the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

In the novel *The Mistress of Spices,* Tilo, an Indian lady, elderly in appearance, runs a departmental store in San Francisco. It is rumoured amongst her customers that she has magical powers and can provide solutions for their problems. The fact is that Tilo's magic lies in her knowledge of spices, in being well-versed with the effect of each of the numerous spices that she houses in her store and her ability to use these spices to do her bidding. Born as an unusual girl in a remote village of a faraway land, she had a knack for finding things that were hidden to the eyes of other humans. The news spread and bandits came to her house, killed her family and kidnapped her to become their "treasure finder". After a few years, she escaped from their boat and with the help of sea-serpents reached to "The Island". It was here that she met "The Mother" and started learning from her about the spices and their magic. But every power has to be paid for and the price for this was to become "The Mistress of Spices". She was to give up the world and love none other than

the spices, never set a foot outside the place where she lived with the spices and never use the spices for her own Self.

In the final ceremony, when she took these vows, she chose her name as “Tilo”, apparently after the spice ‘sesame’, but secretly, in her heart, she was naming herself after the most beautiful of the heavenly beauties: Tilottama. The mother, who knew the passionate nature of Tilo warned her to be on her guard when she left the island to go and serve the community in San Francisco. Because, the penalty of breaking any of these rules is only one: the mistress has to enter the fire and annihilate herself. Tilo’s customers include people from all casts and creed, and while helping a teenager boy Jagjit, a taxi driver Haroun, an elderly man worried about his granddaughter Geeta, Tilo slowly gets attached to them and their lives. But above all, a man comes in her life, Doug, an American, who always looks at her as if seeing beyond her old frame and frail body, looking for someone he knows to be inside her but cannot see. And Tilo falls in love with him, against reason and warnings of her mind.

As her feelings for Doug increase and as her detachment for her customers is slowly replaced by her concern for them, her power over the spices starts reducing. Instead of helping the people, spices are now aggravating their problems. And then Tilo learns about Doug’s past, his connection to the natives of America and the magical tradition of his tribe that he could have inherited but lost. He has come to Tilo hoping that she would help him in discovering this lost magic.

Tilo cannot help breaking the rules while trying to help Geeta and Haroun and The Mother comes to warn her that she must return to the island now and take her penalty. Then Tilo breaks the final rule: she uses the spices to become a young and exotically beautiful woman to spend one night with Doug. What happens next? Did Doug really love her? Will she go to the island and destroy herself in the fire? Will she ever be able to repair the

damage that she has caused in the lives of people around her and the city of San Francisco? Will the spices ever forgive her? This easy-breezy tale of a woman from a world beyond the one that we can see and her journey in our world and our day-today concerns is very well written and delicately woven. As we read on, Tilo's concern becomes ours.

Problems of the day-to-day life of her customers are not hi-fi; they are very common. An immigrant from Kashmir in quest of peace and harmony on the new land trying to leave the violence behind him, a boy, outcast at school due to his different appearance and manners, trying to fit-in, a girl born and brought-up as an American struggling to balance between her boyfriend and her suddenly traditional Indian parents, a married woman asking herself how much she could sacrifice on the altar called marriage; we have met all of these somewhere or the other. But here we see them with Tilo's eyes and feel for them with Tilo's heart. We join her in wishing well for them and trying to provide solution of their problems. Despite of her possessing magical powers, she is just as human as any of us, governed by her warm heart rather than her cool mind. And we cannot condemn her, when driven by the intense emotions of her heart; she is not able to restrain herself within the bounds, so much so, that when she ultimately finds love, she is ready to walk through fire (literally) for it. Divakaruni's characters rise above divisions between religions and beliefs so as to overcome separation and differences among people and cultures.

In these three novels the characters undergo huge transformation all through. Through the characters we come to know that they try to reincarnate themselves to complete 'Other' to cope within a foreign land. These characters have problem with their identities and this seems to be a big problematic thing for them. They try to transform themselves, in terms of their identity in order to adapt the foreign culture. The other reason

for these characters to assimilate themselves to the Other because they do not want to feel alien and stay isolated in an atmosphere they are dwelling in.

In the three novels *Jasmine, The Namesake,* and *The Mistress of Spices,* their shifting of identities is clearly visible. Their transformations are clearly shown as they change their name according to their situations and when they try to become the complete 'Other'; however, this act is a deliberate one. The changing of the name of the characters in these novels has effect on their attitude as well.

In the novel *Jasmine,* the character Jyoti changes her name to Jasmine, Jazzy, Jase and finally to Jane. Even in the novel *The Namesake* the character Gogol has the problem with his name. In the Other novel, *The Mistress of Spices* the character Nayan Tara becomes Bhagyavati becomes Tilotamma and Tilo becomes Maya, she stands a metaphor for movement, change and struggle for life. As these characters keep changing throughout the novel, it only clarifies the complexity of the crisis of the Self that an immigrant has to struggle within a foreign land.

Here comes the discussion of the Self and the Other of an individual; one's Self is distinguishable from self-awareness, which refers to the extent to which self-knowledge is defined, consistent, and currently applicable to one's attitudes and dispositions. The perception that people have about their past and or future selves is related to the perception of their current selves.

The writers of the diaspora go back to the land of their origin and project the life of those times, that is, their history as they lived it and they saw it, because they want to document how they have lived in the times that are in the past and will never return again. The immigrant writer has the need to 'voice' his presence and to bring his history or identity to the forefront for recognition since that gives him validity. In their writings, they now take pains to construct a viable representation of the 'Self' as a located 'Self' because

what is at pale here is more than just local colour – it is an ambience that actually gives authenticity to their identity.

Identity is an important issue in diasporic literature. Diasporic literature especially Indian diasporic literature is the result of colonization and decolonization, the period in Indian history in which a large number of Indian people migrated to other countries either through colonization or by their need for work. These people began to face different problems as they were indifferent to the culture of other countries, which lead them to search for their own identity.

The feeling of lack of identity gets classical expression in the diasporic literature. Many writers like V.S. Naipaul, Jhumpa Lahiri and others have expressed the feelings of rootlessness in the countries to which they migrated, where they were treated as 'Others'. Diasporic dream figures are found prominently especially in all of Bharati Mukherjee's fiction.

The first person perspective distinguishes self-hood from personal identity. The identity of an individual is shaped by his/her self- perceptions of the world surrounding him/her based on the religion, race, class, economic and social status of family cultural and religious beliefs shared by the society in which the individual lives. Whereas identity is sameness, self-hood implies a first person perspective. The philosophy of Self seeks to describe essential qualities that constitute a person's uniqueness or essential being. There have been various approaches to defining these qualities. The Self can be considered as the source of consciousness, the agent responsible for an individual's thoughts and actions or the substantial nature of a person, which endures and unifies consciousness over time.

The psychology of Self is the study of either the cognitive and affective representation of one's identity or the subject of experience. Current views of the Self in

psychology position the Self as playing an integral part in human motivation, cognition, affect and social identity.

The Self is constantly evolving due to the complexities of cultures and societies. Researchers have shown that the Self is dependent on the culture that the Self has been situated around. Several comparisons between the Western cultures and Eastern cultures show that there are cultural differences among the Self and Self-concept. The Self can be redefined as a dynamic, responsive process that structures neural pathways according to the past and present environments including material, social and spiritual aspects.

As children, teenagers and young adults grow up the society tells these individuals to "be yourself." But this may mean something completely different for individuals who live in different cultures. The way the individuals construct themselves may be different due to their culture. In the Western culture Self is usually seen as abstract, private, individual, sand separates themselves from the rest of the group. Whereas in the Eastern culture Self might be presented as open and flexible. The Self relies on the environment and culture it is put in. The Self evolves and is constantly changing to the environment so that it is not threatened. This is why researchers want to study the differences between cultures and see if the individual's conceptual selves change due to their culture and environment.

Furthermore, the Self is shaped by our social interactions and our physical environments. An individual's social interactions occur when they are in a specific society or culture. If these individuals grow up in a certain culture they are going to conform to societal norms and pressures to follow a specific standard that their culture is important to study and explore when searching how the Self evolves and changes. To conclude, western cultures are more Self-absorbed in their own lives whereas eastern cultures are less Self-absorbed because they cherish the collective. The Self is dynamic and complex and it will

change or conform to whatever social influence it is exposed to. The main reason why the Self is constantly dynamic is because it is always looks for reason to not be harm. The Self in any culture looks out for it well-being and will avoid as much threat as possible.

The Self is completely changed when people move to a different country. People change themselves completely where they even change their own identity in to a complete different level. There is a possibility where people destruct themselves and become complete Other, which is known as Self-destruct. This is done intentionally with their consciousness. During self-destruction people undergo drastic change and there is a huge transformation in their identity and in their attitude as well. They tend to destroy themselves through their habits and actions. This transformation is to redefine themselves and attain their goal in a foreign land.

In human context, self-destructive behaviour is a widely used phrase that conceptualizes certain kinds of destructive acts as belonging to the Self. It also has the property that it characterizes certain kinds of self-inflicted acts as destructive. The term comes from objective psychology, wherein all apparent self-inflicted harm or abuse toward oneself is treated as a collection of actions, and therefore as a pattern of behavior.

Self-destruction is usually defined as the voluntary destruction of something by itself. Acts of "self-destruction" may be merely metaphorical (social suicide) or literal (suicide). Generally speaking, Self-destructive actions may be deliberate, born of impulse, or developed as a habit. The term however tends to be applied toward self-destruction that is potentially habit-forming or addictive. Self-destructive behavior may also manifest itself in an active attempt to drive away other people. For example they may fear that they will 'mess up' a relationship. Rather than dealing with this fear, socially self-destructive individuals engage in annoying or alienating behavior, so that others will reject them first.

Another good name for self-destruction could be self-denial. There is a splitting of the personality in which this “thing in me” is to be ignored and suppressed by any means possible, at whatever cost. The person feels that their very being must be kept under strict control. So, in this way they become “Other”.

Conceptually, the Self requires the existence of the ‘Other’. The Other is dissimilar to and the opposite of the Self, of us, and of the same. Otherness, the characteristics of the Other, is the state of being different from and alien to the social identity of a person and to the identity of Self. Another way of describing “the Other” is to portray oneself at the centre of focus and the Other on the outside.

The cultural example of Othering is when individuals that identify closely with their own ethnic or religious beliefs begin to gain the mentality that those who are different from them are problematic. This can lead to extreme separation, alienation, and exclusion of the person, or of people that is seen as different or unusual to the typical lens of one’s societal views.

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) applied the concept of the Other as a basis for inter subjectivity, the psychological relations among the people. He says that the Other is constituted as an alter ego, as an Other Self. As such, the Other person posed and was an epistemological problem of being only a perception of the consciousness of the Self.

The ‘Other’, by definition, lacks identity, propriety, purity and literality: the one who does not belong to a group, does not speak a given language, does not have the same customs, he is the unfamiliar, mysterious, unauthorized, inappropriate and the improper. The Postcolonial experience and especially the diasporic experience is often characterized by a co-existence of opposites which is a feature of consciousness, which exists along with other co-existence of silence and dynamism, singularity and multiplicity, manifest and unmanifest.

The idea of ‘Otherness’ is central to sociological analyses of how majority and minority identities are constructed. This is because the representation of different groups within any given society is controlled by groups that have greater political power. So from this perspective an effort in this study has been made to foreground such concepts. This study seeks to consider how literature describes the Other. It shows the way to maintain authority over the Other in a colonial situation, that is, an imperialist must see the Other as different from the Self; and therefore he has to maintain sufficient identity with the Other to valorize control over it. Politically as well as culturally the Self and the Other are represented as the colonizer and the colonized.

Here the characters in the novels immigrate to a different land which is totally alien to them. They face the problem of identity crisis that Indians try to cope within a foreign land. These novels also show the exuberance of immigration in a foreign land.

Immigration to Europe is very heterogeneous. Different European countries have immigrant populations that are very different in terms of ethnicity, origin, and educational attainment. For instance, while more than 70% of the foreign-born population in Ireland comes from within the EU, this share is only 21% in the neighbouring UK, where almost one third of the immigrant population comes from South Asia.

Immigration involves the movement of people from their home country to a host country or region, to which they are not native, to live. There are many reasons why immigrants choose to live leave their home countries, including economic issues, family reunification, and natural disasters. In general, no matter what the reasoning is, immigrants move to another country to improve their life. So here the protagonists of both the novels immigrate to US leaving their home land to improve their quality of life. They try to redefine their identity with various shifting of identities.

The majority of challenges associated with immigration deal with assimilating into life in the host country. Immigrants must learn a new way of life and become familiar with the language and the laws of the host country. While many immigrants leave their home country to escape persecution, it is possible that they could face discrimination or even racism in the host country. The process of immigrating is not easy, but for many individuals staying in their home country does not provide them with a promising future. Most immigrants are willing to take risks and work hard to build a solid future even though the process can be challenging.

