I.I: Introduction:

The twenty-first century is an age of Technology; which brings together the people from different countries in search of better education, services, commerce, material success, prosperity and so on. As a result of it, there is increasing cross-cultural interaction and awareness about the international communities. The issues related to even other cultures, religions and geographical locations have not been alien to the people belonging to certain place. Thus, the world at present has transformed to the status of ‘Global Village’. This identity as the Global Village has brought the world into new horizons, issues, concerns, aspirations and etc. The Cross-cultural interaction and migratory movement are the issues prominently attached and interlinked with the cultural, social, psychological, gender-related, economical, political and geographical concerns. The cross-cultural migration has been continued for centuries and it has increased during the previous couple of decades. It has resulted in emergence of problems related with identity awareness and aspects of assimilation. Thus, the people in migration face various problems with the people and the land they visit, which results in the sufferings in their life. In this context, it is necessary to acquaint the contemporary educated young generation with the problems emerging due to cross-cultural migration. It has been a need of time to increase awareness in young generation about the possibilities of and the problems emerging in the cross-cultural migration because migrated people belong to a particular cultural background.

The literature by the Diasporic writers is a type of self-analysis, a sort of therapy for survival in this Darwinian global village, in which surrounding forces determine the creative output. The predicament and problems of women due to cross-cultural encounters in immigration have remained an issue of discussion for the South Asian Diasporic women writers. The predicament of women portrayed by Diasporic writers may be studied from different points of view such as the cultural, feministic, political, psychological, biological, sociological, economical, geographical and so on. A comparative study of the predicament of the women protagonists in immigration as presented in the novels and short stories, may lead to the findings of the common and diverse problems faced by women in the alien countries, which may be concluded.
with a collective Diasporic consciousness. The present thesis entitled as “A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PREDICAMENT OF WOMEN IN THE CROSS-CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS IN THE SELECTED WORKS OF BHARATI MUKHERJEE, JHUMPA LAHIRI AND SHAUNA SINGH BALDWIN” undertakes a comparative analysis, from the cultural and feministic points of view, of the predicament of women protagonists in immigration presented in the novels and short story collections: *The Tiger’s Daughter* and *The Middleman and Other Stories* by Bharati Mukherjee; *The Namesake* and *Interpreter of Maladies* by Jhumpa Lahiri; and *The Tiger Claw* and *English Lessons and Other Stories* by Shauna Singh Baldwin.

I.II: Justification:

The number of cross-cultural marriages and immigration is increasing day by day due to many reasons like advancement in Information Technology which mingles the world together. The woman in all the ages is a subject to suffer more than the man. The twenty-first century educated young generation must be acquainted with the possibilities of and the problems due to cross-cultural marriages and immigrations, particularly sensational and emotional untrained young women. The selected works have presented the problems of cross-cultural immigrated women.

A comparative study is intended because it helps to widen the sense of understanding the intensity of the issue under discussion. It sharpens and brings accuracy in the understanding of literary endeavor. Clubbing the selected writers together for comparison may lead to realize the universality of human behaviour and experience. Comparison provides scope for granting individuality into generalization. The selected women writers of Indian diaspora have different approaches to look at the problems of diasporic women, but they carry a collective diasporic consciousness. The remarks brought forth on the basis of comparison are more acceptable, authentic, reliable and valid. Thus, a comparative study is necessary for the purpose of acquainting the contemporary generation with the problems emerging due to cross-cultural migration.

I.III: Aims and Objectives:

The present research aims at identifying the problems and its causes emerged due to the cross-cultural immigration of women of different generations and in
different countries. The causes and effects of their sufferings are to be discussed from the feministic and cultural points of view to reach to a certain conclusions. It is to be done with an aim of acquainting the young generation with the problems emerging due to cross-cultural marriages and immigration. The thesis also aims to assess the contribution of selected novelists to the feministic literature. The present research has an objective of evaluating the life and problems of immigrant women protagonists in the selected texts and aims, also, at comparing and contrasting the problems faced by the immigrant women in one text with the problems faced by women in the other texts. Another objective of the present thesis is to observe and analyze the facts related to the problems of immigrant women in the selected texts and compare with each other. Finally, a purpose of undertaking the present research is a systematic investigation of cultural immigration and its critical study in the light of Feminism.

I.IV: The Scope and Limitations:

- The present research has its own limitations too. There are Japanese, Chinese, Indian, African, Caribbean and European diasporic women writers. But the present research is based only on the selected works by the diasporic Indian women writers.
- These writers write essays, poems, autobiographies, plays, travelogues, novels and short stories in English. Of these categories, a novel and a short story collection each by Bharati Mukherjee; Jhumpa Lahiri and Shauna Singh Baldwin are selected, as they belong to different communities and different generations of the diasporic Indian women writers.
- The selected texts may be studied from political, geographical, biological, psychological, sociological, economical, cultural, feministic, racial, historical, philosophical and religious points of view. Of these approaches, only feministic and cultural points of view are determined to study only the predicament of women in cross-cultural encounters.

I.V: The Chapter Scheme:

For the purpose of convenience, the present research work is divided into six chapters. The first chapter includes a survey and review of the literature, and also studies and evaluates the lives and literary contributions of Bharati Mukherjee;
Jhumpa Lahiri and Shauna Singh Baldwin. The second chapter takes a thorough account of the immigrant experiences of the protagonists of Bharati Mukherjee’s *The Tiger’s Daughter* and *The Middleman and Other Stories* to point out the problems of the women. The third chapter focuses on the life-story of the women protagonists of Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Namesake* and *Interpreter of Maladies* to discuss their predicament in cross-cultural conflict in relationships between couples, families, and friends. These relationships explore ideas of isolation and identity, both personal and cultural. In the fourth chapter Shauna Singh Baldwin’s *The Tiger Claw* and *English Lessons and Other Stories* are discussed to bring out the cultural tension and displacement in the lives of immigrant women. Chapter number five compares the selected novels and short stories with each other. The life and problems of all the women protagonists in immigration are compared and contrasted against each other. The reasons of their sufferings are searched out and discussed with the feministic and cultural approaches. The reasons and effects of their sufferings and the ways they prefer to come out with their problems are also compared. The similarities and the differences in the problems and sufferings of the women protagonists are revealed. The last chapter gives certain conclusions and makes the path clear for further research in similar and related subjects.

The writers under study are the creative talents who have been practicing novel and short story which have brought a number of laurels for themselves and have also attracted attention of international readers. They have made significant contribution towards consideration of Indian Writing in English as a mature and sensible wing of writing. These women writers have shown their creative talent in form and content and have touched new horizons of creative process. However, they have not alienated themselves from their forerunners. Indian Writing in English carries a great tradition of writing and experimentation. These writers have added new dimensions to the post-colonial Indian Writing in English and the gender studies as well. Thus, it is necessary to take a brief survey of Indian Writing in English with special focus on the women writers, which went through number of phases, stages and transformations, which would be significant to locate and place these writers.

I.VI: **A Survey of Indian Writing in English:**

The present chapter takes an over view of literature from general to particular perspective suiting to the purpose of undertaken research. The history of Indian
English novel needs to be focused with details up to the recent contributions of the contemporary writers, from its imitative infancy to an intermediary phase of assimilation finally reaches to authentic self-expression.

‘Indian Writing in English’ is a relatively recent phenomenon; as one may trace its roots into a century back India. Indian writing in English has come into force only in the last couple of decades as some of the writers have achieved worldwide fame. Indian English literature refers to the body of work by writers in India who write in the English language. It is also associated with the works of members of the Indian Diaspora, such as V. S. Naipaul, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri and Salman Rushdie, who are of Indian descent. M.K.Naik defines it as,

*A literature written originally in English by authors of India by birth, ancestry or nationality.* (Naik 02)

It is frequently referred to either as *Indo-Anglican Literature* or *Indo-English Literature* or *Indian Writing in English*, but it is neither the Anglo-Indian Literature nor the literal translations. As a category, this production comes under the broader realm of Postcolonial Literature or the Commonwealth Literatures- the production from previously colonized countries such as Africa. This literature is believed to be the production out of amalgamation of the two cultures which the Indian English novel expresses through all the phases of imitation, assimilation and self-expression.

