CHAPTER-5
Globalisation and the Mutations in
Women’s Diasporic Identity

Globalization is as old as humanity itself. It dates back to the pre-historic period (10,000 BC–3500 BC), pre-modern period (3500–1500 BC) and early modern period (1500–1750 BC). But globalization then was severely limited as it was hampered by geographical and technical bounds. With the launch of the modern period, globalisation scaled a new level. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels captured this qualitative shift in the following passage from their famous Communist Manifesto written in 1847:

The discovery of America prepared the way for mighty industry and its creation of a truly global market. The latter greatly expanded trade, navigation and communication by land. These developments, in turn, caused the further expansion of industry. The growth of industry, trade, navigation and railroads also went hand in hand with the rise of the bourgeoisie and capital which pushed to the background the old social classes of the Middle Ages, . . . the bourgeoisie has no choice but to settle everywhere; cultivate everywhere; establish connections everywhere. . . . (qtd. in Steger 31-32)

But the global interconnections in the modern era would not have been possible without the initial nomadic settlements of the pre-historic era, the monumental inventions of the pre-modern period,
explorations and explosion of science and technology in the early modern period.

Thus, globalisation in the past few centuries paved a way for itself through interactions that went on in the form of trade, explorations, warfare and religious conversions. Through merchants, travellers, pilgrims and conquerors, world has witnessed much cultural dialogics. But these cultural dealings had been restricted by time, space, distance and limited technologies. With the technological and media explosion, in the past quarter century, the world, in terms of Marshall McLuhan has become a “global village”. The process of globalisation has accelerated in the recent years with the booming computer technology, the dismantling of trade barriers and the expanding political and economic power of multinational corporations.

Global interdependence has further led to cultural unification as well as cultural diversification throughout the world, which Arjun Appadurai termed as “cultural homogenization” and “cultural heterogenisation” (102). Cultural homogenisation referring to the absorption of cultures creates a multicultural or hybrid identity, whereas, cultural heterogenisation referring to indigenization creates an ethnic identity or the ‘self’ not ready to mingle with the ‘other’. Thus, mutations in diasporic identities as a consequence of multicultural confrontations have become the central issue of today’s global interactions.
An outstanding feature about it in the late twentieth century is globalisation along with international standardization. In the late 20th and 21st centuries, the international, inter-linguistic and intercultural standardization leads to the popularity and distribution of the same movies, television programmes, music styles and also the same living style all over the world, making it global. The biggest example of the standardization of culture is the opening up of different traditional restaurants all over the world, and people of the so-called ‘other’ culture being their regular customers. We can today find various kinds of ‘ethnic’ foods like–Thai, Mexican, Chinese and Indian–throughout Europe, America and Australia. “In fact, many residents and visitors to Britain believe globalization and the resulting ‘fusion’ of cuisine is the best thing to happen to English cooking in the past 500 years” (Ellwood 9). Earlier, one did not witness any such homologisation. Cultures remained glued to the ‘self’. But with the increasing trends of a global culture, all cultures seem to have intermingled. Global unification today is the result of communication, trade and migration, which is innovatively progressing at a great pace.

With the world shrinking into a global village, the nostalgic pangs are gradually withering away. Cultural dialogics is leading to the severing of nostalgic chords and assimilation into a new culture. Due to globalisation, the national and cultural boundaries have become porous making border crossings more frequent and accessible. As a result, the whole concept of diasporic consciousness
is mutating. Instead of the ‘homing desire’ of an expatriate, a new immigrant sensibility is emerging.

An immigrant “defines a location, a physical movement and a forward–looking attitude” (Jain, *Writers* 12). She puts an end to the ethnic selfhood and ventures forth to inaugurate the post ethnic. This immigrant sensibility is vividly pervasive in the first as well as the second generation immigrants in the works of Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjeet and Jhumpa Lahiri. Due to the impact of globalisation, a new social and cultural pattern is emerging, with every new work that is being produced by these writers. This impact on a displaced women’s identity is being diligently graphed by these writers. This thesis intends to foreground this newness of women’s identity caught up in the dichotomies of acculturation/hybridization and dissociation.

Global interdependence and convenient movement across borders has made the boundaries more permeable, allowing the cultural influences to seep through. Amartya Sen, winner of the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics, believes that globalisation has contributed immensely to the development and unification of the world through travel, trade, migration and spread of cultural influences. Globalisation is generally mistaken to be Westernisation. It is a misconception that globalisation belittles the cultural integrity of other cultures and is therefore repressive and exploitative to most people in most places. But according to Amartya Sen, agents of globalisation are not exclusively Western or Eastern, but the entire
world is globally interrelated. “It would be a mistake to see globalization primarily as a feature of imperialism. It is much bigger—much greater—than that” (Sen 18). Thus, globalisation in this work dominates in the form of global cultural contacts arising through the cross-cultural interactions of the three writers and the characters in their works.

The new immigrant sensibility is a consequence of the new world culture. Roland Robertson explains that globalisation compresses the world into a single entity making it indispensable/essential for people to locate their new global existence. In the new global set up, societies and individuals have to identify themselves in a new way that is different from their original identity. The identity construction comes naturally with the cultural compression of the world. In terms of Bakhtinian dialogics, the dialogue between the core and the periphery—i.e. the self and the other, leads to a collision between cultures, traditions and values that ultimately culminate into what Hannerz calls a “creolized world” (qtd. in Lechner and Boli 57), and a ‘globalised identity’.

According to Mikhail Bakhtin, “Discourse lives, as it were, on the boundary between its own context and another, alien, context” (284). This concept of Bakhtinian dialogics is interpreted in this chapter as the dialogue between the local and the global. This dialogue has been gaining ground with globalisation reaching unprecedented levels. Individualism and universalism are in constant
dialogue with each other. This dialogue may seem to culminate in the fusion of local and global that makes the existing borders and boundaries irrelevant. But in Bakhtinian terms, a dialogue never ends. Hence the inevitable change brought about by globalisation is also endless:

Globalization refers to a multidimensional set of social processes that create, multiply, stretch, and intensify worldwide social interdependencies and exchanges while at the same time fostering in people a growing awareness of deepening connections between the local and the distant. (Steger 13)

When critically analysed in Bakhtinian terms. This definition may be interpreted as an awareness of connection that arises only through a dialogical interaction of the local and global, characterized by cultural borrowings and results in the mutations in diasporic identities. The ‘self’ located in the centre is addressed by multiple global voices of the ‘other’ located at the periphery. This relation of simultaneity gives rise to ‘addressivity’ or discourse that results in the ‘self’ adjusting to the temporal, spatial, cultural and linguistic parameters of the ‘other’.

Terms like ‘self’/‘other’ and ‘centre’/‘periphery’ which are crucial to Bakhtin’s thought arise out of ‘consciousness’. “In dialogism, consciousness is otherness. More accurately, it is the differential relation between a centre and all that is not the centre” (Holquist 18). Bakhtin insists on difference in space and time that cannot be
overcome. He believes that separateness and simultaneity are the basic criteria of existence. Thus, from Bakhtinian point of view, in a ‘globalised world’ where time and space are compressed, a migrant “must consummate the fluidity of his self in the more stable contours of the other” (Holquist 178).

Cross cultural flows intersect in different ways in different societies. This collision begins to make sense only when a new identity is constructed that fits well within the distinct parameters of a new sub-culture. This fresh identity is born where “sameness and difference ‘cannibalize’ each other” (Lechner and Boli 57).

With the budding technology, world seems to be a more familiar place. Telecommunication, travel, mass media and computerization have transformed the world into a global whole. One may be in the remotest part of the world, yet remains linked with the rest. An expatriate, no more yearns for the “home” left behind. But comfortably dials a number, e-mails or books a flight to subdue the nostalgic pangs.

Globalisation acts as a solvent that dissolves all cultural differences into a homogenous whole and the forces behind this homogenization are the mass media. By “spreading their ethereal tentacles through the airways to the farthest reaches of the globe, the media impose their powerful images, sounds and advertising on unprepared peoples who succumb meekly to their messages . . .” (Lechner and Boli 287). The term mass media is used for the means to
communicate to a large number of people. It involves message production and dissemination through television, films, radio, computers, newspapers, periodicals and magazines which are broadly categorised as audio-visual media, electronic media and print media. Media plays an important role in maintaining cultural affinity and keeping the traditions and cultures alive. Through social and cultural elements in media programmes, people are reminded of their social and cultural practices. Through these programmes, they continue to cling to the little cultural affiliation that they possibly can in an alien land. Thus, maintaining their dialogue with the past and trying to locate a centre in the two contradictory cultures.