On the other side immigration can become a social/political issue, where racism can be used to exploit feelings or as an excuse for current woes of the local population. Concerns about illegal immigration can spill over to ill-feelings towards the majority of immigrants are law-abiding and contributing to the economy. Many die trying to flee their predicament, and this can often make sensational headlines giving the appearance that immigration is largely illegal and out of control.

In the 21st century, societies remain culturally diverse, with most countries and having a mixture of individuals from different races, linguistic backgrounds, religious affiliations, and so forth. Contemporary political theorists have labeled this phenomenon of the coexistence of different cultures in the same geographical space.

To understand the discussion of multiculturalism in contemporary political philosophy, there are four key topics that should be taken into consideration. They are: the meaning and the concept of ‘culture’, the meaning and the concept of ‘multiculturalism’, the debate about the justice between cultural groups and the practical implications of multicultural practices.

As such, ‘Culture’ refers to the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, defined by everything from language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music to

arts. Many countries are largely populated by immigrants, and the culture is influenced by the many groups of people that now make up the country. This is also a part of growth. As a culture grows, so does its cultural diversity. For if all cultures are equal, we cannot say that there is one superior way of being, one superior set of values, or one superior method of educating individuals. However, societies like America and Great Britain often adopt such methods, values, and ways of being based on white value systems, language and beliefs. If we look at public education in both the nations, we can see how problematic multiculturalism remains as a term or a doctrine. Multiculturalism is a concept that raises question of privilege and disadvantage and encourages us to reexamine our assumptions about what is identified as the norm.

As a result of international migration, multiculturalism has become the dominant theory in the last 20-30 years in some countries of Western civilization. It is generally accepted that due to the practice of multiculturalism different cultures can live peacefully side by side. This theory has become widely spread in the 1970s, but nowadays it is increasingly criticized; many question its ability to solve cultural problems. The question is especially relevant as there is a lot of discussion about the failure of multiculturalism and as it is blamed for being responsible for causing social conflicts. Being examined as a political theory, we see that the concept can be interpreted in different ways and its boundaries are often blurred when trying to distinguish it from Globalism or Liberalism. In everyday language, multiculturalism is often regarded as identical to efforts to promote the integration of immigrants as well. The most widely accepted definition is generally negative: it determines what multiculturalism is not, or what can be contrasted with it. In fact, multiculturalism is a political philosophy and a social doctrine, which takes into account diversity and cultural differences, and defines itself as an alternative to assimilation. It is important to clarify that the model can only be applied in states where

there are many strong communities that are able to survive and even seek it. However, it is not applicable if there are many immigrants from different cultures, but only a few from each culture or they do not wish to keep their identity.

Countries that suddenly became culturally diverse effected by immigration started to face multiple issues that strained their solid social framework: frictions and hostilities between the indigenous population and migrants, minorities and immigrants, minorities and the indigenous population, and between various immigrant groups. The ideology of multiculturalism is the most recent solution to the problems of minority groups with listening to them and respecting their habits. Therefore it does not seek to integrate them into society, but to maintain the diversity they represent, and thereby, to make people of different cultures loyal to the given state. Its purpose is twofold: to prevent frictions, and on the other hand to economically exploit this diversity.

It is not enough that should be an immigrant be legal to be socially integrated; we have to be clear that with immigration they not only are importing workers, but also persons with their own histories and cultures. Therefore, we will be able to speak about integration when the immigrants who come to their country preserve their identity and establish socio-cultural contacts with their culture. On more than one occasion we talked about integration as concealing situations of exclusion or marginalization because what is really being achieved is their assimilation, which carries with it for immigrants the abandonment of their culture of origin and replacing it with ours, thus causing complicated and conflictive situations.

As compared to immigrants from other parts of the world such as Caribbean, Africa, Eastern Europe or Latin America, South Asians are very different culturally, which perhaps makes it harder for them to assimilate themselves into any society with ease. This again leads to greater difficulties in being in a Canadian or an American workplace.

The discovery that an immigrant makes when he enters a new situation is that at every stage of a change in the socio-cultural, political and economic references, the value-systems and principles, his/her ‘positionality’ changes accordingly. The immigrant experience in such a situation is one of surprise, disappointment and even disillusionment but he is so transfixed in the new context from which he has come.

As we know, the Diaspora communities are bound to live in multicultural environments and the obvious result is a sort of re-identification and reassignment to the Self for the struggle for survival and existence, which can be termed as reassembly of the Self, or say, reconstructing of the Self to face the new alien world as the ‘Other’, by relocating the Self in the third space of multiculturalism. Here the identity becomes important as an individual for the sole purposes of Self and in respect of society.

Chapter 2

Destruction and Reconstruction of the Existing Self

The identity of an individual is shaped by his/her self-perceptions of the world surrounding him/her based on the religion, race, class, economic and social status of family, cultural and religious beliefs shared by the society in which the individual lives. Identity for a woman in particular questions a lot. A woman is always a preserver of culture.

The Self is constantly evolving due to the complexities of cultures and societies. Researchers have shown that the Self is dependent on the culture that the Self has been situated around. The Self relies on the environment and culture it is put in. The Self evolves and is constantly changing to the environment so that it is not threatened. Therefore, researcher wanted to study the differences between cultures and see if individual's conceptual selves change due to their culture and environment. Unless we are in our native the 'Self' does not seem to be problematic. But, we are forced to become the 'Other' when we move to a foreign land to survive. Hence, when we become the 'Other', the term "identity" remains a big mystery, we tend to create our own identity to become the 'Other'. In their search of identity the characters lose one identity to find out another one. Therefore, destruction of existing Self is deliberate and done with consciousness. The aim of self-destruction is in fact the process of self-preservation.

What seems to be so infuriating to Edward Said (1978) is that people, who, in most cases have completely different cultures, have always been stereotyped by the so-called Orientalists, who so simply cross out all the distinctions and national characteristics of these diverse cultures. Consequently, the colonial texts have depicted the Indians, the Egyptians, the Palestinians, the Latin Americans, and many others as almost the same, the Orient, the "Other", in comparison with "Us", the Occidental.

So, when it comes to self-destruction, the Self is completely destructed where there is much difference in an individual's attitude. When the Self is destructed, we cannot be ourselves as we like or wish to be. We try to change our selves depending on the atmosphere we live in and, when it comes to a foreign land self-destruction becomes necessary for an immigrant and he/she is forced to become 'Other' by adapting their culture. The same thing happens in the novel *Jasmine*.

Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*, the story of a widowed Punjabi peasant woman rediscovering herself in the USA was published in 1989. *The New York Times* Book Review called *Jasmine* 'One of the most suggestive novels we have about what it is to become American.' At the year's end, it named the book one of the best of 1989. *The San Francisco Chronicle* and *The New York Times* praised the author's poetic writing style.

Jasmine, the title character and narrator of the novel, is a young woman whose life takes her from India to the United States, where she lives out many different destinies. Jasmine was born by 1965 in a rural Indian village called Hasnapur. She narrates her story as a twenty-four-year-old pregnant widow, living in Iowa with her crippled lover, Bud Ripplemeyer. It takes two months in Iowa to relate the most recently developing events. But during that time, Jasmine also relates biographical events that span the distance between her Punjabi birth and her American adult life. These past biographical events inform the action set in Iowa. Her long journeys involve five different settings, two murders, one rape, a maiming, a suicide, and three love affairs. Throughout the course of the novel, the title character's identity, along with her name, changes and changes again: from Jyoti to Jasmine to Jazzy to Jassy to Jase to Jane.

In the novel *Jasmine* the US is seen flooded with immigrants of various origins like Indians, Mexicans, Vietnamese and so on. But the Americans, the original immigrants from Europe to the New World, are not welcoming of the newer immigrants. It is because

"to them, alien knowledge means intelligence" and especially the educated among them are "interested in differences" (33). It is not that there are no problems with the immigrant population but the attitude towards them is not exactly intolerant though there is some sort of vigilance.

Mukherjee's third novel *Jasmine* (1989) reveals a more positive approach to the problem of immigration. *Jasmine* was written after Mukherjee migrated to the US and it is a poignant story of survival, expediency, compromises, losses and adjustments involved in the process of acculturation to American life. Jasmine, the female protagonist of Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* is faced with the problem of the loss of culture and trying to create a new identity in the US.

The novel focuses on Jasmine, an underage village girl from Punjab, who projects as an undocumented woman and as a widow, where her fate will be "rewritten". Born in Hasnapur, a small village in Punjab, Jyoti has the distinction of being the most beautiful and clever in the family. She is seen against the backdrop of rigid and patriarchal Indian society in which her life is controlled and dominated by her father and brothers who record female as, "village girls are cattle; whichever way you lead them, that is the way they will go" (46). However, Jyoti seeks a modern and educated husband who keeps no faith in dowries and traditions, and thus finds US based modern thinking man named Prakash. He encourages him in everything especially in learning English and symbolically gives her the name 'Jasmine', which is the name of this novel

The novel has a non-chronological order of events creating a rather cinematic effect, which makes it hard to follow the shifts in location and time. The narration is in the first person and the time and setting is Baden, Elsa county, Iowa, when Jasmine is aged twenty-four.

The novel's opening phrase, "Lifetimes ago…" (1) sets in motion the major motif, the recreation of one's Self. Jasmine is seven years old. Under a banyan tree in Hasnapur, an astrologer forecasts her eventual widowhood and exile. Jasmine raises in anger and said "No, you're a crazy old man. You do not know what my future holds!" (1). Then the astrologer replies "Suit yourself, What is to happen will happen" (1). Such astrological forecasts create a grave moment in the young girl's life. It foretells her first husband's death and even her move to the isolated Iowa farm town of Baden.

In *Jasmine,* Mukherjee tries to untie the difficult layers of cross-cultural reality, through a series of adventures, which the heroine undertakes during her odyssey from Punjab to California through Florida, New York and Iowa. Her struggle symbolizes the restless quest of a rootless person annoyed by a depressing sense of loneliness all around. Her journey through life leads Jasmine through many transformations--Jyoti, Jasmine, Jazzy, Jase and Jane through divergent geographical locales like Punjab, New York, Iowa and finally California. The narrative transports between past and present, between India of the narrator's early life, and America of her present one. Jasmine is a giver. She is a caregiver, recipe-giver, a preserver and a tornado. She is a vital, life-giving force to Bud, Taylor, Duff and Du—they all love her and depend on her. She learns how to reinvent both herself and the American dream.

The novel begins with the retelling of a story from her childhood about an astrologer who predicts her future as a widower living in exile. Then we are transported to see her living in Baden, Iowa where Jasmine known as Jane is 24 years old, pregnant and living with 53 year old banker Bud Ripplemayer, and their adopted son Du. Bud insists on marrying Jane, who refuses for unknown reasons. Bud is also in a wheelchair because he was shot in the back two years ago. Jane and Bud have a neighbor named Darrel Luzt, a recent college grad who inherited his family's farm. He is contemplating whether or not to

sell his farm. Bud refuses to loan Darrel money to inflate his herd and grow his crops because Bud does not trust Darrel's character as a farmer and a manager. Darrel also shows some romantic interest in Jane.

Jane walks through her life with Du and Bud before flashing back to her life in Hasnapur, Jullundhar District, Punjab. Here in India, she is known as Jyoti. She has a teacher named Masterji, who teaches her English. Masterji urges Jyoti to continue with her education instead of getting married. Soon after Jyoti's father passes away, she meets Prakash. They marry and move in together. He begins to call her Jasmine. Prakash works two jobs and studies for his diploma exams while Jasmine runs a Ladies' Group raffle and sells detergent to make money. Prakash receives a letter from Professor Vadhera who encourages Prakash to study in America. While he is making plans to move the two of them to Florida, one day Prakash, when he is out shopping for saris, is killed by a bomb, set off by a man named Sukhwinder.

Even after Prakash's death, Jasmine continues with Prakash's plans to move to Florida, travelling by plane, train, and ship. Half-Face, the captain of the ship drives Jasmine to a motel when they arrive to land. He then sexually assaults her. Jasmine scrutinizes killing herself, "I tried to keep my eyes on Ganpati and prayed for the strength to survive, long enough to kill myself" (116) but instead kills Half-Face. "I was walking death. Death incarnate" (119). She stabs him to death and in this act she finds the strength to continue to live and vows to start a new life in America, separate from India and the native identity. She says:

> My body was merely the shell, soon to be discarded. Then I could be reborn, debts and sins all paid for. If he had only killed me. If he had only left my mission alone. He made me say it, he laughed at it. Suddenly death was being denied. I buttoned up the jacket and sat by the fire. With the first

> streaks of dawn, my first full of American day, I walked out the front drive of the motel to the highway and began my journey, traveling light. (121)

By this incident the protagonist has come to know the real purpose of her survival. Jasmine does not seem to give up her life; instead she tries to overcome the difficult situation she faces. Jasmine becomes 'the Other' which is the characteristics of being different from alien to the social identity and to the identity of Self. She reincarnates according to the time and incidents she undergoes.