The early Indian English novelists, though seemed to be imitative and stereotype, have marked Indian sensibility which later claimed real recognition and special attention to shift the centre of English novel out of the Europe. The Indian English novel begins with the publication of *Rajmohan’s Wife* in 1864 by Bakim Chandra Chatterjee; before which there were translations of the Western classics and works either imitations or inspired by the Western models. Chatterjee is considered as the father of novel in India. Other notable productions of the time are Rajalakshmi Devi’s *The Hindu Wife* (1876), Toru Datt’s *Bianca* (1878), Kali Krishna Lahiri’s *Roshinara* (1881), H. Dutt’s *Bijoychand* (1888) and Kshetrapal Chakravarti’s *Sarata and Hingana* (1895). Most of the novels of the period focus on the life of women with increasingly bolder approach to the actualities of life. All these novels have played a vital role in starting literary renaissance in India, though these novels

*have for us today no more than an antiquarian or historical interest.*

(Iyengar 315)
Ravindranath Tagore has exerted a tremendous influence with his choice of themes. He has nurtured the infant genre and brought new force to it with his *Gora* (1910), *The Home and the World* (1916), *The Wreck* (1921), *Farewell My Friend* (1929), *Four Chapters* (1934) and other works in Bengali. Then Gandhi’s arrival galvanized entire nation into tremendous action turning the independence movement into an emotional experience. Simultaneously, the religious literatures also played a major role in shaping of the sensibility of the Indian English novel. The arrival of ‘the founder fathers’, as William Walsh addresses to Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, and R.K. Narayan, gave a new vigour and direction to the Indian English novel. They defined the area in which the Indian novel in English was to operate, and drew the first models of its characters and themes and elaborated its popular logic. Another feature of the time is that the middle class was taking avid interest in the creative writing and ordinary people suddenly found that their own lives could be made the theme of literature. The novel became a handy instrument to the new social and political awareness, and this found the creative expression in novel. The novels like K.S.Venkataramani’s *Kandan the Patriot* (1932), Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* (1938), Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936) and *The sword and the Sickle* (1942) were written during the storm and stress of the freedom movement. M. K. Naik points out,

*The Indian English novel of the period was deeply influenced by the epoch-making political, social and ideological ferment caused by the Gandhian movement.* (Naik 152)

A bitter and prolonged freedom struggle yielded India Independence, but a pall gloom of perpetrated partition shadowed the celebration of victory in the literature. Many of the serious writers concentrated their attention to give expression to the partition wounds such as Khushwant Singh in *Train to Pakistan* (1956); Bonophul in *Betwixt Dream and Reality* (1961); Padmini Sengupta in *Red Hibiscus* (1962); Raj Gill in *The Rape* (1974) and Chaman Nahal in *Azadi* (1975). All these novels have tried to capture the shocks and miseries of the men and women during the partition.

The Cultural conflict and quest for identity have become crucial issues of discussion in Indian Writing in English after Independence. The country’s process of reconstruction and rebuilding with positive domestic and international affairs during the 1950s and 1960s have remained productive period for the literature. Keeping with
the newly emerging sensibility and concerns the novel has taken new theme of the East-West encounter causing struggle to the protagonist, who tries to find place between two cultures; one inherited and the other acquired through education or different influences. During the freedom struggle the cultural conflict has remained on the social level, but in the novels of 1960s and 1970s it has come to very personal level, leading to the crisis of identity.

This inter-cultural theme has been handled earlier in 1909 by Sarat Kumar Ghose in his novel *Prince of Destiny*, in which the protagonist is thrown in a predicament to choose between an English girl and a native Indian princess. The quest for identity constitutes a satisfactory attitude towards the West, and at the same time an emotional towards the East. Nayanatara Sahgal in *A Time to be Happy* (1958) presents Shivpal’s predicament due to his feeling of alienation caused by his social background, to which he finds solved by marrying the unsophisticated, non-westernized daughter of a college lecturer. In *The Dark Dancer* (1959) of Bhalchandra Rajan the protagonist is hanging to choose between Western Cynthia and Indian Kamala. He resolves his predicament by embracing the traditional ideals of his country symbolized by Kamala. Deeply philosophical in tone and metaphysical in demeanor Raja Rao’s *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960) moves into depth and achieves meaning to the East-West encounter in a different realm. His protagonist finds very personal solution and realizes the need of a guru to sort out the serpent from the rope and come out of his predicament. Attai Hossain in *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961) projects the orphaned protagonist’s quest for her personal identity as a result of the impact of the Western ideas on her, to which she satisfies through marriage against the wish of her distinguished Muslim family.

The themes of East-west conflict, the search for identity and renunciation have continued in the novel of 1970s, but have lacked the great spurt of literary activity. Some significant novels published are Arun Joshi’s *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* (1971), Anita Desai’s *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (1971), Chaman Nahal’s *The Apprentice* (1974); *Azadi* (1975) and *The English Queens* (1979); Rama Mehta’s *Inside the Haveli* (1977). Desai’s *Bye-Bye Blackbird* is an authentic study of man-woman relationships bedeviled by the cultural encounters. Mehta’s *Inside the Haveli* displays the helplessness of a woman protagonist caught in the complexity of dilemma of traditions and modernity, who struggles much to carve out her own identity in the male dominated world. With inevitable overlapping of themes these novels present
that retreat is a possible solution to the dilemmas of human life. Anita Desai’s aspects of loneliness, alienation and vain attempts of understanding; Nayantara Saghal’s socio-political incongruities and realities, female quest for sexual freedom and self-realization; and Arun Joshi’s exploration of problems of detachment and involvement, indifference and commitment, all together attempt to focus on an individual’s relation to the society.

Kamala Markandeya deals with the encounter between the diametrically opposite East and West in the context of human relationships and cultural values. Ruth Prawer Jhabwala’s early works in India dwell on social idealism and chaos of the early decades of independent India and the themes of romantic love and arranged marriages in India’s Westernizing middle class preoccupied with marriage. Other remarkable writers of the time are Manohar Malgonkar, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Shasthi Bratta, Khushwant Singh, D.F.Faraka, Ninad C. Choudhari, Sudhin Ghosh, Ahemad Ali, Balchandra Rajan and Santha Ram Rao. The novels of 1960s and 1970s operate within a limited range and afford easy solutions may be due to the general historical and political decline because of the debilitating wars with Pakistan and the Emergency declared in 1975 dealt with death-blow to the Indian sensibility.

The novel of the 1980s is ‘bursting like myriad flowers on a laburnum tree’ and reflects the sudden realization of the historical reality in which the individual has an important role to play after awaking by the taste of totalitarianism. Thus, the active role of an individual in making of the history has become an important theme of the novel in 1980s. With trans-national and trans-continental scope, innovations in theme and technique, the plurality of nature of society and importance of national integration the novels of 1980s claim international recognition and special attention to the Indian English novel. The novelists with choice of theme and technique show how in cultural mingling the characters of different nationalities interact with ease, and share the vision and objectives of other postcolonial writers.

The quest for identity continues but, now, against the larger cosmopolitan world in which an individual is belonging to everywhere, a cultural traveler with ability to merge into all cultures while broadening horizons of modern experience. The writers of Diaspora, particularly, have faced many problems themselves and have presented these issues through their writing. One of the prominent immigrant writers Ashis Gupta observes,
I was trying to expiate a nagging sense of guilt, but new in my heart that I didn’t really deserve forgiveness. This is the guilt of the expatriate Indian, the cornerstone of the immigrant personality. Of course, I realize that I should not speak for others. I know just as many Indians who share my sense of guilt and nostalgia as I know others who present a public persona which appears perfectly content and at ease in Western society. I suspect that all of us somehow paper over the ‘cornerstone’ of guilt, but that some of us, like me, end up doing a lousy job. (Gupta 40-41)

After a gestation period of 1970s for the shaping of the new Indian sensibility, Salman Rashdie’s Midnight’s Children (1981), while shaking the very foundation of the Indian English novel, has taken the literary world by storm. Makarand Paranjape praises the book as,

*This momentous book really jolted the very foundation of the Indian English novel. Its energy, self-indulgence, irresponsibility, disorder and cockiness really shocked the daylight out of the staid form of the Indian English novel.* (Paranjape 220)

The novel breaks away from the norms set by the earlier writers with the experimental, confessional, interrogational and polemical narrative techniques. In search of identity the protagonist moves through suffering a crisis of identity which involves a process of correction. Amitav Ghosh’s The Circle of Reason (1986) deals with the young orphaned protagonist’s search for identity through the picaresque adventures and at the last stage of his search for identity he realizes the idea that for a sane and balanced life, passion should be moderated by genuine human concern. In his The Shadow Lines (1988) cosmopolitanism moves to a broader examination of the interaction of cultures, and the individual’s attempt to find a place in this interaction.

Another important novel of 1980s is Kamala Markandaya’s Pleasure City (1982) which focuses on the cultural confrontation between, not the usual East verses the West, but tradition and modernity as Multinational Corporation comes to a village and the struggling villagers cannot resist the regular income offered by jobs because of it. Indira Mahindra’s The Club (1984) is centred round Lucy and her stepsister Mabel who have stayed on in India after the other English people left. Upamanyu Chatterjee’s English, August: An Indian Story (1988) through the story of an I.A.S. officer presents the contemporary youth’s search for identity whose cosmopolitan
upbringing functions as alienating force, leads to a disturbing sense of rootlessness, disillusionment and disaffection, but finally finds his own solution through a positive involvement in the compelling realities of life in this county. Ruth Prawer Jhabvala’s early novels and short stories are set entirely in India, but In Search of Love and Beauty (1983) continues her preoccupation with India by using her European Jewish heritage and American experience and explores the background of the Western characters and examines the roots of their fascination with India. Jhabvala satirizes overwhelming sexual attraction of the Indian men, and the charisma of often a fraud guru in Three Continents (1987). Set entirely in New York, her Poet and Dancer (1993) is the story of intelligent and hardworking, but not good looking, Angelica’s fatal infatuation for cousin Lara, and her wandering to ashrams in India in search of higher consciousness. Jhabvala’s Shards of Memory (1995) is set in America, England and Europe.

