Chapter 5

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The study of fictional worlds of Manju Kapur and Jhumpa Lahiri primarily as writings of women writers and secondarily as writings of diasporic nature is in itself a rewarding academic exercise in the sense that their writings are testimonials of the psyche, sensibility, strength, suffering, struggle, strife, entrepreneurship, endurance and also phenomenology of the inner and the outer selves of Indian women who have been portrayed if not from feminist perspective then certainly in the most feminine yet deterministic, definite, deliberate and distinguished perspectives which in turn make the fictional worlds of both the writers comprehensively meaningful, thought provoking and appealing to the literary as well as actual sensibility of all those who take sufficient pains to understand the trysts of women with the strifes and trials and tribulations of life, whether in India or abroad. Notwithstanding the fact that Manju Kapur does not essentially fall under the category of diasporic writers, the parallels drawn between Jhumpa Lahiri and the former are sufficient evidences to prove that women writers have many things in common to share irrespective of their social, academic, economic, professional or geographical backgrounds. The core areas and primary
focus of the research has therefore been the diasporic as well as comparative study of the writings of Jhumpa Lahiri and Manju Kapur. On the basis of the issues discussed throughout the previous chapters, what comes to light is the fact that both the writers have honestly and explicitly dealt with their women characters maintaining almost absolute integrity of circumstantial actualities that their women characters are provided with and the emerging realities that they are made of. Not a single female character depicted by these two authors renders any intangibility in terms of its appeal and proximity to the real life. All the women characters that we come across in the fictional works of Manju Kapur and Jhumpa Lahiri definitely come alive in flesh and blood on account of their realistic portrayal finely chiseled with delicacy of expressions and intellectually rational treatment. The similitude with life that arises out of the lives of these characters speaks volumes of the creative talent of these two authors.

It is obvious that the female protagonists enjoy the forefront status as far as these authors’s narrative treatment is concerned. However, the impetus given to the sufferings and struggles of the women owes much to the male protagonists’ presence, actions, intentions and attitudes as well. There are subtle but definite parallels drawn in the fictional worlds of these two writers that are surely suggestive of essential tension that
ultimately is the driving force behind any and every man-woman relationship which is interestingly the most predominat thread that binds the beads of fictional works that are studied here for the purpose of proposed research work.

The nuances and niceities of these two writers are better understood when they are studied from the perspectives of the theory of comparative literature. It is interesting to observe that in the midst of lot of changes happening all over the world, the basic conditions of women have changed to negligible extent. The works cited in this research reveal that women characters make emphatic attempts in search of desirable changes in their life, but with moderate success only; in some cases their attempts meet a closed end. Most women characters are shown constantly striving for the openings in their life. The impediments before them may not be newer ones as both writers try to weave their fictional plots with the customary threads of marriage, man-woman relationship, concepts of family and home making, economic independence and women’s struggle for survival in the patriarchal structures. There is a wide range of variety in terms of locations, cultures, social milieus, education and even financial background; however the conditions and aspirations of the women characters more or less remain similar as they are shown suffering, subjugating, unsuccessfully rebelling and desiring freedom
under the tyranny of male dominated world. If the fictional world of Manju Kapur seems to be at once convincing mainly because of the Indian background and Indianness found in her works, Jhumpa Lahiri’s works only add to the convincing effect of the former by way of her fictional treatment of the migrants that live on foreign lands, still aspiring to breathe their native soil. The theme of journey from being a girl child to attaining womanhood and subsequent societal roles as women is common with Jhumpa Lahiri and Manju Kapur. The fact that they are born Indians remains a governing factor in shaping their psyche that continues to dictate their ways of life. Most of the female characters of Manju Kapur hardly travel beyond India and remain within the confines of the male dominated societies. Even with less hope and little openings, they seem striving for their individual footprints being guided by their own desires. The female characters of Jhumpa Lahiri, however, are fortunate enough to have wings to fly over. However, being away from the native land is actually of little help to them as they carry the emotional native drives wherever they are settled abroad. Their inability to get rid of enforced societal roles and structures does not allow them to exercise borrowed sensibility of the western world that harps on liberation of women. If women portrayed by Manju Kapur are helpless merely because they are located within the traditional Indian societies, their counterparts in