“The forces of cultural gravity seemed always to pull away from the formations of large-scale acumens, whether religious, commercial, or political, toward smaller-scale accretions of intimacy and interest” (Appadurai 100). This statement befits the theories of rootlessness, alienation and the expatriate experiences. Expatriates prefer a ghetto existence. They believe that mingling with the host society gradually evaporates their indigenous values. They continue to guard their interest and try to retain the imperviousness of traditional, cultural, religious, ideological and linguistic barriers.

Sociologist Roland Robertson contends that global cultural interaction gives rise to ‘local cultural niches’ i.e. “rather than being totally obliterated by the Western consumerist forces of sameness, local differences and particularity still play an important role in
creating unique cultural constellations” (Steger 75). The expatriates form such cultural constellations which are impervious to alien cultural values. They reject the complete loss of tradition and individuality even while living and acting across cultural borders.

Information and communication technology has compressed time and space, making direct interaction possible over any distance on the globe. Thus, an expatriate never feels stranded in the destination society. According to Martin Albrow, globalisation has also given rise to “disembedding” which means that people can go across national boundaries worldwide with the confidence that there will be no hindrance in maintenance of their lifestyles, routines and values wherever they are. Thus, globalisation allows these displaced identities to maintain kin relations with their homeland without alienating themselves in the adopted land. Expatriates like to maintain the authenticity of their national identities by reinforcing their cultural values and rejecting the western decadence.

Expatriates follow the pattern of multiculturalism–which signifies that they form ethnic communities that remain distinct from the majority population in terms of language, culture and social behaviour. They form “ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin–their homelands” (Sheffer 3).
Where a large number of migrants from one town or city, region or country live together in the same country of destination, they come together in formal diaspora organisations. These organisations focus their activities in development of their country of origin by sending them money, remittances and material goods. This “virtual return” of the expatriates through internet or money transfer systems is a firm evidence of their emotional bond with the homeland.

Media has contributed immensely not only in maintaining cultural continuity but also in giving rise to new cultural challenges. Media has weakened the national borders and has intensively interconnected and globalised the world. As a result, new cultural linkages are established

Globalisation attempts assimilation of cultural traits and thereby denies plurality. . . . As globalization considers the entire world as a single system, its attempt is to create a global culture. . . . Thus, cultural autonomy of nations is in jeopardy under globalization. (Singh 83)

Globalisation leads to homogenization of culture and hybridization of identities.

Technology has not only changed the face of expatriation but has also brought about a substantial change in the attitude of expatriates. The constant influx of new technologies has made radical contribution to the cross-cultural interactions. The micro-electronic revolution has drastically changed the face of communication and
interaction. Distances have shrunk and the information is spreading at a break neck speed. The internet and the World Wide Web have further sparked up this wave of a homogenous and largely commercial culture. Cultures, traditions and values are not confined to a certain border anymore, but have crossed all bounds to reach out and influence other cultures. Consequently, cultures and traditions, all over the world seem to have been contaminated. Thus, an advantageous factor for the immigrants is that, they are not considered a complete ‘other’, by the host society, and it also reduces their feeling of alienation. Confronting a hint of their culture in foreign land minimizes their fear, doubt and hesitation before assimilation.

Cees Homelink in his book *Cultural Autonomy in Global Communications* (1983) has brought forth the concept of “cultural synchronization” which refers to the issue of cultural homogenization. Cultural synchronisation results from diffusion of diverse cultures into a rich global culture. “The impressive variety of the world’s cultural systems is waning due to a process of ‘cultural synchronisation’ that is without historic precedent” (Tomlinson 308). Cultural convergence, a feature of global modernity, has greatly influenced and enriched the interacting communities. Thus, adding to the comfort with which immigrants readily succumb to the cross-cultural influences. This willing absorption of the host culture makes them a global citizen with dual or multiple identities and they feel accepted on either side of the border.
Cultural synchronization is a serious threat to cultural autonomy i.e. individual or local cultural characteristics cannot possibly thrive in a global context. Therefore, the scope for the survival of completely unadulterated cultural system is almost negligible in this global web where every inch of the world is well connected. For immigrants, cultural synchronization is a convenient mode of adaptation to an environment that is not completely alien. Since synchronization refers to diffusion, they may find traces of their culture in the adopted land. This makes the identity crisis less critical for the cross-cultural subjects.

Manfred B. Steger also points out that both ‘pessimistic hyperglobalisers’ and ‘optimistic hyperglobalisers’ believe that globalisation generates sameness. Keeping the homogenizing forces of globalisation in mind, one of the pessimists, Benjamin Barber has coined the term ‘Mc World’ that refers to the Western Cultural imperialism. Whereas, optimistic hyperglobalizer, Francis Fukuyama (an American Social Theorist), discusses the positive impacts of cultural homogenization like hybridization and acclimatization.

Cultural synchronization and homogenization are, therefore, the outcome of globalisation which results in compression of the world by obliterating the national, cultural and identity differences. This has brought about a remarkable shift in the immigrants’ consciousness by making their sense of identity and belonging less stable.
Unification of the world makes them global citizens, who willingly drift with global cultural flows and encourage cultural hybridity. They assimilate with the host culture by giving up their distinctive linguistic, cultural and social characteristics and try to merge with the majority population.

In this chapter we have focused specifically on those works of the three authors that target the gradual transition of expatriates into immigrants; and the second and third generation immigrants. The immigrant patterns visible in the lives of these characters justify the impact of globalisation.

Due to globalisation world appears to be on a uniform platform. Consequently an expatriate conveniently fits into the new mould without lingering in the ex-status. An example of this is clearly visible in characters like Tara in Bharati Mukherjee’s *The Tiger’s Daughter*, Pat in Anita Desai’s “Scholar and Gypsy” (a story in the collection *Games at Twilight and Other Stories*), Donna Vera and Betty in Desai’s *The Zigzag Way*; and Aparna in “Hell-Heaven” (a story in the collection *Unaccustomed Earth*) by Jhumpa Lahiri.

Tara’s experiences and character in Mukherjee’s *The Tigers Daughter* seem to be a replica of Mukherjee’s real life. ‘The Tiger’s Daughter’ is one of the first works of Mukherjee when she herself was undergoing the phase of expatriation. Hence, Tara’s journey from an expatriate to an immigrant is a fine manifestation of Mukherjee’s own experiences. Mukherjee sees this transition as “a movement away
from the aloofness of expatriation to the exuberance of immigration” (Kumar 62).

Tara is sent to America at a tender age of fifteen for higher studies. In Poughkeepsie she feels stranded and nostalgic. “She suffered fainting spells, headaches and nightmares. . . . She complained of homesickness in letters to her mother, who promptly prayed to Kali to save Tara’s conscience, chastity and complexion” (TD 13).

But soon the immigrant sensibility dawns upon Tara and in her desire to adapt, she marries an American named David Cartwright. She is still apprehensive about the fact that her husband is a foreigner unable to understand the nuances of her family background and culture. She irons the silk scarves and hangs them in her apartment to give it an Indian décor. Thus, the feeling of insecurity continues to cling to her until she plans a trip to India, after a gap of seven years, to erase all the shadowy fears of alienation and hesitation. But a journey back home doesn’t help her find what she has lost. Like Meera in Leena Dhingra’s *Amritvela* (1988) and Feroze in Bapsi Sidhwa’s *An American Brat* (1995), Tara also fails in the search of her roots. Once in her native land, she confronts the changed circumstances of her country with the eagerness of a foreigner. It is then she realizes that seven years of Americanisation have drained fifteen years of Indianness out of her. She still wonders: “How does the foreignness of spirit begin? Does it begin right in the centre of Culcutta, with forty
ruddy Belgian women, fat foreheads swelling under starched white
head-dresses, long black habits intensifying the hostility of the Indian
sun?” or did it “drift inward with the winter chill at Vassar, as she
watched the New York snow settle over new architecture, blonde
girls . . .?” (TD 37). Thus, Tara’s foreignness begins at home due to the
globalised culture of convent education and continues to seep into her
through the cultural confrontation during her stay in America. It so
influences her that she becomes foreign to her own native values and
like an immigrant begins to yearn for her new adopted home. “New
York, she thought now, had been exotic” (TD 34).

Tara’s consciousness of the present is rooted in her life in
the States and when she looks at India anew it is not
through her childhood associations or her past memories
but through the eyes of her foreign husband David. Her
reactions are those of a tourist, of a foreigner. (Jain,
“Foreignness of Spirit” 1)

Tara’s alienation in Calcutta is visible through her regular visits to
Catelli-Continental Hotel, where she feels cut-off from the real India,
burning with violent riots. She still “longed for the Bengal of Satyajit
Ray, children running through cool green spaces, aristocrats
despairing in music rooms of empty palaces” (TD 105). But unable to
find the innocence she left behind, she decides to go back to David, an
evidence of her American identity, by keeping all her nostalgia aside.
Thus, globalisation leading to multi-cultural confrontations brings about the mutations in Tara’s identity. These changes are irreversible and despite her earnest efforts she cannot locate the identity lost in her roots.

