CHAPTER - II

DYNAMICS OF DIASPORIC REALITIES

We
the migratory birds
are here this season
thinking
we’ll fly back to our home
for sure.
Does anyone know
which invisible cage imprisons us?
And the flight begins to die slowly
in our wings.

Surjeet Kalsey\textsuperscript{1}, “Migratory Birds” (1982)
(www.surjeetkalsey.wordpress.com)

Surjit Kalsey’s “Migratory Birds” faithfully records the uncertainty inherent in diasporic existence and realities. The immigrants arrive in their new found land with high aspirations. Bidding farewell to their friends and family, they travel far distances and finally arrive at their destination – the new land of milk and honey. This new land, for the immigrants, holds a higher standard of living, plenty of work and many opportunities. Compared to the standard of living in their homeland, life in this new capitalist haven seems to be fantastic. Ghosh’s description of England to Ashoke in the train journey in \textit{The Namesake} bears testimony to it:

Ghosh spoke reverently of England. The sparkling, empty streets, the polished black cars, the rows of gleaming white horses, he said, were like a dream. Trains departed and arrived according to schedule … (15)
However, everything does not occur as per the aspirations of immigrants. Even under the best circumstances, immigrating to a new country can be a harrowing experience. Life in diaspora is often more difficult than previously anticipated. Despite much preparedness, immigrants can, inevitably, encounter things that can catch them by surprise. Bewilderment, confusion and eventually, disappointment can set in when reality meets fantasy—when the envisioned dream of life in the "promised land" and the day-to-day reality of life in the new host country do not match. This diasporic reality finds ample expression in the stories: “Mrs. Sen’s” in which Mrs. Sen tries wholeheartedly to adjust with the American life style while babysitting Eliot, “The Blessed House” in which Sanjeev and Twinkle make a painful effort to accommodate in a Christianity haunted house, though Twinkle is inquisitively exciting about the christian flavour of the house, and “The Third and Final Continent” in which a young Bengali bachelor strives to seek accommodation while working at MIT.

Diasporic realities are problematic realities thanks to their associations with diverse psycho-social phenomena. In fact, any discourse on the life of migrants must be viewed socially and psychologically, and the diaspora is not exception to it. Here, I would like to dwell upon certain issues that contribute in the making of diasporic realities.

**Sense of Loss:**

It is natural to have tremendous feelings of loss after traveling hundreds of miles and separating from one's family, home and culture. Even if the migrant is excited about emigrating and even if the situation at home was unfavourable, there is still an
accompanying sense of loss felt by the migrant—and loss always requires adequate mourning. No doubt, letting go of the past and moving into the future can be an exciting adventure, but underneath the "adrenaline high" lies a great deal of sadness and physiological stress. It is said that change always produces stress in one's life even when the changes occurring are positive ones. Therefore, the emigration experience feels particularly overwhelming because there is change and concomitant stress in nearly every aspect of one's life—geographic, economic, social and cultural. Feelings may run the gamut of both high and low extremes, all in the course of a single day. The migrants may feel joy at their new found opportunities but their joy is continually punctured by loneliness for loved ones back home. Sometimes they also feel a sense of guilt that they are in a better place than those left behind.

**Isolation:**

Isolation is an essential part of Diasporas' life. A condition universal to any immigrant experience, it may be seen as one of the defining factors of living in exile. Isolation is a two-fold problem, and can be felt as isolation from other immigrants, and/or isolation from the native population in the host country. The degree of isolation migrants experience in Diaspora depends upon the immigrant status—those awaiting verdicts on asylum cases, those with temporary status and those who have no legal documentation are likely to feel a greater degree of isolation from the rest of the population than those who possess permanent legal status. Legal and permanent status affords one a sense of belonging and makes it easier to begin the process of laying down physical and psychological roots to the host country. For those without legal documentation, isolation
will exist indefinitely and will be one of the foremost elements of their life in Diaspora, affecting all of their decisions and actions as long as they reside in the host country.

**Marginalization:**

While isolation is an experience usually felt by the individual migrant, marginalization is felt by the entire sub-population of migrants. As a group, foreigners are often marginalized—pushed to the fringes of society, where they remain, unaccepted by the native majority. Marginalization can also turn into discrimination and structuralized racism, whereby the migrant group is prevented from assimilating into, or advancing within, the host country. Both individual isolation and group marginalization can produce acute feelings of loneliness, which in turn enter into a cycle of grief and loss. Feelings of grief can trigger feelings of loneliness, which then lead to a sense of isolation. Moreover, the cycle is self-perpetuating and any element within it can trigger the other two elements.

**Culture shock:**

Culture shock refers to the feelings of alienation and estrangement that accompany the process of learning to adapt to a new host culture. Even if one's destination country speaks the same language that the immigrant is accustomed to, people in the new country will speak that language using different accents, dialects, euphemism and idioms. They will use unique body language or gestures and will behave in ways that the migrant is not accustomed to. Different cultures operate using different underlying normative assumptions. As a result, trying to adapt to a new culture one can feel as if one
is trying to learn the rules of an invisible system with no accompanying guidebook or manual— a frustrating and often bewildering experience.

**Home:**

At the centre of every diasporic feeling lies the notion of ‘home’. Home: its conception, its loss, its re-possession and longing for its restoration etc., is the axis on which the entire discourse of diaspora revolves. It “figures prominently in the psychic imaginary of diasporas” (Mishra 70). Home is a very complex and multivalent concept. What is home for one may be homelessness for another. For most people, migrant or local, home is where they are themselves, where they are at home and where their heart is and not where only their feet are. Home is not just a building, a geographical location, a region, a religion, a nation, a culture, or spiritual or imaginative refuge. It may be none of these, one of these, some of these, or all of these. It has Derridean indeterminateness, numerous interpenetrating categories, various involvements, overlaps and slippages. It is home that determines one’s identity, defines and redefines one’s belonging and endeavours to answer the question that Sura P. Rath has to struggle with it in his “home(s) Abroad: Diasporic Identities in Third Space”,

“Where then is my home?” I struggle daily in the town called Shreveport in the bible-belt south of the United States: I teach there; I live there; I write about people who live there. It is my present. But my mind has been shaped by four other places – Cuttak, Bhubaneswar, New Orleans, and College Station – each of which can lay its claim as the home base of my psyche, hence, my home. Above all, however, it is Balugaon, that clammy, dingy fish-smelling sultry town on Chilka lake where I sometimes return when I sing or dream of home. (20)
Homeland means being rooted in something or some place and a person may be rooted in numerous things and several places. A person may live in a town/city/village but not feel at home if he is not rooted in caste, creed, ideology, politics or physical features of the place. One may or may not be aware of homeland while living in it. According to Peter van der Veer, “those who do not think of themselves as Indians before migration become Indians in diaspora” (7). Home may be a memory or memory of memory (for a Trinidadian Indian in England) or just a memory (for a Guyanese of Indian origin). It may exist only in imagination as Rushdie points out,

But if we do look back, we must also do so in knowledge – which gives rise to profound uncertainties – that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost, that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, India of the mind (10).