Jhumpa Lahiri’s works seem to be utterly failing in assuming and asserting the new roles. What restrains their scopes for success is their limited and concretised senses of being women. The very notion of being women is enough to impend their scopes of becoming self dependent individuals independent of any male domination. Being the women writers themselves, both Manju Kapur and Jhumpa Lahiri highlight the plights of their women characters in their creative writings. It is therefore, that women characters hold the center while their male counterparts remain mostly at the periphery. However, the latter’s peripheral roles provide impetus to the struggles and sufferings for the women characters. Interestingly, the women of these fictional worlds whether in India or abroad, confront obstacles more so on account of male domination than any other factors. Since the theme of marriage and the sub-themes of family and child-rearing is common with both the authors, their women characters find it difficult not being able to attain what they desire for and not being able to come to terms with the worlds: of their dreams and realities. The concepts surrounding the idea of home are perhaps most vividly brought out by these writers as they explicitly show how women in their fictions strive for what they believe should be their home. The idea of home is what encompasses the world of women who do not try to think and live beyond it. The novels of Manju Kapur are examples of how
and why Indian women suffer only because they just cannot think beyond their concepts of home. As homemakers, the women in her novels earn little respect from their male counterparts; whereas not giving enough at the home front while chasing their own dreams, too, brings them bad blood in the sense that they are constantly made feel guilty of not being faithful to their traditional duties as directed upon them by the patriarchal system of customary indian societies. It is worth observing that the notion of home is quite paradoxical for Manju Kapur’s traditional women as well as Jhumpa Lahiri’s diasporic women. It is a paradox that home is a center of grounded realities of an individual’s life; however it remains illusiory for traditional Indian women who cannot materialize their dream reality into actuality and for the so called advanced immigrant women of Jhumpa Lahiri who fail to recognize which home is their real home. In both cases home remains their dream destination as well as a paradox which engulfs their life. As per the customary notions of Indian societies, home and women are almost inseparable entities, perhaps synonymous with one another, the idea of home is the most haunting and daunting notion that unsettles and upsets the lives of most women characters in the fictions of both writers. Any interpretation or analysis of women characters from this view point makes their study complicated but concrete as the problems of homelessness and homeliness concern the ins
and outs of the women characters who on one hand are expected to make or build homes but are on the other hand forced to do so not as per their wishes but those of the males in their lives. Such a complex oddity leaves us to probe whether women in their native land really live in their own home or it is homelessness arising out of hopelessness within homes on the homeland. In case of Jhumpa Lahir’s women, it is homelessness felt in sophisticated homes at non-native locations. However, the pertinent question is that the concept of one’s own home continues to elude almost all women that we come across in the writings of Manju Kapur and Jhumpa Lahiri.

Irrespective of being within one’s own country or away from it, the women always seem to be yearning for home and homeliness. In the women characters of Jhumpa Lahiri, especially such a tendency is overtly seen. If manju Kapur’s women are seen dissatisfied with their native homes, Jhumpa Lahiri’s women are equally dissatisfied with their home away from home for different reasons. Indian women migrants in Jhumpa lahiri’s fiction are prone to ghettoisation as most of them try to create a mini Bengal in US, a replica of Bengali culture and lifestyle perhaps to shield them with some more security, not necessarily in terms of values but more so in their native practices. Jhumpa Lahiri shows her women romancing with the Bengali culture and traditions to the extent that their
assimilation in the US remains inapt and even disturbing, not allowing them to completely settle down. The comfort zones created by these women with typical Bengali ways of life are mere illusions since they neither promise better future at the destination country nor do they cater to the challenges and requirements of the non-native living. Jhumpa Lahiri’s women suffer from split personality and perturbed psyche as geographical dislocation means negligible freedom and even more negligible empowerment for women; since her women could not actually walk into the ways of the western life. The issues pertaining to adaptability are grave because their very system of faith does not comply to their requirements of far modern and advanced society that they have chosen to live in if not on their own then by way of being in relationship with their man. As the women are constantly engaged creating a mini Bengal, their male counterparts, too, find it cumbersome to toe in line with the western world. Though the men in Jhumpa Lahiri are educationally and professionally well off, they do not strike a balance between their chosen world and their attachment with the native. They are found confused and engrossed with a peculiar dilemma which prevents them from hugging the western life or even shaking hands whole heartedly with their western colleagues. Real lifelike mingling, mixing and adapting to the ways of western world hardly take place; instead the
men remain emotionally aloof and non-interactive with their western colleagues. At their best they make half hearted adjustments in order to prove their decision viable for surviving and succeeding on foreign lands. In the novels of Jhumpa Lahiri, it is a striking observation not to find any budding or blossoming relationship among Indian men and their western colleagues whether at professional level or at home front. However, among the second generation migrants, Indian men tend to come out of the cocoon and reach out to the western life style so much so that some of them also embrace the western life by accepting a westner to be their life partner. However, by and large, Indian men, though having more interaction with the western world, donot feel convinced somehow to give them direct and unabashed exposure and excess to personal relationships with the westerners.