In Anita Desai’s Baumgartner’s Bombay (1988), the German Jew protagonist’s series of flashbacks show us his early prosperous life, Nazis killing his father, his timber business in Calcutta and peaceful life is interrupted by the Second World War and the persecution of his Muslim business partner in the communal riots in Calcutta in 1947 echoes the earlier persecution of his father. Anita Desai points out, 

*The writer’s interests should be purely literary, his one concern his writing. If he does it well, the book will belong neither to India nor to England but to everywhere in the world where books are read, appreciated and valued. He should be able to say with Emily Dickinson: “My country is Truth; it is a free democracy.”*  

(Desai 68)

Anita Desai reveals all the characteristics of diasporic fiction: a concern with the fate of immigrants, and a growing distance from the Indian reality, which is viewed from the outside in Journey to Ithaca (1995). Sensitive Matteo and his bride Sophie come to India in 1975 to a charismatic old woman as a Guru. Sophie wants to prove that the Mother is a sham, and Sophie's quest for the Mother's origins reveals that the holy woman, brought up in Paris, with an Egyptian mother, closely resembles the Mother of the Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. The descriptions of life in India strike a false note as India is presented through an outsider's eyes. Fasting, Feasting (1999) presents the travails of Uma, a daughter with neither looks nor intellectual brilliance, who is treated as a domestic drudge by her absolute-monster parents, leaves school to
look after her baby brother Arun. Arun comes to study in America. Desai convincingly presents the Indian obsession with a son, as Uma's lawyer father is not taking legal action against his bigamous son-in-law.

The master of Magic Realism Suniti Namjoshi uses fantasy and surrealism and expresses the feminist concern through the allegory and fables. Her *The Conversations of Cow* (1985) is tale in realm of fantasy of the protagonist lecturer Suniti and her Guru, a cow, moving around Canada. The leading practitioner of the political novel, Nayantara Sahgal’s *Rich Like Us* (1985) exceptionally presents Rose, a Cockney shop girl, who comes to India, not because of philosophical considerations, but because of passionate love for Ram, and as vibrantly receptive to life, with no feelings of race or colour, she establishes deep bonds with Ram's first wife Mona. Murder of great-grandmother, the rape of the village women by the police, or the murder of the defenseless Rose because her frank talk focus the fact that women have always been ill-treated in India. In Sahgal’s *Plans for Departure* (1985) Anna Hanson, a Danish woman visits India, and her Indian experiences reach a kind of consummation when her son marries an Indian girl who is a political activist. In *Mistaken Identity* (1988) Bhushan Singh, prince of Vijaygarh, is arrested on a charge of sedition while his way back home from America in 1929, and spends almost three years in jail with idealistic Congress followers of Mahatma Gandhi, and militant trade union leaders, both trying to win freedom for India in their own ways.

Belinder Dhanoa's *Waiting for Winter* (1991) presents a bleak picture of a rich family girl Pratibha’s best education up to university degree not equipping her to face life and meant to prepare her for a suitable arranged marriage. Married to an Indian settled in the U.S.A by giving a big dowry and her world falls apart as her only brother joins the Sikh terrorists, her father is killed in a terrorist attack, and her husband is already married to an American. In Zai Whitaker’s *Up the Ghat* (1992) the abroad studied heroine Azra insists her sister for agreeing to an arranged marriage, herself marries Hussain, the dedicated IAS officer arranged for her, who is suddenly transferred to a remote hill station in South India. Jai Nimbkar’s *Come Rain* (1993) in simple and unpretentious language presents India true to life with new version of the East-West encounter where Ann leaves America for India when she marries the Indian research-student Ravi and finds it difficult to adjust to his Indian parents and home. Another successful Magic Realism is *The Mistress of Spices* (1997) by Chitra Banerjee-Divakaruni. The Indian born heroine Tilo, ‘Mistress of Spices,’ encounters
an ancient woman who imparts instruction about the power of spice and sends Tilo disguised as an old woman to sell spices at Oakland, California. Uma Parameswaran appreciates Divakaruni with following words,

_Chitra Divakaruni, the most recent star in the Diaspora sky, delves into the darker dreams and nightmares of womanscape and has an appreciative readership among feminists, but since her women characters are mainly Indo-American, there is a tendency to see them not as individuals so much as representative of the Diaspora, and we are back on square one perception of negative stereotypes that the average north American reader has of Indian life and culture._

(Parameswaran 34)

K.R. Usha’s interesting first novel _Sojourn_ (1998) reveals the sordidness of small town life and the smugness of the cosmopolitan urban woman Neerja, who is forced to move to a small town for a brief period. Meena Arora Nayak’s _About Daddy_ (2000) presents a young woman born in America, visits India in 1997-1998 to fulfill her father’s last wishes: that his ashes should be scattered on the Indo-Pakistan border as a kind of expiation for his sin of killing innocent Muslims before Partition. The daughter's innocent attempts to take a photograph at the border land her in jail; she is released only through the intercession of her American fiancé.

In Anuradha Marwah-Roy's first campus novel _The Higher Education of Geetika Mehendiratta_ (1993) young Geetika moves to Jana University in Lutyenabad for higher education after her M.A. in English, so the novel contains satirical sketches of research in Jana University. Elsie Nora, an Anglo-Indian is the subject of Manorama Mathai’s _Mulligatawny Soup_ (1993), who belongs neither to India nor to England once the Raj ends. The narrator is a child of modern, multi-cultural Britain, with an English mother and an Indian father who deserted her even before the birth of the baby.

Some women have written about the life in upper class society. Achala Moulik attempts at the full-fledged historical novels. Her _The Conquerors_ (1996) chronicles three generations of Ruthvens from 1857 to 1867, describing the expansion of British rule in India. _Earth is But a Star_ (1997) with every element of popular fiction: romance, adventure, intrigue, exotic settings, and even rebirth deals with the Spanish empire in fifteenth century Granada, Lisbon and Goa. Achala Moulik is quite readable and satisfying as long as one does not look for any profundity.
Some university teachers of English like Shakuntala Bharvani have tried their hand at fiction. *The Walled City* (1997) by Esther David is about three generations of women in a Jewish family in Ahmadabad. The usual pressures and anxieties of a young girls growing up in India are presented through a young girl protagonist, who unlike her mother and aunts, freely mixes with Hindus, Muslims and Parsis, though they are very conscious that she is different. *Smell* (1999) by Radhika Jha, is an account of Eighteen-year-old Leela suddenly uprooted from her comfortable life in Kenya, sent away to live with her paternal uncle and his wife in Paris when the natives murder her father by setting his store on fire and is drifting from one lover to another when she is thrown out of her uncle's home for revealing his extra-marital affairs. Obsessed with smells she is terrified to know that she herself gives off an unbearable smell, a metaphor for cultural differences. *The Gin Drinkers* (2000) by Sagarika Ghose is a comedy of manners about the rich and fashionable, English speaking section of society in Delhi. Uma Chatterjee is just back from Oxford; her civil servant father is clinging to anglicized ways, while her mother is an alcoholic. Another interesting first novel by Sunny Singh *Nani’s Book of Suicides* (2000) explores the stream of consciousness of a young, educated, westernized Indian woman through her recurrent nightmares. Mini’s maternal grandmother Nani has the magical power of entering other people's minds and reading their dreams. The protagonist tries to run away from this domination in Mexico and attempts to forget herself in alcohol, cocaine, and promiscuous sex, but she cannot get away from her grandmother. The Hindu concept of honour seems to entail suicide for women, so the title of the novel is not too far-fetched.

This survey of Indian English fiction indicates that it continues to evoke colonial legacies in the contemporary society and seeks to compete with the English language fiction for international prizes. The most important feature of it is stricken realism. Bijay Kumar Das comments on the types of realism as,

*We come across five broad types of realism – social realism, psychological realism, historical realism, mythological realism and magic realism in Indian English fiction.* (Das 169)

In recent times the novel has developed different genres such as the thriller, the whodunit, the pot-boiler, the western and works of science-fiction, horror and the sex-and-shopping novel. At the end one may say that the Indian English Literature has hopes for the better future. Arvind Krishna Mehrotra optimistically justifies,
Though the literature’s past does not reflect its present, may be its present, which has increasingly become self-perceiving and self-recognizing, holds in it the seeds of its future. (Mehrotra 26)

As society alters, so the novel reflects this change; a few of many works will fulfill this defining role; those which seem to do so now, may not speak to later generations in the same way.

The last few decades have witnessed a remarkable change in the perspective of women in Indian English fiction mainly because of numerous female writers in India who follow their own unique way. One must agree with R.K. Mishra, who evaluates the contribution of women writers as,

As the women novelists of India were moved emotionally and psychologically by the plight of the depressed women, they felt impelled to externalize their repressed psychic mind and highlight their issues in the novels with a view to arousing public consciousness in favour of women’s emancipation and amelioration of their condition in the prevailing social situation. (Mishra 163)

The stereotypical suffering woman is transformed to an aggressive or independent person trying to seek an identity of her own through her various relationships within the family and in the society. To Hindu women traditional moral codes deny a separate existence and a western education to them in India cause suffering in the cultural clash. Caught between cultures with feeling of in-betweenness or being juxtaposed poses, they are trying to maintain a balance between their dual affiliations. The case of the immigrant women is more pronounced and prominent as they carry the burden of cultural values of their native land with them to their new country, thus making it more difficult and problematic for them to adjust.