Pat is another character in the story “Scholar and Gypsy” (in Anita Desai’s collection *Games at Twilight and Other Stories*) who befits the role of an expatriate altering into an immigrant. Pat, an American woman, accompanies her husband David, a sociology student, who visits India for a certain research regarding his thesis.

Pat is very similar to Katharine, a character in the story entitled “Pahari Story” by Margaret Chatterjee. Just as Katharine identifies herself with the hill people so completely and fails to return to England, similarly, Pat is lost in the company of hippies in the hills of Manali. “Striding through the daisy-spattered yard in her newly acquired hippy rags that whipped against her legs as she marched off, bag and prayer beads in hand, with never a backward look” (“Scholar and Gypsy” 138). She is in search of nirvana and has no desire to go back to America.

Pat, initially an expatriate, is homesick for the farmlands of Vermont. In this alien land “chaos and evil triumphed over reason and order” (“Scholar and Gypsy” 109). She found the Indians “not civilized” (“Scholar and Gypsy” 110). On the other hand, David becomes aware of the Western influence on the Indian society through the Gidwanis—an evidence of global standardization. David notices Pat’s nostalgic
yearning through her eyes. “Her eyes had been so blue, how they were fading, as if the memory, the feel of apple trees and apples were fading from her” (“Scholar and Gypsy” 115). Hence, he decides to go to the hills of Manali, away from the heat of Bombay and Delhi that has almost wilted Pat.

It is on the hillside that Pat begins to feel at home. The climate, vegetation and large number of familiar American and European faces bring back the atmosphere she left behind in America. It is the fulfilment of her lost desires that have re-kindled her American identity amid an alien land. In terms of Martin Albrow, Pat has undergone “disembedding”—which is the consequence of globalisation.

The presence of hippies and foreign tourists in the streets of Manali is another evidence of multiculturalism due to globalisation. Pat becomes a victim of this cultural interaction. She undergoes “the process of uprooting and re-rooting” (Carb 648), or what Mukherjee’s husband Clark Blaise refers to as “unhousement” and “rehousement” in his book Resident Aliens (1986). The immigrant traits become visible in her when she befriends the hippies and gives up her religion to become a Buddhist. The physical, linguistic, religious and habitual changes in Pat are so dramatic that her return to the original identity is impossible. Thus, Pat’s journey from expatriation to immigration or assimilation is a clear evidence of cultural homogenization.

Doña Vera and Betty Jennings in Desai’s The Zigzag Way are the diasporic characters who leave Europe to accompany their
husbands to Mexico. Thus, matrimonial alliance is the cause of their expatriation. Having left Vienna, Doña Vera initially feels tired of the social flutter she is required to participate in Mexico City, due to the influential mining family of Don Roderigo.

Her discomfort and restlessness had not the slightest effect upon her husband, . . . She had quickly given up being the delightfully coquettish woman he had brought back from Europe, . . . She soon began to complain loudly of boredom and disappointment. ‘I am not one of these silly, card-playing women of your circle,’ she told him. . . .

(ZW 62)

She cannot fit into the new role and fails to hybridize herself.

But once she comes in direct contact with the Huichols (original inhabitants of Mexico), she devotes the rest of her life in guarding their culture and values. It is in the exploitation of Huichols and their culture, she views her own ethnic values and traditions being crushed. “I have worked among the Huichol Indians, the first, the first Euro-pean woman to do so. I founded my centre to pro-tect them, their en-vir-on-ment, their hist-ory, and rel-ig-ion. I am not one of those who took their land and ru-ined it with mining and made them slaves” (ZW 56). She is not interested in the Post-Columbian Mexico but her aim is to keep the original culture of the Huichols alive. Spivak has pointed out: “if the subaltern can speak . . . the subaltern is not a subaltern anymore” (Spivak 158). Doña Vera doesn’t want to
be marginalized and culturally denigrated like the Huichols, therefore, she raises her voice against the Spanish miners who are exploiting the Huichols.

Devastation of the Huichol culture by the miners reminds her of her own country in the midst of a war where her own culture and religion were put to stake by the Nazis. She can see a reflection of her own experience in the Huichol’s cultural depletion. This resemblance and sympathy makes her adopt the garb of an immigrant. “Her story had many chapters—European, Mexican, Huichol . . .” (ZW 101). But she puts an end to all the past chapters like the end she has put to the languages she spoke. “Neither English nor Spanish, both spoken languages to her, not literary ones. The only one she could write with any ease was one she would never use: she had crushed it out of herself. No tracks, no tracks” (ZW 93).

Becoming the ‘Queen of the Sierra’ and having got a documentary made on her, refreshes her memories of a leading theatre actress on the stages of Europe. “Being the star of a film—how could she have resisted that? It had seemed as if, in the most bizarre and unexpected way, her past had found a way to fuse with the present” (ZW 74). This fusion of identities is the result of cultural homogenization.

Another important factor alarmingly influencing the new world culture is global ethics. Hans Küng believes that:
there will be no new world order without a new world ethic, a global or planetary ethic despite all dogmatic differences, . . . the global ethic is a basic consensus on binding values, irrevocable criteria and basic attitudes which are affirmed by all religions despite their dogmatic differences, and which can indeed also be contributed by non-believers. (45)

Global ethics contribute substantially in spreading true humanity and a conjugal atmosphere, in lieu of which every human without distinction of race, sex, religion, culture or origin possesses an inalienable dignity. Thus, the criterion of humanity is the primary concern of global ethics. Once the respect for humanity dominates, the racist culture automatically relegates to a secondary position and the rift between ‘we’ and ‘them’ begins to diminish.

An evidence of global ethics is clearly visible in this novel when the worship of Virgin Mary is shown through two different cultures. The Priest, Fray Junipero is totally against the methods of worship by the Huichols. He refers to them as *paganos* and dislikes them visiting the church and paying obeisance by offering objects of black magic to the blessed Virgin. But Doña Vera, while explaining to the priest says: “Ah, father you know as well as I do that they bring these of-fer-rings to the Virgin Maria because to them she is not that, she is their own goddess To-nant-zin and that is why they bring the vo-tive of-fer-ings that she prefers” (ZW 91). Thus, Doña Vera tries to clarify that besides
the assertive differences between the two religions, they must allow sufficient freedom to each other to practice their customs. Reverence for each other’s religion is the initial step to maintain respect for humanity. Globalisation, therefore, leads to secularization that develops a more conjugal atmosphere for culturally displaced characters.

Betty Jennings is the grandmother of Eric (narrator of the story) who also has to leave Cornwall to accompany her husband Davey Rowse to Mexico. He comes to work in the silver mines of Mexico as the Cornish mining industry has failed.

Initially, Betty continues to linger in her memories. She tries hard to mingle with the locals. “But it appears that in Mexico, a Cornish woman could not do that, go down to the Indian village and sit there with brown Mexican crowds” (ZW 129). The ghetto existence of the Cornish miners does not allow any kind of amalgamation. Despite, the guidelines laid down by the Cornish Society, Betty unconsciously begins to drift towards the Mexican influence. A stark evidence of this cultural affinity is visible when:

Betty played with the gravel at her fingers and found herself chanting the rhyme she had heard the village children sing, ‘Tucu-tucu, tiqui-taca,’ and no one could have said if she was so pensive because she was thinking of her arrival, or her departure. (ZW 124)
She is displeased with the fact that Cornish people are suspicious of the people they live among and whom she considers friendly.

When the end of colonial rule is declared after thirty years, the *mineros* begin to evacuate Mexico and leave for their homeland, as the entire valley is splintering in the flames of revolt. Amidst this chaos, Betty gives birth to a child and unfortunately dies in the process, leaving behind the infant—a citizen of Mexico (a land Betty was gradually adapting to). The child is later named Pablo due to the request of la Bella Isadora, the Mexican woman who fed this motherless child and acted as his quasi-mother. Betty’s assimilation culminates in her lifeless body resting still in her grave dug in a land—once alien—but now a home for eternity.