Jasmine meets Lillian Gordon, who takes her in. Mrs. Gordon is also housing three Kanjobal women. She calls Jasmine 'Jazzy,' and helps her get to New York to meet with Professor Vadhera. Lillian also has a daughter named Kate Gordon-Feldstein who works as a photographer in the city. Lillian is later sent to jail for exploiting undocumented fees for cooking, cleaning and yard work. For five months, Jasmine lives with Professor Vadhera, whom she calls Professorji. She becomes depressed because she has fears, hesitating to leave the house without a green card. Professorji agrees to get her a green card, for fifty thousand rupees, or three thousand dollars.

Jasmine's former identities are never completely erased, and keep on emerging in specific moments. In an attempt to forget her past and all the horrific experiences, Jasmine tries to distance herself from everything Indian. In an attempt to flee from her past she moves to New York City to become the au pair for an American family.

Jasmine begins working for Wylie and Taylor Hayes, friends of Kate Gordon-Feldstein. She moves in with them in Manhattan to take care of their adopted daughter, Duff. Taylor calls her "Jase." Wylie falls out of love with Taylor and falls for Stuart. Wylie leaves Taylor, but Jase continues to take care of Duff. She falls in love with Taylor, but one day while the three of them are at the park, Jase spots Sukhwinder, the man that killed Prakash. She flees New York for Iowa. She chooses Iowa because Duff's birth mother lives

in Iowa. Back in present day Iowa, Jane recalls the night two years ago when Harlan Kroener shot Bud. They were walking to Harlan's car when he shot Bud. He then proceeded to kill himself. Harlan was angry at Bud because of money issues with the bank. Before Bud met Jane, he was married to Karin. Karin initially hates Jane for taking her husband away from her, but they maintain a spiritual relationship.

Jane receives a letter from Taylor, letting her know he and Duff are on their way to find Jane. Du figures out Jane is in love with another man besides Bud. Jane goes to visit Darrel because he says he feels crazy, but she leaves soon when he starts insulting her and Bud's relationship. She suspects he might shoot himself that night. When she returns home, Du announces that he is going to L.A. to live with his sister and he leaves with his friend John. Karin visits, and the two of them drive to see how Darrel is doing. He is fixing up his hog house. Back at the house, Jane tells Bud that Du went to visit his sister but he will be back before school starts. Bud later approves of Darrel's loan application, and the two of them drive over to let him know the news. But when they arrive, they discover him hanging from a rafter.

Bud begs for Jane to tell him she loves him, but she does not respond. Du has decided to stay in California. While Jane is working in the kitchen, she sees a car pull up the driveway and Taylor and Duff get out of the car. Taylor tries to convince Jase to come with him to California. She is hesitant, thinking of Bud who will lose everything if she leaves. She calls Karin and tells her she's going somewhere, to see Du. Jasmine stops thinking of herself as Jane and follows Taylor and Duff to the car, whispering "Watch me re-position the stars," to the astrologer who foretold her widowhood and exile. Jasmine has achieved a proper identity and balance between tradition and modernity in the concluding part of the novel.

Jasmine changes herself constantly, ferrying between multiple identities in different spaces and at different times. Jasmine shows the most predictable crusade towards Americanization and its obvious uncertainty and without feeling infuriated she survives to make a new start in the host country. Geographically, the story begins in India and takes off from Europe to America, where it bounces back and forth from Florida through New York to proceed to Iowa, then finally lands in California. The novelist has deliberately transports her in time and space again and again so as to bring in a sense of instability into the novel.

This novel is another one that applies the stream of consciousness technique wherein every small thought can emerge at any time when the character got to compare the past events with the present time. Jasmine used to be the traditional Punjabi girl from the village of Hasnapur who was haunted by the partition of Pakistan and India dragging from family down from Paradise. The story is absolute anti-exotic concept from the West perspective.

Jasmine has had bitter experiences throughout her life starting from her childhood. She always faces the unexpected events; early marriage, the death of her father, her husband died from the terrorist explosion, and she was raped after illegally entering to the US by the seaman whom she killed him when she was asleep. The reason why she comes to America is to burn Prakash's clothes as he could not fulfill his dream of coming to America. Jasmine comes to America to create her own identity by adapting their culture.

To start a new life in foreign land, Jasmine has to undergo a huge transformation. Her transformation helps her to create a new identity. Therefore, Jasmine becomes the complete 'Other' by forgetting her past and in search of her identity. Here the Self of the character Jasmine requires the existence of the Other. So, the character tries to become the Other. Becoming the Other helps this character to build an identity which is perhaps the opposite of the Self. To define her Self in the foreign land, the existence of 'the Other' is

required. Frantz Fanon (1963), who develops the ideas of the 'Other' in his writing to be a key concern in Post-colonial studies "To him the Other is 'not me', he is 'the Other'".

Jasmine, the protagonist of the novel is a complex, resourceful and dynamic character who undergoes drastic change throughout the novel. A young woman from India, she represents Bharati Mukherjee's concept of 'the new breed' of Americans from non-European countries. Mukherjee describes this novel as a fable of the new immigrant experience, highlighting the psychic violence and Self-invention she describes as necessary for an immigrant to be successful in America. She is 'reincarnated' multiple times through the roles and names she adopts.

Conceptually, the Self requires the existence of the Other, so the protagonist Jasmine undergoes multiple identities to become the 'Other'. Her renaming is the sign of her initial migration away from the traditional India. Initially Jyoti and Jasmine are two separate selves, yet Jasmine finds herself occupying both the identities.

The concept of Otherness sees the world as divided into mutually excluding opposites; if the Self is ordered, rational, good, then the Other is chaotic, irrational and bad. In the novel, after Jasmine's husband's death she emigrates to America all alone to fulfill his husband's dream. Upon her arrival in Florida, she meets Half-Face, the captain of the ship on which she entered the country, and his disrespectful treatment gives her, her first taste of American racial categorization. That person sees her only as a sexual being and after the rape Jasmine finds that she cannot escape this new perception of identity. Thus she turns to violence in order to express the conflict she is experiencing. She stabs him to death and in this act she finds the strength to continue to live and starts a new life in America, separate from India and the native identity. Jasmine's speaking a new language and acquiring new names becomes a severing process from Orientalism, an act of rebirth in some ways that is just as violent in its complete erasure of the past as her committed

murder of Half-Face. Jasmine adopts America's narrative and by doing so transform its meaning. From then, there is no more Jyoti (former name), thus she becomes 'Other'.

When Jasmine reaches America, she wanted to completely adapt their culture in order to build a different identity and at the same time she wanted to become completely Other. The meeting with Lillian Gordon starts the process of assimilation, with a temporary home and a temporary name; Jasmine as Jazzy. It is Lillian Gordon who helps her to become an American at ease with her Americanness. She bestows upon her the nickname 'Jazzy' a symbol of her entrance into and the acceptance of American culture which she welcomes gladly. Jasmine pays tribute to her after Lillian Gordon is busted for harbouring "undocumented", "She represented to me the best in the American experience and the American character. She went to jail for refusing to name her contacts or disclose the names and addresses of the so-called army of illegal aliens she'd helped "dump" on the welfare rolls of America" (137).

Lillian Gordon is not a "missionary dispensing new visions and stamping out the old" (131). For Jasmine, she is a "facilitator who made possible the lives of absolute ordinaries that we ached for" (131). When Jasmine runs away to Iowa from New York she finds another comforter in Mother Ripplemeyer. The kind lady not only takes Jasmine home for lunch but also provides her a job in her son's bank. They are the people who do not see differences as alienating. Their directness of their approach show their minds to be devoid of any impediments towards the oneness of all humanity irrespective of distinctions of race, ethnicity, skin, colour, religion or any other such factor. This is why Jasmine wants to "belong to that tribe" (197) whose representatives are Lillian Gordon and Mother Ripplemeyer. Having come in contact with their likes, Jasmine cannot have a ghetto-mentality of any secluded Diasporic community.

Jasmine creates her final identity when she moves to Baden and meets Bud Ripplemeyer, an American banker who instantly falls in love with her. They eventually marry and Bud renames Jasmine as Jane, yet another evolution of her identity. Jasmine thrives on Bud's Orientalist fantasy of hers, and in essence his perception of her sexuality is what allows her to embrace her new identity, so she is able to "rejuvenate" Bud by being the sexual, passionate and powerful woman she now sees herself as (200).

The English texts also represent Jasmine's struggle learning English and the ability to apply English texts she reads to her own experiences. Jasmine's speaking a new language and acquiring new names becomes a process of severing from Orientalism, an act of rebirth in some ways that is just as violent in its complete erasure of the past as her committed murder of Half-Face. Jasmine adopts America's narrative and by doing so transforms its meaning.

With a remarkable will power, she fights an undesirable fate as she resists the hold of a feudal and patriarchal family. Her marriage to Prakash allows her to break the mold of the traditional female role in Indian society and strengthen her hopes for a bright future.

In the novel Jasmine blossoms from the timid submissive Indian wife, to a strong independent Indo-American woman, stops worrying about the future and is indifferent to the past. She is renamed Jasmine after her marriage to Prakash. Prakash's renaming of Jasmine is a representative of her initial migration away from the traditional Indian customs and cultures. Her husband wants her to become a modern city woman as he aids her in her transformation from Jyoti to Jasmine. Here starts her transformation from a village girl under the shell of her father and brothers to a wife of an American traditional husband who gives her all liberties. Prakash wants her to him by his first name. But Jasmine is not at all comfortable with it. In Hasnapur wives used only pronouns to address their husbands. She still had a hard time calling him Prakash. She would cough to get his

attention. Every time she coughs his husband would say, “Do I hear a crow trying human speech?” (77). He wanted to break down the Jyoti she’s been in Hasnapur and make her a new kind of city woman. To break of the past, he gives a new name ‘Jasmine’.

Jasmine’s rebirths as Jyoti/Jasmine/Kali/Jazzy/Jase/Jane represent stages in Jasmine’s ever-changing self-identification process and the cultural influence she undertakes at each stage. When Jasmine visits a swami in an ashram after Prakash’s death, he tells her that “a person’s highest mission is to create new life” (97). She later realizes that the identity of Jasmine and the dream of Vijh and Wife are her versions of this “new life” (97). It is through this redefinition of “new life” that Jasmine gains enough courage to transform herself into a maximalist immigrant. Jasmine’s selves do not follow the concept of wholeness and often overlap; frustrating the power the signifier has over the signified. Hindu texts, namely for their focus on reincarnation and pluralistic deities, are the clearest Indian cultural influence on these rebirths. Jasmine, like the Bengali interpretation of Kali, encompasses birth and destruction at the same time. Her journey also reads as a realization of Hindu theological beliefs about the soul.

The text’s tangled structure allows Jasmine the freedom to float between classic to powerful Indian goddess Kali. This structure also prescribes the breakdown of cultural barriers in literature. Here Mukherjee provides not only a space for the Indian immigrant in the American canon, but also subtly makes the argument that Indian women do not follow to their passive Orientalized stereotype. Through interwoven identities of fictional women that gain agency through their ability to transform themselves, Mukherjee sets a literary precedent for Jasmine and therefore asserts her place as an American feminist character.

It is difficult to pinpoint when each incarnation of Jasmine begins and ends, even with her insistence that “we murder who we were so we can rebirth ourselves in the image of dreams” (29). The reader never witnesses the birth of Jasmine’s child just as they never

witness her maintaining a stable identity. The narrative stays in the gestational stage because it is a fable about the development of a new America and not its final arrival. More significantly, because the narrative never enters a final conclusion or birth Jasmine is never presented with the necessity to adopt a stable sense of identity. Jasmine's identity, much like Jasmine's child, seems to be forever in the fetal stages of development.

Jasmine again expands upon Jane Eyre through her Jane Ripplemeyer incarnation, which picks up where the original text ended. She has been compared to Jane Eyre, Bud as Rochester. "Jane" is pregnant with Rochester figure's baby. Harlan is one of Bud's clients and Rochester believes that Bertha's seclusion is for her own good. However, Bud's paraplegic comes from his unwillingness to recognize the economic pressure on Baden's farmers causes them to lash out at moneylenders. Jasmine's pregnancy is product of artificial insemination, and it is implied that she does not love her "Rochester." When she lives with Bud Jasmine becomes increasingly aware of his willful ignorance of class or race distinction, and he keeps his ignorance in order to maintain the delusion that he is still "the pillar of Baden" (200). Like Jane Eyre, Jasmine serves as a moral beacon for the corrupt "Rochester".

After meeting Jasmine, Bud is transformed by his Orientalist interactions with Asia, which compels him to "make up for fifty years of Selfishness" (144). Du, the Vietnamese refugee who becomes their adopted son, fills the role of the ward Adele, and he is ignored as much by Bud as Adele is by Rochester. Furthermore, as Rochester ignores Adele in order to forget his past sins, Du stands as a continual reminder of the fallout from the Vietnam War as a victim of the resulting political instability. Bud adopts Du presumptively to make up for the "Selfishness" of his past, but metaphorically this reads as an emblem of America's tendency to assuage political guilt with charitable contributions.

