PREFACE

“Where is your home?” – This question has been asked to me umpteen times particularly by new acquaintances. Most of the people appear to be doubting Thomas to my answer, i.e., Tezpur, and recently North Lakhimpur as I am settled here having a house of my own. They immediately ask “Where is your original home?”, and to clear their doubt I am often compelled to utter I belong to Bihari community. After I joined North Lakhimpur College in 2005, one day I was invited by my neighbour, a Bihari family for lunch. For the last fifty year this family has been in North Lakhimpur having a dignified and cordial relation with the broader Assamese society. But during the lunch, there was no trace of local culinary, everything that was served to me, even the T.V. channel, was someway connected to North India. After the lunch I was stunned with the oft-asked question with one addition, “Where is your home in Bihar?” I could not give an appropriate answer but the question has always been in the back of my mind. It is this question and my inability to give appropriate answer made me to ponder over the idea of “home”. My emotional and cerebral musing drives me to the field of Diaspora study.

The selection of topic was done after long deliberations on Diaspora and writers writing in diaspora. Jhumpa Lahiri was already in my mind as I had already gone through most of her works. But my motive was to find out whether diaspora reality is subject to the subjugated migrants or it is also found among the upper hand migrants. And my guide
suggested Margaret Wilson, an early 20th century American Missionary writer in India. Jhumpa Lahiri and Margaret Wilson were selected for study with a view to find out the differences between the diasporic feelings of an American in India and Indians in America.

As regard to the selection of texts, I have discussed all the works of Lahiri as they are replete with elements of diaspora. The elements of diaspora are not present in all the works of Wilson. The diasporic part of her life is connected to her short stay in India (1904-1910) and her expression of Indian experiences in form of a novel entitled *Daughters of India* and a few stories under the broad title *Tales of a Polygamous City* published separately in the magazine *The Atlantic Monthly*. My discussion in this thesis is restricted to three works of Lahiri (*Interpreter of Maladies*, *The Namesake* and *Unaccustomed Earth*) and two works of Wilson (*Daughters of India* and *Tales of a Polygamous City*) as they are imbued with the elements of diaspora and fit for a comparative study.

The thesis is conceived in six chapters along with a bibliography. The first chapter is “Introduction” in which I have discussed the emergence of Diaspora as a field of academic study. The chapter also includes brief biography of the chosen writers and the introduction of the texts under study and ends up with the discussion of diaspora and humanistic concerns in them.

The second chapter entitled “Dynamics of Diasporic Realities” deals with certain crucial elements of diaspora such as the concept of home, loss, marginalization, isolation
etc. and discusses the treatment of diaspora in Lahiri and Wilson in two separate heads and ends up with a comparative analysis of diasporic concerns in Lahiri and Wilson.

The third chapter entitled “The Matrix of Multicultural Concerns” treats multicultural elements in Lahiri and Wilson. After a brief discussion of the concept of multiculturalism and its relation to diaspora, the chapter comparatively analyses the treatment of multiculturalism by Lahiri and Wilson in their select works.

The fourth chapter entitled “Myriad Modes of Sexuality, Ecology, Pain and Ambition” is conceived in three segments: Treatment of Sexuality, Treatment of Ecology and Metaphors of Pain and Ambition. Each segment deals with the conceptual ground of the terms and their application in the texts under study.

The fifth chapter entitled, “The World of Subaltern” is an effort to study the social footings of diaspora in host land. After the theoretical discussion of the term “subaltern”, the chapter veers towards the analysis of subaltern elements in Lahiri and Wilson and sums up with the comparison of their treatment.

The sixth chapter is “Conclusion” in which I have succinctly presented the main ideas of the previous chapters to facilitate the final comparison of Lahiri and Wilson as diasporic writers. This chapter makes an assertion that both Lahiri and Wilson have treated the elements of diaspora with respect to their time and circumstances and the differences in their treatment are not of kind but of degree.

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