In her new collection of stories titled *Unaccustomed Earth*, Jhumpa Lahiri has shown the impact of globalization on the migrants and their quest through multiculturalism. The story “Hell-Heaven” introduces us to Aparna, referred to as Boudi. Uma, a second generation immigrant, is the daughter of Aparna, and it is through her narration that we sketch her mother’s slow transition from an expatriate to an immigrant. Having accompanied her husband to America, Aparna continues to cling to her mother-tongue (Bengali) and traditional style of dressing. Pranab Chakraborty, a fellow Bengali, from Calcutta:

noticed the two or three safety pins she wore fastened to the thin gold bangles, . . . which she would use to replace
a missing hook on a blouse or to draw a string through a petticoat, . . . a practice he associated strictly with his mother and sisters and aunts in Calcutta. (“Hell-Heaven” 61)

They do not celebrate any American festivals treating them as another holiday on the American Calendar. Three years of American life have not been able to scar her well-preserved ethnic identity.

Pranab’s visits become frequent and Aparna secretly develops affection for him. Uma realizes that, “Pranab Kaku’s visits were what my mother looked forward to all day, that she changed into a new sari and combed her hair in anticipation of his arrival, and that she planned, days in advance, the snacks she would serve him with such non-chalance” (“Hell-Heaven” 63). But her traditions and culture are a constant reminder to her of her disloyalty. As a result, she keeps her feelings snubbed throughout.

Pranab’s marriage with Deborah, an American, comes as a shock to Aparna. She always presumes their cross-cultural wedding to end in a disaster: “She was waiting for the affair to end, for Deborah to break Pranab Kaku’s heart and for him to return to us, scarred and penitent” (“Hell-Heaven” 70). After marriage, Pranab and Deborah are not the regular visitors to the traditional gatherings:

Their absences were attributed by my parents and their circle, to Deborah, and it was universally agreed that she had stripped Pranab Kaku not only of his origins but of
his independence. She was the enemy, he was her prey, and their example was invoked as a warning, and as vindication, that mixed marriages were a doomed enterprise. (“Hell-Heaven” 75)

While comparing the expatriate and immigrant attitudes of Pranab, Aparna considers it to be “hell-heaven, the difference” (“Hell-Heaven” 68-69).

Aparna continues to cling to another way of life and exhorts her children to do the same by taking them to Calcutta every summer, not allowing Uma to date or to attend the dances in the school cafeteria, and forcing her to wear a salwar kameez on special occasions. She keeps warning Uma “Don’t think you’ll get away with marrying an American, the way Pranab Kaku did” (“Hell-Heaven” 75). As Uma reaches puberty, Aparna tries to tighten her grip not realizing that with every passing year, Uma has been slipping through. “I began keeping secrets from her, evading her with the aid of my friends. . . . I began to pity my mother; the older I got, the more I saw what a desolate life she led” (“Hell-Heaven” 76).

Once Uma leaves for college, she notices a vast change in her mother:

She had accepted the fact that I was not only her daughter but a child of America as well. Slowly, she accepted that I dated one American man, and then another, and then yet another, that I slept with them, and
even that I lived with one though we were not married. She welcomed my boyfriends into our home and when things didn’t work out she told me I would find someone better. After years of being idle, she decided, when she turned fifty, to get a degree in library science at a nearby University. (“Hell-Heaven” 82)

These changes point to Aparna’s transition into an immigrant. Her alteration is gradual and takes nearly twenty-five years because her initial struggle to cling to an ethnic identity slowly gives way to the dominant American culture. She realizes that maintenance of familial ties with her daughter (a second generation immigrant) is possible only through reconciliation with the culture of the adopted society. Even T. S. Eliot is of the view that:

> The culture of the individual is dependant upon the culture of a group or class, and that the culture of the group or class is dependent upon the culture of the whole society to which that group or class belongs. Therefore it is the culture of the society that is fundamental. (21)

Hence migrants like Aparna, must try to assimilate with the American culture in order to maintain a close bond with her daughter. The expatriate tendencies only build a cocoon around the migrants and the rift between the first and the second generation continues to widen into a gulf that is inaccessible.
Aparna’s immigrant traits are also the result of the failed marriage of Deborah and Pranab. After twenty-five years of marriage, Pranab and Deborah get divorced as Pranab falls in love with a married Bengali woman. Aparna begins to see a similarity between Deborah and herself. “Their hearts had been broken by the same man . . .” (“Hell-Heaven” 81). She begins to see a reflection of herself in Deborah who now seems as desolate as she has been through all those years of estrangement and isolation. Pranab’s disloyalty forces Aparna to harmonise with Deborah’s feelings. Thus, Deborah personifies a doorway through which Aparna steps into an American world and undergoes the process of hybridization.

Thus, Jhumpa Lahiri has foregrounded the varied impacts of globalisation on the cross-cultural characters; and shown how these impacts further play an inevitable role in shaping an immigrant identity.

Another impact of globalisation is the conflict between civilizations, which arises due to the basic differences in their history, culture, tradition and religion. The cultural characteristics and differences cannot be easily mutated, compromised or resolved. Hence, these fundamental differences in the civilizations lead to the clash of views. Samuel Huntington believes that with the world becoming a smaller place, “The interactions among peoples of different civilizations enhance the civilization consciousness of people that, in turn, invigorates differences and animosities stretching or thought to
stretch back deep into history” (Huntington 37). They begin to realize an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ relation existing between themselves and the people belonging to the ‘other’ ethnic origin. The line of difference, however thin, never fades and leaves an ineradicable mark on the ‘self’. Territorial, cultural, religious and ideological differences become magnified when seen through the marginal vision.

The first generation migrants feel insecure in a new country. The feeling of alienation continues to linger in their sub-conscious. They remain deeply imbued with their past and feel responsible for the propagation of their culture and indigenisation of their coming generations. As a result, they continue to preserve their indigenous values and teach their further generations “to modernize but not to westernize” (Huntington 42). Most of the migrants try to inculcate their values, traditions, customs and most importantly language in their future generations, considering them to be the preservers and propagators of their ethnic identity.

On the other hand, the second and the third generation migrants seem to be dwindling between the two conflicting worlds—one at home and the other outside. They seem to be striking a balance between the environment they are born and bred in and the world they are stepping into for the rest of their lives. They no longer want to “remain the objects of history as targets of Western Colonialism but join the West as movers and shapers of history” (Huntington 37). They
realize that co-existence with the ‘other’ is the suitable path to a relevant and thriving future.

Professor Anthony Heath, a sociologist at the University of Oxford, has concocted the term ‘ethnic penalty’ that refers to discrimination, racism, unemployment, education and housing problems faced by the immigrants. According to this research, the second and third generation immigrants still experience traces of ethnic penalty. The reason being, that legacies from the past are hard to overcome. But being the citizens of the host country, and through the principle of *ius sanguinis* (law of the blood) and *ius solis* (law of the soil i.e. birth in the territory of the country), the descendants of immigrants receive certain benefits for which their previous generations had to go through years of struggle.

While the first generation migrants experience economic, linguistic, educational, electoral and employment disadvantages, their second and third generations receive all the above advantages and are competent enough to stand on an equal footing with the host society. First generation migrants often have limited legal rights and suffer discrimination in the judicial system. They are often excluded from the civic participation of the host society. They suffer harassment in racial and religious matters. But their further generations remain safely secure from such negativities and enjoy all the freedom and rights as experienced by their contemporary host society. The descendants of immigrants have been largely successful in bridging the gap that their
preceding generations could not cover due to the lack of foreign qualification, lack of language fluency and lack of experience.

Bharati Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri have portrayed varied experiences of the second and third generation immigrants in their collection of short stories. Like their ancestors, the second and third generation immigrants face the challenges of acculturation. But their conflict is not with the contemporary society but with their origins that now appear alienated and estranged. Thus, they are thwarted by the complexity of cultural plurality in their own land of origin.

“A Father” is a fine story in the collection *Darkness* where Bharati Mukherjee has shown the problem of reconciliation between the Indian and American values through Mr. Bhowmick and his daughter Babli, a second generation immigrant. Babli is a graduate from Georgia Tech and a successful engineer in Detroit. But she is not the child of her father’s dreams.

But Babli could never comfort him. She wasn’t womanly or tender the way that unmarried girls had been in the wistful days of his adolescence, . . . she had taken two years of dance lessons at Sona Devi’s Dance Academy in Southfield, but these accomplishments didn’t add up to real femininity. (“A Father” 63)

It is not Babli’s femininity, but her immigrant sensibility that appalled Mr. Bhowmick, who clung to the superstitions, myths and religious practices. “Compromise, adaptability, call it what you will. A dozen
times a day he made these small trades-off between new-world reasonableness and old-world beliefs” (“A Father” 64). Like himself he wants his daughter, Babli, to adopt multi-culturalism.