Bud's concept of America never changes despite the evidence in his surroundings, and he continually regards Du with suspicion. Through her incarnation as the dynamic and individualistic "Jane", Jasmine eventually grows beyond the role of exoticized moral compass. As she explains at the end of the novel: "I am caught between the promise of America and old-world dutifulness. A care-giver's life is a good life, a worthy life" (240). Though presumable she chooses the "promise of America" by leaving with Taylor at the end of the novel, Jasmine is uncertain of her fate.

Jasmine herself sees the darker side to this characterization, stating, "Bud courts me because I am an alien. I am darkness, mystery, inscrutability. The East plugs me into instant vitality and wisdom" (200). Bud's view of Jasmine's identity clashes against her name, showing that Bud does not view her as the American ideal as much as the Orientalized view of Eastern wisdom. When she is not afforded the pioneering identity she seeks in Baden, Jasmine moves on. She alludes to her appropriation of the pioneer archetype at the end of the novel by declaring, "Adventure, risk, transformation: the frontier is pushing indoors through the un-caulked windows" (240). Here Jasmine redefines the frontier as the promise of transformation and opportunity instead of a physical place while she retraces the early American pioneer's western route. Jasmine's psychological and physical adventures are entangled. Her appropriation of the Hindu sage archetype enables her to avoid the categorical restriction of the original Calamity Jane era pioneers and still retain characteristic of this role that allow her more agency.

Jasmine's journey gives her sage-like powers because she views others and herself from a distance. This ability gives her greater control over her destiny. Throughout her shifting between incarnations Jasmine keeps her 'third eye' a scar she receives in the first chapter of the novel. Jasmine's mother explains to her that only the holiest sages develop eyes in the middle of their foreheads. This eye serves as an eye into an enlightened state,

sometimes indicating divine or wisdom. Many mid-forehead markings on statues or on people are symbolic of the third eye. However, as with much of her other symbolism, Mukherjee uses the third eye as an alternative meaning. In the Hindu religion it is said that if Shiva opens his third eye the physical world will cease to exist.

The end of the novel finds Jasmine moving to California with Taylor, uncertain of what the future will bring but nevertheless confident in her decision to leave,

> "I cry into Taylor's shoulder, cry through all the lives I've given birth to, cry for all my dead. Then there is nothing I can do. Time will tell if I am a tornado, rubble-maker, arising from nowhere and disappearing into a cloud. I am out the door and in the potholed and rutted driveway, scrambling ahead of Taylor, greedy with wants and reckless from hope. (241)

The shifting of her identity from 'Jyoti' to 'Jasmine' to 'Jane' to 'Jase' is suggestive of the death of one personality and an emergence of a new, but it does not have negative implications. This sense of movement further strengthens the notion that her identity is forever evolving, she cannot remain in a stable life because disruption and change are the means of her survival. The surrounding environments influence the formation of her identities. She navigates between temporal and spatial locations, her perception of herself changes, thereby resulting in a multiplicity of consciousness. These create a tension within her and she feels the need to reconcile these conflicting perceptions, so that they do not wage a psychological war inside her. Thereby we see her reinvent and reincarnate her identity completely by destructing the Self to become an 'Other' in order to survive in a foreign land.

Violence is not the only vehicle that facilitates change in Jasmine or represents adaptation to new lives in Jasmine. The "pitted, pocked, broken up" nature of identity that

facilitates necessary change is hybridized. Jasmine cannot completely escape the ghosts of her past or completely murder her Indian Self; she instead becomes a mosaic of selves.

Mukherjee asserts that the new immigrant is bionic. John Hoppe (1999) explains, "The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation" (148).

Samir Dayal (1993) argues that in *Jasmine* "it is often hard to separate perpetrators from victims, destruction from creation, and violence from its opposites" (72). If there is one consistent theme throughout *Jasmine,* it is this ambivalent line between archetypes and ideologies that seem initially to be widely divided. The ease with which characters like Du and Jasmine negotiate their psychological transformation into maximalist Americans implies that East and West are not as polarized as essentialist interpretations of these cultures present. Jasmine's sage identity translates easily into the pioneer because both identities allow her to journey beyond the edges of social reality. Jasmine's pregnant body and the waiting room between India and America that she occupies during her secretive flight between countries also allow her the space to transport between identities in a liminal and constrictively instable environment.

'Otherness' can also be seen as a shared theme of this issue is seeing and feeling from the Other's perspective, a practice which may cultivate an understanding of how others are also selves. Contrary to Levinas's claim, empathetically living the other through literature, need not necessarily collapse difference. On the one hand, imagining oneself into the experiential lives of Others may involve a Self seeking its mirror image in the Other, presupposing and projecting a sameness in mental and emotional states, claiming a common ground that is in fact under the jurisdiction of the Self.

On the other hand, this does not necessarily exclude the fact that empathy can at the same time be Other-oriented: empathy does not only involve imagining how the Other is like us, but availing oneself of such imagining precisely as a means to imaginatively reach how it is to be like the Other, that is, the Self may be sought in the Other ultimately in the interest of reconciling and fine-tuning a comparative sentiment in an effort to appreciate, move toward, and meet the Other. Given that one is only ever admitted to one's own experience, in empathy, the Self may identify with the experiential reality of the Other through and by drawing on their own reservoir of accumulated life experiences not to assimilate but to approach the Other. Although every individual life history is contextually specific, unique, and thus would, on the face of it, inhibit identically feeling what the Other feels, one does need 'to feel the Other's feeling. Neither does empathy presuppose nor demand that the Other be identical to myself. Consequently, when literature is also considered as something Other than representation, then affectively living the experiential lives of literary others is not a false promise.

"My own eyes are not enough for me," C.S. Lewis writes towards the close of *An Experiment in Criticism* (1961), "I will see through those of Others." In this respect, literature is essential inasmuch as "[l]iterary experience heals the wound, without undermining the privilege, of individuality" because, as he explains, "in reading great literature, I become a thousand men and yet remain myself … I see with myriad eyes, but it is still I who see" (140-141).

The character Jasmine in the novel builds multiple identities throughout her life. The reincarnation of her multiple identities help her for survival in such foreign land. Though the character rebirths as Jyoti/Jasmine/Kali/Jazzy/Jase/Jane, she remains herself at the end.

Jasmine creates a new world consisting of new world consisting of new ideas and values, constantly unmasking her past to establish a new cultural identity by incorporating new desires, skills, and habits. This transition is defined not only in the changes in her attitude, but more significantly in her relationship with men.

Hence, we come know that Jasmine's identity is formed not only through construction, but also through the destruction of existing Self. This destruction of existing Self has helped her to survive in an alien land. The transformation of the heroine satisfies her inner Self rather than the society. As social-realism adorns the life of the poor, in *Jasmine* the life of Jyoti is glorified by herself and her inner consciousness which makes her act according to her own wish. Mukherjee's novel reaches the theme of fulfillment within the inner Self at the final moment.

Chapter 3

Cultural Disorientation

The history of mankind itself is the history of migration and settlement; of displacement and relocation, of alienation and belonging, and of acculturation and assimilation, wherein the displaced lot keeps negotiating all along with the 'New World'. Expatriate experiences are invariably the experiences related to displacement, cultural crises, rootlessness, a sense of alienation and marginalization caused due to 'triple disruption'- "loss of roots, linguistic diversity, and social dislocation" (Rushdie 279).

Expatriates, especially first generation expatriates, find it quite difficult to mentally adjust to the alien culture, to the new setup. They try to survive in their adopted land by creating alternative worlds in two ways; one, in the form of nostalgia of the past and two, avoiding in all possible ways the process of socialization by clinging to their own culture. They beat their time by indulging in nostalgia, for nostalgia sustains memory, sometimes even creates it which in turn it prevents the experienced Self from coming smoothly under the influence of the new culture. To survive in the foreign land the expatriates create an ambience there by establishing their own ghetto, celebrating their festivals, dining together or holding community feasts, sharing cultural markers and little socializing with the dominant group. Thus they create an 'alternative world' in their present world. These expatriates ignore the subtle desire to merge among the majority, oppose the willingness of their children to adjust to and accept the dominant culture.

Culture is passed on from one generation to the next through the process of socialization. Although there are many aspects of everyday life which are shared by most members of society, there are different conceptions and definitions of culture within this general approach. The culture is not the same when one moves to a different country. There

one remains in a huge confusion whether to follow one's own culture or adapt to their foreign culture.

When people move into a different foreign land, their culture remains a big problem. Thus the term 'Cultural Disorientation' is basically refers to a person's confusion as to which culture, religion and tradition to follow. This sort of cultural crisis can be found in diasporic literature.

The immigrant experience and status of expatriate writers is constantly filtered and replicated in their fiction. As K.T Sunita points out in "Cross Cultural Dilemmas of Indian Women in Bharati Mukherjee's Fiction" *The Literature of Indian Diaspora* (2000): "Indian expatriate writers do not write from the position of a distant foreign community, such as the exiled Black or West Indian novelists, but their writing reflects the perspective of someone caught between two cultures" (82). Loss, alienation and dislocation are experienced by every expatriate at some stage or the other. In the case of Jhumpa Lahiri's , she is a second generation expatriate and is hence better able to understand and replicate the 'sandwich culture' in her novel.

The novel deals with the problems of Indian immigrants of Bengali origins in America. In socio-cultural spatialization these immigrants come across the problem of language, cultural practice, political ideology and in social adjustment they do not have any prejudice against the American culture but they have the privilege for home culture in which they are born and brought up. In the enjoyment of illusions in this imaginary state they cannot dispel the domestic ideology. It becomes difficult on their part to keep their culture inviolable in the highly materialistic society. In a conflicted Self and confused mind they can neither keep their indigenous culture insular nor can consider the acquired one as irrational. In adoration of the native one and adoption of the acquired one they walk on the razor's edge of the ethics and maintain a fine balance between the two. As Patricia Holt

says it in "Mukherjee's Vision of America," *San Francisco Sunday Examiner and Chronicle* (1991), The marginal and alienated Self enjoys "a two-way metamorphosis" (2) in America's materialist society. They syncretise their cultural values with the affluent 'Other' remaining above the narrow feelings of prejudice and intolerance. In their struggle against the dominant culture's influence they try to keep their indigenous one 'pure'.

Lahiri herself is a second-generation Indian immigrant in America. Her nostalgia for India is that of the first generation Bengalis who move between the two in their emotional courses. Analyzing her love for Calcutta in her 'inbetweenness' she narrates how the second generation Bengalis in their existential marginality become a decentred lot. This second generation immigrants, the "American-born confused deshis" (118), are confused and conflicted more in their self-idealisation. The first generation has the flashback of immediate past in their inherited Self but the second generation has a fluidity of it in their 'acquired Self'. When the first generation wavers between Indian identity and American nationality, the second generation in their frivolity deconstructs their identity and Self in 'abrogation'. This appropriateness of India as the motherland for Ashoke was precious but Gogol it is a Cassandra "in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality" (Fanon, 18).

The Namesake centers on the psychological travails of the protagonists Gogol (a namesake of the Russian short story writer Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol) who tries to frame a sense of identity and individuality for himself out of the tricultural assimilation of his existence. *The Namesake* is about Gogol, who later on calls himself Nikhil, and yet we can analyze it as Ashoke's story, Ashima's story and Gogol's story. Throughout the novel, there is no first-person description but the first few chapters are clearly Ashoke's story, even though the novel begins with Ashima's labour pains and the birth of Gogol. Ashoke sits in the waiting room of the hospital, waiting for the news of the arrival of his first-born.

It is as if the writer is indicating the possible and probable responses to the idea of immigration. When Ashoke decides to move to the US, much against the wishes of his family, "he began to read, late at night, which was when his motionless body felt most restless, his mind agile and clear…he imagined not only walking but walking away…" (20). His immigration is certainly for economic gain, for professional purposes and for permanent residence there. Sociologically this would mean an interaction between two cultures-the traditional Indian culture and the modern Western-American culture.

Ashoke could easily fit into the category that G.S Aurora (1976) in *The New Frontiers Men* calls 'accommodationists'. The goal of these people living in the host country is only earning money—a better economic condition than the one they had at home. Hence they are not troubled by questions of belonging and not belonging. At work they adopt the dress etc., of the host country so as not to be seen as belonging to a minority. This type of adjustments allowed them to preserve their cultural identity at home without it in anyway imposing on their economic goals. Ashoke too manages this dual identity with total flair. He seems to follow the American dictum: "Everyone should live on their own at some point" (161).

Ashoke compares himself to the writer Nikolai Gogol: both lived most of their lives away from their homeland. The desire to go back to one's roots, to retain one's culture, causes Ashoke to be a part of the Bengali community in his town—Bengali can be heard and spoken, festivals can be celebrated and one can continue to have a sense of belonging, of being a part of one's own community. Ashoke tries to keep this link on by his periodic visits to the homeland.

In direct contrast to this is the portrayal of Ashoke's wife Ashima. Moving to the US after her marriage, Ashima's status as an expatriate is handled in great detail. "The situation of woman is that she, a free and autonomous being like all creatures, nevertheless

finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other" (Beauvoir, 173). She is presented as a typical female as portrayed by male writers in diverse cultures through all ages.