Majority of the Indian English writers preferred to live in India, but after the Independence many living out of India sought recognition and fame as diasporic Indian writers. The contemporary diasporic Indian English writers have enormous force in their writing to shift the centre of English novel out of the Britain. A few of them, like V.S. Naipaul, have the potential to bring Nobel Prize for literature they have written. So, it is necessary to study the meaning of the term Diaspora, a brief history of the Diaspora and elements of the diasporic studies; Indian Diaspora and the history of, particularly, women writers of the Indian Diaspora, as the selected women writers belong to this category.
I.VII: The Diaspora:

The term ‘Diaspora’ has wide ranging connotations and complexities, and is very difficult to explain or define easily. But before proceeding, it is necessary to define and understand the term ‘Diaspora’. The word Diaspora is derived from the Greek words ‘dia’ and ‘sperien’ which respectively mean ‘through’ and ‘to scatter’. The Dictionary of Webster refers it as ‘dispersion’; thus it includes a notion of a centre or a ‘home’. The dictionary relates the Diaspora to the settling of scattered colonies of Jews outside Palestine after the Babylonian exile. The Oxford Advanced Lerner’s Dictionary also defines Diaspora as:

The process by which people of a particular nation become scattered and settle in another countries, especially Jews who left ancient Palestine in this way. (Hornby 320)

The Britannica Encyclopedia explains the term as:

The dispersion of Jews among the Gentiles after the Babylonian exile (586BC); or the aggregate of Jews outside Palestine or present day Israel. (vol. 3)

Along with religious, philosophical, political and eschatological connotations the term ‘Diaspora’ refers to a special relationship between the native land and the people themselves. However, today it has come to mean any sizeable community of a particular nation or religion living outside its own country and sharing some common bonds that give them an ethnic identity and consequent bonding. Jasbir Jain interprets the term in following words,

The word ‘Diaspora’ is literally a scattering carrying within it the ambiguous status of being both an ambassador and refugee. The requirements of the two roles are different. While one requires the projection of one’s culture and the ability to enhance its understanding, the other seeks refuge and protection and relates more positively to the host culture. (Jain 11-12)

As the above definitions refer to the Jewish scattering, the term is essentially associated with the images of journey, voyage, displacement, seeking roots and settling feet on the alternative lands. The classical use of the term capitalized as ‘Diaspora’ only in singular is mainly confined to the study of the Jewish experience. Between 1960s and 1970s the classical meaning is systematically extended to more common description of the dispersion of Africans, Americans and Irish who
conceived their scattering as arising from a cataclysmic event that traumatized the group as a whole. Like Jews, they also have a central historical experience of victimhood at the hands of a cruel oppressor. During the 1980s and onwards diaspora is deployed as ‘a metaphoric designation’ to describe different categories of people: expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants and ethnic and racial minorities. They come to be a more varied cluster of diaspora than the earlier groups because of their historical experiences, collective narratives and differing relationships to homeland and hostlands.

The mid-1990s is marked by the social constructionist critiques holding back the full force of the concept as well as recognized the proliferation of new diasporic groups and the new ways of studying them. They sought to decompose previously delimiting and demarcating diasporic ideas of ‘homeland’ and ‘ethnic community’. They argue that as the identities have become deterritorialized and constructed and reconstructed in a flexible and situational way, accordingly the concept of diaspora has to be reordered.

By the turn of the 21st century the social constructionist critiques are partially accommodated, even they are emptying the notion of diasporic analytical and descriptive powers. Along with the increased complexity and deterritorialization of identities, ideas of home and often strong inflection of homeland remain powerful discourses. This consolidation is marked by a modified reaffirmation of the diasporic idea.

The key feature of the diaspora is dispersion to foreign destinations followed by a traumatic event in the homeland. The brutal and intense events of being shackled in manacles, expelled by a tyrannical leader or coerced to leave by force of arms, mass riots or the threat of ‘ethnic cleansing’ compel emigration or flight. This is different from general pressures of over-population, land hunger, poverty or unsympathetic political environment.

The term is applicable to the migratory movement of Parsi community after the invasion of Persia by the Arab conquerors and the persecution of Parsis at their hands. Near about twelve hundred years ago they landed in India at Diu, off the coast of Gujarat in India to make this their alternative home. After settling down, they started a new life and while accepting a few conditions by the local leaders, they succeeded in keeping their own religion in a new country. In the same way the term is usable for the migratory movement of people after gruesome act of partition between
India and Pakistan. The troubles, pains, losses, agonies and suffering quite distinguish them from others, as that had reached to the naked parade of women. But their quest for identity is akin to other immigrants. Like these two examples, the migration can take place out of force like economic, social, political or religious, and also out of choice and freewill as today people voluntarily leave their own country for higher education, better opportunities or better life. The term may also be applied to these people willingly migrating to other Western countries, which are promising greater economic benefits, pursuit of higher studies or cross-cultural marriages.

As the term diaspora comes to be more widely applied, we need to draw generalized inferences from the Jewish diaspora and to be sensitive to the inevitable dilutions, changes and expansions of the meaning of the term. The Diasporas may be studied by distinguishing between emic and etic claims and judging how these claims count onto history and social structure of that group. A time dimension is to be considered while looking at how a putative formation comes into being and develops in various hostlands and how it changes in response to subsequent events in homelands and hostlands. We may also list the most important features that seem to be applied to all these cases. Even we can create a typology, classifying phenomena and their subtypes using measures of consistency, objectivity, pattern recognition and dimensionality evolving an agreed and controlled vocabulary.

William Safran in his article in the first issue of Diaspora journal has mentioned that the members of an expatriate minority community share several common features, which are as follows:

1) They or their ancestors have been dispersed from an original centre to two or more foreign regions;
2) They retain a collective memory, vision or myth about their original homeland including its location, history and achievements;
3) They believe they are not- and perhaps can never be – fully accepted in their host societies and so remain partly separate;
4) Their ancestral home is idealized and it is thought that, when conditions are favourable, either they, or their descendants should return;
5) They believe all members of diaspora should be committed to the maintenance or restoration of the original homeland and to its safety and prosperity;
6) They continue in various ways to relate to that homeland and their ethno communal consciousness and solidarity are in an important way defined by the existence of such a relationship.

(Safran 83)

In addition to these features, Robin Cohen suggests that the diaspora includes the groups that disperse for colonial or voluntarist reasons. Indian indentured labour may be called a ‘labour diaspora’ and the Chinese traders appropriately may be described as a ‘trade diaspora’. Cohen recommends recognition of the positive virtues of retaining a diasporic identity as the tension between an ethnic, a national and transnational identity which is often a creative and enriching one. As argued by Neusner that if the life is too comfortable, creativity may dry up; the incommoded diasporas are responsible for many advances in medicine, theology, art, music, philosophy, literature, science, industry and commerce. Diaspora often mobilizes a collective identity in solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries because this transnational affective and intimate relationship shares a sense of common fate, language, religion and culture. Here, this ‘co-responsibility’ competes with a bond of loyalty to the hostland. The ‘co-responsibility’ surpasses the exclusive territorial claims to pave the path for ‘deterritorialized diaspora’. Robin Cohen in his book *Global Diasporas* (2008) has stated a few common features that Diaspora shares. They are as follows:

1) *Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions;*

2) *Alternatively or additionally, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or further colonial ambitions;*

3) *A collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history, suffering and achievements;*

4) *An idealization of the original or imagined ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation;*

5) *A frequent development of a return movement to the homeland that gains collective approbation even if many in the group are satisfied with only a vicarious relationship or intermittent visits to the homeland;*
6) A strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history, the transmission of common cultural and religious heritage and the belief in a common fate;

7) A troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group;

8) A sense of empathy and co-responsibility with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement even where home has become more vestigial;

9) The possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in the host countries with a tolerance for pluralism.

(Cohen 17)

To the social constructionist critiques like Dufoix the word ‘diaspora’ seem to have escaped its conceptual cage and used now to describe many like scientists, intellectuals, engineers and football players. It lacks the melancholic sentiments of displacement, alienation and exile associated with the prototypical diaspora. Another social constructionist Avtar Brah seeks to dethrone the fundamental idea of the homeland, as her concept of diaspora offers a critique of discourses of fixed origins, claiming a homing desire different from desire for ‘homeland’. Thus, homeland becomes a homing desire and home transmuted into placeless. Inspite of these interventions the ‘home’ is interpreted as the place of origin, or the place of settlement, or a local, national, transnational place, or an imagined virtual community, or matrix of known experiences and intimate social relations. Floya Anthias describes ‘absolutist notions’ of “origin” and “true belonging” with sufficient attention to internal divisions of the ethnic communities and to the possibilities of selective cultural negotiations between communities. Later Yasemin Nuhoglu Soysal amplifies the change by pointing out inappropriate privilege to the nation-state model and nationally-defined formations while discussing about a global process of immigration. For her the concept of diaspora suspends immigrant experience between host and home countries, home-bound desires and losses, and obscures the new, multi-connected, multi-referential and post-national topography and citizenship.

The new themes in diaspora studies include looking at their changing role in international politics and seeing them as a means of facilitating the development of
their home areas. In the age of globalization full of insecurity, risk and adversity, many social groups want to reach in and out, to be ethnic and transnational, local and cosmopolitan simultaneously, and to have comfort zone and a questing impulse. In such situation we must consider whether the concept of diaspora is appropriately used or not, and also what functions it is serving for many groups that have adopted it.

Especially diasporic identity composed of various factors and sub-factors becomes the core issue in any exploration of Diaspora. The word contaminated used for Diaspora perpetuates the complexity of combined pluralities in the singular self of the diasporic person, who tries to explore out the roots in out-of-reach native land which dominate his/her unconscious and subconscious memories. Jasbir Jain in her article focuses on the concerns for identity building as,

*Identity is the external layer related to colour, race, class, social position, economic status, nationality and a whole lot of other outward indicators, while ‘self’ is the deeper layer, the ‘core’ self, constituted through cognitive process, reflection, memory (or in some cases forgetting), education media, exploration and exposure.*

(Jain 77)

The diasporic identity is multi-layered and has various identity groups as it is based on the circumstances causing migration, immigration and the individual’s responses to that situation. The members of the Diaspora are referred to by different names based on the criteria of judging their individualistic positions in terms of geographical and psychological displacement as traders, indentured labourers, immigrants, exiles, refugees and expatriates. All these terms give some indication of the ideologies, choices, reasons and compulsions which govern the act of migration.