The notion of ‘home’ is much more complex. We cannot talk about one singular ‘home’ in diaspora; what mainly characterizes diaspora is the multiplicity of ‘homes’ and the ‘multiple belongings’, as the following quote indicates:

The notion of diaspora can represent a multiple, plurilocal, constructed location of home, thus avoiding ideas of fixity, boundedness, and nostalgic exclusivity traditionally implied by the word home. (Walters, intro xvi)

The link between diasporas and countries of origin is usually marked with ambivalence and psychological anxieties; basically because the diasporic subject is torn-between two different ‘homes’.
‘Home’ and ‘abroad’ are mingled in diaspora, ‘home’ can be ‘abroad’ and vice versa; they are not necessarily fixed geographical points. There is a tension between “where are you at?” and “where are you from?” Sometimes, to feel ‘at home’ while they are in the ‘host country’, diaspora people create their own space. Chinatown is an example of a Chinese minority in London; a very important place for the Chinese population which creates a familiar space and makes them feel ‘home’. It is important in terms of creating a sense of belonging.

The diasporas are without/beyond borders and live a life of ‘in-between’ condition which results ultimately in their loss/quest of ‘Identity’. They live in a land of nowhere resulting from their attempt to overcome cultural issues and negotiate diverse racial identities. The conflict between rootedness, continue a tie to their past, and uprootedness, living in the present, disrupts their lives. However, this is more acute in case of the first generation migrants. The second generation migrants, influenced by the notions of globalization and transnationalism, attempt to locate and stabilize their identities in the new territories through a process of acculturation. Thus, diaspora is closely linked with the concept of ‘home’, ‘space’, ‘identity’, ‘migration’, ‘hybridity’, ‘transnationalism’ and ‘transculturalism’. All these concepts are found in diasporic writings depending on the nature of immigrants.

**Diaspora and Jhumpa Lahiri:**

Jhumpa Lahiri has depicted some of the problems engendered by the experience of migrancy and diaspora such as displacement, rootlessness, fragmentation, discrimination, marginalization, identity crisis, identity formation, acculturation,
contraculturation and also ‘transnationality’. Her Interpreter of Maladies is an authentic example of displacement and rootlessness because most of the characters are first generation migrants. The diasporic experience of displacement, rootlessness, isolation, discrimination, and marginalization is well couched in the stories “Mrs. Sen’s”, “Sexy” and “The Real Durwan”. Mrs. Sen who baby sits Eliot, an eleven year old American boy, at her own apartment is often questioned of her origin and background by his mother. The American mother scorns her mannerism and food that she serves her as a mark of Indian hospitality. This hurts her many a time and makes her restless, though she knows that her relatives in India “think I live the life of a queen …” (125). Similarly, Dixits in “Sexy” are mocked at by their American neighbours and their children are called “the Dixits dog shit” (95) by the American children. However, it is not only in America that the Indian migrants undergo such humiliating and discriminatory experiences, the diasporas experience such treatment in every dominant culture or in other nations. The predicament of Boori Ma in “The Real Durwan” substantiates it. She is a low caste Bangladeshi Bengali who is sent to Calcutta after partition. But she is left to the mercy of other. She earns her meager livelihood by doing small household works and sleeps under the stair of a big building. To seek a change from her routine, Boori Ma sometimes visits other houses in the afternoon. No doubt, she is welcome there and sometimes “cracked in (of tea) was passed to her direction” (76) but “knowing not to sit on the furniture, she crouched, instead, in doorways and hallways and observed gestures and manners in the same way a person tends to watch traffic in a foreign city” (76). Thus, she remains a foreigner, “the other” not knowing which country or community is hers. Her dilemma is that she can neither go back across the border which was once her home nor is she given
a space in this new country which is politically declared to be her for being Bengali. Thus, she belongs to no country, neither here nor there.

In the story “When Mr. Pirzada came to Dine”, Mr. Pirzada is an East Pakistani national who is on a Government scholarship to study the deciduous trees of New Zealand. He deeply misses his wife and daughters, and while taking dinner with Lilía’s parents he keeps his pocket watch “set to local time in Dacca, eleven hours ahead …on his folded paper napkin on the coffee table” (30). This shows that the first generation migrants face cultural dilemma and try hard to retain their cultural identity and practices in their faiths, values, costumes, food and behaviour. According to John McLeod these “beliefs, traditions, customs, behaviours and values” along with their “possessions and belongings” are carried by migrants with them when they arrive in new places (211). Mr. and Mrs. Sen, Mr. Pirzada, Dixits, Lilía’s parents, endeavour to adhere to their cultural values and mannerism, and any conflict with it or their concept of “home” seems to disturb them.

However, among the second generation migrants we witness waning emotional ties with past or “home” as in case of Shukumar and Shoba in “A Temporary Matter” and Sanjeev and Twinkle in “This Blessed House”. They are quite alienated from Indian culture and values; they stick to American life style. Moreover, their marital relations are also disturbed and seem to be crumbling. The cultural alienation of the second generation diasporas is well couched in the story “An Interpreter of Maladies” in which Mr. and Mrs. Das (American born Indians) are on journey to their home (parents’ home). They are quite strangers to the Indian culture and mannerism, and they learn about India only
through “the paperback tour book” (44) or through Mr. Kapasi’s description of India to them while showing them the Konark Temple in Orissa. For being born and brought up in America, they face an unbridgeable cultural chasm in India which makes them displaced in their parents’ motherland. They do not feel at home in the surrounding of Konark Temple and want to go back soon. This reveals that Lahiri endeavours to present the shifting concept of ‘home’ and ‘displacement’ in the successive generations of people living in diaspora.

*The Namesake* explores the conflicts of both the first and second generation Indian immigrants covering a time period from the late 1960s to the early twenty-first century in the United States. The characters are middle class Bengalis, well versed in both Indian and British education. They bring with them enough cultural associations to recreate their “imagined political community,” with the first generation protagonists constantly recalling their birth country with longing and occasional visits to India (Anderson 6).