She represents the majority of women expatriates, including Indians, who are reluctant to change or adopt the culture of the host country. This could be a result the fact that Ashima does not work outside the home, she has not pursued her higher studies in the host country; the reluctance to change could also be a direct result of the fact that she and others like her are not fully exposed to the cultural mores of this new society. Hence, Ashima lacks the motivation to change and we notice that for women like her the need for social ties or kinship relations assumes greater importance. Their dependence on husband and family for solace and support too is a consequence of this. In her dress sense too, they continue to wear the costumes of their homeland as she does in wearing only sarees.

It begins with Ashima, who is in the hospital in US to deliver their baby without the emotional support of her family, which is in India. She feels lonely and abandoned, as she struggles through the barriers of culture and language. "There is nothing to comfort her in the off-white tiles of the floor, the off-white panels of the ceiling, the white sheets tucked tightly into bed" (4). The loneliness arises from her inability to find herself a proper identity in the midst of strange culture and language, however hard she tries to imbibe it. The emotional agony stresses her intensely and adds to her physical pain. It pains her not to have her relatives around her when she gives birth to her first child in a foreign country. She misses the comfort and piece; whereas her present abode of stay suffocates her inner being. But she gradually comes into terms with her new home and manages things well when her husband is away on teaching.

Ashoke and Ashima, both Bengalis at heart even after migration, are portrayed as fervent preservers of Bengali festivals and religious rituals and rites of the ethnic

community even while in America. This is made clear when the writer presents the annaprasan ceremony of their son Nikhil named Gogol, which the couple eagerly celebrate while in America, through with minutiae altered by the changed circumstances. Nonetheless, since Cohan says "the distinct diaspora communities are constructed out of the confluence of narratives of the ole country to the new, which create a sense of shared history" (qtd. in Mishra 39), the couple are bound to acculturate despite their pride in the Bengali customs and the solidarity they establish with other Indian migrants in America. The celebration of Christmas and the compromise made on the food made at home are instances. Lahiri makes the heterodiagetic narrator observe, "for the sake of Gogol and Sonia they celebrated with progressively increasing fanfare, the birth of Christ, an event the children look forward to more than the worship of Durga and Saraswathi" (64). The preparation of "Shak'n Bake chicken or Hamburger Helper prepared with ground lamb" (65) is yet another instance where a compromise is effected for the sake of host-land-born generation.

None the less, it is significant that these changes made do cost the immigrants much, it is not without pain and reluctance that acculturation takes place. Giving birth and childrearing in America is shown as hard for Ashima who is used to the concept of pregnancy and childcare under different cultural values. Though in America, it is the thoughts about India that make these tolerable for her. Thus, Ashima is caught up in the practices of India while at America. The musings of Ashima run thus:

> It is nine and half hours ahead in Calcutta, already evening, half past eight. In the kitchen of her parents' flat on Amherst Street, at this very moment, a servant is pouring after-dinner tea into steaming glasses, arranging Marie biscuits on a tray. Her mother, very soon to be a grandmother, is standing at the mirror of her dressing table, untangling waist-length hair, still more

> black than gray, with her fingers. Her father hunches over his slanted ink-stained table by the window, sketching, smoking, listening to the Voice of America. Her younger brother, Rana studies for a physics exam… opposite an alcove shielded by clouded panes of glass is stuffed with books and papers and her father's water colour tins. (5)

Thus rather than alternating behavior as per requirements, Ashima is shown as finding solace in thoughts about India and in the watch "which is a bon voyage gift from her parents slipped over her wrist, the last time she saw them, amid airport confusion and tears" (4), establishing her as a liminal personae. The discomfort experienced by Ashima has also been expressed in clear terms when it is said that Ashima spent hours in the apartment napping and sulking, rereading her parents' letters and the same five Bengali novels and that for Ashima:

> Being a foreigner is a sort of life long pregnancy—a perpetual wait, a constant burden, a continuous feeling out of sorts. It is an ongoing responsibility, a parenthesis in what had once been ordinary life, only to discover that that previous life has vanished, replaced by something more complicated and demanding. Like pregnancy, being a foreigner, Ashima believes, is something that elicits the same curiosity from strangers, the same combination of pity and respect. (50)

As Sunita Agarwal states in "Generational Differences in Diasporic Writings: Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*" (2007), "the dichotomy between private and public sphere is almost tormenting to these women immigrants who have to suffer double dependence. It becomes difficult for them to cope with multiple stresses of the two different cultures" (30).

Ashima experiences solitude in America even after the birth of Gogol, “she cries as she feeds him and as she pats him to sleep, and she cries between sleeping and feeding. She cries after the mailman’s visit because there are no letters from Calcutta” (34) and harping back upon India, writing letters to her mother or reading Bengali books turns out to be her only solace. Though Ashima seems to be apparently comfortable with her children to take care of, the same irritation and loneliness returns to her once her children are grown up.

The accidental naming of their first born as Gogol also brings twists to the plot. Gogol or Nikhil, a second generation expatriate provides the third point of view in the novel. It is Nikolai Gogol, Russian Surrealist who inspires Ashoke Ganguli to name his son as Gogol. And Gogol grows up with a name that he dislikes, a name that seems to make him stand apart from the rest of his classmates:

> Though substitute teachers at school always pause, looking apologetic when they arrive at his name on the roaster, forcing Gogol to call out, before even being summoned, ‘that’s me’, teachers in the school system know not to give it a second thought. After a year or two, the students no longer tease and say ‘giggle’ or ‘gargle’. (66-67)

Hating his unusual name, he grows in the US imbibing American culture and shedding the Indian one. Gogol who cannot identify himself with the name, starts hating the company of others who address him as Gogol. He also has a sense of alienation which arises from his inability to identify with other white children as well as his parents who are Indians. Thus forms a split or a wide gap between the two generations. He changes his name to Nikhil so that he does not have to explain again and again why he has such an unusual name.

Throughout the novel, Gogol is haunted by his name, even when he changes it to Nikhil he realizes that he cannot get away from it. The oddness of his name strikes him time and again:

> This writer he's named after-Gogol is not his first name. His first name is Nikholai. Not only does Gogol Ganguli have a pet name turned good name, but a last name turned first name. And so it occurs to him that no one he knows in the world, in Russia or India or America or anywhere, shares his name. Not even the source of his namesake. (78)

And this 'namesake' that gives the novel its title, *The Namesake.* Though Gogol constantly wonders about the reason for his having such an unusual name, his father harbours no doubts about the appropriateness of the name. To him, Gogol was his saviour because it was a volume of Gogol's writings that he was reading when the terrible train accident took place, 209 km away from Calcutta. When 7 bogies derailed at 2:30 in the morning, it was the book and a few pages that he clutched in his hands which saved him. So, this writer was merely his favourite writer and now he began to consider him his savior too. Thus, in a way, as if by sheer providence, Ashoke owes his life to Gogol. It is this feeling of overt gratitude to Gogol, the writer, which he, almost spontaneously, blurted out the name to be given to his newborn child.

This emotional conflict in Gogol finds psychological manifestation in the formation of his distinctive cultural identity. Gogol is a product of matrix culture, with the indices of Indian tradition and American social traits running parallel to each other beyond any point of convergence.

Gogol is caught between two opposite forces, of alienation and integration. The feeling of alienation in him is due to his strong desire to merge with the life of the adopted land, and his inability to do so for his cultural past, because of his family clinging to their

tradition and custom. He turns into a rebel due to clash between generations over their attitudes, approaches to the way of life and outlook of the host country. This creates a sordid conflict between him and his parents and aggravates, what Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (1994) says, "the tension of difference, the difference of the historical and geographical past and present" (177).

For Gogol, America is his home, and Boston is the sweetest place for him. His parents' and their friends' constant reference to India as 'desh' annoys him, he takes India as only India, a country like any other country in the world map, no emotional bond attached to it. He is tired with occasional visits of his parents to India during vacations. He hates visiting their relatives, taking unfamiliar names like Mithu and Monu. He feels relieved as soon as they leave for Boston. He does not suffer emotionally as his mother does at the thought of leaving India, rather his journey back to America quickly replaces lingering sadness. 'Home', for him, is not a search for roots, not a hunt for Self, but a quest for spatial identity.

In America too, Gogol does not share his parents' joy in celebrating Bengali festivals or their sticking to Bengali customs and traditions. He despises his parents' attempt to preserve their culture in the land of their relocation. He does not like the ghetto mentality of Bengali people or their community gathering where they enjoy Bengali food, sing Bengali songs, converse in Bengali language. His 'glorious' past to 'drab' present is unreal in his perspective. He is ever eager to embrace American life as his own, which he feels is compatible to his personality. So he and his sister Sonia take an American outlook in choosing their partners despite objections from their mother. Gogol only after becoming Nikhil kisses Kim and Sonia marries Ben, a half Chinese American citizen.

The identity crisis faced by the children born to immigrant parents is too serious. They cannot identify with their parents' aspirations, but at the same time, they are not

accepted by the whites among them. At one point Gogol tries settling down with Moushumi, a girl of Bengali origin. But they get divorced as Moushumi develops an affair with another man. They seem to be restless souls, in search of their true identity. They wander and trip along their journey of life.

The multilayered hybrid identity is a characteristic of diasporic cultures. Identity, here, becomes the net result of one's response to social experiences. Social identity is intended as a concept to mediate between social context and the action of human subjects. The social identity tradition is fundamentally oriented toward variability and possibility in human social behavior, rather than toward singularity and constraint. Its broad approach fits well with the social thinker Geertz in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1993) argument that human nature is to be found not on behavioral uniformities but in the patterning of behavioral differences:

> If we want to discover what man amounts to, we can only find it in what men are: and what men are, above all other things, is various. It is in understanding that variousness—its range, its nature, its basis and its implications—that shall come to construct a concept of human nature that, more than a statistical shadow and less than a primitivist dream, has both substance and truth. (51-52)

According to Burke (1994), the need for identification originates from division and becomes a reasonable cause for man to try to identify with other fellow beings and thus, unite (qtd. in Branaman 3: 446). We witness this need for identification in Lahiri's novel *The Namesake*. They are essentially lonely in a faraway place, very distant from their culture and language. It is their need to identify themselves with something familiar that makes them long for their homeland. The immigrants face difficulty in coping with a new culture which is entirely different from theirs. The immigrant children or rather the second

generation immigrants find it more confusing when they get themselves caught between two different cultures. Gogol's twin names pose a threat to his identity for a long time, almost till the end of the novel.

The dilemmas they encounter in their relationships shows their affiliation towards a western culture; they are never satisfied with their partners and do not follow the values and ethics of their parents. Their parents can never let go of their old culture and values and we can sense the nostalgia for their homeland. Gogol wants to lead an independent life, but his parents expect him to live according to Indian values, which is quite disturbing to him. He manages to have dual existence. Being both Gogol and Nikhil claim his true identity which is not purely American or Indian. Though he is born and brought up in America he is still an Indian to his fellow Americans. When he returns to India, he is referred to as an NRI. Lahiri has depicted the pain of the second generation, who has no land to be called their own. They live in a land which they can never belong because of their roots.

Ashoke and Ashima cling to their past while living in the present. They love the memories of their life in India and remain faithful to their heritage. They live in America without losing their sense of being an Indian. It is different in the case of their children, Gogol and Sonia, who do not cherish their parents' emotions regarding their homeland. They do not want to leave the material comforts in America; the journey to India becomes rather tiresome to them. Hence they do not view themselves as belonging to India. They aspire to be like Americans, adopting their culture, lifestyle, and dress codes. But they realize that the Indian part in them cannot be wiped out, especially, Gogol, who reconciliates with his name and accepts it with a yearning to understand his father through the book gifted by him. He decides to live by accepting his Indian roots in the American context.

Through Ashima and Ashoke, Lahiri presents the aura of loneliness of the expatriate families in an adopted country; a clash of their familial tradition as against everyday experience and the struggle of their Americanized children with their question of identity and belonging. This truly results in inwardness and isolation, both mental and physical in Gogol. But at the end, with his own life in ruins around him, his father no more, he turns to a volume of Gogol, a long discarded birthday gift from his father and starts reading for the first time, the sad tale of Akaky Akakievich and his overcoat.

Thus, despite his attempts at reframing his identity and individuality, despite his indifference to familial responsibilities, he is found to be de-cocooning himself from the intense psychological problem he confines himself into, sharing and attempting to renurture a bond of interconnectedness with his father with Gogol and 'The Overcoat' again providing a vital link and imparting a fresh meaning to his life and identity. In the world of eroding kinship and steady degeneration of familial bonds, the story of Gogol stands out as one which extols the permanence and strength of such relationship despite cultural fragmentation.

Lahiri also portrays the generational differences of the immigrant parents and their children. They face different problems—the first being directly related to one's homeland and second generation forming an image of culture based on the information transmitted by the first generation.