The term ‘immigrant’ indicates a location, a physical movement and a forward-looking attitude, whereas the ‘exile’ indicates a compulsory isolation and nostalgic anchoring in the past. Though the terms ‘expatriates’ and ‘immigrants’ are used as synonyms nowadays, the expatriation focuses on the native land that has been left behind, while immigration denotes the country into which one has ventured as an immigrant. Critics consider the words ‘exile’, ‘emigrant’, ‘expatriate’ as synonyms that conjure up ‘state of exclusion’. In opposite to the excluding ‘e’, the including ‘in’ is in the immigration or inclusion. The expatriate lives on the ‘ex’ status and the immigrant celebrates his present in the host country. The expatriate had left his country long behind and longing for it, he takes the literary journey to home, to
history, to memory and to past. They face the rejection in the host country and, thus, they cling to their ethnic identity. There is a complexion of the double vision as they are looking forward and yearning backward. They are caught in duality of two worlds, two cultures and two languages and they navigate a new literary space. The concept of ‘home’ continues to exacerbate inter-generational frictions that exist everywhere within the Diaspora community. Uma Parameswaran aptly states,

Most young people whose parents keep to the old ways feel trapped by their differences, not only at school but at home. However, with the resilience of youth, most of them find balance, and some even start appreciating aspects of their heritage culture.

(Parameswaran 35)

The people born in the host country are somewhat different from those who come to the host country in childhood. Much of it depends on their parents’ economic, educational and cultural background, and on the time at which they left their homeland.

The writers of Diaspora have the real strength of the modern literary imagination in the evocation of the individual’s predicament in the context of alienation, immigration, expatriation, exile and the quest for identity. Shyam M. Asnani comments on the experience of the diasporic community as,

Culturally and even linguistically estranged as the individual feels about himself, the whole question of his social, emotional, ethnic or cultural identity assumes mythic proportions and thus becomes an unattainable ideal. (Asnani 73)

The Diasporic literature is a rich resource of studying the challenges of diaspora and the various strategies of negotiation which delineate diasporic experience at various levels of the place, language, customs, myths, beliefs, geographical displacement and the combat with the gape and change adopted in the process. Actually, the people and the place that one parted with change in course of time, and when he or she writes about homeland, it seems often an anachronistic and outdated, as one has either over idealized or condemned it. One must agree with Salman Rushdie, who in his Imaginary Homelands points out a common diasporic sense by saying,
Writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. (Rushdie 10)

Salman Rushdie believes that any writer writing about his homeland from the outside ‘deals in broken mirrors, some of whose fragments have been irretrievably lost.’ The memories of these writes are fragmentary in nature and contain incomplete truths. Rushdie while probing deep in the psychological mechanism of the diasporic people says,

*Shards of memory acquired greater status, greater resonance, because they were remains, fragmentation made trivial things seem like symbols, and the mundane acquired numerous qualities.* (Rushdie 12)

The cultural conflict is an important issue of the diasporic literature. A person leaves the homeland carrying with him the deep rooted cultural habits, which are never guaranteed to suit to the atmosphere in the adopted land. The cultural conflict begins first in the mind which always tries to cope with the original and situational cultural pulls, and this is strengthened by the actual experiences with society of the host land.

*There is a need to realize the significance of the cultural encounter which takes place in diasporic writing, the bicultural pulls and the creation of a new culture which finally emerges. It is equally important to understand the dynamics of reception at both the ends for reception is also rooted in cultural contexts.* (Jasbir Jain 15)

With the double vision the diasporic writing has developed its own theory, but this theory works in different ways influenced by personal and social issues and political and cultural implications. About problem of Diaspora Deepkumar Trivedi observes,

*Psychology, every person desires to be accepted, in other words it can be said that the problem of nation and identity is after all a psychological and emotional problem, because it is concerned with sense of belonging.* (Trivedi 21)

The expatriate writing is the work of the exile which explores the experience of unsettlement at the existential, political and metaphysical levels. It has a significant position as it generates theory and defines positions by constructing a new identity, which negotiates boundaries, and confines and relates to different temporal and spatial metaphors.
I.VIII: The Indian Diaspora:

Historically Indians are spurning isolation, but have been going to different parts of the world as traders, teachers, preachers, adventurers and soldiers. In ancient times Mesopotamia Meluhha and Dilmun bear witness to the outgoing and enterprising spirit of Harappan and Indus businessmen of the third millennium B.C. Since then with the vibrant links to the rest of the world, Indian civilization is celebrating its limitless capacity for accommodation, assimilation, readjustments and restatements. Indians sought and strive to disseminate Indian spiritual, intellectual and aesthetic ideas through diffusion of Hindu-Buddhist philosophies, art and agricultural traditions which influences the lives of a vast segment of humanity by providing a corrective alternative to many in the West disillusioned or disenchanted with their own heritage. Thus, the lands and islands of South-East Asia, Central Asia, China, Korea and Japan cannot be fully understood without reference to India.

Later, in the face of sustained Muslim onslaughts, defeated and dejected Indians turned to their Gods for redemption. The purveyors of false purity prohibited travels to the foreign lands and islands; and the instruments of ostracism punished who dared to oppose the self-appointed custodians of the Hindu religion. When the Mughal Empire tottered and disintegrated, India succumbed to the imperial domination of the Britain, which dragged India against its will into the world around. The old taboos against foreign travel became ineffective and inoperative in the face of stark economic and political compulsions. The British industrial revolution and colonialism in Africa, Asia, the South Pacific and Caribbean needed cheap labour and India was inexhaustible reservoir of expendable indentured and voluntary labour. Out of the Indian diaspora to different parts of the British Empire a large number of indentured labourers sought salvation from penury and privation in the far-flung lands out of their free will and volition. The painful legacy of partition in 1947 and its later effects caused the Indian diaspora to continue still unabated, including skilled workers, businessmen, professionals, scientists and men and women of letters.

Today, the Indian diaspora of around twenty million serves in their host a hundred and ten countries with the distinction as entrepreneurs, workers, teachers, researchers, innovators, doctors, lawyers, engineers, managers and even political leaders. The Indian origin, their consciousness about cultural heritage, and their deep attachment to India give a common identity to all these people. Why people emigrate
from India and what they achieve in the Western countries, are the questions of debate. Ashis Gupta points out,

*The cancer of poverty, corruption, confusion and rootlessness that afflicts the Indian subcontinent appears to rage with equal ferocity as a cancer of the spirit in the ‘developed’ nations of the world. There is no escape, no exit. The Cowpath to America leads eventually to a gilded hell.* (Gupta 48-49)

Historically, India has received migrants and absorbed them instinctively with their culture, language, economic and social status and this has equipped Indians to easily interact with other cultures and ethnicities abroad. This rich legacy of adaptability is most important factor in the success of the evolution of the Indian diaspora. Homi Bhabha compares the Indian diaspora to the banyan tree, which is the traditional symbol of the Indian way of life. According to Bhabha, like the banyan tree, the Indian diaspora spreads out the roots in several soils and draws nourishment from one when the rest dry up. It has several homes and feels at home in the world.

During the colonial period the economically beleaguered labour force started seeking their livelihood in distant lands. And recently Indians are migrating in the neighbouring countries in search of opportunities and commerce as professionals, artists, traders, factory workers and so on. Later wave of migration consists of the professionals and the educated elite of India seeking economic betterment in the advanced countries where they are referred as ‘model minority’. In the last decades of the twentieth century Indian talent has become a major source of knowledge for the technology-based economies of the First World countries. This ‘model minority’ has made Indian diaspora one of the most powerful Diasporas in the world.

As a result of colonialism a large scale peaceful immigration to South East Asia took place in the nineteenth century and in the twentieth century after independence Indians migrated to Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and other places in search of employment and because of geographical proximity they maintain close cultural ties with India. Gurbhagat Singh explores the reason and process of migration as,

*The phenomenon of exile has emerged in our times due to the movement forced by colonial powers. The uneven development has led to unprecedented migration of the Asians and Africans to the West. The imposed, and indirectly hegemonizing shift from territories, has
occurred within Asia, Africa and the Middle East, and also from these continents to the West. This movement has produced a new person whose mind works at least with two epistemologies. He/she has lost the centre that used to unify. (Singh 21)

After the oil boom of 1970s in the Arab world nearly three million Indian people are taking opportunities as blue collar workers and professionals. Of the twentieth century Indian immigrants in Western Europe; two-third is found in the UK as a result of the interaction between the British Raj and India. This inter-culture interaction of India with other countries compelled by the British has been a great source of inspiration to the writers from India. Ramesh Chandha points out,

_Owing to the close intercultural contact imposed on India by Great Britain, the British and the Indian writers have produced a considerable body of fiction that explores the seemingly infinite subject of cultural interaction, commonly known as the East-West dichotomy._ (Chandha 2)

The shortage of labour after the Second World War resulted in large migration from India. There was second flow of immigrants after the expulsion of Indians in Uganda. Today, per capita income of this community is higher than the national average. Out of many Indian millionaires abroad, about two hundred are in Britain only. The second largest presence of Indians in the Western Europe is in Holland, because of migration of people of Indian origin from Suriname.

