CHAPTER 5

Conclusion
In the forgoing chapters an attempt has been made to critically examine and analyse the concept of alienation, as discussed by eminent scholars and its impact on the lives of various characters in the selective works of Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai and Jhumpa Lahiri. In the process of encapsulation, it would be appropriate to coalesce and combine the different findings into a single unit.

As discussed earlier, in Chapter I, Man suffers spilt within himself vis-à-vis the society in which he is accidentally born. It is this breach or displacement that occasions many a tension and life-long struggle. Industrial revolution and advancement of technology intensified this struggle. As man grows he finds himself in a dubious situation as far as his relationship with himself as well as his relatedness to his society is concerned. An alienated individual suffers chain-reaction of debilitating symptoms the worst of which are powerlessness and the depressive psyche which may lead to suicide. Many scholars have dealt with this malady throwing light on various aspects of life. Hegel used the term ‘Entfremdung’ or ‘self-alienation.’ While elaborating the concept he says that it is an essential characteristic of finite mind to produce things, social institutions and cultural products and every objectification is, of necessity an instance of alienation. He believes that alienation is a phenomenon of consciousness, involving an inherent disassociation of man as subject and object. It is interesting to note that while Marx discusses four aspects of “alienation” – alienation from the object produced; alienation from one’s work process itself; alienation from one’s work; alienation from one’s fellow men, the Freudians hold that it is society that creates an emaciating effect upon man’s raw energy. Erich Fromm, like Hegel, explained “alienation” more than a sociological phenomenon. He discussed four main ways in which a person can experience alienation: from nature, from others, from society, and from the self. While discussing the concept of alienation, Karen Horney talks about ‘real self.’ Her main focus is on understanding the psychic processes which
ensue when a person loses touch with his 'real self' or is self-alienated. In Durkheim's phraseology, "alienation" as the consequence of a state of "anomie" exists when people believe that there is a breakdown of societal behavioural norms, and the cultural goals are achieved primarily through deviant behaviour. F. H. Heinemann, the continental philosopher who coined the term *Existenzphilosophie* in 1929, explains that the existentialists wish to make man aware of the fact and problem of alienation; their aim is to liberate him from estrangement. The plight of modern man has been summarised by Melvin Seem as under the set of six interrelated optional conditions, viz. powerlessness, meaningless, normlessness, isolation, cultural isolation, and self-strangement.

Exile, migration and expatriation are not a physical condition but also a state of mind. It does not matter where the one is, in one's native or in an alien land. The sense of exile results in a deep feeling of loss, ache, and separation yearning for recuperation. "Home" is the axis on which the entire discourse of migrancy revolves. It is home that determines one's identity, defines or redefines one's belonging. With modernisation expanding its tentacles, squeezing the traditional social and family system, breaking them apart, man is engulfed by an identity crisis and man's greed for material possession has made him migrate to different lands, uprooting himself from his culture and society to re-root in an alien land. But striking one's own root is a painful process, involving mental, spiritual and emotional trauma leading to cultural and self alienation, because to feel uprooted is against man's nature, for, a physical being man needs to be located in space. As Ashley Montague points out: "No living organism is either solitary in its origin or solitary in its life. Every organism from the lowest to the highest is normally engaged in some sort of social life. The solitary animal is any species, is an abnormal creature."

As argued in the Chapter II, the worst case of alienation occurs in Roy's novel *The God of Small Things*. Throughout the discussion of alienation in the novel, Roy
reveals inner realities and psychic reverberations of her characters. The novel depicts alienation on two different levels. First, in the immediate individual sense, the novel narrates alienation of its characters’ experience in the surroundings of lost values. Second, on a broader, historical level, it is the cultural product of a country with an alienated history. The novel centres on the twins’ loss of childhood and their existential problems of adjustment, exile and meaninglessness of Ammu, racial discrimination and the brutal death of Velutha.

Ammu, though is a ‘Mombatti’ of a big house, she expresses that the light of her life has been snuffed out by Pappachi and Mammachi, her parents, whose own lives symbolises ‘Mombattis’ with flickering lights about to be extinguished. Ammu’s identity had been thrashed out from the very onset. It would have been less painful and less bizarre for her parents to have her killed in the womb itself than maltreating her so cruelly in her innocent tender years which were so impressionable. Her married life was also a horrendous experience for her. Her alienation was further heightened when her conjugal relationship fell into a pattern of violence and reconciliation by turns. Her husband’s implicit willingness to degrade her sexually and morally further alienated her. Her return to Ayemenem along with her twins is just like entering a place as good as some central jail. Chacko, her brother, often displayed insensitivity towards the growing kids by mocking at their natural physical development calling it indecent. Ammu becomes totally destitute when even her brother bares his fangs. She was thrown out of the house before being condemned to a solitary cell while her heart touches the depths of despair which led to rebelliousness in her nature. Ammu surrendered herself to Velutha, an untouchable. Kenneth Boulding notes both the productive and destructive aspect of love. According to him, love creates intimacy and forges connection, but, on the other hand, love also causes alienation to people from one other. He defines that love has a form of integrative power:
Integrative power may be thought of perhaps as an aspect of productive power that involves the capacity to build organizations, to create families and groups, to inspire loyalty, to bind people together, to develop legitimacy. Integrative power has a negative sense, to create enemies, to alienate people; it has a destructive as well as a productive aspect.

Ammu’s love is shattered and enhances her sense of alienation and disillusionment. As Ammu transgresses the love laws, one finds the result is the loss of two lives – Ammu’s exile and subsequent death, Estha’s silence, and Rahel’s inability to engage in intimate, socially acceptable relations. Ammu’s alienation leads her on to utter desolation as the lady was declared ‘defiled’ by society. She becomes totally destitute when even her brother bares his fangs. She was thrown out of the house before condemning her to a solitary cell while her heart touches the depths of despair which led to rebelliousness in her nature. She becomes invisible in the eye of puritans and at the very young age of thirty-one breathes her last and even the church refused to bury her. The story of their lives is more bizarre and horrendous than the ‘honour killings’ in India. In the former case the lovers are killed in instalments with an unforgiving heart even by the religious priests while in the latter case the death is meted out in a few strokes of ruthlessness.