The story commences with Ashoke Ganguli, who, as a young Indian student ponders over to pursue his further education in the United States. His return to India from the United States for an Indian wife, Ashima, follows a second generation that turns into the hyphenated Indian Americans with a dual culture, or the ABCD—“American Born Confused Deshi” (118). Here “Deshi” means simply Indian and desh is India (118). Gogol is an exemplary ABCD who cannot answer the question, “where are you from?” (118). For him the notion of home is very complicated. He is baffled to answer whether he is from India or the United States. However, Gogol does not think of India as his
country or “desh”, he sees himself as purely American—unhyphenated Indian American. Though Gogol considers himself an American, he is brought up between two diametrically different cultures, similar to Bhabha’s “in-between space” (10) where people can, to a certain extent, move and negotiate within their worlds. He is both Indian and American. He belongs to Indian parents on a different geographical space than India and is acculturated as an Indian at home. But outside the home, he is an American. He thinks of India as a “foreign country far away from home, both physically and psychologically” (118). He struggles to reconcile his dual cultures. On the one hand, he is fascinated with the free and happy lifestyles of his American girlfriend, Maxine; on the other he feels a sense of obligation towards his parents. Like that of every immigrant child, Gogol’s real challenge is to secure an identity in the midst of differences.

Under the influence of American lifestyle, Gogol strives to distance himself from his parents and embrace an American identity. He spends “his nights with Maxine, sleeping under the same roof as her parents, a thing Ashima refuses to admit to her Bengali friends” (166). His identity is strongly identified with cultures that play a crucial role in the formation of modern immigrant identity which is “de-centered” (Hall 1999: 274). A culture is, as Vijay Prasad defines, “a living set of social relations,” rather than a “timeless trait” (112). It is not a fixed site of meaning, or simply “common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provides us, as one people” with stable unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning” (Hall 1994: 393). Prasad’s and Hall’s ideas on culture are important to understand the modern cultural identity of Lahiri’s characters. In fact, her characters attempt to form a multiplicity of identities in a process of cultural formation. Their cultural identity formation includes pieces of cultural
inheritance to incorporate into their lives as Americans, which is similar to Hall’s idea of “being” and “becoming” of cultural identity (Hall 1989: 70).

However, Hall’s idea of being and becoming is complicated by Lahiri’s focus on the tension between past and present in *The Namesake*. For instance, Gogol dwells between the worlds of past and present. No doubt, he endeavours to escape from the past by denouncing his cultural roots and changing his name, he is somehow attached to his roots. He is uncomfortable with his name that has so many connections with his past. Moreover, he can not comprehend the significance of the name Gogol that his parents chose for him. His name also creates embarrassment for him as he is teased by his friends and his name is mispronounced by his teachers. As a result, when he turns eighteen, he goes into a Massachusetts courtroom and asks the judge to change his name, providing as his reason that he “hates the name Gogol” (79). Gogol changes his name for he believes that by switching his name to Nikhil he would get rid of his past. But his parents’ continue to call him by his original name, and their adherence with the name Gogol symbolizes that a simple name change does not alter the fabric of a person. It is a symbol of something that he learns later through his father that his name Gogol is connected to his father’s past life. Ashoke tells Gogol the story of the train mishap that he had encountered twenty-eight years ago, in October 1961 which “had nearly taken his life, and the book that had saved him, and about the year afterward, when he’d been unable to move” (123).

Through the story of his father and the train accident, Gogol learns that the significance of his name is so strongly associated with his father’s unforgettable past that
he cannot escape so easily. Ashoke survived the accident because he was reading Gogol’s “The Overcoat” when the accident occurred near two hundred and nine kilometers away from Calcutta “killing the passengers in their sleep” (17). Gogol realizes how his life has been interwoven between the past and present. However, although Gogol is living in the in-between space and struggling to balance the two different worlds, he still longs to escape from his cultural roots and venture into his U.S. girlfriend’s life.

Gogol’s inclination towards the life style of Maxine and her parents suggests that the immigrant children are fascinated to adopt the American lifestyle. Gogol’s plunge into his girlfriend’s life is an indication of a second generation immigrant child’s realization that an identity far from their own cultural roots is a necessity to live happily in the multicultural United States. It is Gogol’s ability to understand the difference between the lives of his parents and Maxine’s that prompts him to desire Maxine’s lifestyle. He is surprised to find the warm welcome from Maxine’s parents. At the dinner table, he is impressed with their style which reveals his comparison of his parents with Maxine’s:

A bowl of small, round, roasted red potatoes is passed around, and afterward a salad. They eat appreciatively, commenting on the tenderness of the meat, the freshness of the beans. His own mother would never have served so few dishes to a guest. She would have kept her eyes trained on Maxine’s plate, insisting she have seconds and then thirds. The table would have been lined with a row of serving bowls so that people could help themselves; but Lydia pays no attention to Gogol’s plate, she makes no announcement indicating that there is more. (133)

Gogol experiences a sense of freedom and independence even in the dinner table at Maxine’s house. Insisting someone empty the plate or requesting to eat more, which is a
common practice in Indian culture, is something that irritates Gogol. On the contrary, he finds no obligation to eat more at Maxine’s house. Thus, though the passage is simply a description of a dinner table, Lahiri’s use of delicate language reveals a sense of freedom at the American dinner table. It is this freedom and individualism that instigate Gogol to opt for American way of life.

Before meeting Maxine’s parents, American table manners are not the part of his life, “this sort of talk at mealtimes, to the indulgent ritual of the lingering meal, and the pleasant aftermath of bottle and crumbs and empty glasses that clutter the table” (134). This meeting makes him love the food Maxine and her parents eat; “the polenta and risotto, the bouillabaisse and osso buco, the meat baked in parchment paper” (137). Not only Gogol’s affection for Maxine suggests his adoption of interracial dating and love, but also the adoption of most of the American demeanour because for him “to know her and love her is to know and love all of these things” (137). In fact, Gogol’s love for her is an outcome of his strong desire for everything she possesses— the individual lifestyle of Maxine who has “no sense of obligation,” and “unlike his parents her parents pressure her to do nothing, and yet she lives faithfully, happily, at their side” (138). In other words, Gogol’s cultural identity formation is highly affected by what Prasad calls “a set of social relations” within the society he lives in (112). Gogol’s position emphasizes the necessity of the formation of a transnational identity which requires negotiation of the cultural borderlands between the United States and India.

According to Bhabha the in-between space of the cultural borderland is a place of transformation and change where fixed and essential identities are deconstructed. For this
reason, he asserts that “the borderline work of culture demands an encounter with “newness” that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation” (10). Bhabha argues that such borderline culture innovates the performance of present by renewing the past, “refiguring it as a contingent in-between space” (10). Looking from the perspective of Bhabha’s notion of borderline culture, Lahiri’s characters can be seen dwelling between different cultures and engaging in transcultural conversations. The interaction between her characters and the host groups slowly opens up the space for cultural transformation that characterizes the in-between as a third element, an amalgam of two cultural entities that create a third after the original two have been altered. One of the important techniques that Lahiri uses in the novel to liberate her characters from the narrowed confinement of national boundaries is her contrast between the initial and latter attitudes and behaviour of the characters. In the beginning Lahiri’s characters are seen holding strictly to their cultural roots. But later they go through changes in their demeanour.