Against the life of choice that Jhumpa Lahiri’s men and women live on foreign land, Manju Kapur’s characters suffer from issues related to the oddities of the native societies. Accentricity of bold choices and non-native challenges are causes of discomfort for Jhumpa Lahir’s characters; whereas, for manju kapur’s characters, oddities and atrocities of the native society prove to be their nemesis. In the fictions of Manju Kapur, the native land itself holds little promise for men and women. The men in Manju Kapur do not taste any success and make something big out of
themselves though being in the native land, whereas her women suffer
the slings of irrationality, inequality and even inhumanity of the native
societies. In comparison with the women in Jhumpa Lahiri, Manju
Kapur’s women too, are no less competent, capable and promising. It is
lack of adequate exposure and timely opportunities that grounds them
whenever and wherever they gather courage to flail their wings.
Unfortunately, despite being in native societies, they remain helpless and
even separated from their desires and ambitions. If not alienation, it is
estrangement, enforced estrangement from their emotive selves that is
their real plight. The scenes of patriarchal partiality and atrocities that go
with it hardly allow Manju Kapur’s women to grow in desired directions.
Jhumpa Lahiri’s women are confronted with challenges of new life;
whereas Manju Kapur’s women are confronted with the problems of the
old life. Being in India does not allow Manju Kapur’s women to grow and
find their own life independently. Native societies guarantee them neither
freedom, nor any comfort zones nor even a promising future. If Jhumpa
Lahir’s women suffer from the dream life chosen by men in their life and
its consequences, Manju Kapur’s women suffer from predestined fate –
that of being a daughter, a sister, a wife, a daughter-in-law and even
mother. Assuming newer responsibilities on a foreign land is a challenge
for Jhumpa Lahir’s women. However, for Manju Kapur’s women, it is
pity to be living among one’s own people on one’s own land; therefore problems in their life rise out of sense of ownness and owing to the native societies. Although, Manju Kapur’s women do not disown their traditional roles and life, they are found being disowned by their own people and own society. The issues of disowning and always being at the receiving end as far as the plight of disowning is concerned, is perhaps the real tragedy in the life of Manju Kapur’s women. The echoes of restlessness and dissatisfaction in the life of Jhumpa Lahiri’s migrant women are more eloquent, whereas the tears and sobs of Manju Kapur’s women mostly go unnoticed amidst the chaotic rhetorics of Indian patriarchal society. The issue with Jhumpa Lahiri’s women may be that of unfulfilled dreams or dreams partially fulfilled because of being on foreign land; however manju Kapur’s women are doomed not to dream at all and if at all they dare to dream, it would happen at the cost of their self respect and they very essence of their life. Manju Kapur’s women are set against social and familiar ordeals as they are expected to play roles which are mostly imposed upon them. Whenever they try to assume roles of their own, only their sufferings increase, only the ordeals augment with little gain and more remorse. The quest for freedom and space becomes their goal, so success remains a far cry for Manju Kapur’s women. The question of identity is also a major concern while analyzing
women characters in the novels of Manju Kapur. Women find it difficult to underline their identities not because they are incapable but because they have little acceptance as individuals in the society. They are projected in a society which is divided on the basis of gender. Further divisions only mean further marginalization of women. Consequently every custom, belief, dogma and tradition of the society would narrow down any scope of progress for women. For most women in Manju Kapur, the greatest disadvantage is that of living in traditional Indian society itself. Global economic or professional developments have a little to do with the conditions and progress of Manju Kapur’s women, as higher education or sound financial status do not guarantee freedom and space for women. This is because the patriarchal mindset refuses to modify itself with the changing times. The novelist herself has failed to portray and project a single woman character in her individuality independent of any relationship with men in the life of that woman character. While Manju kapur’s women are under tremendous social pressure being in India, women in the fiction of jhumpa Lahiri do feel the same, if not in the same degree than certainly being chased by the same though living abroad. For them, the haunting memories of the native land serve as major factors responsible for the social pulls and pressures that disturb their new beginning of life abroad. Their immediate family
members, their relatives and other acquaintances of the motherland constantly influence them for not forgetting and for remaining faithful to the traditions of their respective societies without realizing the difficulties of the migrants to mix and match the East and the West. Occasional visits of the migrant women to their homeland are meant for reinstating, reinforcing and restrengthening their social ties with the native traditions. On their visits to India, the children of these migrants, who are often described as second generation migrants, seem to be rather confused as they do not have the best of both worlds. They have just learnt to be an active part of the western culture on account of their US citizenship, only to realize that their real part of origin is India which is not only different from the US but also almost opposite of the western lifestyle. Thus the dilemma of ‘belonging’ is passed on from the first generation migrants to those of the second generation. However this dilemma is more felt with the first generation migrants as for them it is almost compulsory to guard their Indian identities for the sake of not getting labeled as social outcasts; whereas for the second generation migrants, Indianness is a matter of mere formality or at the most a novelty that they fancy around. As far as social traditions are concerned, the migrants practice them trying to adjust their newly found ways of life in the US and thereby not being able to maintain the balance between what is necessary and what is