Condemned to discrimination by casteist society, Velutha is a source of prosperity for the Ipe family. He secures card-holder membership of the Communist Party, but this attempt is foiled by the ruling class. Instead of listening to the ‘family-stories’ he had been subjected to the descriptions of ‘crawling backwards’ and other atrocities to have a grave effect on his childhood joy. His only solace was the praise garnered from various quarters for his being an accomplished craftsman. His dalit identity proved to be a perpetual curse for him that binds him to the yoke of alienation from birth to death. His existence continually reminds Spivak’s question “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Alex Tickell opines:
“In the figure of Velutha (as an untouchable), we might be tempted to see a fictional representation of the subaltern, especially as the social structures he inhabits only allow him to ‘speak’ in limited ways.”

As is evident in the novel, both the Communist Party and the Police cast strong influence over people’s lives. Yet it does not mean that siding with certain power will guarantee any protection. Ironically, Roy intends to highlight the misuse of power in the novel when Inspector Thomas Mathew is described as the one who knows “whom he could pick on and whom he couldn’t” (God 10). She deliberately gives capitalised words to ridicule the police: “Police/Obedience/Loyalty/Intelligence/Courtesy/Efficiency” (God 10).

Besides, the Inspector seems so proud of his rank and status – “He had a Touchable wife, two Touchable daughters – whole touchable generations waiting in their Touchable wombs” (God 245). However, Velutha does not get any protection from the Communist Party when he is charged of raping Ammu. The police do not even get the whole truth before they decide to give Velutha a death penalty, just the fact that Velutha is an untouchable is a sufficient reason. In the end, Velutha is betrayed not only by the big authority but by his caste destiny. Thus, Velutha dwells in a world where privilege and exclusion determine the survival of small lives. Though, the attitudes of the insensitive society proved a dampener for him, his sobriety was transformed into the tiger-like ferocity and transgression by the eyes and dimpled cheeks of his lady love and he was lost to the whole world. The power gained from Ammu’s love was transmuted into powerlessness by the cruel society. The deviant and dubious hereditary influence exercised by Vellya Pappen, Velutha’s father, ingrained in him the characteristic of a slave. He never thought of revolting against the obnoxious system. At last the conspirators succeeded in destroying his life after a tortuous and humiliating behaviour. The poor dalit
is a modern tragic hero, for his treatment at the police station was an act of brazen criminality.

Roy has striven hard to balance various sociological and political tensions and complications through the last days of the unlucky Velutha who not only fails in sustaining his instincts for survival but falls prey to the zeitgeist of his times clearly indicating that a modern’s man’s life is so complex and chaotic. By positing the ultimate subaltern in the figure of Velutha, Roy addresses the problem of doubly, triply marginalised people. She suggests that fictional imagination is perhaps the only tool for eloquently voicing the silenced protests of the subalterns. Roy, through her narrative, presents a chain of exploitation regarding class, sex, age, and race. Examining the problem of exploitation she reveals that no group of human beings is exempt from potentially becoming exploiters or victims in their turn. Although patriarchal tyranny is heavily criticised in this novel, the ultimate human victims in this novel are not women but the pariah man Velutha, and the twin brother of Rahel, Estha. The novel reaches out to the most oppressed of all human beings and examines the world from their end. Instead of adopting a bird’s eye view of the world, it adopts the worm’s eye view.

Velutha dies due to atrocities of the biased police officer, Comrade Pillai, the regional party leader, absolutely denies any connection between Velutha and the party, which gives the police chief an opportunity to exploit a low caste man. The novel attributes, the unspeakable atrocities committed by the police to “feelings […] of contempt born of inchoate, unacknowledged fear – civilization’s fear of nature, men’s fear of women, and power’s fear of powerlessness” (God 292). Love, defying social customs is regarded as the power of nature which needs to be trodden down mercilessly. Since Roy herself belongs to South Indian Community, she can very well trace the power politics played in the region which leads to her truthful descriptions.
Estha’s mind is benumbed by a number of tragic incidents in a row. He withdraws into himself as an insect burrowing deep within the womb of the earth in an alienated response to the outwardly threat to his very existence. A father’s house that should hold the promise of survival and protection itself becomes a source of displacement both for Estha and Rahel, the intimate brother and sister. It is said that Estha “had always been a quiet child, so no one could pinpoint with any degree of accuracy exactly when (the year, if not the month or day) he had stopped talking” (God 12). The world around him does not carry too much meaning. In Laura S. Brown’s terms, Estha has the symptom of “pre-trauma levels of denial and numbness.” Actually, Estha’s alienation can be traced back to his experience of sexual harassment by the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man. While the grandmother disowns him in home, the ghost of Orangedrink Lemondrink Man constantly hovers over his mind only to augment his alienation. Further, Margaret Kochamma’s persistent aggression against him that he was implicated in the drowning tragedy of Sophie Mol did aggravate his alienation. Separation from Rahel proved to be a bolt from the blue for the poor lad as he went into silence for a protracted period. He walks miles and miles, even in rain, getting drenched. He is obsessed with washing clothes. Actually, it is not the clothes he is washing; he is trying to wash his alienated childhood. Estha’s alienation is confirmed by the novelist when she couches the point in a fine imagery of the fisherman. She described the alienated Estha thus: “High cheek bones and hunted eyes. A fisherman in a white-tiled bathroom with sea-secrets in his eyes” (God 92). Rendezvous with Rahel brings him back the gift of flowing speech. The loss of Ammu and Velutha alienates his fragile heart even worse, and these painful memories may be the hidden causes of Estha’s stagnation in his growth and in his inability to live a normal life. Baby Kochamma’s insinuation and the feeling of guilt caused by Velutha’s betrayal weigh down heavily upon his mind only to make his alienation unbearable. He desperately tried
to salvage his past in petty things but, above all, the soul-piercing word, “yes” was especially millstone around his neck of the dead past that he would not relinquish at any cost. Curiously, the only saving grace from Estha’s guilt-ridden mind is the thought; after all, he had saved Ammu from denigration. The ancient mariner was fortunate that he could reveal his sea-secrets but it never happened in the case of Estha whose body was buried in the womb of the cold earth along with his static heart that held in it so many hidden secrets to be known only perhaps to worms but not to the cruel human beings conditioned hard by the casteist society.