In adapting themselves to the new culture and in adopting new values and ideas, the immigrant is constantly faced with choices where he is confused. He feels a sense of belonging only with his own community and hence whenever a decision has to be taken, Ashoke and Ashima constantly have deliberations only with their own Bengali community. "Each step, each acquisition, no matter how small, involves deliberations, consultation with their Bengali friends" (64). The fear of losing one's culture and hence one's identity, the

possibility of being drowned in an alien society makes them hold on to their native group and culture whenever and as far as possible; attending music recitals or watching Bengali movies. The first generation immigrant attempts to create island where the host culture does not intrude but for the second generation like Gogol and Sonia Christmas is more exciting than their traditional festival *Durga Puja*. Even the language they speak confounds the parents because it is an accent that the parents are not familiar with.

The need to belong is constantly reinforced by the get-togethers that the community has; whether it is the usual weekend visiting or a special occasion, "the baby has three visitors, all Bengali (24), "as the baby grows, so, too does their circle of Bengali acquaintances" (38), "as their lives in New England with fellow Bengali friend" (63) or a birthday party when "like most events in Gogol's life is another excuse for his parents to throw a party for their Bengali friends" (72) or even the death of Ashoke, one notices that it is always a closed group of their community with very few or almost no Americans included.

The first generation expatriate lives a life very different from that of the second generation. In the case of Sonia and Gogol, they fit into a culture which they consider their own and except for the obvious differences in colour and appearance, they have no problems in fitting into the life of the host country. The expatriate is no longer 'ex' for he becomes a patriate. Exile and nationalism are the conflicting feelings. At the end of the novel while Ashima feels exiled and is drawn more towards her native land and always the expatriate and never the immigrant. In a way, she will be "True to the meaning of her name, she will be without borders, without a home of her own, a resident everywhere and nowhere" (276).

On the other hand, Gogol tries to find his roots, his identity and finally learns the lesson of action preached by existential philosophy. He realizes that the only way for an

immigrant to get rid of identity clashes is to accept that dual, fragile and hyphenated identity. When Gogol returns to Calcutta with his mother Ashima as a widow then he realizes the origin of his true name. His Self-invention comes to an end with an acceptance. He finally learns that lesson that the answer is not fully abandon or attempt to diminish either culture, but to mesh the two together Gogol is not fully in tune with his identity until he realizes that is embellished by both cultures. He does not want to be one or the other; he does not have to choose. He is made up of both. He is proud of who he is and where he comes from. Most importantly he is proud of his name and all that it means. He accepts the reality of his name recognizes his roots and feels belonging to his mother, sister and other people. He starts his new life in Calcutta but with a newly found acceptance. He feels the fact of life that detachment is not the solution of any problem. His journey starts from detachment and ends with getting involved and belonging to everyone.

Chapter 4

Conflicting Identities

The most basic problems experienced by the diasporic existence are nostalgia, alienation and problem of assimilation. While the first generation immigrants suffer from nostalgia, those who belong to the second generation or generations after that suffer from the problem of assimilation, i.e. they earnestly desire to get assimilated in their country of adoption and become part of it but their hyphenated identity never leaves them. Alienation is a common feature to all generation of immigrants, first generation immigrants are not one with the new surroundings (emotionally and culturally) and feel alienated whereas the next generations become part of the new culture but are still considered outsiders and hence made to feel alienated. This leads to an identity crisis.

Identity is a very intriguing concept both in psychology and literature. Many modern literary texts revolve around this concept. Michael Hogg and Dominic Abrams (1988), explain, "Identity as people's concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others" (2). Stuart Hall (1989) defines identity as "a process, identity is split. Identity is not a fixed point but an ambivalent point. Identity is also the relationship of the Other to oneself" (20). Alexander Wendt (1992) observes identities are "relatively stable, role-specific understandings and expectations about Self" (397).

Diasporic identities are characterized by a continuing relationship to a homeland that may either be physical, when individuals or group members continue to visit the homeland, or based on an imaginary community with the knowledge that they cannot, or will not return. Immigrants live and share the cultural life and traditions of two distinct peoples as they realize that they may never be fully accepted by their new nation and maintain memories, myths, customs and traditions of their original homeland. They position themselves astride the boundaries of two different cultures. Unable and unwilling

to assimilate, these immigrants exist as on the margin of two cultures and two societies, which never get completely interpenetrated and fused. To account for this duality, immigrants assert their individuality by declaring their hyphenated identity. However such transformations come after great loss and compromise; most of the times not without violence, in which one Self seems to annihilate another in the in between spaces. In the act of becoming, when the old subjectivity and the new subjectivity collide, psychological violence is inevitable.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's works are largely set in India and the United States, and often focus on the experiences of South Asian immigrants. She writes for children as well as adults and has published novels in multiple genres, including realistic fiction, historical fiction, magical realism, and fantasy. Much of Divakaruni's work is partially autobiographical. Most of her stories are set in the Bay Area of California, and she also excels at depicting the nuances of immigrant experience, she writes to shatter stereotypes and myths. She breaks down the barriers between people of different backgrounds, communities, ages, and different worlds. She focuses on the bicultural lives of Indian women struggling with cultural shackles to carve out an identity of their own.

She could draw the contrast between the selflessness required of women in India and the freedom they got in their adopted land. One feels committed to the land where one is born and always in search of the opportunity to verbalize one's feelings and memories of the homeland. In "The Occasion for Speaking" George Lamming tries to analyse the circumstances that led to the migration of certain writers and their absence from the homeland drags them into a state of separation from their roots sometimes temporarily and sometimes permanently. The questions like "Why have they migrated? And what, if any, are the peculiar pleasures of exile? Is their journey a part of a hunger for recognition? Do they see such recognition as a confirmation of the fact that they are writers?" (12) keeps

haunting the critic and the reader alike. Divakaruni's writings raise themes of alienation and Self-transformation at various levels and try to voice such questions by exploring their roots, allegiance, family, origin, community and identity through her works.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni focuses on the diasporic Indian women caught between two opposing worlds. They find themselves in an in-between state, struggling to carve out identities of their own. They are all trying to discover their own selves amidst joy and heartbreak. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni excels at depicting the cultural dialect of immigrant experience, like many other contemporary writers Bharati Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices* is about magic, wielded by a woman masquerading as an old and hunchbacked creature, but in reality, vibrant, eager for life, hungry with desires. Tilo, the mistress of spices, has many guises and names that reveal her multiple identities. Chameleon-like, she keeps changing throughout the novel, making clear how complex the problem of identity crisis is that Indians try to cope in a foreign land. *The Mistress of Spices* deals with the inner conflict raging within a woman who has to decide whether she has to live for the welfare of others or to live for herself.

In *The Mistress of Spices*, the character Tilo provides spices, not only for cooking, but also for the homesickness and alienation that the Indian immigrants experience. She writes to unite people and she does this by destroying myths and stereotypes. As she breaks down these barriers, she dissolves boundaries between people of different backgrounds, communities, ages and even different worlds. *The Mistress of Spices* is unique in that it is written with a blend of prose and poetry.

The novel follows Tilo, a magical woman who runs a grocery store and uses spices to help the customers overcome difficulties. In the process, she develops dilemmas of her own when she falls in love with a non-Indian. This brings out the true woman inside, who then has two minds. This creates conflicts, as she has to choose whether to serve her people

or to follow the path leading to her own happiness. Tilo has to decide which parts of her heritage she will keep and which parts she will choose to abandon.

Divakurani's *The Mistress of Spices* is the story of a girl born with magical powers, kidnapped by pirates whom she rules later shipwrecked enchanted island, where she is tutored by a mystical figure transmigrated in an old woman body to an Indian grocery store, met Raven, an elusive American in quest of an earthly paradise breaks Tilo to Maya. The novel in Oakland California, is about a female Indian shop owner named Tilo who sells spices which act a remedies for those who come to her for help. The protagonist of the novel, Tilo, is a Mistress of Spices, who is able to solve the problems of her customers miraculously with the help of the spices which they come to buy from her shop. She has been addressed by nearly four different names representing four conflicting and confusing identities in a single lifetime.

Tilo, the protagonist of the novel was born in a lower class family as a child and was considered as a burden by her parents as another as another dowry debt. As the cows run dry at the time of her birth she was fed with the milk of ass which helped her in getting the sight and words sooner than others. Being neglected by her parents her parents she led a very careless life. Tilo was named Nayan Tara at the time of her birth. Nayan Tara means a Star of the eye, but it could also be interpreted as a person who is starry-eyed. Just like the name, she has very high aspirations and is not content with whatever she has. She yearns for something more in life despite being worshipped by thousands of villagers as a goddess. She wants something drastic to break the monotony of her life. The filial love a daughter is not received by Nayan Tara. She suffers from not being accepted and loved by her biological parents. Her parent's reaction contrasts with the meaning of her first name, "Star of the eye", yet, Nayan Tara is scared by her family and village because of her supernatural powers to see the future.

Nayan Tara s forced to look for other persons who would bring her love. It is at this juncture that the pirates loot her village and kidnap her. She is named as Bhagyavati or one who is in charge of destiny. The pirates regard her as their lucky charm which would bring them to their destiny, while she is far away from her own destiny in life.

When Tilo was a girl, pirates storm into her home and they murder her entire family and abduct Tilo, taking her on board their ship as a prisoner. Eventually, Tilo overthrows the pirate captain to become the pirate. But Tilo abandons this exalted position when the mythical sea serpents tell her about the existence of an island upon which she, and other women like her, can develop their supernatural talents to use them for a greater good. This isolated island is a haven for these women, who call themselves the "Mistress of Spices" and are under the care of the First Mother, the eldest and wisest teacher of all the women. When Tilo arrives on the island, she and other young girls like her are given identities, indicating the past is being relegated to memory and new personas are being fake. Tilo meets the First Mother, a figure who foreshadows the paradoxical identity that Tilo will soon find herself grappling with. The First Mother is elderly and maternal, representing the traditionalist notion of the South Asian woman in domestic sphere. The island nurtures Tilo, educating and preparing her for the next stage of life she will encounter when she leaves, and also imbuing Tilo with a sense of singularity of identity. She happens to meet the Old Woman whom she called the First Mother.

The First Mother promises her a sense of security and love. After being chosen as an apprentice by the Old One, the protagonist makes the request that she be addressed Tilo. She tries to justify her choice of the name Tilo by drawing a comparison to the Tilo or sesame seed which restores health, hope and gives a new lease of life to people suffering from several incurable diseases. But the Old One also reminds her that Tilo is the short

form of Tilottama who was the most elegant of the dancers in Lord Indra's court. Indra is regarded as king of the Gods in the Hindu pantheon.

Tilottama was cautioned by Lord Brahma, the Creator of the universe according to Hindu mythology, that she would be condemned to seven lives of illness, disfigurement and leprosy if she falls in love with a human being. Tilottama disregarded the words of caution of Brahma and fell to the earth for her misdeeds and had to suffer greatly for it. The Old One reminds Tilo to think about Tilotamma's fate if ever she is led by her over-confidence and arrogance to go against the norms set for a Mistress of Spices.

The Old One's gift of a knife to Tilo while leaving the island is reminder of the narrow and dangerous path she had to tread for being a Mistress of Spices. The Old One warned the Mistresses before allowing them to enter into the *Shampathi's* fire that a Mistress, grown rebellious and failed her duty and must be recalled. She felt it fully, burned and parched, the razors of flame might cut her flesh to strips, "Screaming, I smelt my bones shattered, skin bubbled and burst" (58-59). Some Mistresses were allowed to return to the island, learn and labour again by the Spices. For some it was the end, crumbled to charcoal, a last cry dangling in the air like a broken cobweb.

She remembered all this as she watched her sister-mistresses. One by one they walked into the fire, and when they reached its center they disappeared. There had been no agony on the faces of her sisters before they vanished. After the complication of their training each of the mistress has to go through the *Shampathi's* fire and choose the country they want to go. Once they take over the "Mistress-body" (59) they transform into old lady. When it was Tilo's turn that she was afraid and closed her eyes. She believed what the Old One had told them, "you will no burn you will not feel the pain. You will wake in your new body as though it has been yours forever" (60). As the Old One said, it happened in reality. When Tilo stepped into the heart of *Shampathi's* fire, she felt that "the flame tongues

licked like a dream at my melting skin, flame fingers pushed down my eyelids" (61). Soon after the training was over First Mother offered to choose the places to settle themselves. Tilo chooses Oakland, The Old Mother warns her against it and offers to choose another place but Tilo insists on the same.

Old one gave each Mistress a going away gift. Some got flutes, incense burners, some looms and some pens but Tilo alone got a knife, to keep under her mattress before sleeping, to keep her chaste and from dreaming. The knife is as cold as ocean water, supple edged as the yucca leaf that grows high on the sides of the volcano. The Old one taught Tilo to look into the heart of others but she does not teach her to read the future as it keeps her away from hoping and trusting the spices fully. While Tilo was about to leave the island of Spices to America First Mother, from the folds of her clothing placed a slice of ginger root to give her heart steadfastness and to keep her strong in her vows. The taste of ginger root is the last taste of island and first taste of America. The Spices in Divakurani's novel can cure a wound, they can help people survive, they can evoke love, and last but not least, they can heal one from nostalgia and homesickness. Each chapter is named after one particular spice and each explores how that spice has unique name, one major function, several other functions, and how, as Tilo remarks, "each spice has a day special to it" (13). The Spices can be seen as a representation of Indian culture. They also give Indians the taste and smell of home while in America.