Inspite of some impediments and atrocities, the Indian diaspora has the achievements, educational advancement, economic progress and political success. This story of the diaspora has provided material and scope for the diasporic writers to illustrate their history and heritage, their own awareness of their society and its problems, its achievements and its limitations and frustrations. A few have turned their attention to India to assess and explore their relationship with it by focusing on how they differ and diverge from many of the characteristics of Indian society. One may strongly agree with Dr. Annie John, who examines the case of writer of Indian diaspora as,

_The writers of Indian Diaspora have been aiming at re-inventing India through the rhythms of ancient legends, the cadences of mythology, the complexities of another civilization, cultural assimilation and nostalgia._ (John 29)
Their connection with India affects their perceptions. Thus, some of them disown the India, some grudgingly, sometimes reluctantly, sometimes apologetically own it, while others proudly uphold and applaud it through their writings.

The present study specifically considers the literature written in English by the Indian diasporic women writers. The selected texts of these writers are only short stories and novels; so the history of these literary genres, excluding other literary types, needs to be studied with details. Moreover, the juxtaposition of the contemporary happenings and developments in the diasporic Indian English novel may help to understand its nature, scope, newness and differences.

I.IX: The Women Writers of the Indian Diaspora:

The Diasporic Indian women writers, despite their different regions of India, share the common features like multiplicity, ambivalence and lack of authenticity. The historical nature of their predicament with their sense of marginalization and search for roots are uniquely akin to one another. B. R. Nagpal observes,

The discursive nature of consciousness, quest for an idealized vision and the sense of inadequacy, incompleteness obtrudes upon the psyche of these writers who are apprehensive of their logic and regress to their sub-conscious fear of racial persecution, imperialist exploitation, white manipulation and a sense of self-annihilation.

(Nagpal 82-83)

There are many Indian women writers based in the U.S.A. and Britain, like Jhabvala and Anita Desai are late immigrants, while Jhumpa Lahiri belongs to the second generation of Indians abroad. Uma Parameswaran states,

Perhaps women, with centuries of cultural indoctrinations and expectations are able to adapt more quickly and to accept and love two homes without conflict or ambivalence. (Parameswaran 32)

But this opinion of Parameswaran is acceptable in the case when both the homes lay in the same country and not across the oceans. In fact, most of the expatriate writers recreate India through the lens of nostalgia and lack the grasp of actual contemporary conditions at India. They deal with Indian immigrants whom they know at first hand. The oldest and most prolific are Suniti Namjoshi and Bharati Mukherjee. Bharati Mukherjee moved to the United States in 1962 and has never looked back. Her first two novels, The Tiger's Daughter (1972) and Wife (1975) are followed by two
collections of short stories. Her third novel *Jasmine* (1989) is about an illegal immigrant, which may express Mukherjee's concept of the archetypal American pioneer, but fails to convince a picture of a young Indian village girl. While presenting minor details, the wrong picture of the Punjab constantly irritates Indian readers. In *The Holder of the World* (1993) the choice of names for Indian characters is quite inept. In Mukherjee's fifth novel *Leave it to Me* (1997) the only Indian touch is the mythological story of Mahishasuramardini in the prologue. Bharati Mukherjee has declared that she is an American writer in the American mainstream trying to extend it. This is a vitally important statement from her – she is not an Indian writer, not an exile, not an expatriate. She is an immigrant; her investment is in the American reality, not the Indian. With *Leave it to Me*, her ambition is realized: she is no longer an Indian writer. But whether she has extended the American mainstream is a debatable point.

In Shona Ramaya's first novel *Flute* (1989) India is an exotic and mysterious place, which upsets the psyche of her hero Julian, who plays the Indian bamboo flute so well and could enchant all that villagers identify him with God Krishna. Wrong descriptions of India in small details put Julian simply in suffering from some kind of mental aberration. Indira Ganesan’s *The Journey* (1990) proves that fictional India is still a saleable commodity in the West. Her descriptions of India- the cool floor of the storeroom, sacks of rice and flour, bins of dried lemons and peppers, Renu and Rajesh read as lizards darted noiselessly across the walls- often ring false. In Ganesan's second novel *Inheritance* (1997), the young protagonist is the youngest of three sisters, all with different fathers. Ganesan's fiction has problem of the locale as the island of Pi is supposed to be midway between India and Sri Lanka, but we are always presented with a slightly warped version of Indian life.

In Sunetra Gupta’s Sahitya Akademi Award winner novel *Memories of Rain* (1992) a young Bengali heroine is swept off her feet by an Englishman visiting Calcutta. After marriage she realizes that he is unfaithful and refuses to live with his new girl friend in England, and comes back to India with her child. Her second novel *The Glassblower's Breath* (1993), set in the cities of London, New York and Calcutta, presents a young Indian woman’s search for ideal love and companionship. In her *Moonlight into Marzipan* (1995), Promothesh makes an important scientific discovery in Calcutta and goes to England with his wife. In *A Sin of Colour* (1999) the hero falls desperately in love with the highly accomplished wife of his elder brother and he goes
to England and marries Jennifer, returns to Calcutta twenty years later as he is losing his eyesight and devoted Jennifer comes here to look after him.

The clash between the older and younger generations of immigrants is one of the central themes in works of Atima Srivastava and Meera Syal. Atima Srivastava's *Transmission* (1992) is about young people who have adapted to their new land. The theme is continued in *Looking for Maya* (1999), where a young, brilliant student falls in love with an older Indian professor. Though Meera Syal's *Anita and Me* (1996) is narrated by a child in an Indian family in Britain, the adult novelist frequently intrudes. Her *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee* (1999) deals with the youth and middle age of three school friends and reveals the plight of British-Asian men and women caught between the traditions of their families and the social mores around them.

Meena Alexander's novel *Manhattan Music* (1997), with a complex narrative technique and a variety of epigraphs for chapters, deals with the lives and problems of Indian immigrants living in America. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices* is set in the United States and has employed Magic Realism. Some other immigrants have published first novels. Kirin Narayan's *Love, Stars and all That* (1994) presents Gita Das as a graduate student at Berkeley, who implicitly believes an astrologer in India who told her that she would meet her Prince Charming in March 1984 and describes her growth and various relationships. Narayan has a character named Kamashree Ratnabhushitalingatn whose sexual escapades are given as much importance as her activities as a high profile, unintelligible, post-modern literary critic. Rukun Advani's *Beethoven Among the Cows* (1994) has Professor Lavatri Alltheori as a protagonist. Anita Rau Badami's *Tamarind Mem* (1996) describes the life of a sharp tongue woman married to a railway officer, who is referred to as "Tamarind Mem" by her servants. Badami successfully depicts Tamarind Mem's unhappiness, and the tensions within the family, but lacks the external reality of life in India. Ameena Meer's *Bombay Talkie* (1995) describes the Indian sojourn of a young born-in-the-U.S.A. heroine, but with the usual stock response to India. Kiran Desai's *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998), with different style and sensibility of her mother Anita Desai, is about a superficial treatment of the holy man and the gullibility of the public. Shauna Singh Baldwin's *What the Body Remembers* (1999) is set in a village in the Punjab and presents the story of the beautiful daughter of a poor man whom the forty-plus Sardarji marries secretly so that she can give him a son. Though the atrocities on women that accompanied the Partition of 1947 are seen through a
woman's eyes, the novel lacks the particulars in the depiction of contemporary India, perhaps inevitable as the novelist is physically out of touch with the country and has to depend on memory or news reports. In Shreelata Rao-Seshadri’s *Matrimonials are Deadly* (1995), a fast-paced detective story set entirely in the USA, the heroine Viji investigates crime, like in another only women crime fiction *The Turning* (1996) by Armin Wandrewala.

This survey indicates that the novel configures through changes from time to time and writers’ perception found expression moving into a trans-cultural ethos and carving a niche for themselves in the sphere of post-colonial literatures. One may see that the vein of women’s writing in English lies in the frameworks of its critique of social relationships, and in representation of the entangled space of gender and history. A detailed discussion on the contribution of the selected Indian diasporic women writers: Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri and Shauna Singh Baldwin is necessary to focus their valuable concerns that distinguish them in the Indian English literature.

**I.X: The Life and literary contribution of Bharati Mukherjee:**

Bharati Mukherjee was born on July 27, 1940 to Sudhir Lal, a pharmaceutical chemist and Bina Mukherjee, a housewife in Calcutta, India; then moved to Britain in 1947 with her family and lived in Europe for about three and a half years. Mukherjee realized at the age of ten that she wanted to become a writer and had written numerous short stories. In 1951 the family returned to Calcutta and she joined the English-speaking Loreto convent school run by Irish nuns. Mukherjee and her sisters were chauffeured to the convent school quite and characteristic of this clash of "westernized" Bengali family may be seen in the sense that English education was valued. In 1958 Mukherjee's father lost his partnership in the factory and moved his family to Baroda. She obtained B.A. from the University of Calcutta in 1959 and her M.A. in English and Ancient Indian Culture from the University of Baroda in 1961 and went to the United States of America. She has earned her M.F.A. in Creative Writing in 1963 and Ph.D. in English and Comparative Literature in 1969. While studying at the University of Iowa she met Clark Blaise: a Canadian student from Harvard and married with him on September 19, 1963. She lived in Canada from 1966 to 1980. She got Canadian citizenship and lived in Toronto and then in Montreal. She held teaching portions at MC Gill University and Concordia
University. As a professor and wife of Clark Blaise, Mukherjee got opportunities to teach all over the United States and Canada. She migrated to the U.S.A. in 1980 with her family and became a U.S.A. citizen in 1988. Mukherjee's career is as Instructor in English, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: 1964-65, and University of Wisconsin, Madison: 1965; lecturer: 1966-69, assistant professor: 1969-73, associate professor: 1973-78, and professor: 1978, McGill University, Montreal. Professor, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York; associate professor, Montclair State College, New Jersey: 1984-87; Queen's College, City University of New York, Flushing: 1987-89; professor, University of California, Berkeley: 1990-95. At present she is a professor at the University of California, Berkeley. Her husband Clark Blaise is an American - Canadian author who teaches also in the English department of Columbia University. They have two sons together, Bart Anand and Bernard Sudhir. Mukherjee has established herself as a powerful member of the American literary scene, one whose most memorable works reflect her pride in her Indian heritage, but also her celebration of embracing America. She is a writer whose voice tells the tales of her own experiences to demonstrate the changing shape of American society.