Since girlhood days, Rahel had no friends and the lack of friendship brings alienation. Her revolting attitudes both at school and college keep her away from the social interaction. At Boston, though she had developed an intimate physical relationship with her husband, Larry McCasalin, she never allowed him the intimacy of her psyche which had been made perverse by the incidents of the past. Her ruptured marriage ended miserably causing her more serious alienation. The traumatic experience only brought back the memories of the past with more poignant agony resulting in emotionlessness as the only shield against all the fragile and treacherous human relations. The only silver lining in the darkest clouds was the final union between Rahel and Estha. Though Ammu’s love for her children acted as the last refuge she too considered them parasites after some time and made them feel like a castaway. Long separation between the twins makes them crave and covet for each other and they cross all bounds of relations disregarding the scruples of morality – the chance encounter made the too familiar a brother only a naked stranger whose potential sexual energy bewitched her beyond self-control, hard for many a moralist or a puritan to swallow and yet her life elicits reader’s sympathy and deep compassion for Rahel. Nonetheless, healing seems a possibility for Estha and Rahel, such as in the act of incest. Roy encourages readers to consider whether
incest is an ethical form of coping up with alienation. Judith Lewis Herman explains: “In situations of terror, people spontaneously seek their first source of comfort and protection. Wounded soldiers and raped women cry for their mothers, or for their God. When this cry is not answered, the sense of basic trust is shattered […] Thereafter, a sense of alienation, of disconnection, pervades every relationship.”

As a matter of fact Ammu is oblivious to the alienation that Estha experiences, whereas Rahel is certainly her brother’s sole source of comfort. Their incestuous union demonstrates that Rahel knew her brother long before they were even born. Not only did they grow together in their mother’s womb, but Rahel looked to Estha for guidance and comfort as early as during the actual birthing process. When Rahel watches Estha undress, she has not seen his body since he was a child. By looking at him, “Rahel searched her brother’s nakedness for signs of herself […] The way his toe-nails tipped upwards at the end. The sculpted hollows on either side of his taut, beautiful buns” (God 88). Although, this observation may be construed as though Rahel is, in fact, lusting after Estha’s body in a sexual manner, Roy immediately adds, “Men’s bums never grow up. Like school satchels, they evoke in an instant memories of childhood” (God 88-89). This is significant because Rahel’s observation about Estha’s buttocks in not adult lust, but a desperate attempt to identify his adult body the body, she remembers as her first source of comfort as a child. Even though, the twins’ action is a violation of moral values, Roy wants her readers to understand the true nature of it. While the incest is comforting and can help to heal them from the effects of alienation, the narrator also refers to it as an expression of “hideous grief”. Though Roy does not absolve the characters indulging in incest, she justifies it on the grounds that such an act provides a fleeting relief to the characters desperately involved in it.
Roy’s novel is a successful attempt to evaluate the abnormal psychology of human beings. She believes that the mind of man is so complex that it is most often a daunting task to examine it properly. Some of her characters suffer from traumatic experiences caused by the harsh and cruel situation in which they are placed. The characters like Ammu, Rahel, Estha Baby Kochamma and Velutha reveal that they are suffering from certain psychological disturbances, and as a result they suffer from displacement and alienation. The traumatic psychological experience can be seen in the lives of Ammu, Estha, Rahel and Velutha. Ammu undergoes a traumatic mental shock when she marries a great drunkard. Her husband puts her in an awkward situation by suggesting that she should satisfy the sexual needs of his boss. Roy’s insight exposing the inner recesses of Ammu’s mind shows the power of her narrative technique.

Later, Ammu has to suffer humiliation when she is exposed to the public eye regarding her illicit relation with Velutha. Moreover, the writer uses an effective technique while digging into the past lives of Rahel and Estha who also suffer deep alienation. Here she uses the flashback technique while describing the childhood experiences of the twins. More than a psychological aberration, the motif of incest needs to be taken as a metaphor for the reunion of the two selves. Roy does not favour an incestuous relation and she observes what the twins share that night was not happiness but a “hideous grief.” This situation is a pointer towards the feeling of loneliness, emptiness and a serious feeling of alienation.

Roy uses the stream-of-consciousness to lend charm to a certain situation or to probe into the mind of her character. When after a long period of separation, dejection and desolation, Rahel remembers the early days, the writer recollects that period in these words: “In those early amorphous years when memory had only just begun, when life was full of beginnings and no Ends […] As though they were a rare breed of Siamese twins,
physically separate, but with joint identities. Now, these years later, Rahel has a memory of waking up one night giggling at Estha’s funny dream” (God 160).

Besides, the charm of stream-of-consciousness technique in the above citation, Roy is most appropriate for describing the alienated state of mind. She is as adventurous with words as Emily Dickinson is, while putting emphasis on a certain situation or the mental setup of a character through the use of capitals within the sentences. For an example, to tell about the possessiveness of Baby Kochamma, Roy states: “She opened the Windows only for a Breath of Fresh Air. To pay for the Milk – To Let Out a Trapped Wasp” (God 28). It would be appropriate to say that the plethora of these capitals creates a unique effect on the psyche of readers.