In *The Namesake*, the cultural transformation does not occur at once. It occurs in a process that makes the characters form their identities as hybrid and transnational. This process, for example, can be seen in Ashima by contrasting her character in different stages of her life in the United States. When she first comes to the United States, she feels completely lonely in the foreign land. She is shocked to find people who live detached from one another. When the time comes to give birth to her first child, she is “terrified to raise a child in a country where she is related to no one, where she knows so little, where life seems so tentative and spare” (6). She remembers her home country where most of the relatives and elders gather for blessings when a baby is born. In contrast, she finds no
one surrounding her and her child in the United States except “Nandis and Dr. Gupta, who are only the substitutes for the people who really ought to be surrounding them” (24). This is a common experience of immigrants unaccustomed to new cultures of the new land. Ashima does not have any other choice but to study her son and pity him for “she has never known of a person entering the world so alone, so deprived” (25).

In order to cope up with her loneliness, at least temporarily, Ashima practices Indian cultural values at her new home in Boston. She preserves the Indian food recipes, the Indian dress, the sari which is a key example of the maintenance of cultural identity that Indians are so proud of. She clings to her six-meter dress until the end, challenging even the coldest temperature of Massachusetts. The bindi, that usually adorns the forehead of an Indian married woman, is another cultural possession that Ashima adheres to daily. She cooks Indian foods “combining Rice Crispies and Planters peanuts and chopped red onion in a bowl; she adds salt, lemon juice, thin slices of green chili pepper, wishing there were mustard oil to pour into the mix” (1). She prefers to read “a tattered copy of Desh magazine” printed in her mother tongue (7). She does not even say her husband’s name, a practice in South Asia, particularly in Nepal and India. Usually husbands are called with the name of the first child plus “father”—for example, Gogol’s father. Ashima does not call her husband Gogol’s father, but never utters his first name:

Like a kiss or caress in a Hindi movie, a husband’s name is something intimate and therefore unspoken, cleverly patched over. And so, instead of saying Ashoke’s name, she utters the interrogative that has come to replace it, which translates roughly as “Are you listening to me? (2)
Like Ashima, Moushumi’s mother is also a typical example of an Indian wife. A traditional woman in India does not hold a job, but remains a homemaker. She is almost ignorant of the outer world. Similarly, although Moushumi’s mother lived abroad for thirty-two years, in England and now in the United States, she does not know how to drive a car, does not have a job, and does not know the difference between a checking account and a savings account. And yet she is a perfectly intelligent woman, was an honors student in philology at Presidency College before she was married off at twenty-two. (247)

By juxtaposing the immigrants’ initial experiences and practices in the United States with their latter adoption and immersion into the U.S. culture, Lahiri suggests the transient nature of identity, pushing the characters towards inhabiting transnational space on U.S. soil. As Lahiri’s immigrant characters live in the liminal space by attempting to adhere to the old values and negating U.S. culture, something new begins to emerge. In this regard, their immigrant experience reflects what Bhabha suggests:

The negating activity is, indeed, the intervention of the beyond that establishes a boundary; a bridge, where presencing begins because it captures something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world. (13)

Bhabha’s concern about cross-cultural initiations is particularly evident in Ashima. Although she resists U.S. culture in the beginning, later she starts to adopt it. A sense of relocation replaces her earlier feelings of homelessness in the United States.

There is a stage wise development of diaspora in the works of Lahiri. While she presents displacement, nostalgia and identity crisis in *Interpreter of Maladies* and generational differences of diasporic community in *The Namesake*, she adopts a broader perspective on diaspora and exhorts the diasporic community to endeavour to locate
themselves in an alien land in her work *Unaccustomed Earth*. Her quotation from Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Custom House*,

> Human nature will not flourish, any more than a potato, if it be planted and replanted, for too long a series of generations, in the same worn out soil. My children have had other birthplaces, and, so far as their fortunes may be within my control, shall strike their roots into unaccustomed earth. (vii)

sums up her entire diasporic concern in *Unaccustomed Earth*, i.e. life grows well in a new place, and, so, the diasporic community must change its perspective on host nation and go for acculturation or assimilation.

*Unaccustomed Earth* is divided into two sections. The first part consists of different experiences of diasporic Indians, and the second section entitled “Hema and Kaushik” is three inter-connected stories of two young second generation diasporic Indians who converge at a point of time and develop a kind of love and understanding with each other but have to depart with each other tragically in the end.

The title story “Unaccustomed Earth”, weaving the fabric of a father-daughter relation, casts light on the extent of solitude the characters experience in the process of executing their relational duty. The story commences with the prospect of the visit of Ruma’s father to her home at Seattle. Her mother being dead and the only brother settled in Australia, she feels that the visit of her father will be an additional burden on her as he is retired and has dispensed with every possession that he had:

> 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, and the
second child that would come in January, conceived just before the move. She couldn’t imagine tending to her father as her mother had, serving the meals her mother used to prepare. Still, not offering him a place in her home made her feel worse. (7)

The similar dilemma continues when Ruma engages in telephonic discourse with her husband, Adam, on the visit of her father:

“I can’t imagine my father living here,” she said.

“Then don’t ask him to”

“I think the visit is his way of suggesting it”

“Then ask”

“And if he says yes?”

“Then he moves in with us”

“Should I ask?”

She heard Adam breathing patiently through his nose. “We’ve been over this a million times, Rum. It’s your call. He’s your dad”. (25)

Ruma’s dilemma is the outcome of her upbringing. Children acquire the sense of filial duty from their family set-up, and the second generation diasporas, like Ruma, are removed from the concern for the aged members, the concern that binds the family in India. The modern western family is basically nucleus, and, hence, isolates the elders; every one constitutes a family in himself / herself. It is the influence of such Western family pattern that puts Ruma in dilemma despite her Indian origin. Her father himself admits this aspect of her nature to Mrs. Bagchi:
Now that he was on his own, acquaintances sometimes asked if he planned to move in with Ruma. Even Mrs. Bagchi mentioned the idea. But he pointed out that Ruma hadn’t been raised with that sense of duty. She led own life, had made her own decisions, married an American boy. He didn’t expect her to take him in, and really, he couldn’t blame her. For what had he done, when his own father was dying, when his mother was left behind? By then Ruma and Romi were teenagers. There was no question of his eighty-year-old widowed mother moving to Pennsylvania. He had let his siblings look after her until she, too, eventually died. (29)