customary. The ghost of Indianess constantly chases them; their houses, therefore, are haunted houses where their past lives along with them in their present of the US life. It is in this way that society plays a vital role in shaping the ways and means of the life of women characters in the fictional world of Manju Kapur and Jhumpa Lahiri.

Along with the social constraints, man-woman relationships are photogenically developed throughout the panaromic descriptions found in the fictional works of Manju Kapur and Jhumpa Lahiri. As it has been observed earlier, women characters of these two writers are always discussed and sketched with the shades of their male counterparts. It is here that the dominance of social roles and the influence of relationships, especially man-woman relationship are juxtaposed and found interpolated to the extent that most women characters in the fictions studied here are allowed shadow existence under and beneath the blinding lights of patriarchy. Some of the major issues in the life of the women characters pertain to their relationships with father, brother, husband, son and even male colleagues or male friends. The women in Manju Kapur’s fiction fall prey to the clutches of Indian patriarchal social system; hence they are always made to feel the secondary status in any relationship with men in their life. However, Jhumpa Lahir’s women are staked with a further lower status on account of their status of
secondary citizens in their home away from home. For the migrant 
women, with all their riches abroad, they enjoy secondary citizenship 
outside their homes abroad and while at home the men in their life, 
despite their advanced, professional and educational set up, make them 
feel secondary beings as the male mind sets are shown scarcely improved 
to recognize independent existence and talents of the women in their life. 
The women, by and large, as portrayed by these two authors, are shown 
being at the receiving ends only. Whenever they try to exhibit any sense 
of initiative, it is doubted first by their fear of lack of experience and 
confidence and secondly by their fear of rejection and disapproval by 
their own men in life. Chiefly because of these two reasons, the women 
definitely fall short of being what they like to be or what they think they 
are capable of. Such perplexity and helplessness engulf their existence to 
the extent that either they become passive sufferers of the buffets of time 
or they take untimely actions in haste. Under both these situations, their 
life is left mercilessly with a sense of either remorse or repentence. 
Despite having excess to living abroad where causes of women’s 
emancipation are championed, Indian migrant women mostly end up 
becoming housewives, may be in a bit more dignified fashion; which 
means getting a visa to live abroad never surely means a passport to their 
economic freedom. It is from this perspective that the condition of
women in Jhumpa Lahiri’s fiction is no different or better than that of Manju Kapur’s. On the contrary, Nina and Shagun of Manju Kapur, find employment and thereby a path to walk the road of some individual freedom. In almost all the works studied here, the women are denied to carve their niche perhaps because it is feared it would disturb the social fabric and it would put at stake their relationship with men in their life. Given the background of traditional Indian society, it is understood that Indian men with their little exposure to the issues and practices of gender sensitization, would never forego their superiority while in relationship with women in their life; however Jhumpa Lahir’s men with all their exposure abroad, fail to get rid of clichéd mindsets as they continue to have an upperhand while treating their wives and daughters. What is grossly misunderstood and underestimated is the fact that, under whatever circumstances, it is the woman of the house that constantly strives to weave and hold the family ties. Under the customary traditions of Indian society, woman’s pivotal role in binding and nurturing the familial relationships is not given its due. Perhaps such a feeling leaves women with a sense of acutely painful dissatisfaction with self and disillusionment with their relationships with men. By the customary traditions of the western world, Jhumpa Lahir’s women should have been known for their professional life, contrary to their domestic roles that
they continue to play even as migrants abroad. It is in this sense that any relationship with any man seems to be restricting scopes of women characters to be free individuals. As far as their domestic duty is concerned, whether native or non-native, geographical location does not matter much for women characters of both the writers. However, there are heartening exceptions to this observation in case of Nina and Shagun in Manju Kapur who succeed in becoming independent women of their own choice. Except these two characters, all other first generation immigrant women characters lead a life limited by personal relationships wherein they are supposed to discharge duties dictated by their men.