Babli has her own way of surviving “in a city that was both native to her, and alien” (“A Father” 65). She appears to have reconfigured her identity in what Homi Bhabha calls the “third space of enunciation” (Bhabha 37), where a hybrid identity doesn’t belong clearly to either of the two cultures. She negates the Hindu myths and superstitions referring to them as “a series of super graphics.” For her, “The cosmos balanced on the head of a snake was like a beach ball balanced on the snout of a circus seal” (“A Father” 65). Mr. Bhowmick considered her independent and headstrong nature to be the American influence. Babli has forged a new identity in the process of cultural acclimatization. She “is a hybrid self in which there is not much Indianness that precedes or stands apart from Americanness” (Vinoda 152).

When Mr. Bhowmick comes to know about Babli’s pregnancy, he blames his wife for making them come to States. “Girls like Babli were caught between rules, that’s the point he wished to make. They were too smart, too impulsive for a backward place like Ranchi, but not tough nor smart enough for sex-crazy places like Detroit” (“A Father” 72). But his violence erupts when he hears that she has gone in for artificial insemination, and starts hitting Babli on the stomach with a rolling pin.
Babli’s decision of artificial insemination justifies her hatred for men. “Who needs a man?” she hissed. “The father of my baby is a bottle and a syringe. Men louse up your lives. I just want a baby” (“A Father” 72). This hatred is also symbolic of her rebellion against patriarchal and cultural pressures. A post-immigrant like Babli wants to break all the ethnic barriers and relieve herself of a cloistered life.

Bharati Mukherjee’s second collection The Middleman and Other Stories has won the National Book Critics Circle Award. One of the most successful stories in this anthology is “Orbiting”. This story introduces an Italian-American girl named Renata (Americanised to Rindy) who is a third generation immigrant, and shows how the native Americans have begun to accept the diasporic settlers. Renata falls in love with Ro (Roashan), a first generation immigrant from Kabul—and takes it up as a duty to Americanize him and teach him the basics of survival in America. “I shall teach him how to walk like an American, how to dress like Brent but better, how to fill up room as Dad does instead of melting and blending but sticking out in the Afghan way” (“Orbiting” 74-75). Renata wants Ro to adopt American lifestyle without completely dissolving his own ethnic identity. She accepts the fact that “Each culture establishes its own manly posture, different ways of claiming space” (“Orbiting” 70). She wants Ro to step out of the cultural niche and explore a life in the interstices of cultures.

Renata’s love for Ro and admiration for his macho culture is an evidence of what Salman Akhtar calls “ethnocentric withdrawal”—i.e. a
tendency to associate mainly with people of their ethnicity or immigrant category. Through Renata and Ro, we see an encounter of immigrants from two different continents. Though Italianness only exists metaphorically for Renata, yet it leaves an indelible mark on her subconscious. The deep seated sense of being an immigrant drifts her towards Ro.

Jhumpa Lahiri, like Atima Srivastav, Sujata Massey, Amulya Malladi, Shauna Singh Baldwin, Mira Kamdar, Meera Syal and Bidisha Bandopadhyay, belongs to the category of post-immigrant writers who no longer consider themselves immigrants but still inhabit a hyphenated space in terms of cultural negotiations. Hari Kunzru says:

> I am very careful never to describe myself as an Indian writer . . . I am a British-born, British-resident author. I have connections to India and I feel they inform what I do to some extent, but more than this I cannot claim. What I and Zadie are doing is British writing about British hybridity. (Dalrymple 4)

The second generation writers have reached a new paradigm of bicultural experiences. This new perception of ethnicity and a drastic shift in their focus and concern regarding transnational identities is reflected through their writings.

Being a second generation immigrant, Jhumpa Lahiri deals with the post immigrant experiences in three of her works. Born to Indian
parents in London, raised in Rhode Island, and living in New York, Jhumpa Lahiri is well-versed with the problems of bicultural situations faced by the second generation immigrants; and has skilfully portrayed the varied cultural ambiguities faced by the second and third generation immigrants in her works.

In her Pulitzer Prize winner debut collection of nine short stories *Interpreter of Maladies: Stories of Bengal, Boston and Beyond* we are introduced to Mr. and Mrs. Das (Mina) in the story “Interpreter of Maladies”, who are born and brought up in America and their only link with India is due to their parents settled in Asansol whom they visit once every year. They “looked Indian but dressed as foreigners” (“Interpreter of Maladies” 43-44). Throughout their trip they view India through an American vision. During their visit to Orissa, Mrs. Das comes so close to Mr. Kapasi, who is their tourist guide-cum-driver, that she reveals to him the secret of her illegitimate third child, Bobby. The loneliness and lack of attention from her husband, due to the busy western life, is a stimulant to her act of adultery. Considering Mr. Kapasi to be the interpreter of maladies, she wants a cure for her own malady. “It means that I’m tired of feeling so terrible all the time, eight years Mr. Kapasi. I’ve been in pain eight years. I was hoping you would help me feel better, tell the right thing. Suggest some kind of remedy” (“Interpreter of Maladies” 66). When asked by Mr. Kapasi, “It is really pain you feel, Mrs. Das, or is it guilt?” (“Interpreter of
Maladies” 66), she leaves the question unanswered and her problem unsolved.

Her Indian consciousness doesn’t allow her to sever links with her deeply ingrained traditions and values, which years of Americanisation could not wash away. The concept of chastity haunts her constantly and coaxes her to confess her sin. Her malady is that she is lost in the dichotomies of traditional duties and a western lifestyle. She finds herself in the condition of post-modernity that is defined by Dr. Anderson as:

Post modernity, then, is the age of over-exposure to otherness–because, in travelling, you put yourself into a different reality, because as a result of immigration, different reality comes to you; because with no information, cultures interpenetrate. It becomes harder and harder to live out a life within the premodern condition of an undisturbed traditional society or even within the modern condition of a strong and well-organized belief system. . . . We are living in a new world, a world that does not know how to define itself by what it is, but only by what it has just now ceased to be.

(Anderson 33).

Mrs. Das is a second generation immigrant trying to maintain a new cultural equilibrium within the host culture.
Lilia, the little girl in “When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine” is another second generation immigrant born and brought up in Boston. Though she is too young to understand the problems of Mr. Pirzada, yet she can assess the mental presence of Mr. Pirzada back home in Dacca with his seven daughters. Once Mr. Pirzada finishes his research in America and goes back to Bangladesh, Lilia finds a void in her life:

Though I had not seen him for months, it was only then that I felt Mr. Pirzada’s absence. It was only then, raising my water glass in his name that I knew what it meant to miss someone who was so many miles and hours away, just as he had missed his wife. (“When Mr. Pirzada” 42)

Lilia is an example of those second generation immigrants who are born with inherent sentiments for their ethnicity.

Through, Mr. Pirzada she experiences the nostalgic anchoring in the past. When she sees her parents and Mr. Pirzada watching the Asian News on T.V., she observes that “the three of them were operating during that time as if they were a single person, sharing a single mind, a single body, a single silence and a single fear” (“When Mr. Pirzada” 41). Lilia discerns that Asianization is the glue to their ‘single’ entity. It is through this observation that she becomes aware of her family’s deep seated roots in India. Thus, Mr. Pirzada acts as a catalyst in activating the nativity of Lilia amidst American culture.
Some of the second and third generation immigrants “assiduously project themselves as secular, liberal, unconventional and modern so as to be acceptable to the culture of mainstream America, which is popularly called the ‘melting-pot’ culture” (Satyanarayana and Katyayani 282). Twinkle is one such character in the story “The Blessed House” who suffers from the conflict between the belief system of the old and the new world. Twinkle is a second generation immigrant who completes her master’s thesis on an Irish Poet at Stanford. She marries Sanjeeb, a first generation immigrant. Twinkle has her parents in California and Sanjeeb in Calcutta. Twinkle’s only connection to India is her name that sounds strange to the American ears of Nora and Douglas, who are Twinkle’s cross-cultural friends. It is the rift between the first and second generation immigrants that Sanjeeb and Twinkle are never able to bridge. Jackie Large and Erin Quinn observe that:

Many of Lahiri’s characters must cope with new and sometimes shockingly different gender stereotypes and roles in their new homelands. Generation gaps, culture shock upon moving away from the “homeland” and questions of sexuality play their roles in Lahiri’s interpretations of gender and what it means to the Indian in Diaspora. (Large and Quinn)

Twinkle and Sanjeeb are not able to reconcile with each other’s beliefs. While Sanjeeb finds it difficult to forget the culture and values
of the old world, Twinkle easily gets assimilated to the new world. Twinkle considers the new house to be a blessed one as she finds a statue of Christ and Mother Mary in it. She wants to treasure all this along with the switch plates in the bedroom which are decorated with scenes from the Bible. But Sanjeeb doesn’t approve of Twinkle’s sentiments. He considers the house to be cursed because evidences of Christianity in his house seem a threat to his own religion.