However, very soon Ruma realizes that her father turns out to be a great help, rather than a burden. Her father’s living pattern has built on the anvil of self sustenance, and prefers to do everything himself, and this habit of him keeps him engaged. For a retired and aged soul, engagement is necessary to shun off loneliness:

After finishing with the dishes he dried them and then scrubbed and dried the inside of the sink, removing the food particles from the drainer. He put the leftovers always in the refrigerator, tied up the trash bag and put in into the large barrel he’d noticed in the driveway, made sure the doors were locked. He sat for a while at the kitchen table, fiddling with a saucepan whose handle— he’d noticed while washing it— was wobbly. He searched in the drawers for a screwdriver and, not finding one, accomplished the task with the tip of a steak knife. When he was finished he poked his head into Akash’s room and found both the boy and Ruma asleep. (27)

Moreover, she recollects the past life and its joys merely with the presence of her father. She notices how her son, Akash, mingles with her father, and both together become a reservoir of family satiety for her. Her father too engages in reminiscences of her wife as Ruma now resembles her a lot:
For several minutes he stood in the doorway. Something about his daughter’s appearance had changed; she now resembled his wife so strongly that he could not bear to look at her directly. That first glimpse of her earlier, standing on the lawn with Akash, had nearly taken his breath away. Her face was older now, as his wife’s had been, and the hair was beginning to turn gray at her temples in the same way, twisted with an elastic band into a loose knot. And the features, haunting now that his wife was gone—the identical shape and shade of the eyes, the dimple on the left side when they smiled. (27-28)

Significantly, in course of her father’s stay at Seattle, Ruma gets accustomed to her father. In fact, she had never been so closer to him before her marriage with Adam. While having conversation with her father when the latter is engaged in gardening, it is obvious that she wants him to stay with her, quite contrary to her initial response:

“If I lived here I would sleep out here in the summers,” her father said presently.
“I would put out a cot.”

“You can, you know”.

“What?”

“Sleep out here. We have an air mattress.”

“I am only talking. I am comfortable where I am”

“But”, he continued, “if I could, I would build a porch like this for myself”.

“Why don’t you?”

“The condo would not allow it. It would have been nice in the old house”. (45)

The mentioning of the ‘old house’ sends her in tormenting flash-back which reveals how much Ruma misses the milieu of her parental old house. Her recollection of how her mother used to manage the household work, and the way she departed to her
heavenly abode instills in her a deeper sense of filial duty, however tinged with her own selfish desire. In the scene where she asks her father to stay with her, one can easily feel that her father is no way interested in staying back which pains her much as she herself finds it difficult to bear the solitariness of her domestic life:

“It is a good place, Ruma. But this is your home, not mine.”

She had expected resistance, so kept talking. “You can have the whole downstairs. You can still go on your trips whenever you like. We won’t stand in your way. What do you say, Akash,” she called out. “Should, Dadu live with us in here? Would you like that?

Akash began jumping up and down in the pool, squirting water from a plastic dolphin, nodding his head.

“I know it would be a big move,” Ruma continued. “But it would be good for you. For all of us.” By now she was crying. Her father did not step toward her to comfort her. He was silent, waiting for the moment to pass.

“I don’t want to be a burden,” he said after a while

“You wouldn’t. You’d be a help. You don’t have to make up your mind now. Just promise you’ll think about it.”

He lifted his head and looked at her, a brief sad look that seemed finally to take her in, and nodded. (52-53)

The loneliness of Ruma is well comprehended by her father as he finds her in the position of her wife. His wife has also experienced the pang of managing the family alone in an alien land and has suffered deeper solitude. Like her mother, Ruma, though acquainted with American life-style, is not exception to the solitude of life, and so craves to have her father with her. Her father himself admits this:
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 of things he provided her in the course of his life. And because of this the offer upset him more. A part of him, the part of him that would never cease to be a father, felt obligated to accept. But it was not what he wanted. Being here for a week, however pleasant, had only confirmed the fact. He did not want to be part of another family, part of the mess, the feuds, the demands, the energy of it. He did not want to live in the margins of this daughter’s life, in the shadow of her marriage. He didn’t want to live again in an enormous house that would only fill up with things over the years, as the children grew, all the things he’d recently gotten rid of all the books and papers and clothes and objects one felt compelled to possess, to save. Life grew and grew until a certain point. The point he had reached now. (53)

At the level of relation, both Ruma and her father are intrinsically selfish. Her father has been escapist right from the beginning as far as the execution of his filial duty is concerned. To build his life and career abroad, he ignored the need of his aged parents in India, and, ironically, he is left in the similar circumstances, though self-chosen. Even this choice of her father is motivated by his deep-rooted selfishness and desire not to be entangled further in the maze of family relation. He has turned into a kind of solitary wanderer, an aghori; a person who denounces all relations and lives a life of wanderer. In case of Ruma’s father, no doubt, the denouncement of committed relation is inspired by the desire of uncommitted relation. It is this uncommitted relation that characterizes diasporic existence in its entirety and extremity, apart from instilling a sense of isolation. For any kind of association, commitment is imperative; the lack of it results in the breakdown of even the most intimate relation. Her father’s choice of Mrs. Bagchi in stead of her is, in fact, an expression of his desire to be uncommitted, free from any kind of bondage; the bondage that makes us suffer. Thus, in “Unaccustomed Earth” we
witness that the characters are lonely at the heart of their heart which accounts for much of their suffering. However, here we also witness the transfer from physical alienation to that of the metaphysical one in order to attain untainted, uncommitted bliss and liberty.

The note of alienation continues to run throughout Lahiri’s “Hell-Heaven” which seems to be a saga of broken hearts. The important women characters: the narrator, her mother and Deborah are presented in such circumstances where they feel alienated in relation to their men. At the centre of the story lies the incompatible relation of the narrator’s parents, Shyamal and Aparna, resulting in the alienating feelings of Aparna. The narrator herself admits this,