Roy’s metaphors and similes leave a brilliant effect: “Memory was that woman on the train. Insane in the way she sifted through dark things in a closet and emerged with the most unlikely ones [...] The smell of smoke. A windscreen wiper. A mother’s marble eyes. [...] Her, co-passengers madness comforted Rahel. It drew her closer into New York’s deranged womb” (God 72). Some of the author’s sentences invariably produce a staccato effect like “He stroked her back. Very gently. She could feel the skin on his palms. Rough. Calloused. Sandpaper” (God 335). Though, Roy is successful in building pictorial effects, yet she seems to be overdoing while exercising the innovation of hyphenation, italicisation, twistability, and breaking of words. Nonetheless, a compendious description of the use of these devices gives an extraordinary charm to her language. One of the other narrative techniques that Roy uses in the novel, like Vikram Seth’s The Golden Gate, is the creation of sheer poetry. A one sentence paragraph gives the semblance of poetry in prose: “The God of Loss/The God of Small Things/The God of Goose Bumps/ and Sudden Smiles” (God 330).
Another innovative technique that is made use of in the novel is the subjectless sentences. Much against the rules she drops the subject of a sentence, in the following sentences, “Not when Mammachi dies” and “Not when Chacko emigrated to Canada” (God 23). Apart from different innovative stylistics, one comes across a good sprinkling of ‘slangs’ (bum for example). In the area of technique innovations, Roy seems to be unique and convincingly effective. Thus, in order to empower her text, Roy uses certain stylistic innovations like the use of vernacular language (Malayalam), and of italics, upper case letters, normal word order, faulty spellings, single word sentences, change of word classes and many others. On the other hand, it would not be wrong to say that the symptoms of linguistic alienation seem to be embedded into the psyche of the Indian authors, for instance Roy, who strive to prove themselves a cut above the western authors by the use of their own coinages as well as narrative style.

Kiran Desai, in her debut novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, offers a remarkable description of a boy who seeks refuge on a guava tree. Sampath is good at nothing on account of this malady and escapes in a tearing hurry from the chains of domesticity to enter the guava garden’s captivating calm just to ally his frayed nerves. Then, he decides to settle there at top of the tree and heaves a sigh of relief having demolished the parental yoke, however briefly. The baba’s antics and a host of fantasy evoke deep admiration and reverence in the guileless hearts of the believers. The local press has its own axe to grind as its print excites the curiosity of people who flock to the garden in hordes. Thus, Sampath became the hero of Shahkot. Recovering soon from the initial shock, Mr. Chawla’s fertile mind embarks upon his specific plans to cash in on the possibility of amassing huge profits through his newfangled ideas. It is interesting to note that even the detractors of the Monkey *Baba* are silenced for a while as he (Sampath) has tamped the cinema monkeys, yet the atheist journalist seems determined to expose
Sampath’s fraud and, like the saying ‘Curiosity kills the Cat’, the poor fellow (the Journalist) gets killed and Sampath gets trapped amidst a turmoil. His ingenious escape turns out be a divine incident at last.

The marginalised individuals too have the power to enrich a society in their own way, though they follow their own norms and principles. Kulfi and Sampath are social outcasts; their habit of day dreaming clearly distinguishes them from the society of Shahkot. This marginalisation from the community, which is self-imposed, creates a profound desire for solitude and silence that contrasts sharply with the noise pollution of the town life. Desai clarifies the minute difference between solitude and silence. Silence is the necessary absence of verbal communication while solitude is related with living condition.

Desai wants the reader to have a peep into Sampath’s mind and one enters into a different realm. Thus, Kulfi’s alienation explodes into an irrepressible gluttony, she chooses to confine herself in a cocoon just to experience the smug sense of completion. Not only does she accept her son’s resolve to stay on the guava tree, but also painstakingly looks for him besides indulging in phantasmagoria to provide solace to herself. Both Sampath and his mother are condemned to an existence of self-isolation based upon greed and selfishness. And at the end, he disappears as a guava over the crest of a high hilltop, borne by the monkeys: “Still the monkeys travelled [...] Like a gust of wind that comes out of nowhere, rustles through the trees, and melts into nothing, like a ghost” (Hullabaloo 208).

There is rich sense of flamboyance in the prose of Desai. Sampath’s sister Pinky is stuck by the Cupid’s arrow at a very early stage and the sentiment of love might have cured her self-alienation to some extent, but she has a grouse against her parents and her grandmother who would never care to boost her image in the eyes of the other people. Her
crush for the ice-cream vendor and her kinship with her brother reveal her eccentricities so adequately! Her desire to achieve wholeness is muffled by the insensitivity of the patriarchal society. Alas! that a struggling soul was crushed into silence.

The elaborate structure of Desai’s second novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*, takes the readers into a world that seems contemporary and timeless, familiar and unpredictable. Chapters alternate between India and the U.S., juxtaposing the slow pace of life in the hills with the frantic movements of an illegal migrant’s existence, maintaining a degree of suspense until discontinuous narratives collide. The book is written in the third person omniscient. The narrator knows everything that all the characters are feeling and often switches from their thoughts and enters straight into dialogue.

The genesis of Jemu’s alienation and the consequent despair can be traced to his student life in England’s racist society. The feeling of isolation and uprootedness make such deep scars on his psyche that he could not purge these negative feelings out of his system till his last breath. The judge beats his wife as if she were a beast and she suffers his outrage in silence unaware that the actual source of his ire is her husband’s own fractured self. The power puff serves him as a tool to camouflage his Indian identity, to countervail the hurts inflicted upon him by the racist society and a symbol of his contempt for everything claiming itself as ‘Indian.’ The guardian of justice indulges in despicable and ignominious acts with impurity and shows absolute insensitivity even when he hears about Nimi’s horrible death over the stove. Even Sai’s birth brings him no joy. In his barren heart, the only impulse of spring is his love for Mutt, his pet dog.

In times before the GNLF movement the mists driving down from the majestic Kanchenjunga or from the hills of Kalimpong must have touched the people’s heart gently and lovingly but the chemistry underwent a radical change after the spreading of the movement like the jungle fire, and, now, the same mists touched the hearts of the people
like lava while the movement gained momentum like blitzkrieg. Gyan’s love-passion was consumed by the flames of the political frenzy, for Sai suffered a heart break when her lover, Gyan betrayed her. After all, this was the sole panacea for many of her mental bruises. Of course, she did receive a gesture of affection from the Indian cook. The author uses an apt simile of a sea-animal, squid to bring out the barren loneliness of the deserted lady at Cho Oyo beside the imagery of ‘unhomliness’ which indicates of the cultural positions of the characters in the novel. Ethnicity, of course, is all pervasive factor tending towards alienation even of Lola and Noni who had considered themselves safe, after all, from the onslaught of the GNLF. Their life-style was swept away by the Tsunami of the movement.