Within the man woman relationships depicted by Manju Kapur and Jhumpa Lahiri, the themes of love and marriage come to the forefront. Being women writers, these two things seem to surround what they feel, observe and translate into their creative writing. Most titles of their fictional works are also indicative of the themes of love and marriage. The significance of such things can be seen in the fact that even today with all the modernity and advancements of life, love and marriage remain closer to the life of women whether educated or uneducated, professional or domestic, native or migrant. From time immemorial love and marriage have been top priorities for women on account of cultural, social or traditional reasons. The perceivable tension in the fiction of
these two writers is felt when love and marriage are separated from each other. It is a reality eluding the life of women whether they marry for love or they love to marry. Lack of love is hardly compensated with by way of marrying the man of their life. On the contrary, it is the marriage that deprives women of the love they longed for prior to their marriage. With most women characters, marriage is a hard core reality whereas love is a matter of quest like quest for their own identity whether in India or abroad. The innate psyche of women makes them prone to the practices of love while it is the society that forces them to marry. Since love is based on personal preferences it depends upon changing conditions of the life of women; whereas marriage remains a matter of compromise formula based upon life long sacrifices made by women. Whether love or marriage, women have to suffer as they always associate love and marriage within the domains of their relationship with men.

Despite complexity of relationships, oppression of society and oddities of circumstances, it is a remarkable quality with the migrants described in Jhumpa lahiri’s fiction who strive for better life through the process of assimilation. They not only try to mingle with the natives of the US, they also try to learn the western ways of life in order to compensate with the loss in terms of social traditions and cultural practices which cannot be fully lived with being migrants away from the homeland. Through the
process of assimilation, the migrants automatically develop a sense of adjustment and adaptation. With the first generation migrants especially, such process of assimilation renders them with ‘dual identity’ for the simple reason that they cannot easily and immediately come out of the social and cultural pulls and pressures of their homeland. Moreover, the first generation migrants have already spent their formative years of life back at their homeland, so they take more time to assimilate with the western culture and even when they do so, they do it rather too partially; consequently ending up with what is technically called a case of dual identity in the critique of diaspora studies. Whereas, the second generation migrants, mostly children of first generation migrants, are born abroad and/or they spend their formative years abroad enjoying legal citizenship of a country which is not their own, so in their case, the process of assimilation is automatically natural, faster and easier. It is for this reason that their sense of acceptance of and adjustment with the western culture is broader. Resultantly they succeed in assuming what is technically termed as the ‘fluid identity’ in the critique of the diaspora study. Assimilation in case of Manju Kapur’s women has a lot to do with pairing up with the local society as against individual ideology, goal and desire of women. Under traditional domestic life of ordinary Indian women, assimilation does happen to them the day they get married and
start a new life at husband’s house. In a way an act of marriage is in itself an act of migration for traditional Indian women who definitely undergo a post marriage phase of tremendous transition, transformation and transportation. The changes experienced and undergone this way by women are so significant that they affect the course of personal, domestic and social or professional life of women after marriage. Their orientation, brought up, personal desires and even education come to be redefined after their destined migration known as marriage. As the society they live in leaves little scope for them either to complain or rebel against the new post marriage life, they are left mostly with a singular option of assimilation with the customs and practices of the respective society. The immediate outcome of such assimilations is settlement of life conducive to the prevalent norms of the society. Despite such assimilation, there are a few things that still remain unsettled in the life of the migrants. Though an early result of assimilation is sense of settlement and feel of immediate comfort for migrants, slowly and gradually the haunting turbulence of cultural dilemma creeps in their life as they cannot completely unlearn and undo their ethical and emotive realities rooted in their homeland; merely because, with their migration, are also extended the traditions and practices of the native life which remains, if not actively practiced, then surely, inseparable reality with the migrants.