She is awarded with the ‘Prestigious Shastri Indo Canadian Institute Grant’ during the year 1976-77. She is a recipient of ‘Guggenheim Foundation Award’ in 1978-79 and ‘Canadian Government Award’ in 1982. She is also winner of the first prize from Periodical Distribution Association in 1980 for her short story “Isolated Incidents”. Mukherjee has also been honoured with the ‘National Book Critics Circle Award’ for her short stories collection ‘The Middleman and Other Stories’ in 1989 and Pushcart prize in 1999.

Her creative novels and short story collections are:

She has co-authored with her husband two non-fictional works: *Days and Night in Calcutta* and *The Sorrow and the Terror*. Through the projection of her characters, mostly Indians abroad, Mukherjee is a classical example where one may mark a clear change from expatriation to immigration. Her stories do not give any solution to the problems faced by her characters; it is up to the readers to find out some.

Mukherjee’s experience and struggle for identity as an exile from India, an Indian expatriate in Canada and as an immigrant in the United States provided her to focus on the phenomenon of migration, the status of new immigrants, and the feeling of alienation often experienced by expatriates, as well as on Indian women and their struggle. A. P. Abraham examines,

*Mukherjee considers expatriation as a restrictive and self defeating attitude in a writer. The expatriate writer is always in a mood of complaint and projects the pain of exile and becomes a figure of solitude.* (Abraham 57)

Her earlier works, *The Tiger's Daughter* (1972) and *Days and Nights in Calcutta* (1977), are attempts to find her identity in her Indian heritage. The chaos, poverty and mistreatment of women in the name of tradition of India affected Mukherjee while her venture back to India in 1973. It has inspired young Tara’s venture back to India after many years of being away only to return to poverty and turmoil in *The Tiger's Daughter*. It reflects the confrontation between illusion and reality. Tara is in America at early age of fifteen, because her father is prompted by suspicion and pain for his country. Homesick in Poughkeepsie, Tara senses discrimination if her roommates do not share her mango chutney. She defends her family and her country vehemently. She prays not to break down before the Americans. But by fate she falls in love with an American not to communicate the finer nuances of her family background and life in Calcutta at her husband’s naïve questions about Indian Customs and Traditions and feels completely insecure in an alien atmosphere.

After seven years Tara planes dreamed-for-years visit to India, believing that all hesitations and all shadowy fears at abroad would be erased quite magically if she could return home. On her return, Tara sees India through the eyes of a Western imagination rather than through her own childhood eyes. Through a series of adventures she reaches to a final self-realization and reconciliation. She is outraged, when confronted to a restive city which forced weak men to fanatical defiance or dishonesty. In Tara’s violent demonstration at the end, Chaudhary, a symbol of the
old world is brutally beaten to death. Young Pronob tries to save him, but is himself injured in the process. This is a course of history, which cannot be stopped. The magic of the myth and culture of Bengal moved Mukherjee’s husband. However, she is shocked and this is seen in one of their joint publications: Days and Nights in Calcutta. Her early work leads to her being seen as a writer firmly enclosed in the bosom of Indian writing in English. But this Mukherjee herself sought to avoid with the publication of Darkness, where she convincingly declared her desire to be seen as a North American writer. In the hard-hitting introduction to this collection of stories Mukherjee explains this shift as ‘a movement away from the aloofness of expatriation, to the exuberance of immigration’.

Originated from experience of racism in Canada her works such as Wife, the short stories in Darkness, an essay entitled "An Invisible Woman" and The Sorrow and the Terror - a joint effort with her husband focus on humiliation even being a tenured professor and on being a housebound, fearful, affrived, obsessive, and unforgiving queen of bitterness. Darkness focuses on natives of South Asia who crave success and stability, but are burdened by their histories and face the difficulties of prejudice and misunderstanding. Her personal experiences of biased Canadian view towards immigrants and how government agencies handled assaults on particular races are explored in her short story entitled Isolated Incidents published after moving back to the United States. Another short story titled The Tenant focuses, through a divorced Indian woman studying in the States, on immigrant Indian women and their mistreatment in interracial relationships. The stories in Darkness further endeavor to tell similar stories of immigrants and women. In Darkness specifically Canadian stories continue to explore the painful world of the expatriate. Other stories explore North America through the alien voices of its various immigrant cultures—Italian, Latin American, Sri Lankan, as well as Indian.

In Mukherjee’s Wife (1975) Dimple is suppressed by men and attempts out of fear and personal instability to be the ideal Bengali wife, but she murders her husband and eventually commits suicide. Dimple is a product of middle class of Calcutta that values docility and submissiveness in women. In sexual fantasies with Cricket Stars, Young Cabinet Ministers and Heroes from novels, Dimple sets out on a long journey of unreal meaningless and morbid existence. Abnormally Dimple thinks that marriage is a blessing in disguise, which will bring her freedom, fortune and happiness and married with Amit Basu. Lived in a fantastic world, a world which is created by
herself, she doesn’t like Amit’s unattractive house, his mother and sister. Amit do not match the man she has imagined for her husband. The excitement of marriage diminishes when she feels a strange sensation in pregnancy. She decides to terminate her pregnancy by abortion and never repents for her cruel deeds. She is an escapist, lost in sequestered world of fantasy. She finds her new life impossible to adjust to, and her attempts to become American cause her to question her own cultural values, and even her own happiness. These are questions she might never have asked herself in Calcutta, and had she done so and found herself equally disillusioned, her solution, the novel suggests, would probably have been suicide. In killing a mouse symbolically she kills herself. Her frustration and depression, symbolic in her irritable responses to the things around, turn her in cold blooded murder of her husband.

Mukherjee has accepted being an immigrant, living in a continent of immigrants and describes herself as American and not the hyphenated Indian-American. Mukherjee’s most of the stories in The Middle Man and Other Stories are about the immigrant experience. These stories explore the meeting of the East and West through immigrant experiences in the great melting pot of culture of the United States and Canada. In The Middleman and Other Stories sometimes with anger, often with violence, sometimes with comedy, often with tenderness Mukherjee gives voice to the "other" within North America. It provides detailed portrait of the North American immigrant experience than Wife or even the impressive stories in Darkness. The story titled "The Management of Grief" deals with the sorrow of the bereaved relatives of the victims of the 1985 Air India disaster. It is, perhaps, the most moving story in the collection. In The Middleman and Other Stories Mukherjee becomes a valuable middleman linking disparate worlds by telling her tales from many perspectives, with a keen eye for the concept of self within a larger society. Her characters are adventurers and explorers rather than refugees and outcasts, and are a part of a new and changing America.

Mukherjee's Jasmine (1989) may express concept of the archetypal American pioneer, but fails to picture a young Indian village girl. The wrong minor details of the Punjab constantly irritate Indian readers. The story of a young Hindu woman Jasmine, who leaves India for the U.S.A. after her husband's murder, only to be raped and eventually returned to the position of a caregiver through a series of jobs, develops this idea of the mixing of the East and West, but presents the unity between the East
and West in the treatment of women as subordinate. It is a story of dislocation, relocation and assimilation as the title character continually sheds lives to move into other roles, moving further westward while constantly fleeing pieces of her past in which she faced only despair and loss. It’s a feministic novel in which the Jyoti of Hasanpur rebels against age-old superstitions and traditions, and later on becomes Jasmine, Jase and Jane, while maintaining proper balance between tradition and modernity. Jasmine's ongoing journey is an effective device which highlights her rootless position and her search for identity. The state of exile, a sense of loss, the pain of separation and disorientation make Bharati Mukherjee’s novel *Jasmine* a quest for identity in an alien land. While scavenging firewood Jyoti gets a star shaped wound on her forehead-the third eye, which gives her a wide and true perspective on life. Thinking that memories, a sign of disloyalty, make one nostalgic coward, she is sheathing her heart in a bullet-proof vest. The archetypal image of Kali-the Goddess of Destruction and an incarnation of Durga-the Goddess of Strength bring out the protagonist’s feminist trait and the strength of a woman like Jasmine who has embarked on a perilous journey to a new world to fulfill her husband’s dream.

In Mukherjee’s feminist novel *The Holder of the World* (1993) the protagonist Beigh Master as an abandoned child comes to India in search of wonderful diamond called the "Emperor's Tear" and fascinated by the life of Hannah Easton, leaves her Puritan New England upbringing at Massachusetts to become the mistress of Raja Jadav Singh. Mukherjee's focus continues to be on the immigrant women and their freedom from relationships to become individuals. She also uses the female characters to explore the spatiotemporal connection between different cultures. Bharati Mukherjee in *The Holder of the World* suggests female liberation through Hannah and Bhagmati who recurrently defy estrangement in the society they live and rejecting cultural stereotypes, they develop the life of their own outside the home. Mukherjee focuses on female issues in the historical times as well as in the contemporary society by making sense from the historical evidences, as conventional answers no longer satisfy.