Tilo loves spices, knows their origins, what their colours signify, their smells and even their true names. Their heat runs in her blood. From *Amchu*r to *Zafran* all bow to her command, yield their properties and magic powers. The spices talked to Tilo to use them to get back her youth when she wanted. They told her if she wanted true change she must use them differently, must call on their powers. When she hesitated that her spells were not given for her to use. She thought that the spices knew right and wrong better far than her.

At that time Tilo hears the singing of spices from the inner room. “Come Tilo use us, we give ourselves gladly to you who have tended us so faithfully. Lotus root and *abharak, aalaki* and most of all *Makaradwaj* kings spice, we are yours to command. Use for love, for beauty, for your joy, because that is why we were made” (201-2).

Every Indian spice was found in her store and when placed in her hand they speak to her and even direct her at necessary times. ‘Spice Bazar’ was the name of her shop fitted at the corner. The board faded into mud brown. Though the shop has been there for only a year, it looks as though it was there from many years. The walls inside the shop were veined with cobwebs and metal bins lost their shine. In the corner of the shop dust balls are accumulated along with the desires exhaled by the customers. According to Tilo many people are attracted to her store as it attracts a large groups of people for whom the store is reminiscent of home, a little oasis in their diasporic lives full of problems. The Spice Bazar is visited by many faces belonging to different sections of the society and from various parts of India as well as other minorities like the rich men’s wife, Mohans, Haroun, Jagjit, Ahuja’s wife, Geeta’s grandfather and Kwesis. Each face tells one unique story contributing to a larger story of survival.

Tilo the central figure of all these characters tries her best to give them comfort until she is caught in her own desire. She bridges the gap between the Indian communities and she feels that Indians come to the spice store in quest of happiness. There are certain codes of rules to be followed by all the mistresses which Tilo ultimately breaks during the course of her transformation. Tilo should never leave the store, she should never use powers for herself but for others to help and last but not the least she should not make any physical contact with any human being.

As the story progress, readers find smaller stories intertwined where Tilo uses her powers to help others. While helping others, she is so taken into it than one after another

she starts breaking the forbidden rules laid for Mistresses. Not only she breaks rules but she also allows herself to fall in love with a lonely American, Raven. Tilo is attracted towards Raven as he shares his personal details including his mother Celestina. Raven does not like his mother as she pretends to be white and so he leaves her alone after he had started earning. He starts living his life without any aim. He earns and sends money to his mother but will not even reply to her letters.

One day when he goes in search of his mother he gets to know that she is no more. He confides everything to Tilo as he thinks that his burden will be reduced. Raven is left all alone in his world with no one to share his life. He expects love from Tilo, and she offers him a spice to get some interest in life. Tilo also falls in love with Raven. She starts waiting for him in the store. She is fully engrossed in his thoughts. Tilo finds herself irresistible in reciprocating to Ravens love and she says- "For the first time I admit I am giving myself to love. Not the worship I offered the Old One, not the awe I get for the spices… the anger of spices the desertion. The true risk is that I will somehow loose the love" (219).

As she moves through the maze of American culture, she desires even more to see herself, to view her life through her own eyes rather than the perspectives of others. Her moment of 'Self-perception' occurs after she questions the prohibition of mirrors for Mistresses. Before she looks at her reflection, she decides to drink a special potion, a concoction whose power stems from the spice *Makaradwaj*, and is considered the conqueror of time. This potion will transform Tilo to a body of youthful beauty. Over the course of three days, her beauty increases as the layers of age peel away. As she gazes into the mirror, she sees "a face that gives away nothing, a goddess-face free of mortal blemish .... Only the eyes are human, frail" (279). She has a dream in which the First Mother tells her that she only has three more days in America, and on the third day she will have to enter once again into *Shampathi's* Fire and return to the island. Yet when the moment

arrives for the fire to consume her, Tilo is surprised to find that the flames do not envelop her as they did once long ago. Rather, she is transformed back into the body of the old woman. When Tilo returns to the body with which she experienced the different perceptions of race and sexuality, she is in essence accepting her fragmented selves in place of a unified identity.

Tilo feels that she was doomed to live in this pitiless world as an old woman, without power, without livelihood, without a single being to whom she could turn. For one to be happy, another must take upon herself the suffering. She spent her whole life for the welfare of others. Tilo, once, had the desire to live for her. She would make herself as ravishing as Tilottama, "dancer of the gods, for Raven's pleasure" (318). Tilo knows definitely that *Shampathi's* fire will take her as she has disobeyed her vows and Tilo meets Raven for the last time as she uses the powers of spices for herself. She uses *Makaradwaj* to make her extremely beautiful, thinking that Raven is more attracted towards beautiful girls and loves beauty. By using the spice Tilo becomes young and beautiful.

Tilo, after consuming *Makaradwaj*, the most potent of the changing spices for three days, was getting back her youth to give pleasure to her lover Raven who loved her sincerely. When the transformation was going on in her body, she felt the pain. But Tilo was too confident, who thought she could absorb the poison like—"Shiva of the blue throat, who had risked all for nothing" (278). Tilo gets astonished feeling at her beauty. She was dazzled by the face looking back at her, young and ageless at once. The author describes Tilo's "forehead was flawless like a new opened shapla leaf, nose tipped like the til flower, mouth curved as the bow of Madan, God of love, lips colour, of there are no other words for this crushed chilies" (297).

When Tilo and Raven were indulged in love making, the spices encouraged her. "The spice spoke to her in my ears,—Use everything …Give and take back, teasing. As did

the great courtesans in the courts of Indra the god king" (307). Tilo disobeys her vows by giving herself to Raven but making love with Raven brings Tilo a symbolic change, making her more human rather than supernatural and it gives a sense of harmony with the outside world. Tilo enters the *Shampathi's* fire, leaves a note to Raven and loses consciousness:

> I hope I have given you a little too. Our love would never have lasted, for it was based upon fantasy, yours and mine, of what it to be Indian. To be American. But where I am going—life or death, I do not know which—I will carry its brief aching sweetness. Forever. (311)

In the morning when Raven comes in search of Tilo, there was a huge earthquake which destroys almost the entire Oakland and even her spice shop collapses. He finds her lying down unconscious takes her in his hand and moves out to his car. They leave the place and go in search of his earthly paradise. But Tilo after going a little distance stops the car and looks at Oakland which is on fire. She changes her mind to return to Oakland and help people over there. She thinks that it is because of her that everything happened and she wants to help people as she did before. Even Raven changes his mind and returns with Maya, the new name given to Tilo to lead a new life. Maya is not anymore the mistress of spices but a woman who has accepted her life, a woman who loves a man named Raven, even though she may not accept to live with him in the conventional way.

Love has settled within her mind and body, she closes her shop and eventually frees herself from the enclosed room of Spice Bazaar thus significantly breaking it free from narrowly divided rules and regulations of the society.

This inner conflict has been well narrated in this novel with some fantasy and mysticism. Tilo struggles with her own passions as she builds an emotional relationship with a Native American man. She transforms herself into a woman, feeling guilty about her

"Self-indulgence" but decides to brave the retribution that she would have to face. The narrator changes her name many times, from Nayan Tara to Bhagyavati to Tilottama and finally to Maya, the most appropriate name, since it means spell or enchantment.

The novel closes with Tilo renaming herself Maya, which "can mean many things. Illusion, spell, enchantment, the power that keeps this imperfect world going day after Day" (317). Maya is also an ancient Sanskrit name, and the juxtaposition of a name representative of a cultural past with Tilo's present suggests that she still lives between spheres. In naming herself, Tilo accepts her multiple consciousness's that allows her to exist not as an Indian or American only, but rather in between contradictory spaces and times, comprising the rather ambiguous landscape of her existence.

Both the novels *Jasmine* and *The Mistress of Spices* revolve around three central themes--exile, journey and sexuality. By contrasting the physical exile of the present with the psychological exile women have always suffered, they express the essential estrangement of woman in a man-made world. Journey is treated as a means of Self-knowledge through reentry into collective female experience, itself redefined by the journeys from east to west. The tensions of a transplanted existence, the struggle for survival in a world of strangers, the schizophrenic experience of woman cracked by multiple identities is common to both the states—the state of exile and the fact of being a woman and it becomes so in the case of Jasmine and Tilo.

Diasporic woman writers have made significant efforts to create identities of their own independent of any established theory. They all had firsthand experience in the alien soil. Being women, they were able to translate the experience of women with authenticity. In their portrayal of women, they have avoided the stereotypes. They have also highlighted the resilient nature of women which is a remarkable feature that facilitates women to adapt themselves to circumstances better than men do. The conventional portrayal of

transnational women as victims have been broken and these writers have projected them as champions who successfully overcome adverse circumstances.

Chapter 5

Summation

Diaspora does not merely refer to a wandering journey, since it enacts a process of mutual translation and interaction, in which place has been translated into plural interrelationships that bridge and abridge different cultures. The (a)bridging effects of diaspora require us to examine the spatio-temporal imaginaries of place within a new context, for diaspora informs of the multifaceted complexity of the dialectical negotiation between here and there—a tension that not only reflects the very nature of diasporic identity but also indicates a salient feature of nonlimited locality.

In the age of modem diaspora, it is almost impossible to segregate any local place that does not involve non-local or extra-local linkages in a wide network. Moreover, what we find in diaspora is a dramatic change in the politics of place, which starts to redefine place beyond the historical opposition of here versus there, since to a certain extent, there has been both merged and emerged in the very characterization of here.

To be in diaspora is not only to traverse various cultural and national spaces, but also to erect a bridge between here and there. In other words, the increasing global flows of diaspora that overcome distance and separation have created the effects of spatial compression. As mutual penetration between the local and the extra-local has dramatically increased, we need to explore the influence as well as the consequence of place-in-displacement on identity formation across cultural and national boundaries. As the custodian of tradition and memory, the family fulfills an important function, transmitting and mediating the memories, mores, and myths of the preceding generations and the community. In contemporary Postcolonial literature the theme of the family is particularly rich and diversified. As the locus of tradition, the family, in these literatures may be explored as the place where the core values of the preceding generations and the ancestors

are transmitted and lived, so that continuity and growth are ensured. At the same time, the family, as reflector and indicator of social change, offers a wide area of research for themes of conflict and reconciliation.

Globalization is tentatively defined as the "interconnectedness" of nations at a purely surface level, namely economics. Viewed from the vantage point of the power of socio-cultural parameters, such as race, religion, language and the economy, globalization is perceived as a narrative of contradictions and incoherence. Through technological advances globalization has come to mean the economic and cultural interconnectedness of people in a world bereft of borders. It is a complex metaphor the world is experiencing, possibly, with the motive to expand links across humanity, to evolve a global consciousness. It is synonymous with modernization.

While clinging on to grass root cultural ideologies of caste, religion, and community, the social movement, sweeping the country through the new middle class professionals, youth and women, cuts across caste, region and religion, creates a culture where homogenization and heterogenization may actually operate in tandem or even reinforce each other, heightening incoherent societal contradictions. If globalization is towards consolidation of a world society, it could mean 'social change,' or modernity. The globalization of cultural identities have led to conflicting identities and rootless-ness in contemporary Postmodern condition. Cultural change is not only a story of loss and destruction, but also of gain and creativity. As a result of increasing interconnection, old forms of diversity do vanish, but at the same time a new cultural diversity comes into existence.

In *The Location of Culture* (1994), for Homi Bhabha diasporas as,

> Gatherings of exiles and émigrés and refugees; gathering on the edge of 'foreign' cultures; gathering at the frontiers; gathering in the ghettos or cafes

> of city centres; gathering in the half-life, half-light of foreign tongues, or in the uncanny fluency of another's language; gathering the signs of approval and acceptance, degrees, discourses, disciplines; gathering the memories of underdevelopment, of other worlds lived retroactively; gathering the past in a ritual of revival; gathering the present. (139)

'Identities' remain a great question for the immigrants in the New World. Identities, like the shifting Kaleidoscopic images, are constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed regularly. They are always in the process of constitution. As Hall (1989) talks on identity:

> ….identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented; never singular but multiply, constructed across different often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation. (4)

The hyphenated existence of the diasporas draws attention to the fluid identities which are continuously reconfigured in ongoing negotiation with the changing political environment. According to Stuart Hall, in "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory* (1996), the diaspora experience "is defined, not by essence or purity, but by recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity, by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity" and diaspora identities "are constantly producing and reproducing themselves a new, through transformation and difference" (402).