Twinkle wants to treasure these symbols of Christianity, because they are a constant reminder to her of her successful assimilation with the host society—an Indian woman among the Americans. Her association with the Americans is an evidence of her struggle to break away from the foreignness and become malleable enough to reshape herself as an American.

Salman Akhtar believes that the second generation immigrants raised by the first generation immigrant parents, may face several problems of bicultural situations, and may grow up with the feelings of suppressed anger, guilt and sorrow which further result in violence, rejection and revolt. Moushumi in Jhumpa Lahiri’s The Namesake is one such character who rejects the ethnic ways and strives to blend, to merge, and to assimilate. Her revolt against the parental pressure is in the form of an escape to France for an independent life, free of any cultural and social restrictions. Finally, when she yields to family pressure for marriage with Gogol (an Indo-American like herself), she regards it a kind of “capitulation or defeat” (NS 230).
She can’t help associate him, at times, with a sense of resignation with the very life she had resisted, had struggled so mightily to leave behind. He was not who she saw herself ending up with, he had never been that person. Perhaps for those very reasons, in those early months, being with him, falling in love with him, doing precisely what had been expected of her for her entire life, had felt forbidden, wildly transgressive, a breach of her own instinctive will. (*NS* 250)

Moushumi protests against the Indian ways and takes refuge in the individualism of American life. She betrays her husband by associating with Dimitri (an old acquaintance); and this “causes her to feel strangely at peace” (*NS* 266).

But Moushumi’s revolt soon changes direction and she begins to protest in favour of her ethnicity when she sees it becoming a target of racial prejudice by her American fiancé, Graham. Moushumi’s rejection against racism is evident in her breaking the engagement with Graham. Though it is impossible to return to her roots, yet she would like her heritage and culture to be respected by others. This cultural confluence that Moushumi finally reaches, is not a hyphenated space, but it is a moment which “takes cultural approaches West and attempts to change that direction of the Western interpretation, to shift the norm and erase inequality—a moment which allows the suppressed, the excluded ‘other’ to come in” (*A. Mukherjee*)
13). Therefore, Moushumi is one such immigrant, who forges a new identity in the process of cultural translation because being a second generation immigrant she can only understand and interpret the past that her parents left behind.

Jhumpa Lahiri’s latest collection of short stories *Unaccustomed Earth* deals with varied cross-cultural experiences of immigrants as well as the post-immigrants. The most recurrent theme in this collection is the strife between the mother and daughter, representing the two generations of immigrants. Mothers want to keep their daughters within the traditional bounds of femininity and culture, whereas, the daughters resist anything that impedes their freedom.

In the various stories of this collection, viz. “Unaccustomed Earth”, “Hell-Heaven”, “Only Goodness” and “Once in a Lifetime”–Lahiri records the experiences of the two generations of immigrants, and explores the contrast and conflict that arises between them. She also foregrounds, how the mothers (i.e. the first generation immigrants), gradually step out of the in-between spaces and reconfigure a new identity. This depiction of the lives of different generations of immigrant women and an insight into their diasporic experiences in Lahiri’s collection *Unaccustomed Earth* is similar to the themes of Amulya Malladi’s *Serving Crazy with Curry* (2004) and Chitra Banerjee Divakurni’s *Queen of Dreams* (2004).

In the story “Unaccustomed Earth”, Ruma is a post-immigrant, who is struggling to maintain an equal footing with her family and the
world outside. Settled in Seattle with an American husband, Adam, and a son, Akash, Ruma seems to have disguised herself completely in the American way. But it is through her late mother’s memories and her father that she struggles to re-establish contacts with her roots.

As a child, Ruma and her brother Romi are forcibly taken to India to visit their grandparents. Her mother seems to have “lived for these journeys” (“Unaccustomed Earth” 8). Viewing the gradual segregation of his children from their ethnic origins, Ruma’s father tries his best to cover up the fissures that would soon turn into a gorge. “And so they’d gone in spite of the expense, in spite of the sadness he felt each time he returned to Calcutta, in spite of the fact that the older his children grew, the less they wanted to go” (“Unaccustomed Earth” 8). Ruma’s mother sticks to wearing “her brightly coloured saris, her dime-sized maroon bindi, her jewels” (“Unaccustomed Earth” 11). She is strict enough with Ruma “so much so that Ruma had never spoken to her in English” (“Unaccustomed Earth” 12). It is due to her mother’s influence that Ruma can speak Bengali exclusively in the initial years of her life. But being the child of America, “Bengali had never been a language in which she felt like an adult. Her own Bengali was slipping from her” (“Unaccustomed Earth” 12). Therefore, she can’t blame her son, Akash, for forgetting whatever little Bengali she has taught him.

Ruma’s mother always laments “the fact that her daughter preferred pants and skirts to the clothing she wore, that there would
be no one to whom to pass on her things” ("Unaccustomed Earth” 17). To her parents:

Ruma seems foreign in every way. The more she grows, more aloof she becomes. When she is young, her parents are her entire world. But eventually that need dissipated, that, dwindled to something amorphous, tenuous, something that threatened at times to snap. That loss was in store for Ruma, too; her children would become strangers, avoiding her. (“Unaccustomed Earth” 54)

Thus, Ruma’s initial relation with her parents is contradictory. It is a clash between solitude and merger. Ruma having successfully merged with the host culture begins to drift away from her ethnic origins.

By the end of the story, Lahiri features the cordial relations that begin to develop between the two generations of immigrants. Ruma and her mother try to attune to each other’s lifestyles. But as Helena Grice puts it: “Ethnicity never exists in its ‘pure’ form because it is always already shaped by the cultural forces surrounding it” (Grice, Hepworth, Lauret, and Padget 5). Hence, Ruma’s mother begins to shed her expatriate garb and put on a multi-cultural mask. Her sudden desire to visit Europe to see “The Canals of Venice or the Eiffel Tower or the windmills and tulips of Holland” (“Unaccustomed Earth” 19), surprised the entire family because “it had been an unquestioned fact that visiting family in Calcutta was the only thing worth boarding a plane for” (“Unaccustomed Earth” 19).
Ten years back, Ruma’s mother tried everything to talk Ruma out of her marriage to Adam, “saying that he would divorce her. . . . ‘You are ashamed of yourself, of being Indian, that is the bottom line” (“Unaccustomed Earth” 26), her mother tells Ruma time and again. But soon she accepts her American son-in-law and denies all her previous objections:

She grew to love Adam as a son, a replacement for Romi, who had crushed them by moving abroad and maintaining only distant ties. Her mother would chat with Adam on the phone, even when Ruma was not at home, e-mailing him from time to time, carrying on a game of scrabble with him over the Internet. (“Unaccustomed Earth” 26)

It is after the birth of Akash, that Ruma’s relationship with her mother becomes harmonious. A grandchild seems rejuvenate in Ruma’s mother:

For the first time in her life Ruma felt forgiven for the many expectations she’d violated or shirked over the years. . . . Her mother had even begun to exercise, getting up at five in the morning, wearing an old Colgate Sweatshirt of Ruma’s. She wanted to live to see her grandchildren married. (“Unaccustomed Earth” 27)

It is, ironically, the third generation immigrant, Akash who acts as a bridge between the mother and the daughter (i.e. the first and second
generation immigrants). “Oddly it was his [her] grandson, who was only half-Bengali to begin with, who did not even have a Bengali surname, with whom he|she] felt a direct biological connection, a sense of himself [herself] reconstituted in another” (“Unaccustomed Earth” 54).

The change in Uma’s mother is an evidence of the transformation of cultural heterogenization into cultural homogenization. The global phenomenon of cultural compression causes the creation of a hybrid identity. Thus, Uma’s mother adopts a new identity in order to fit well within the mosaic of multiple cultures.

In an interview to Newsweek, Lahiri admits “The ink hasn’t dried yet on our lives here” (Patel 80). Being a second generation immigrant herself, Lahiri confesses that diasporic characters like her cannot overcome their past. The multi-cultural situation doesn’t allow the past to be wiped out completely. The past does have an impact on their present, however slight it may be. As a result, Ruma, a second generation immigrant, witnesses a gradual sublimation of the mental, cultural and native differences between her parents and herself. The differences she once considered to be gigantic begin to evaporate as she comes to realize the realities of two cultures co-existing in and around her.