The image-rich prose highlights the particular effect on the psyche of characters. When insurgents pitch tents in the garden and Lola’s protests are ridiculed, the sisters realise that “amid extreme poverty, they were baldly richer […] and they, Lola and Noni, were the unlucky ones who wouldn’t slip through, who would pay the debt that should be shared with others over many generations” (Inheritance 168). Sai and her Nepali boyfriend inherit the loss, too, as do the cook and his son. The very mountains themselves suffer: Darjeeling is literally “going downhill,” there are landslides everywhere. It’s not their tents, the rebels tell Lola, but her big house that endangers this hillside. The narrative is filled with examples of how different types of people interact, mix, and blend. Unfortunately, the line between cultures is not always easily blurred. Some customs and traditions transcend separate cultures especially in today’s globalised world, but prejudices and hatred based on race and class are often hard to eliminate. Almost the entire novel is dark in its description of colliding cultures, but the last pages pinpoint a new side to the theme when Biju returns home penniless and broken. As Sai sees Biju and his father
“leaping at each other”, overjoyed by their reunion in Kalimpong, the mountain of Kanchenjunga “appears above the parting clouds” (*Inheritance* 357).

Crucially, the reality is that the world is full of racism, segregation, and cultural divisions, but it does not mean that hope does not exist. Change can happen if people initiate it. People will always be stuck in the same place, in the same mind set, until they decide to change, to move, to escape. Happiness is possible; the world is not always submerged in fog and rain. In the end “the five peaks of Kanchenjunga turned golden with the kind of luminous light that made you feel, if briefly, that truth was apparent. All you needed to do was to reach out and pluck it” (*Inheritance* 357). In the mist of chaos and cultural division, home, family, identity, and history are what hold people together and allow them to survive the day.

Desai has a keen and precise observation of the environment around her characters. The captivating Kanchenjunga has been described thus: “All day, the colors had been those of dusk, *mist moving like a water creature across the great flanks of mountains* possessed of ocean shadows and depths. [...] Kanchenjunga was a far peak whittled out of ice, gathering the last and the light, *a plume of snow blown high by the storms at its summit*” (*Inheritance* 1). This is how the novelist conjures up the natural scenery and the creatures living around with the newly created phrases of her own.

Desai handles human emotions like love, hatred and expectation deftly while giving them a new twist. Through Sai, for instance, she defines love in a series of phrases. She asserts, “Love must surely reside in the gap between desire and fulfilment, in the lack, not the contentment. Love was the ache, the anticipation, the retreat, everything around it but the emotion itself” (*Inheritance* 2-3). To Uncle Potty, “*love was tapestry and art*”: the sorrow of it, the loss of it, should be part of the intelligence, and even a sad romance would be worth more than any simple bovine happiness” (*Inheritance* 251).
Desai’s sense of humour is appreciable in *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*. What saves the novel from moroseness is the element of humour is the novel. The fine blending of humour in the text here and there changes the complex of the novel. The portions highlighting the desirable qualities of an Indian bride; Pinky’s and Ammaji’s adventure with the notorious cinema monkeys that takes them both on a merry chase around the streets holding ice-creams; and sections regarding Pinky’s ridiculous affair with Hungry Hop man throws the reader in splits of laughter.

In *The Inheritance of Loss*, Desai has made use of irony also. Sai’s mother had hailed from Gujarat. Gujaratis are proverbially famous for their conviviality, partying and noisy fellowships. But, even though Sai had plenty of relatives in Gujarat, quite ironically, she became a loner. The novelist refers Sai’s condition: “In a country full of relatives, Sai suffered a dearth” (*Inheritance* 28). Desai also uses number of similes in the novel. In New York a large number of Eastern migrants (workers) find Saeed who is running a restaurant in New York, as their saviour. These migrants would love to “cling to him like a plank during a shipwreck” (*Inheritance* 76). The post office on 125th street in Harlem in New York looked to the novelist, “barricaded like an Israeli army outpost in Gaza” (*Inheritance* 95). The innovative use of idioms, phrases, metaphors, similes, irony, italicised letters by Desai surely reveal the inner tresses and the restlessness of the times.

Jhumpa Lahiri has touched the very nerve of a humanistic issue which deals with the malady of alienation, suffered by man from time immemorial. According to Sushila Singh, an ethnic American author such as Lahiri “endeavours to apply the knowledge gained from the past to the questions of the present and the future.” Lahiri elucidates the problem of alienation associated with race and identity. Lahiri presented her individuals in *The Namesake* and *Unaccustomed Earth* in an irascible manner. The restlessness of these individuals may rightly be interpreted in terms of their frantic search
of identity and self-knowledge. Most of them are cut off from their society and surroundings and lead a life of loneliness and frustration. They live in an alienated world of their own and drift constantly against the current while waging a grim fight for their existence and freedom. Hence, alienation is closely associated with Lahiri’s works. It refers to the physical action of all classes lived in the U.S.

*The Namesake*, in a symbolic way, presents millions of men who for some reason leave their home and fail to locate their identities in the alien soil and live as rootless and restless individuals. The novel mirrors alienation, the consequences of migration and lack of adjustment encountered by Indian immigrants. Alienation and nostalgia affect the Ganguli family in their daily life, including such aspects as food, clothing, and their circle of friends, festivals and celebrations. The family name, Ganguli, incorporates two generations of expatriates, and the latter experiences alienation, anxiety, anguish and despair. Ashima, the pre-globalised migrant of the 1960s regards diaspora as a limbo or half-life – “a perpetual wait, a constant burden, a continuous feeling out of sorts” (*TN* 49). Her way of resolving this alienation in her life is by returning to her beloved Calcutta after the death of her husband. In its small way this is a warp in the myth of the American dream – Ashima voluntarily shuts the golden door behind her. One of the strands of alienation that afflicts Ashima is the difference of vernacular pronunciation from English language. While Ashima with her strong roots in Bengal is smitten with nostalgia, her doubly alienated American son Gogol (who is never recognised as an American on the street) but can also not think of India as home is consumed by insecurity.