Hybridity is always a threat to dominant culture that seeks to 'ethnicize' difference and render it exotic or static, rather than seeing it as a condition of culture as a whole. Diasporic texts start from a position of arrival, provisional and deferred, with hybridity as an agency, in so far as it interrupts the previous relations between power and knowledge by

bringing into question the problem of representation of Otherness as a contestable site of struggle, not essentially separate from articulation of a national culture-a culture situated in between spaces in such narrative forms –dialogic, critical, negotiative and transnational.

The movement by people from Asia and the Caribbean is such a moment of historical transformation; and in the recent past many writers have claimed the right to signify and to consequently re-invent and re-inscribe tradition, from the point of view of their perspective of multiple and partial identifications. They work within already existing narrative traditions to revisit or 'rewrite the story of childhood or adolescence. They began uniquely by mapping the contours of their own identity as Asian-Caribbean-Black/British people, but Indian or West Indian in essence, not as outsiders but as reflective/critical insiders.

The idea of home as an ambivalent location shows that identities are not fixed but stay in transition, drawing on different cultural traditions at same time. It may be tempting to think of identity as destined to end up in one place or another, either returning to its roots or disappearing through partial assimilation in a hermeneutic 'fusion' that is possible because of the supposed translatability and commensurability of different cultures. Caught between a nativist traditionalism and a Postcolonial metropolitan assimilations, the migrant culture of the "in-between" according to Homi Bhabha, dramatizes precisely the activity of cultural untranslatability. These hybrid identities are metaphorically located on borders and boundaries where the world of capitals and of universalistic assumptions is subverted by interpenetration and reversals of different cultures, where subjectivities are shifting, epistemologies are questioned, and homogeneity is replaced by heterogeneity. As Arif Dirlik in "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism" (1994) has put it:

> New diasporas have relocated the Self there and the Other here, and consequently borders and boundaries have been confounded. And the flow has become at once homogenizing and heterogenizing; some groups share in common global culture regardless of location while others take refuge in cultural legacies that are far apart from one another as they were at the origin of modernity. (352)

The image of women in fiction has undergone a change during the last four decades. Women writers including the immigrant women writers have moved away from traditional portrayals of enduring, Self-sacrificing women toward conflicted female characters searching for identity. In contrast to earlier novels, female characters from the 1980s onwards assert themselves and defy marriage and motherhood. Recent writers depict both the diversity of women and the diversity within each woman, rather than limiting the lives of women to one ideal. The novels emerging in the twenty-first century furnish examples of a whole range of attitudes towards the imposition of tradition, some offering an analysis of the family structure and the caste system as the key elements of patriarchal social organization. They also re-interpret mythology by using new symbols and subverting the canonic versions.

Women writers represent a segment of contemporary Indian fiction, which is focused on the education and enlightenment of women. Feminine sensibilities of these writers have prompted them to explore that tender area of characters which has been neglected for years in India. These writers have tried to encourage the assertion of feminine identity and Self-esteem, while promoting social acceptance of a more complete and diverse set of social roles for women.

Bharati Mukherjee has gained much respected reputation as an immigrant writer. In her novel Jasmine, Jasmine’s decision to leave her homeland coincides with her desire to

escape the confines of her cultural identity. Religion and economics were huge issues in India. In Jasmine's case, renaming occurs during her metamorphosis into a person newly born. A close study of the sundry names given to Jasmine verifies this. Before reaching her final destination of the name of Jasmine, she goes through many stages reflected in the fluid names of her metamorphoses. Jasmine's renaming occurs five times. In chronological order, she starts with Jyoti , then becomes Jazzy, Jase or Jassy which can be considered as one, Jane, and finally, Jasmine. The first naming, Jyoti, occurs in India. She is born with no hope of a dowry. In our country daughters are mostly considered a 'curse', brought on by their own evil deeds in a previous life. Surviving infanticide, she is given by her grandmother the name Jyoti, meaning 'light, brilliance, and radiance'.

Jyoti is first renamed Jazzy in the US by an American woman while she was under her care after killing Half-Face and being injured. The name carries a sense of glitz, and still, as with Jyoti, brings to mind bright lights. Jazzy is trained by the American woman to walk and talk like an American in a T-shirt and running shoes. She needs the flashy name in order to abandon her Hasnapur modesty and transform herself into a dynamic American. Through the woman, she meets Taylor, who gives her the names Jase and Jassy and later accepts her as Jasmine. These names, therefore, can be presumed to be Jasmine's designations, because at the end of the story, Taylor writes a letter 'addressed to Jasmine Vijh'. The name of the addressee suggests that Taylor might accept her as Jasmine. It is with him that she leaves for California as a person genetically reborn and embracing an American and Indian persona, as the name Jasmine signifies.

Jasmine is the most significant of her five names, as it becomes the title of the novel. The name discloses her inner Self. Jasmine is a flower with climbing nature. 'Climbing' means succeeding by taking full advantage of the power of Others. Her climbing nature is introduced in the scene where she, as Jane, is called by Bud's ex-wife "a

gold digger" (179). In addition, jasmine, the plant, is defined in the Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery as 'fragrance', symbolizing female 'grace', and 'love', 'memory' and 'separation'. The heroine reveals the climbing and enchanting figure that 'jasmine' has. Thus, Jasmine, throughout her life under diverse and often changing names, clings to her climbing nature.

Jasmine creates the energy by her constant movement through various events and adverse circumstances. She attains power from her renaming by others and gives energy back to her surroundings while moving through protean changes of name. In India, Jasmine feels suspended between the traditional and the New World offered by her Indian husband, Prakash: between controlled and independent love (69), and between the identities of Jyoti and Jasmine (70). Obviously she feels uncomfortable in her dangling situation. After moving to the United States, she often encounters things that are 'in between', reflecting the concept of 'two'. When she leaves Taylor, he is between marriage and separation with his wife who is also between her lover and husband (175). In Iowa, she happens to hear "two" farmers talk about the difference between "horsepower" and "whorepower" (179). Bud, her lover, punches one of them, because it is in reference to her that they made such remarks. The word "whorepower" reminds her of the murder scene of her Indian husband, where the "two" words "Prostitutes! Whores!" (85) are targeted at her. Through these two incidents, it could be said that she is the cause of his death as well as Bud's fight in the bar. This kind of "between-ness" with "two" issues leads her into distress.

Jhumpa Lahiri also tries to relocate her cultural space and identity mediated by significant cross-cultural influences though she lives in the United States, her work is imbued with Indian, and particularly Bengali culture and sensibilities. Wherever they are set, she explores "Bengaliness" in some of her stories, while others deal with immigrants at different stages on the road to assimilation. Most of her characters play out a simultaneous

existence in two cultures; she changes cultural perspective as easily as a bilingual writer shifts from language to language; how she has minutely observed Calcutta and the middle-class Bengali milieu; how she has deftly depicted cultural disorientation. Jhumpa Lahiri is a class apart in the sense that her second generation diasporic status does not connect her to Calcutta by birth. Born in London, raised in Rhode Island, Connecticut, Jhumpa presently lives in New York. Like Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Bharati Mukherjee, Lahiri makes repeated references to the cultural tradition of Calcutta and their cherished moments of nostalgia or moments of bewilderment in encounters with the real Calcutta.

Jhumpa Lahiri is a second generation diasporic women writer. In her novel *The Namesake*, the expatriates are oppressed by two cultures the native land and the alien land and seem to be forever in a state of flux belonging and not belonging and in the country of migration. Her writings interpret the emerging global culture in its multifaceted form. Her characters generally reach the new land by lawful means unlike Bharati Mukherjee's characters. The second generation of diaspora also experiences some cultural displacement, feeling of in-betweenness and hybridity but the main features that marks their identity is cultural assimilation in the land of adoption or birth. Thus they acquire a hybrid identity.

The protagonist Gogol experiences all ambivalence of his parents who has not yet been able to assimilate into the new land. Ashok and Ashima Ganguli and their children Gogol and Sonia are all exiles constantly juggling from past to present. Ashima is surrounded by loneliness suffers from displacement with the new born baby and spends most of the time crying and depressed. She was like majority of expatriate woman who are reluctant to adopt the culture of the host country. Gogol was troubled by his unusual name, he is relieved when he changes his name to Nikhil. He begins to feel that he was reborn. Most of these portrayals are the portraits of women protagonists fit in to the image of Indian new woman. Mrs. Parul Choudhary of the story "Once in a Lifetime" faces the

initial trauma of dislocation, soon adopt the American conditions and assimilate into her new found identity as American Indians. The younger women characters like Shobha in the story "Temporary Matters" (*Interpreter of Maladies*), Moushumi in *The Namesake*, Sandhya in "Only Goodness" (*Unaccustomed Earth*) etc. are independent, educated women who knows what they do and what they want. They have definite identities of their own and they represent the new woman of new generation.

In the other novel *The Mistress of Spices*, Divakaruni's first novel is a story of an Indian immigrant, Tilo, who runs a spice shop in Oakland, California. She not only supplies ingredients for a host of uses, but also helps customers in every way possible. When local Indian expatriates visit her shop, Tilo is at her best. She dispenses wisdom. She is too courteous and warm, with her Western customers, giving them the appropriate spice they need. She sells coriander for better eyesight, turmeric to erase wrinkles, chilies for cleansing of evil spirits. Some of them like the palm of her hand. Reason is simple: Tilo is a Mistress of Spices; and, a priestess of their secrets. The history of the protagonist is unique yet sad.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is another woman writer of first generation who brilliantly portrays gender in its vivid. Her female protagonists are memorable and real representations of diasporic Indian women. Tilo in *The Mistress of Spices* is a true representative of diasporic identity. She was born in India, becomes trained in spices and called The Mistress of Spices finally lives as an individual in America. She comes across many characters representing vivid identities of diasporic life like scattered identity, marginalized, rebellious, docile, traditional and modern. Chitra Banerjee represented younger women, first and second generations who find their true identity in American land, is an example of complexities of transformation and assimilation.

Jasmine's fusion of two cultures and relational aspects of her personality paves the way for assimilation and integration into American ways of life and American sensibilities, and which makes her declare 'I am one of you now' Jasmine succeeds in maintaining her identity her identity as Indian American in an ethnic high fashion where diaspora means 'gain' and no 'lose' here Bharati calls for an end to futile nostalgic engagement with the past and a bold affirmation of the adopted land. Assimilation would only be the answer to the discontents of diaspora.

Tilo in *The Mistress of Spices* by Chitra Banerjee, true representative of diasporic Indian women, leaves as a successful individual in America and is called the Mistress of Spices. She comes across as many characters representing vivid identities of diasporic life, like scattered identity, marginalized, rebellious, docile, and traditional. She, like Jasmine, a prototype of thoroughly assimilated and integrated individual, rules the roost in public and private domain moulding the discourse as she wants. Their extroversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, less neuroticism, sociability and open-mindedness significantly contributes towards their psychological adaption, sound mental health and cross cultural adjustments.

Therefore, the words exile, diaspora, migration, dislocation, deracination and displacement are the leading metaphors used to express not only disorientation but also ideological and existential fragmentation.

Living in diaspora means living in forced or voluntary exile and living in exile usually leads to severe identity confusion and problems of identification with and alienation from old and new cultures and homelands. In *Shame* (1983) Rushdie generalizes:

> 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 among the scorn of strangers upon whom they see the rich clothing, the brocades of continuity and the eyebrows of belonging.

Therefore most diasporic writing is suffused with identification consciousness and the problem of living in an alien society. As Rushdie (1981) has put it in *Imaginary Homelands*, the position of 'the exile or immigrant' is one of 'profound uncertainties, (10); The diasporic person is at home neither in the West nor in India and is thus 'unhomed' thus the concept of interpretation of 'home' becomes vital in all kinds of diasporic writing.

Gogol Ganguli's meta-Indian home in the Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2003) consists of a Hindu patriarchal home in the interior while externally it looks like any typical American home. In exploring the meaning of place, G.S. Sharat Chandra in his book of short stories *Sari of the Gods*, brings to the forefront how "home" can be lost forever, vividly portraying the confusion, miscommunication, and misplaced ambitions of many new citizens in the New World.

The alienated consciousness of the writer using the English language is another important factor. But since the late 1970's and early 1980's, after expatriation, immigration to the West, the trauma of uprooting, the diasporic consciousness and the loss of "home" and identity have preoccupied many Indian writings in English. In order to do away with the false image of projecting India as a land of snake-charmers and princes and elephants, they have started inscribing Indian words without glossary or italicization into the text with a vengeance. This commodification of India in global literary marketplace is most visible in the more realistic depictions in Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakurani's works.

The Indian Diaspora plays a significant role in reflecting the complexities of diasporic experiences in literature. It aims to examine the displacement and the nostalgia for their homeland and alienation caused by displacement or dislocation as well as conflict

between generations and cultural identity. Diasporic women writers tend to portray the cultural dilemmas, the generational differences, and transformation of their identities during displacement, i.e., their process of becoming ‘Self’ to ‘Other’. The spirit of exile and alienation enriches the diasporic writers to seek rehabilitation in their writings and establish a permanent place in English Diasporic literature.

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