Such and admixture of life is perhaps the root cause of the cultural
dilemma that the migrants constantly find themselves hanging on. The
process of assimilation is triggered off and driven mainly by two factors:
fear psychosis- fear of failure in purpose, and a priori the conditionality
demanded by the life abroad; whereas the cultural dilemma experienced
by the migrants is governed principally by their affinity with an
orientation of the homeland. Assimilation, therefore, is their immediate
conditional requirement forced by circumstances; whereas cultural
dilemma is a complex phenomenon that arises out of their attachment
with the native roots as well as their inborn inability to dispense with it
altogether. For migrants, their heart beats the melodies and lyrics of the
homeland culture; however they are enforced by the circumstances to
dance to the western tunes. The resultant disharmony in their action and
more so in their behavioural pattern is inevitably orchestrated.
Consequently music of a harmonic discord surrounds their life. This
perhaps can be described as cultural dilemma suffered by most migrants.
Even among migrants; the women seem to be all the more sitting on the
horns of cultural dilemma perhaps because of indignant indifference with
which they are treated by the men in their life. Many cultural practices
are left to women who are supposed to be bearers not only of next
genertation but also of values of the previous one. Cultural dilemma
among the migrants has dual effect on them. On one hand it shields them against the threats and negative sides of the western culture; on the other hand it hinders the process of their assimilation with the western culture. In the first instance, they are happy creating a miniature homeland following native practices; in the second instance, clinging to the past and inclination towards the homeland fails to be a catalyst in adopting the ways and means of the new life abroad. The urge to assume a new identity is overpowered by self confessed and self inflicted duty to continue with the native traditions. Thus, a conflict mechanism arising out of the sense of duty to follow the native traditions and urge to assume new identity results into cultural dilemma. Also In the fictions of Manju Kapur are found instances of cultural dilemma. However, cultural dilemma in the fiction of Manju Kapur arises not out of alienation from the mother culture but from the conflicts springing from interplay of specific subsets of the mother culture. In case of Manju kapur’s women, it is either sense of belonging to a particular set of culture or a sense of partial or complete detachment from a particular set of culture that is thurst upon them, which is the root cause of cultural dilemma. Apart from this, in case of Manju Kapur’s women, their orientation during the pre-marriage life plays a vital role in their experience of cultural dilemma. Education that they receive has little to do with the social roles they are
expected to play in their post marriage life. Pre marriage education, orientation or any professional exposure end up miserably when their life is fragmented into post marriage roles of wife, daughter-in-law and even mother. Their dilemma is quite different from that of the migrant women of Jhumpa Lahiri, as for them, the dilemma is not an outcome of cultural shocks on foreign land but it is a resultant outcome of the clashes of ideologies and interpretations of cultural practices within the same society. Mere changes in their social roles, most of the times, mean altogether a different world for the women in Manju Kapur’s fiction. Whenever, their world changes, they suffer the cultural dilemma. Though the differences between the father’s world and the husband’s world are often predictable of nature, they are barely tolerable because such cultural differences eliminate individual freedom of the women who are always expected to bare the identity of the man in their life in order to prove their existence. It is in this sense that the cultural dilemma in case of Jhumpa Lahiri’s women is functional, emotional or psychological of nature; whereas the same in case of Manju Kapur’s women is purely existential and circumstancial. Functionally, such cultural dilemma begins with the persona of the character and later on it grips the psyche. The subtleties of cultural dilemma are manifested by the behavioural patterns of characters who are found indecisive in performing their social
and professional duties. In this sense cultural dilemma is a result of the mechanism based on clashes between ‘what ought to be’ and ‘what has been provided with’. It is a dilemma that resides on the life before the characters and the life that they long for. Overlapping of real and surreal world within the life of characters sometimes plays havoc when it throws their life out of gear. Alienation from the roots and affinity for ‘the other accepted reality’ almost unsettles all those who are ‘home away from home’. Whether Jhumpa Lahiri or Manju Kapur, most of their characters are prisoners of cultural dilemma since they live caged existence whether in India or abroad. Denial of fundamental rights of freedom of actions and personal choices amounts to deprivation of the right of individual freedom. This, inturn, leads to subjugation of self either to the circumstances beyond control or to the patriarchal set up of the native society. The saga of struggle is passed on from first generation migrants to the second generation ones. It is the cultural dilemma that primarily questions the righteousness of the migrants’ actions and unduly probes into what is to be done and what is not to be done on their part. It is in this sense that the cultural dilemma remains a dictator for the women that we come across in the fictional world of both writiers. However, it is pertinent to investigate as to what extent the patriarchal set up contributes to it. This is because most cultural traditions are decided and governed by
the patriarchy that expects the women to be the barriers of such practices. It is to be thus closely read with respect to the atrocities that men commit towards the women.