My father was a lover of silence and solitude. He had married my mother to placate his parents; they were willing to accept his desertion as long as he had a wife. He was wedded to his work, his research, and he existed in a shell that neither my mother nor I could penetrate. Conversation was a chore for him; it required an effort he preferred to expend at the lab. He disliked excess in anything, voiced no cravings or needs apart from the frugal elements of his daily routine: cereal and tea in the morning, a cup of tea after he got home, and two different vegetable dishes every night with dinner. He did not eat with the reckless appetite of Pranab Kaku. My father has a survivor’s mentality. From time to time, he liked to remark, in mixed company and often with no relevant provocation, that starving Russians under Stalin had resorted to eating the glue off the back of their wallpaper. One might think that he would have felt slightly jealous, or at the least suspicious, about the regularity of Pranab Kaku’s visits and the effect they had on my mother’s behavior and mood. But my guess is that my father was grateful to Pranab Kaku for the companionship he provided, freed from the sense of responsibility he must have felt for forcing her to leave India, and relieved, perhaps, to see her happy for change. (65-66)
Aparna finds a source to get rid of her tedious and monotonous domestic life in Pranab, and their intimacy grows to such an extent that they might have been taken for husband wife, “Wherever we went, any stranger would have naturally assumed that Pranab Kaku was my father, that my mother was his wife” (66-67). However, the entry of Deborah, an American, in the life of Pranab fetches a jealously bitter touch in Pranab-Aparna episode which enhances to such an extent that Aparna feels a sea of change in Pranab brought out by Deborah, “He used to be so different. I don’t understand how a person can change so suddenly. It’s just hell-heaven, the difference.” (68)

Aparna turns more bitter and isolated after Pranab-Deborah wedlock as she starts viewing anything American to be unethical deducing from the experience of Deborah – Pranab relation where the latter denounces his family, the family which has cherished a lot of expectation from him. Significantly, she conflicts the Indian social values with the new and changing values that she dwells amid and suffers excruciatingly. Her daughter, the narrator, with her biological growth, adjusts with her American social milieu contrary to her advice. To avoid her irritation, or any confrontation, the narrator conceals many facts about her life from her mother, particularly her experience with boy friends and alcoholic indulgence. Aparna turns so isolated and at times frustrated that she appears to be a grudging or complaining soul:

When my mother complained to him about how much she hated life in the suburbs and how lonely she felt, he said nothing to placate her. ‘If you are so unhappy, go back to Calcutta,’ he would offer, making it clear that their separation would not affect him one way or the other. (76)
Moreover, the narrator also adopted her father’s method of avoiding Aparna whereby ‘isolating her doubly’,

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. (76-77)

Aparna, thus, has none to call her own who can genuinely provide her company and counsel. That she means nothing to her husband is quite evident from the outset, and the one whom she has loved secretly and deeply also denounces her, apart from her own blood, that is the narrator, Usha. She is, in fact, a perfect example of the victim of the fragmented pattern of diasporic relation and existence. Deborah, like Aparna, also suffers the pang of alienation caused by her inability to understand her husband despite their long conjugal life. Aparna has always feared the fact that someday Deborah will go out of Pranab’s life in preference of an American man, which is a common conception among the most Indians about the Americans. However, it is Pranab who divorces Deborah despite their two children, and marries a Bengali woman, leaving Deborah at lurch to look after the kids. Here, we witness the dirty facet of materialistic attitude as aftermath the globalization. The confluence of various cultural and social values under the aegis of globalization, unfortunately, transfers man to the level where individual materialistic concern matters more than anything else. Pranab is a typical global materialistic man who denounces his parents to procure the youthful love of Deborah, and when she loses her youthful luster he denounces her too in order to get another woman of his community. Here, too, we witness a lack of committed relation as in “Unaccustomed Earth”. Pranab is, by nature, flirtiest and fluid in his relation, however,
those who come in his contact are sober and committed. Both Aparna and Deborah are connected in the parallel game of destiny which leaves them to suffer the pang of alienation throughout their lives.

Alienation in diaspric realities is mostly the artifact of conflicting personalities. Since the personalities are shaped by socio-cultural values and the immediate milieu, conflict of values, overt or covert, might be regarded as the root of alienation. In the contemporary global society, everything is tested on the anvil of production and reproduction. It is the productive and reproductive aspect of an object or entity that determines its value and utility. And relationship is not impervious to this paradigm. Such paradigm of globalized world coupled with de-centered, de-rooted, and displaced realities of diasporas that accounts for incomprehensible and abysmal alienation of diasporic existence is couched in the above discussion of relation and circumstances of characters in the story “Unaccustomed Earth” and “Hell-Heaven”.

In the story “Hell-Heaven” Aparna and her husband represent the first generation diaspora. They are quite conservative in their attitude. The story mainly focuses on gendered diasporic experience of Aparna who spends her time preparing Bengali food and recalling her memories of Indian films, etc. The sub-plot of Pranab –Deborah affair presents the process of acculturation in which Pranab is initiated; he shifts his home from Indian areas and marries an American lady. However, this process also reveals how two distinct cultures overlap, intersect, and intermesh with each other resulting in the break of relation as in Pranab –Deborah affair.
But in the story “A Choice of Accommodations” the relationship between Amit (Indian) and his wife Megan (American) survives thanks to their effort to accommodate and adjust in their life. They name their daughters Maya and Monika, an Indian identity despite their fully American appearance. Amit was bothered by the fact “that his father and mother have passed nothing, physically to their children. “Are they yours? People sometimes ask him when he was alone with them” (94). Here, the racial and physical subjectivities are juxtaposed with social and cultural identity.

Of the three connected stories of second segment, the first story “Once in a life Time” presents two contradictory attitudes of diasporic people; traditional diaspora i.e. the migrants who are still nostalgic of their countries, cherish memories of their homeland and desire to preserve them, and the others who are transplants and relocate themselves in a foreign land. Hema’s family and the Choudhuries develop intimacy due to their common origin, but Choudhuries after their remigration to America show a different outlook in their attitude. Mrs. Choudhury smokes and takes rest all the time while Hema’s mother works in kitchen preparing food for them. Hema appreciates open mindedness, broad outlook and lavish style of the Choudhuries. Throughout the story she makes a comparison between the two contrasting diasporic families and feels attracted toward Kaushik, the only son of the Choudhuries, though he appears quite indifferent to her.

The second inter-connected story is after the death of Kaushik’s mother and his father’s remarriage to a Bengali widow with two daughters. The story reveals how Kaushik fails to adjust with his father’s new family as he could not tolerate some other
women occupying his mother’s place. However, later on he painfully tries to obliterate the memory of his mother. The act of burial of all signs of his mother’s memory signifies his preparedness for a transnational citizen. His deterritorialized self is constructed to help him to adjust wherever he may go. The title of the story “Year’s End” symbolically represents disconnectedness with one kind of ethnic identity, ethnicity and mindset, and ushering into a new broader notion of culture and identity.