After her mother’s death:

Ruma feared that her father would become a responsibility, an added demand, continuously present in
a way she was no longer used to. It would mean an end to the family she’d created on her own: herself and Adam and Akash, . . . she couldn’t imagine tending to her father as her mother had, serving the meals her mother used to prepare. (“Unaccustomed Earth” 7)

But over the years, she notices how self-sufficient, helpful, caring and adjustable her father has become. As a result, she requests him to start living with her family in Seattle. “He knew that it was not for his sake that his daughter was asking him to live here. It was for hers. She needed him, as he’d never felt she’d needed him before, apart from the obvious things he provided her in the course of his life” (“Unaccustomed Earth” 53). Thus, we see a bond beginning to develop between the first and the second generation immigrants.

Though Ruma appears to be a thorough American in as far as her language, clothing, eating habits and attitude is concerned, yet she doesn’t want her son Akash, to be an American Child. “In spite of her efforts he was turning into the sort of American child she was always careful not to be, the sort that horrified and intimidated her mother: imperious, afraid of eating things” (“Unaccustomed Earth” 23). When young, Ruma usually corrects the English of her father, feeling irritated, “as if his errors were a reflection of her own short comings” (“Unaccustomed Earth” 35). But now, she ignores her father’s linguistic errors, because she understands the fact that the
adopted land and its language can never become inherent as the motherland or mother tongue.

Thus, we witness a confluence, when the older generation advances in thought towards multiculturalism and the younger generation retreats by adopting some ethnic values.

The story “Hell-Heaven” is about the conflict between Aparna, called Boudi, and her daughter Usha. Aparna, being the first generation immigrant, continues to cling to her Bengali ways. She wears “the red and white bangles unique to Bengali married women, and a common Tangail Sari, and had a thick stem of vermilion powder in the center parting of her hair” (“Hell-Heaven” 61). She stays home all day and her only job is to cook and clean for her family. She expects Usha to speak only Bengali at home. She dislikes Deborah, the American fiancée of Pranab Chakraborty; because she secretly covets Pranab. She doesn’t reveal her love for Pranab because she doesn’t want to break the Bengali code of a loyal and sincere wife. Her hatred for Deborah is rooted in their ethnic differences.

It was universally agreed that she [Deborah] had stripped Pranab Kaku not only of his origins but of his independence. She was the enemy, he was her prey, and their example was invoked as a warning, and as vindication that mixed marriages were a doomed enterprise. (“Hell-Heaven” 75)
For the expatriate nature of Aparna, “there seems no reason except fear and prejudice to keep insisting on their separation and distinctiveness as if that was all human life was about. . . .” It is Usha who teaches Aparna that “Survival in fact is about the connection between things. . . .” (Said 408).

Usha manages to live an American life despite the cultural and ethnic values enforced upon her by Aparna. Usha feels that English is the language in which she can express herself freely. Deborah’s visits produce contrasting impacts on Usha as compared to Aparna. Usha begins to anticipate Deborah’s visits. She develops a connection with Deborah which she feels lies deep within their American origin. Being born and bred in America, Usha considers herself to be as American as Deborah:

With Deborah I had a companion. She knew all about the books I read, about Pippi Long-Stocking and Anne of Green Gables, she gave me the sorts of gifts my parents had neither the money nor the inspiration to buy. . . . I felt protective of her, aware that she was unwanted, that she was resented, aware of the nasty things people said.

(“Hell-Heaven” 70)

According to Bhabha, the kinship that develops between Usha and Deborah is the result of an encounter with alien identities:

Each time the encounter with identity occurs at the point at which something exceeds the frame of the image, it
eludes the eye, evacuates the self as site of identity and autonomy and—most important—leaves a resistant trace, a stain of the subject, a sign of resistance. We are no longer confronted with an ontological problem of being but with the discursive strategy of the moment of interrogation, a moment in which the demand for identification becomes, primarily, a response to other questions of signification and desire, culture and politics. (Bhabha 49-50)

Being a second generation immigrant, Usha drifts away from her ethnic origins towards the adopted culture. The land once alien for her parents becomes home for Usha. Deborah is viewed by Usha, as a fellow citizen. “I felt that she understood me better than anyone else in the world” (“Hell-Heaven” 70). This intimacy between the second generation immigrants with the host subjects is a clear evidence of such immigrants drifting so far away from their roots that they begin to see their ethnic origins to be something exotic.

As Usha reaches adolescence, she begins to keep secrets, from Aparna. She evader her with the help of her friends:

When she screamed at me for talking too long on the telephone, or for staying too long in my room, I learned to scream back, telling her that she was pathetic, that she knew nothing about me, and it was clear to us both that I had stopped needing her, definitively and abruptly, just as Pranab Kaku had. (“Hell-Heaven” 76-77)
The change in Usha’s attitude is stimulated by the cultural pressure that Aparna forced on Usha throughout her childhood. This sudden outburst is a revolt against all the ethnic norms that Usha no longer wants to cling to.

By the end of the story, Aparna has come to terms with Usha:

She had accepted the fact that I was not only her daughter but a child of America as well. Slowly, she accepted that I dated one American man, and then another, and then yet another, that I slept with one though we were not married. She welcomed my boyfriends into our home and when things didn’t work out she told me I would find someone better. After years of being idle, she decided, when she turned fifty, to get a degree in library science at a nearby university. (“Hell-Heaven” 81-82)

Thus, we witness that it is Aparna who succumbs to the alien lifestyle in order to harmonize with Usha, a second generation immigrant. The first generation immigrants, therefore, have to surrender to the adopted culture in order to maintain kinship with their further generations.

The story “Only Goodness” portrays the life of Sudha and her constant conflict with her parents. Having worked with a large number of second generation immigrants, Uma Parameswaran states:
I am aware of the vast differences between their attitudes to “home” and their parents. While many have felt the stings of racism in their school environment, most choose the survival technique of downplaying it. Often this works to their advantage because both oppressor and victim outgrow their roles; but some of the victims carry the scars of trauma all their lives. (Parameswaran 36)

Sudha is one such immigrant, whose brother’s birth rekindles the harsh childhood memories of Sudha. Sudha doesn’t want Rahul’s upbringing to be as un-Americanised as her own. “Even as an adult, she wished only that she could go back and change things: the ungainly things she’d worn, the insecurity she’d felt, all the innocent mistakes she’d made” (“Only Goodness” 187). As a result, she takes charge of Rahul’s upbringing. She buys him the right toys, the right story books, the right Halloween costumes. “She had slipped through the cracks, but she was determined that her little brother should leave his mark as a child in America” (“Only Goodness” 136). She also begins to envy him “because people could call him Raoul, that he could introduce himself in crowds without questions” (“Only Goodness” 136-137). Sudha has no fondness for her childhood because it seems limited to the ethnic code of conduct that her parents adhered to at that time. But in case of Rahul, “Sudha supposed it was a combination of his being a boy and being younger,
and her parents being more at ease with the way things worked in America by then” (“Only Goodness” 137).

Sudha’s submissive attitude soon takes form of a revolt:

Sudha had waited until college to disobey her parents.
Before then she had lived according to their expectations, her persona scholarly, her social life limited to other demure girls in her class, if only to ensure that one day she would be set free.” (“Only Goodness” 29)

It is Sudha who later introduces her brother to alcohol, a practice strictly denied by her parents. But when her mother comes to know of Rahul’s addiction, she doesn’t want to blame her son.

Sudha pitied her mother, pitied her refusal to accommodate such an unpleasant and alien fact, her need to blame America and its laws instead of her son. . . . Her parents had always been blind to the things that plagued their children: being teased at school for the color of their skin or for the funny things their mother occasionally put into their lunch boxes, . . . “Depression” was a foreign word to them, an American thing. In their opinion their children were immune from the hardships and injustices they had left behind in India, as if the inoculations the paediatrician had given Sudha and Rahul when they were babies guaranteed them an existence free of suffering. (“Only Goodness” 143-144)
Sudha’s parents don’t want to accept the fact that the identities of their children have been polluted by the foreign influence.

Without any protest they accept Sudha’s decision to marry Roger, who is fourteen years older to Sudha and is previously married. “Sudha felt that they were not so much making room for Roger in the family as allowing him to take her away” (“Only Goodness” 152). Their quiet approval of Roger is just another effort of Sudha’s parents to preserve the relationship with their daughter. “Sudha regarded her parent’s separation from India as an ailment that ebbed and flowed like a cancer” (“Only Goodness” 138). This ailment has no permanent cure. The only remedy is to restructure the linguistic, cultural and traditional aspects of their identity in accordance with the foreign values.

“Once in a lifetime” is another story of a post-immigrant, Hema, who shares completely different relations with her mother Shibani and her aunt, Mrs. Parul Choudhary, who are both first generation immigrants.