The protagonist Gogol seeks to claim America in a more durable way than as tolerated sojourners in the ‘Promised Land.’ Amartya Sen has made an interesting distinction between ‘well-being’ and ‘agency.’ He states “well-being is the passively contented reception of a generally nurturing environment whereas agency shapes the
environment according to its needs." Gogol invokes agency in his attempts to re-invent America by inscribing their Bengali heritage on to its social and cultural fabric. Gogol’s agency lies in inscribing his newly acquired sense of cosmic uncertainty, which imparts a dark timbre to the American celebration of individuation, as his personal diacritical-mark on America.

The novel suggests through its title the problem of authentically naming or defining the hybrid and hyphenated diasporan identity. Gogol feels a peculiar kind of estrangement and alienation with his labelled ‘ABCD’ identity (American Born Confused Desi). The foreigners’ habit of indulging in abbreviating as Ganguli has been shortened to Gang is the cause of pain to Gogol when he reads the phrase ‘Gang Green’ suggesting a contemptible malady. The reaction and struggle against alienation is reflected in Gogol’s parents’ deep desire to instil a dose of Bengali culture in Gogol’s mindset when they take their child to watch “Apu Trilogy Plays” at the “Orson Welles”, or at a time when Kathakali dance is to be performed or whenever there is a sister recital at the “Memorial Hall.” Unfortunately Gogol fails to establish his identity. He is fascinated with the free and happy lifestyles of his American girlfriend Ruth, the flamboyantly cosmopolitan Maxine, and lastly the ‘ABCD’ Moushumi – ironically the trilogy of relations act as a soothing balm against the feelings of alienation for a short while. Gogol finally returns full circle to the American home with the Bengali ambience positioned at the intersection of two cultures. This time, he is more at peace with the opposed halves of his identity. He divines the significance both of his father’s miraculous escape from a train disaster years ago in faraway Bengal and his mother’s un-American values, all of which “formed Gogol, shaped him, and determined who he is” (TN 287).

Lahiri’s short-stories mostly abound in drama at the centre of a situation with an exaggerated humanitarian apocalypse. Her stories portray a deep sense of betrayal, of
fractured association with the wide world outside and try to convey the impression that trivialities of life matter more than the major issues and have the power to aggravate alienation. While Sudha in “Only Goodness” yearns to seek transformation of herself towards a more beautiful and secure existence, it falls to the lot of Neel to imagine pure goodness as her ignorance proves to be a blessing in disguise. Her father had developed within herself a sort of flux that attracts and coalesces various elements of virtue within his own nature. It takes years of a prolonged battle between the light and shade of confidence and diffidence, sacrifice and aggression when Ruma ultimately witnesses her independence being established and completed with Akash under her wing, and, yet the appearance of her father in her married life and as he would not approve her self-styled life to disturb her poise. Through this brief reticence and a subtle hint in his words “your delphiniums need watering”, it would be appropriate to appreciate Ruma’s earlier efforts at adaptability to secure recognition both from her parents as well as from her peers, yet she could not avoid the feeling that she was leading two very separate lives. The untimely death of her mother proves to be a double curse for her, for not only brief bond of understanding between them gets ruptured but also brings home to her the realisation that her mother’s wish to see her grandchildren married would remain unfulfilled. Ironically, some moments of intimacy between the mother and the daughter are followed by a conviction that “fancy cannot cheat so well.” After some time she was able to get rid of the earlier image of her father and was able to reconcile with her own true hybrid identity.

Kaushik in the trilogy proves as an alienated vagabond who wishes to lead the life of an urban cosmopolite traveller. A constantly nagging feeling afflicts him that he has no moorings anywhere in the whole world. While Kaushik’s distancing towards and away from Chitra, the new mother, keeps on changing its emotional intimacy. Such a feeling soothes the nagging thoughts of alienation, yet Kaushik becomes aware that his heart is
anchored at the emotional depths which he had experienced with his real mother, for, Chitra could only serve as a stop gap arrangement, never the panacea. The emotional explosion resurfaces revealing alienation when Kaushik bursts out in a cry, “you have no right to be looking at these” (UE 286). He would not tolerate someone prying into the sanctum sanctorum of his emotional divinity. It only belonged to him, he firmly holds. They say all roads lead to Rome. So, Kaushik and Hema have their rendezvous there, just by chance. It’s intriguing how past can brew up emotional closeness while Hema and Kaushik are just arriving close to the borders of orgasm – it is there that they decide to forge a relationship. Parul acts a wonderful leverage at that conjuncture. She has a perpetual nostalgia for both Kaushik and Hema and they remain bonded together until the former’s impulsiveness creates an unbearable breach in their relatedness barring a few pangs of memories with a mild regret in Hema’s mind that Kaushik had left nothing behind. Though all may be lost to an individual or to every human being still something persists to salvage a man’s destiny – the silver lining of a memory after the storm of fate has passed and some trace of cultural roots and emotional bonds thrives and survives.

“A Choice of Accommodation” tells the same tale of unremitting alienation, crisis of identity and other facets of displacement that haunts people. Amit’s confession of his love for Pam after the drinking bout despite his bold and successful attempt to shake off the dead hand of the past paves the way of understanding and acceptability by Megan. The revelation of hole indicated the flaw in their relationship as they had not yet evolved a harmonious conjugal relationship. Megan’s openness at the parties had also contributed to a gap in the formation of perfect acceptability.