In the last story “Going Ashore” both the characters Hema and Kaushik are ‘glocalize’ citizen; they are comfortable in every corner of the world, and could relate to host land’s culture as well as their native culture. Kaushik has all the traits and characteristics of a transnational citizen. When he goes to Rome “Like the Mexicans and Guatemalans, the Salvadorans were never sure what to make of Kaushik, not the soldiers who patrolled the streets with guns nearly as big as their bodies, not the children who posed eagerly for pictures when they saw him with his camera” (303). Such confusion pertaining to the identity of Kaushik makes him truly transnational and renders him a hybridized identity. He wants to be different, that in ten minutes he can be on his way to anywhere in the world. During his trip to Khao Lake, Thyland, while having a conversation with a Swedish tourist, Henrik, Kaushik suggests that he has never belonged to any place:

“But you are an Indian, no? (Henrik asks)

“Yes”

“You live in India?”

“I do not live anywhere at the moment. I am about to move to Hong Kong” (320)
Being a photojournalist, Kaushik travels round the world, and feels an outsider in his own home in Massachusetts, where his father’s new family has supplanted memories of his dead mother. In fact, he is a hybrid human being in a hybrid country.

**Diaspora and Margaret Wilson:**

Diasporic concern in Margaret Wilson’s *Daughter of India* is related to Davida’s experience as a missionary which is virtually the experience of Wilson herself⁶. In the very first chapter Davida is seen feeling India to be her own home, typical of a diaspora’s effort to acculturation.

…sitting there among the hungry children watching their evening bread being baked, sitting there observing the firelight on their little brown faces, something has risen and cried within her – again and again it had happened – ‘You belong here! You have always lived in India! This is home!’ (14)

The sense of belonging which is emphasized in the above lines is quintessential in every diasporic discourse. It is such sense of Davida that temporarily makes her think of renting “a little clay house in the city” (15) so that she could have the touch of real India. Moreover, her philanthropic act of giving her own pillows to Begum to soothe her aching ear is a testimony of her solidarity to the poor Indians.

As stated before in this chapter, migrants often encounter adverse circumstances in alien land, and so is in the case of the protagonist of *Daughters of India*. The situation of host land determines much of the activities and aspirations of the migrants. The socio-economic condition of India and Indians during the British Raj cast deeper influence upon the missionaries working in India, and this is well couched in the novel,
All their (missionaries’) first romantic zeal, all their hope and sentimental love, was turned quickly into pain when they had begun to look upon the wretchedness of India. That five hundred dollars of yearly salary that had seemed at home a joke, began, in the poverty of that place, to seem a cruel, alienating fortune. .. (15)

Moreover, the climatic condition of the place also comes in way of the migrants, particularly the food associated with the climatic condition of the place. Consequently, those living in diaspora have to exercise certain restraints as felt by Wilson herself,

‘You have to be very careful of your diet in this climate’, their experienced seniors had warned them. But of some of that group of enthusiasts suffered still from early experiments with stinging peppers and unleavened bread… (15)

However, like a first generation diaspora, Davida is not devoid of nostalgic feelings of her own country. Time and again she resorts to the comparison of American and Indian way of viewing the things. She recollects of taking part in the voting of Presidential election and feels quite happy:

It had been the first time she had ever voted for President … she had seen the ballot, Harding, and Cox, and Debs. Debs was like him – like her foolish lover – Debs had said that while anyone in the land has oppressed, he was oppressed. While anyone was poor, he was poor. So she had voted for Debs! (22)

Her reason behind voting Debs exhibits her humanistic attitude which in turn enables her to adjust with the inclement rural Indian environment.

Despite her obvious effort to be one with the Indian, Davida’s American appearance and apparel makes her alien, often like a member of circus for the Indian children. She says, ‘‘See here! I’m not a circus!’ And he had fallen back blankly,
murmuring, ‘Well, what are you, then?’(27). Most of the diasporas irrespective of time and space, caste and creed, race and religion encounter such situation and question in the host land.

As typical of diasporic existence, Davida has her own sense of insecurity; fear of being physically and sexually assaulted, and this sense is whetted by the response of the locals towards her celibacy,

She (Davida) was still young, she looked younger than she was, and she was full of vitality. Prayer hadn’t thinned her nose. Fasting wouldn’t have shortened her eyelashes. The non-Christian community conjectured about her cynically still. Here she was now, living alone since the First Lady’s departure, and in the next bungalow a white man was living alone who kept his wife in a foreign land, for the sake of children’s education – he said. Davida was never allowed to forget her unmarried position. Whenever she would take her departure from a Moslem house in the city, some mighty mother-in-law was sure to rise up and send her way with prayer. ‘God be thy thick veil’, she would pray. ‘God shield thee from all men’s eyes. (56)

Davida’s association with the Pariahs of Flowery Basti makes her realize certain basic differences between India and America, though they are suggested, “Women in that village were not interested in the mention of possible exotic and alluring sins which so charms the Americans. There was nothing left exotic to them” (34). In fact Daughters of India presents a good depiction of the plight of Indian women during the British Imperialism. Davida’s experience of abject condition of women and gender discrimination makes her juxtapose the Indian women with their American counterparts,

Then Davida would have to recall and describe her coeducational childhood. ‘We went to school with boys. Our faces were unveiled, quite bare. Our heads were
bare. Our arms were bare. Our necks were bare. Sometimes our feet were bare. If by accident we had appeared naked before them, conventions would have expected them to turn their backs till we had passed. We sat in classes with men. We played games with men. We sung with men. We danced with men. We didn’t always behave well. The men didn’t always behave well. But the point was, we were all expected to behave well in those circumstances. Our conventions were based upon the supposition some males can look upon the face of some females without lusting after them. But here’ (in India), she would add sometimes, ‘all society is regulated by the supposition that no man can look upon any woman without lusting after her, not even his daughter-in-law’. (57)

Significantly, Margaret Wilson presents a migrant’s outlook of a host nation. The entire novel seems to be a commentary of the socio-cultural and economic reality of colonial India through the eyes of a migrant. That India is a religious country is evinced in the line, “whenever two Indians meet, there is a religious meeting” (42). It is the religious sentiments that have shaped many of the events in the novel. In fact, the entire novel is conceived in the backdrop of conversion of the poor pariahs of rural Indians to Christianity, and in the process of missionary act the experience of Davida brings a diasporic touch to the novel.