Hema is not on cordial terms with her mother Shibani, who is midway through her identity reconstruction; and like an expatriate continues to cling to some shades of her ethnic identity. According to William Safran one of the six features of Diasporas is: “the retention of a collective memory, vision, or myth about the original homeland–its physical location, history etc.” (85). It is this vision of homeland that Shibhani is trying to locate in the midst of the alien host culture.
Hema and Shibani contradict each other on petty matters; and it is these slight differences that later form a large gulf never to be overcome.

My mother considered the idea of a child sleeping alone a cruel American practice and therefore did not encourage it, . . . she told me that she had slept in the same bed as her parents until the day she was married and that it was perfectly normal. But I knew that it was not normal, not what my friends at school did, and that they would ridicule me if they knew. (“Once in a lifetime” 229)

Despite Shibani’s constant efforts, she cannot instil the Indianness in Hema. “I found trips to India dull, that I didn’t like the geckos that clung to the walls in the evening, . . . or the giant cockroaches that sometimes watched me as I bathed. I didn’t like the comments my relatives made freely in my presence” (“Once in a lifetime” 241). From the very beginning Hema wants to shed the Indian aspect of her identity and merge completely with America—its culture and lifestyle.

On the other hand, Parul’s American ways immediately attract Hema. She begins to admire the way Parul is more American than her mother even though she has spent the last six years in India. “Bombay had made them more American than Cambridge had, . . . There were remarks concerning your mother’s short hair, her slacks, the Johnnie Walker she and your father continued to drink after the
meal was finished” (“Once in a lifetime” 235). This is an evidence of globalization along with international standardization. Global interdependence nullifies the boundaries, bringing the world closer; and allowing the cultural influences to seep through.

Parul and her husband, Dr. Chowdhary “enjoyed the change of pace, having mysteriously acquired a taste for things like steak and baked potatoes, while my parents had not” (“Once in a lifetime” 246). Thus, Hema begins to associate with Parul’s immigrant traits. Christine Gomez remarks about immigrants that they are “middleman in more sense than one. They are not only brokers or go betweens in various deals, but people who are in the middle of where action is” (Gomez 139-40). Hema considers Parul to be one such interpreter between two cultures. The reason why Parul leaves India is not for the treatment of cancer but more to be left alone. Hema completely agrees with this thought of Parul not wanting to be suffocated by the attention of people in India. Hema’s intimacy with Parul is the consequence of their identities being fluid. The similar trait of acculturation acts as a binding agent between Hema and Parul.

Cultural collision leads to a certain seepage of values and customs which cause cultural contamination. No two cultures in confrontation remain virgin. The alien as well as the host subjects are affected by the cultural dialogue. Thus, it may be concluded that the two simultaneous realities of globalisation are cultural fragmentation on one hand and cultural homogenization on the other.
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Conclusion

Due to an intense sweep of technological advancement and globalisation, the cultures, per force have crossed the stage of the ‘event of encounter’. World is shrinking day by day due to easy accessibility of wealth and commuting systems, frequency of cultural encounters have increased so much that mere ‘encounters’ have amalgamated into a new conundrum—a new space is being created, a new generation of diasporic subjects has evolved, which is resulting in the gradual erasure of what was usually meant by diasporic experience a few decades ago. The new diasporic idiom that is emerging now is at great variance with what the term ‘diaspora’ stood for earlier.

The present study has tried to recapture and relocate the concept of diaspora and diasporic identity vis-à-vis the writings of three Indian women writers—Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri. A common strand of experience can be traced in the writings of these writers because three of them share a diasporic identity as well as a multicultural background. Having migrated between cultures and known for their subtle feminist stances, the writings of these multicultural women writers is bound to be at the intersection of multiculturalism and feminism, both of which emphasize pluralities and differences, and as such become a natural site where one might expect a new meaning and also a ‘new vision of
the future’ that is based on the dialogic interaction among disparate cultural groups at the time of sudden spurt of the obsession for preserving nations and nationalism. In the new writings of all three of them can be traced the fact that both multiculturalism and feminism emphasize strategies for survival and coexistence. Writing about ‘dialogics’ and ‘multicultural women writers’, Kishori Nayak’s observation is worth the mention here:

Multicultural feminist/womanist writing emphasizes a pluralist coexistence of stances and identities through an employment of multiple voices as also silences, sometimes polyphonic and sometimes polyvocal and this is in keeping with the spirit of “differences without hierarchies” which both feminism and multiculturalism deem important. These multiple voices from various cultural webs and the deployment of silence act as transformative devices particularly in women characters: they give them courage to transgress cultural norms repeatedly in different ways, and through such transgressions they transform the deviant into the norm. The search for identity, the concomitant processes of transgression and thence transformations are built up partly through the employment of multiple voices and partly through the portrayal of characters with identities in constant flux, reflecting the process of trans-culturalization. (59)
As multicultural women writers, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri have renegotiated the diasporic women’s new identity which has emerged as a natural corollary to the globalisation.

The second chapter of this thesis titled “Multiculturalism and Assimilation: Representing the Tale of Women’s Diasporic Identity” foregrounds the shift in the diasporic sensibility of these three authors as well as the characters in their works from expatriation to immigration (i.e. from isolation to amalgamation). Even the last chapter titled “Globalisation and the Mutations in Women’s Diasporic Identity” highlights the mutations occurring in diasporic women’s identity due to globalisation. Through the conflict of views between the first and second generation migrants, and the gradual but affirmative transition of expatriates into immigrants, this chapter reveals the overall assessment of this dissertation that lays emphasis on adaptation and survival.

In political, social, economic and cultural spheres the overt relationship is always characterized by tension and opposition. The walls between cultures are always porous. Therefore, terms like refugee, immigrant and expatriate have now become redundant. The third generation diaspora does not fall into any of the above categories. They, in fact give rise to the possibility of ‘new affiliations’ in a ‘globalised world’, and celebration of a ‘double status’.

In an essay titled “Discourse in the Novel”, Mikhail Bakhtin points to the paradoxical moments in fictional plots, when characters
acquire independence from author-narrator language sphere and inhabit their own community of language. Some such kind of phenomenon is discernible in the new works of these three multicultural women writers where the women characters reveal dimensions of their otherness from that of the narrators through demarcated registers of both language and action. The women characters in the new works of these writers, emerge as ‘neo-diasporic’, adapting themselves to the ‘new-space’ that has been created due to the destabilization of the old and hackneyed concept of diaspora.

This study makes an in-depth analysis of all the earlier and latter diasporic fictions of the three authors undertaken in this study. What emerges out of this research is that there is a gradual transition in the diasporic sensibility of the authors as well as the characters depicted in their works. Lotte in Anita Desai’s *Baumgartner’s Bombay* (1988) is a nostalgic expatriate, as compared to, Mother in *Journey to Ithaca* (1996) and Doña Vera in *The Zigzag Way* (2004), who represent a forward looking attitude and willingness to merge in the ‘new space’. Similarly, Dimple in *Wife* (1975) and Tara in *Desirable Daughters* (2003) also fall respectively in the early and latter categories of Bharati Mukherjee’s diasporic character portrayals that show a remarkable change from the theme of alienation to that of acculturation and assimilation. Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Interpreter of Maladies: Stories of bengal, boston and beyond* (1999) deals with a number of stories that
portray nostalgic characters like Boori Ma, Shobha, Mrs. Sen and others. But her latest collection of short stories *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) mainly deals with the second generation immigrants who are well adjusted in the ‘third space’ and also encourage their previous generations to step out of the expatriate mould and evolve themselves as ‘neo-diasporics’. Hence, a drastic shift is visible in the diasporic sensibility of these three authors when a comparative analysis of the old and new works of these authors is undertaken.

The dialogic liaison between two cultures inevitably brings into existence a ‘third’ undefined, unnamed ‘culture’ which fills the gap as ‘third space’; and this ‘third space’ becomes the creative, generative location for the evolving new culture. The women’s diasporic identity that emerges in the works of these writers is a ‘globalised identity’ which can neither be viewed as a ‘hybridized’ nor ‘syncretised’ identity. This new identity of diasporic women has yet to acquire a befitting name in the critical jargon. Neither is there ‘nostalgia’ nor an imminent need to take deep roots in the host culture.

The frequent movement across borders, due to the advanced and accessible commuting mediums, has evolved a new kind of sensibility when it appears to the migrants that they have two homes and their special status as ‘diasporics’ has not deprived them, rather enriched them with the positive experience of pluralities. The evolution of women’s diasporic identity in the works of these writers thus becomes a sort of positive marker towards cultural transformation
which embraces multiplicity and ambivalence. In their celebrated
status as ‘double beings’, the diasporic women of the new globalised
world order become a symbol of ‘power’ instead of the pathetic,
schizoid members of the ‘lost generation’ to which a diasporic identity
was generally associated with.