Thus, the men and women in the fictions of Jhumpa Lahiri and Manju Kapur are found at the crossroads of life as their life is full of trysts with traditions, choices and challenges. Their trysts with the real self, the chosen self and the desired self make us look at the present research with a rather philosophical bent of mind. Their circumstances in life may not be unsurmountable but it is their tryst with the triology of circumstances, preferences and practices that makes an extraordinary reading of ordinary human beings. Their exposures to the past and the present life and their prospects of the future life are testimonials of the cultural dilemma that unfolds itself alongside their journey from home to the other home. The viscissitudes of life fail them in their intentions to be either successful or happy; however they do not daunt their spirit to survive against the buffets of time and oddities of life. It is the survival on their part which is perhaps their true success story in the midst of immeasurable trials and turbulations. Conflicts in their life rest on the grounds of ideological and philosophical aspects of culture. Their life is torn apart between practices and beliefs. Only balancing task is never enough for them as they are supposed to convince the self, the family and the society; wherein
sometimes all the three seem to be beyond their control. All the works studied here for this research show a great variety of cultural dilemma as experienced by similar variety of characters, especially the women who are forced to be the embassadors of their respective sets and subsets of culture. Whether native or non native, locals or migrants, the cultural dilemma suffocates the life of women as there have always been less opportunities, lesser choices and least freedom for them in any age and in any society in the annals of the history of mankind. In the final analysis of the research undertaken here, the comparative study of the fictional worlds of Manju Kapur and Jhumpa Lahiri reveals that it is the saga of female senses, sensibilities and persuasions that governs their works. Both the writers portray tableaux of struggles and sufferings of women who are victims of patriarchal objectification and are denied life based on their own subjective realities. Unfortunately, these women cannot call it an unreal life despite the fact that their own realities are not only undermined but also at times oppressed. Their world, therefore, is full of quests towards self identity along with their struggle to assimilate with two different worlds: the patriarchal one that rules them and the social one wherein they feel left out as secondary citizens. Both the writers portray strength and weaknesses of women characters that are portrayed with indomitable spirit to survive under any situation. The diasporic
experiences of Jhumpa Lahiri’s women and the experiences of domestic conflicts of Manju Kapur’s women make a substantial ground for the comparative study of the fictional worlds of the two writers. Assimilation with the senses and sensibilities of the liberal American society on the part of Jhumpa Lahiri’s women is at once compared and contrasted with the persuasions of Manju Kapur’s women attempting to step out from the bondages of the native society. The fictional worlds of these two writers are marked with a striking similarity since their canvas portrays various shades of love and life through their portrayal of marriages and relationships. The quest for the ‘Brave New World’ is again common with the men and women of their fictional worlds; however there are dilemmas, trials and tribulations for both men and women who face the existential crisis in terms of duality arising out of the imposed self that they live with and the desired self that they long for. Thus, the fictional worlds of these writers tell us a story of the journey plying between the world of realities and the world of dreams. Consequently, their fiction seems to be a myriad web of human experiences full of contradictions, strife, unhappiness, incompleteness, incompetence, delusions, hallucinations, searching the ‘self’ amidst humdrums of life as it comes to the characters, whether in exile or confined to the native traditions. This essentially leads us to study the quest of self on the part of the characters.
that are mostly found not at ease with the self as well as the society they live in. The fictional world of Jhumpa Lahiri reveals how Indian males and females crave for success and professional footings on foreign lands and in making a foreign land their own, they suffer the diasporic hurdles of senses, sensibilities and traumas; whereas, the fictional world of Manju Kapur shows us how Indians within India suffer a lot because of their non-conventional thinking and choices based on their prospects that are not so common in the Indian societies they live in. However, the sense of loss and quest for self is commonly seen in the characters of both the writers as they project the fundamental conflicts of human life taking a realistic stand on the essential problems of life. The ‘Brave New World’ whether diasporic or native is a package of mixed surprises for whosoever experiments with it.