In “Nobody’s Business”, Paul’s sense of alienation is aggravated by Sang’s cold responses to his enthusiastic reflection on certain aspects of literature. To connect ultimately even to his girl friend seems a formidable task. Sangeeta keeps passionate
relationship with Farouk but shows a bland attitude towards Paul and others. That is the reason why Paul fails to muster courage to ask for her hand. A total stranger Deirdre too had sneaked into his already quite limited space. He receives a nasty wound when Sang imputes motives to him. Detesting her for her violation of his space he wanted to push her from the door frame where she stood. Intriguingly the confined space of every character has been violated. After all, the American society takes no cognisance of the inner emotional truths. They remain unacknowledged.

Pranab in “Hell Heaven” is new to America and feels alone in Boston. Usha and her mother invite him as a paying guest. Usha’s mother falls in love with Pranab but lost him to Deborah who gets divorced from him after a marriage of twenty-three years of union. Both Pranab and Deborah had caused so much of suffering in the life of Usha’s mother. Usha’s various flirtations only end in a heart-break despite her mother’s futile attempts at consoling the latter.

Thus, Lahiri contemplates on alienation of her protagonists mostly resulting in psychosis and frustration. Lahiri questions the social and cultural implications of Indian immigrants as part of a minority that thrives in the U.S. and highlights a new American identity for them. Her estranged characters, engaged in the conflict to balance two different worlds, enable us to understand the complexities and existential confusion of the immigrants in the new land of settlement. Yet, Lahiri emphasises the necessity of creating a transnational identity to overcome these complexities. As a consequence of globalisation, technological development and mass media, today it’s not only the immigrants who are on the process of negotiation and transformation to form a transnational identity, but also the people from the host societies that are adopting multiplicities of identity. For instance, the celebration of Dipawali in the White House, appointing Lahiri as a member of the U.S. President Barack Obama’s Committee on the
Arts and Humanities is a clear gesture of acknowledgement of multiplicities within the U.S. culture in practise, not limited in rhetoric.

Lahiri’s most potent gift as an artist is her ability to write so exquisitely even about ordinary things. Lahiri uses the third person omniscient technique in her debut novel *The Namesake* to cover a great deal of time in short number of pages. This technique also allows her to tell her story tightly while keeping her control without the added richness of dialogue and a multitude of dramatic scenes. Diverse settings are employed by Lahiri to portray Indian or Western culture and their influence on the personas of the central characters. A ceremonial text is common to her texts and foreshadows the protagonists’ desire to retreat from his/her traditions. In her novel *The Namesake*, Gogol’s “annaprasan”, a customary Indian rice ritual for new born children, reveals his refusal to choose an object, a rare act, which alludes to his reluctance later in life to identify with Bengali culture. These ceremonial settings exhibit the typical behaviour of the main characters.

Lahiri also incorporates specific locations to express the necessity for her characters to experience the counterpart of their own society. Of course, such an experience may lead sometimes to more intense alienation. Gogol cannot visualise his family occupying an elegant house like this during the course of a remote holiday residence with his girlfriend, Maxine. Settings that deviate drastically from the protagonists’ norms raise awareness of the value of immersion in a diverse environment, where one can break away from inherited customs. Dualism between the main characters’ original civilisation and his adopted way of life is further reflected by a change in landscape. For the rest of his life Gogol will not be able to forget Boston children “pedalling their Big Wheels down the road” (*TN* 52), the anaphora of ‘will remember’ in the text signifying that his American childhood has formed the foundation of his identity.
complicating his alienation. A series of snapshots also preponderate in the story; often skipping years at a time, one feels only an observer, outsider, looking into the life of the Ganguli family, who themselves often feel like outsiders in America and in India when they return to visit their families.

Alienation is expressed by the incorporation of symbols in the novel while showing her fine narrative technique over the development of identity. Preference for traditional food by Ashima brings to the surface the cultural separation between India and America. “Though no longer pregnant, she continues, at times, Rice Krispies and peanuts and onions in a bowl” (TN 49). The use of the mechanism of pathetic fallacy brings to light the hidden truths on the individual’s personality. Cleverly making a parallelism between the climatic turbulence of the external with the mental agony of Gogol, the author graphically draws the mental state of the protagonist. Juxtaposing the outer environment with the inner environment of Gogol, Lahiri shows the magnitude of his inner turmoil, “The night is windy, so much so that the car jostles slightly from time to time, and brown leaves as large as human feet fly across the road in the headlight’s glare” (TN 122).

Lahiri amply reveals the finesse of her art while fathoming the psycho-analytical make up of the dwellers in suburban localities. Lahiri points out the protagonist’s burning desire to establish his new identity, severing his tics with his earlier identity, given by the parents. The use of evocative imagery helps to point out the importance of establishing identity. It is in the midst of their relatives that Ashoke and Ashima seem to gain their wholesome personality. “[...] their smiles wider, revealing a confidence Gogol and Sonia never see on Pemberton Road [...] Sonia whispers to her brother, in English seeking his hand and refusing to let go” (TN 81-82). Lahiri has the capability to dive deep into her characters’ mind. This is brought to the fore when she successfully captures the inner turmoil of Ashima. Even after the death of her husband, Ashima decides to stay back in
New York: “But for the first time in her life, Ashima has no desire to escape to Calcutta, not now. [...] He was teaching me how to live alone” (TN 183).

Lahiri’s technique of narration in Unaccustomed Earth appears to be so realistic because her personal pain of shuttling between two cultures percolates into the characters and situations of her stories. The writer chose the title of Unaccustomed Earth from a passage from Nathaniel Hawthorne’s The Custom House, but she does not follow the same idea that “transplanting” people into new soil might be beneficial to them, for her stories are coloured by the pervading sense of loss and insecurity that is suffered by her characters.