The migrants’ description of host nation runs through every story of Wilson’s Tales of a Polygamous City. The diasporic concern gets infused in the narrative texture and surfaces while portraying the scenes that arouse nostalgic memory of home, apart from moment when the narrator realizes the inherent differences in hers and the host land’s ethics, morality, attitude and socio-cultural values. To cite an example, the story “Taffeta Trousers” will be more appropriate as in this story the female American narrator, after living all her life in India as a missionary, engages in nostalgic recollection of her American home at her old age, and realizes that she is without a home:
Sometimes I would exchange a year of those dawns that come up like thunder for one of the well-bred sunrises at home. Sometimes I have shut my eyes to our great trees, which stress their branches upward yearningly and send them down caressingly . . . Sometimes driven by this longings for sights that my eyes were born for, I have gone home, and for a while have loved my native land as only exiles can, consciously loving for months the sweet pressure of home air against my face, of which American skins are unconscious, worshiping the greenness of grass that American eyes never see. But always, doubtless because my judgment is warped by the force and passion of our city, even my palate has been dulled by curries, I grow tired, much to my disappointment, of the keen-minded, charming women of my own country. This is perhaps, because their easy, liberty filled way of living is too easy, the pattern of life too monotonous; from the base to the rim only laughing loves . . . I got the habit, when I was young, of living where *Endurance in the crowning quality/ And patience all the passion of great soul.*

Many women get at life at home. I unfortunately never did. (723)

A typical diasporic longing for home and frustration of the same is well conveyed in the quoted lines which results in the narrator’s occupying an in-between space or to speak in the words of Uma Parmeswaran living a ‘trishanku’ identity.

Diasporic obsessions in Margaret Wilson, unlike Jhumpa Lahiri, are not linked with the pursuit of ambitions. Wilson’s entire experience in India reveals her general concern to do something stupendous for the upliftment of downtrodden Indians. Most of her characters are missionary workers who, beneath their religious activities, carry out a wider plan to spread the European enlightenment. By the time Wilson was staying in India, the country was beset by nationalistic movements on the one hand, and the crying need for the social reformation on all fronts felt by the working missionaries. The colonial India, in a way, suffered more for her inherent malaises than by the seeming exploitation of the colonialists.
The condition of life depicted in *Daughters of India* and in *Tales of a Polygamous City* truthfully presents the quality of life lived by the then Indians. It is the quality of life, and the need to better it necessitated the movement of population. The movement of Indian population abroad during the 19th century, which constitutes the earliest Indian diaspora, was no doubt motivated by the necessity of making life better. However, the movements of European population at lower scale, unlike Indian, no doubt inspired by the motive of colonial expansion, commercial entrepreneurship, religious preaching, its existing living standard was already better. Therefore, the diasporic feeling of a white in India and of an Indian in Europe or West cannot be judged by applying same yardstick.

While Indian diaspora suffers sub-ordinate status in West despite its magnificent contribution in escalating the economy of the host land apart from contributing in uplifting the society and its literature, the white diaspora in India enjoys the superior status. Be it Davida of *Daughters of India* or narrators of the stories included in *Tales of a Polygamous City*, or any other white characters – every one enjoys the dignity of colonial “Sahib”. This brings a sharp contrast between the colonial diaspora of Wilson and the post-colonial diaspora of Lahiri. The colonial diaspora of Wilson is a part of Christian scheme of establishing one religion on the earth. In the process of materializing this scheme, every sorrow and suffering is a service to humanity. It is this sense of service that makes the White suffer in an inclement tropical climate with equally hostile surrounding. No doubt, the characters of Lahiri suffer the same inclement climate and live in somewhat similar hostile surrounding; their suffering is the cause of their own ambition. Whether it is Ashoke or Ashima of *The Namesake* or Mrs. Sen, Mr. Pirzada, Shoba and Sukumar, Sanjeev and Twinkle from stories in *Interpreter of Maladies* or
Ruma, Pranab, Kaushik and Hema from stories in *Unaccustomed Earth* – every one is living his/her own struggling life, a purely personal life devoid of any wider human concern. However, Lahiri cannot be blamed for this lack because her characters are individuals living in an ambience of rat-race competition and in a society which is absolutely capitalistic and materialistic. Wilson’s characters, in a way, suffer from stereotype Christian missionary’s concern of living a truthful, chaste life at the cost of individual human desires. Davida and the narrators of the stories of *The Tales of a Polygamous City* find themselves torn between the fulfillment of their individual desire and their missionary pursuit. Davida has to sacrifice her desire to love and to be loved to remain a chaste missionary and to be holy in the eyes of the poor Indian Pariahs.

Moreover, the inherent urge to adhere to the superior status of White man in colonial country contributes a lot in the suffering of the colonial diaspora like that of Davida’s. No doubt Davida mixes up with the poor newly converted Christians of the Flowery Basti, the divide between the colonizer and the colonized is well reflected in the novel *Daughters of India*. She and the poor Pariah women are not equal, though her Christian morality compels her for the same. It is also true that she strives in every possible way to mitigate the sorrows of Pariahs as she willfully renders her only pillow to ear-aching Begum, the wife of her village pastor. Despite her apparent humanistic service, she is not able to uplift the life of Pariahs due to her own limitations. Quite often she feels for them, but her such feelings do not prevent her from feeling different while living amid the Pariahs. Consequently, like a typical diaspora, there exists a sense of alienation and isolation even in colonial diaspora which is well expressed in the quotation cited earlier from the story “Taffeta Trousers”. Thus, both colonial and post-colonial
diasporas are in the same gondola as regard to their feelings of isolation while living away from home.

Significantly, both Lahiri and Wilson have got female as their protagonist. Going through their works it appears that they are virtually present on the pages of their writings. Lahiri reflects on the issues of women both as nationals and migrants. The anxiety that a woman goes through while making her family, and how the anxiety turns into a nightmare once she is placed in an alien ambience is well explored in the portrayal of Ashima in *The Namesake*. In the works of Wilson, a female migrant narrator decides the narrative texture to reflect on the socio-cultural peculiarities of the host land. However, the narrator, like a diasporic character, gets nostalgic about her own homeland while experiencing the strange Indian temperament and attitude. Significantly, she unfurls a multitude of social malaises (from her perspective) present in the Indian society of the time.

Notes:

1. Surjeet Kalsey was born in India. She relocated to Canada in 1974, and currently lives in British Columbia. Kalsey is a poet and short story writer, editor, translator, and counselor. With most of her writings appearing in Indian and Canadian publications, readers can easily venture out and explore the diversity of Surjeet Kalsey's works.

2. Diasporic realities are problematic in the sense that they are characterized by multiplicities and to some extent indeterminacy. A diaspora’s preference for
two or more cultures makes him belong to none resulting in problematic identity.

3. The spatial location of home is very difficult to determine for its locational multiplicity and hence has Derridean Indeterminateness, i.e. location is indefinitely shifted.

4. Diasporas are torn between home in host land and home in own land.

5. ‘Cross-cultural initiations’ refers to the willing acceptance of other culture’s idiosyncrasies. These initiations assist the diaspors to relocate themselves in the host country.

6. Margaret Wilson herself lived for around six years (1904-10) in the Panjab Province of the then India and much of the facts about India and Indians expressed in her works are based on her experiences as a missionary. This also provides an autobiographical touch to her works.

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