It becomes obvious that the problems of identity crisis, feelings of alienation, isolation, or exclusion are passed down from parents to children as parts of genetic predispositions. The technique is used to properly trace the vestiges of past influences. Lahiri is more focused on inter-generational immigrant experience; the notion of ‘homeland’; and the trope of the ‘return’ are not unavoidably tied up in a nostalgic way. Further viewing together the stories of the children with those of their parents, one comes across the opening story “Unaccustomed Earth.” The experiences of alienation by children as well as their parents form the centre of the story unravels the tensions underlying a daughter’s betrayal of a father’s hopes, the shared (and not quite shared) loss of a mother and wife, a father’s growing love for another woman. These father-daughter tensions are conveyed through alternating third person points of view, a device not seen in her novel The Namesake. The alternating viewpoints appear again in the linked stories, but this time in the first person, as well as the third. In the second part of the book, the first story “Once in a Lifetime” is narrated by Hema, the second “Year’s End” by Kaushik, the third “Going Ashore” by a third person narrator, and then, in its last section, by Hema in her own voice. The child’s perspective, used so effectively, is completely convincing. The voice of
Kaushik, a college senior in “Year’s End”, is less persuasive. The narrator, quiet observant, poised, sounds like Hema recalling her childhood in the first story; in fact, she sounds like the narrators, whether in first or third person, in the whole collection. Lahiri’s style, so beguiling and true, rings false in the mouth of Kaushik because it is insufficiently distinguishable from the writer herself.

Edward W. Said, in his ground-breaking book – *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) – noted that it is “one of the unhappiest characteristics of the age to have produced more refugees, migrants, displaced persons, and exiles than ever before in history.” In *Unaccustomed Earth*, Lahiri too explores the theme of migration and displacement with her typical poetic style and immense emotional involvement. Most of the stories in the book are often dominated by an omnipresent sense of loss and insecurity. The process of self-reconstruction portrayed from generational viewpoints occupies the central space in the collection. In “Only Goodness” the heroine strolls through the National Gallery in London and stops to admire Jan Van Eyck’s portrait called “The Arnolfini Marriage”. The painting, depicting Giovanni Arnolfini, may be regarded as an equivalent of Lahiri’s elaborated writing technique. Beside the two figures who dominate the painting (because of their placement in the foreground and their size), there are other objects worth noticing which carry symbolic meanings, such as the dog (symbolising faithfulness), the fruits perfunctorily placed on the window sill and the blossoming tree outside (fertility) or the solitary burning candle in the chandelier. The careful selection and deliberate placing of these symbolical objects in the painting, which might at first sight appear as insignificant and random, correspond to Lahiri’s sense for miniature and detail. A second look at the painting reveals another interesting detail. The spatial distribution of the figures and objects on the canvas, renders the convex mirror on the wall behind the couple, the focal point of the painting. Placed right in the middle of the canvas and in between the figures,
the mirror simply draws the viewers' eyes to its reflection. A careful inspection of the mirror image reveals another dimension, namely two other figures observing the couple. It points to an invisible part of the scene which plays, however, a crucial role in the whole context. Lahiri focuses one's attention on surface images or scenes appearing as irrelevant which, through investigation, reveal the true essence of the story. Like the painting with "the small mirror at the back revealing more than the room at first appeared to contain" (UE157), her stories point to other stories operating within the invisible space in-between the lines. Thus, the stories of the immigrants' children always reflect the stories of their parents and manifest their mutual interconnection.

Alienation is such a perpetual ailment of human soul and psyche that no perfect remedy can ever be prescribed. One must accept humbly that it has existed and it will be so. In the present thesis an attempt has been made to view this phenomenon from various directions. Benignly, the researcher would like to proffer the findings of this thesis as follows:

a) The word alienation has been researched to such an extent that it has become a part of mystique. Every object, animate or inanimate, dwelling on this earth has to suffer alienation in one form or the other. The insatiable desires and the complex ridden life of modern man have certainly aggravated the already existing problem of alienation. In the present age of globalisation, every character understudy who drifts to another land would have to experience displacement with different degrees of acceptability or nostalgia. Since, alienation or diaspora is as old as man himself; it has certainly raised an incessant debate as to how this phenomenon of alienation has affected the various aspects of human life.

b) There have been unexpected gains as well as losses in the wake of this recent upsurge of globalisation which appears like a hydra-headed monster to some
while to others it serves as an opportunity to realise their dream. Since one cannot escape alienation, it seems wise to have an empathetic and somewhat lenient attitude towards it as this constant reality. The more one would resist it, the more would it persist and one would only go the way of Hercules who while attempting to remove his shirt tore his skin. Therefore, one has to learn to widen the scope of his tolerance thereby extending his existential, mental and spiritual horizon towards greater and still greater acceptability. Whatever the future has in store, one should realise that alienation has come to stay and human spirit must ensure the perpetuation of co-existence through tolerance and co-operation.

c) The peroration after the study of Roy’s classic work *The God of Small Things* is that the invisible Gods are not hostile to human race but rather it is man who is the enemy of man. The tragic relatedness of a Man with Man has created untold sorrow and suffering for all the characters in this novel. If reason dawns upon man he would naturally have strong urges and make a powerful effort to live together in harmony. Feeling of empathy can go a very long way if the different institutions and people realise their responsibility of forging a long chain of bonhomie.

d) The natural surmise from Desai’s *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* and *The Inheritance of Loss* is that alienation springs forth from class conscious society. Man must reach out to his fellow creatures under the code of ‘humanness’ so as to keep man’s race alive with wholesome existence. Sweet impulses of humour and fun keep on flirting with the tragic undercurrents of human emotions. If social animals allow themselves to be shocked into awareness, they might appreciate the dire necessity of learning the art of living.
e) The outcome from Lahiri’s *The Namesake* and *Unaccustomed Earth* is that rather hanging upon conditioned view of identity, one should coalesce both the cultures in a constructive way. In order to overcome the malady of alienation and uprootedness, it seems that diasporics have to give up nostalgic thread of the mystical homeland by renegotiating their hybrid-self and by travelling beyond the fixity of identity. It could result into a successful assimilation and adaptation to their new homes, turning unaccustomed earth into a fertile ground.

Thus, the present thesis is a kind of prism which reflects different shades of alienation, presented by these three women writers in different manners. This shows different facets of a very simple looking term, “alienation.” Nevertheless, the thesis also suggests some clues to fight with different kinds of alienation. Human race can progress by leaps and bounds by curing itself of this disease called “alienation.”