Mukherjee’s *Leave it to Me* (1997) is a story of revenge on parents who abandoned a young woman and avengeful search for her real parents. The novel also looks at the conflict between the Eastern and Western worlds and at mother-daughter relationships through the political and emotional topics by the main character in her quest for revenge. The protagonist Debbie Devi is born in India as a Eurasian Orphan
and adopted by an upstate New York family of Italian Origin and travels through America to find her bio-mom. By the time she tracks down her bio-parents in Laxmipur in India. She learns that her mother was the Hippie follower of a sex-age guru, and her father the founder of the ashram, serial killer Romeo Hawk Haque. Thus, Mukherjee reverts to her earlier obsession with an exile’s agony to make the predicament of the protagonist crystal-clear. In this novel Mukherjee's shift from immigrant diasporic writer to multicultural writer is complete.

Her Desirable Daughters (2002) is story of Tara, Padma and Parvati, three Calcutta-born sisters into a wealthy Brahmin family presided over by their father and their traditionalist mother. The rebel of intelligent and artistic girls is nevertheless constrained by a society with a little regard for women. Their rebel leads them in the different directions, continents and different circumstances, in which strain ultimately strengthens their relationship. One of the Bengali sisters lives a comfortable life in Mumbai keeping herself busy in household chores; another ends up New Jersey among the elite class of migrant Indians and the third ends up in California with more pedestrian life after getting a divorce from her business tycoon husband.

Mukherjee’s next novel The Tree Bride (2004) traces Tara’s ancestry and leads her to a fascinated ancestor, her almost namesake, Tara Lata, a five year old girl who was a victim of the archaic custom of child marriage. It is a mythic family story of a palanquin borne by four servants in which sits a rich man’s three daughters, the youngest dressed in her bridal sari. The father, a university graduate and lawyer willingly follows tradition of the child marriage to a tree, a lifetime imprisonment due to unjust in society and cruel in religion. Thus, we see how marriage saves them from a life of degradation, widowhood and shame. The marriage is a tool in the hands of patriarchy to subjugate women. We see the transformation of Tara Lata from a docile girl-child into an impassioned organizer of resistance against the Britishers. The socio-cultural history of Bengal blended with a family history through influences of colonialism to the present immigrants having a different circumstance. The story focuses on the impact of western culture on ethnic Bengali society. Mukherjee tries to interpret women’s responses to patriarchal hegemony by suing silence as a symbol of oppression and a characteristic of the subaltern condition, while speech signifies self-expression and liberation.
Bharati Mukherjee is a writer who is at her best when she draws on her experiences of the Old World while writing with insight about the New World to which she now belongs. R.K. Dhawan observes,

*A close examination of Mukherjee's fiction reveals a sense of direction, growth and evolution.* (Dhawan 16)

Mukherjee's works are her attempts to find her identity in her Indian heritage. Her more recent books, particularly *The Holder of the World*, confirm that hers is an original voice at the cutting edge of American immigrant/multicultural literature.

**I.XI: The Life and literary contribution of Jhumpa Lahiri:**

Jhumpa Lahiri is born in London in 1967 to a librarian father and a teacher mother who emigrated from India to Rhode Island. Lahiri received a B.A. in English Literature at Barnard College, and later received her M.A. in English, Creative Writing and Comparative Studies in Literature and the Arts, as well as a Ph.D. in Renaissance Studies from Boston University. Currently, Lahiri lives in the New York City with her husband and son and is working hard on her novels. The influence of frequent childhood visits to India and parents who are still a part of the Indian world despite their immigration to America thirty years ago have shaped her books. Lahiri’s role as a writer started in grade school when she began to write 10-page novels during recess with her friends. Later in her school years, Lahiri engaged herself with the school newspaper. After graduation from Barnard college, Lahiri continued at Boston University to obtain her Master’s Degrees in English, Comparative Literature, and Creative Writing and later her PhD in Renaissance Studies. Following the Ph.D. program, she did a two-year fellowship at Provincetown's Fine Arts Work Centre.

While completing doctorate thesis in 1997, she worked for Boston magazine as an intern. Her first book began to receive awards almost immediately after publishing. Among the first received in 1999 was the PEN/Hemingway Award for the best fiction debut of the year. The story entitled *Interpreter of Maladies* was chosen for the O Henry Award for best American short stories. Lahiri is a recipient of the Transatlantic Review Award from Henfield Foundation and the Fiction Prize from Louisville Review. In addition, she has also received *The New Yorker’s Best Debut of the Year Award*, and an Addison Metcalf Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Her books are recognized as the New York Times Notable Books, Publishers Weekly Best Books of the Year, a New England book show selection, Los
Los Angeles Times best book, and Los Angeles Times book prize Finalist. While naming her as 'one of the 20 best writers under the age of 40’, The New Yorker has published three of her stories. As a greatest tribute to her talent, she is the first Indian woman to receive Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for the year 2000. In January of 2001, Lahiri married to Alberto Vourvoulias-Bush, the deputy editor of Time Latin America, by arranging a traditional Bengali wedding in the Singhi Palace in Calcutta.

Jhumpa Lahiri starts her literary career in 1999 by mesmerizing readers and the curiosity brings her audience together. As a popular young writer of Indian background, Lahiri is a representative figure for non-immigrant Americans who do not fully understand what it means to straddle the line between two cultures. Lahiri in some ways herself struggles to understand the Indian culture. As stated by herself in an interview with India-West, Lahiri feels lucky to be between two worlds to know what a distinct South Asian identity means. Avoiding stereotypes and grand generalizations about social and political relationships, Lahiri creates real, alive, complicated and individual people by sweeping her reader through a range of emotions and experiences and letting her characters speak for themselves. She is a bona fide star, and fans and critics eagerly wait for what Lahiri dreams up next.

Her creative novels and short story collections are:

1) Interpreter of Maladies (1999)
3) Unaccustomed Earth (2008)

Her Interpreter of Maladies (1999) and The Namesake (2003) focus on the conflict in relationships between the couples, families and friends. Himadri Lahiri interprets,

The families she represents are usually nuclear ones and the members belong to the acculturated second and third generations.

(Lahiri 47)

These relationships help her to explore the ideas of personal and cultural isolation and identity. 15 million copies of Interpreter of Maladies are sold worldwide in which stories whisper and scream traces of India through complex and conflicted world of Indian immigrants in the United States who are caught between the culture they have inherited and the New World. Her characters often exist simultaneously in two cultures: the American reality and the sphere of Indian tradition. Lahiri uses character details in order to make assertions about the sense of isolation that governs each
story's events. Her characters frequently encounter crises of identity due to their inabilitys to reconcile their American identity with their Indian identity. Lahiri often leaves these crises unresolved, particularly in the short fiction of *Interpreter of Maladies*, to give us a rather bleak outlook on the future of her characters. She often correlates the cultural isolation with the extreme personal isolation to suggest that the cultural isolation causes the personal.

Lahiri’s *Interpreter of Maladies* consists of three previously published and six new stories. Drawn upon different aspects of Lahiri’s Indian background, all the stories are affected in some way or another by India. Some of the stories take place in India; others involve the lives of Indian immigrants in the United States like Lahiri herself. The bulk of the stories about the second generation Indian-Americans, like Lahiri herself, help us to understand the cultures different from our own. The common thread throughout the stories is a sort of suffering from "malady" like the Das family.

‘A Temporary Matter’ presents disintegrating relationship of an Indian immigrant couple, Shoba and Shukumar, due to a stillborn child that Shoba remains no more the attentive wife and becomes more aloof and self-absorbed. Shukumar does little to comfort Shoba in her grief ignoring the seriousness of their relationship problems. They spend nights in the dark sharing secrets with each other and each bold confession reveals flaws in their marriage leading to impending separation. In ‘When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine’ the immigrant narrator’s father admonishes the American schools not teaching about the current events of the Indian subcontinent. On the other hand the narrator seems to be very much the American child, going off to parties with her friends on Halloween. Lahiri suggests the fact that these characters work to keep intact their connection with India, though they have become American.

The title story ‘Interpreter of Maladies’ is about an American-born Indian couple Mr. and Mrs. Das. They are on vacation in India with their three children, Tina Ronny and Bobby. Only Mrs. Das strikes up a conversation with Mr. Kapasi, their tour guide and others in the family seem to be the least bit interested in India. Mrs. Das at a moment reveals to Mr. Kapasi that one of her children is the result of an extramarital affair, to which Mr. Kapasi offers up his interpretation as a factor in her family's ‘maladies’. In confessing to Mr. Kapasi, she endows him with a sort of priestly power, expecting her confession to draw out forgiveness and consolation. Interpretation also becomes a means of communication and connection, something for which both Mr. Kapasi and Mrs. Das yearn. A sort of malady that the Das family
suffers is common thread throughout the stories in this collection. The characters are defined by isolation. The husbands are isolated from wives; immigrants from their families and their homes; children from their parents; and people from the communities in which they live. This isolation causes feeling of missing ‘something’ vital to their identities which defines them. Defying simple explanations about problems, Lahiri gives us a brief glimpse at one key moment that somehow defines characters’ lack of self-understanding. ‘A Real Durwan’ is about Boori Ma, a feeble 64-year-old woman who is the stair-sweeper living on the roof of an old brick building at Calcutta. The Dalal family likes, gives food and takes care of Boori Ma’s ailments. However, the sink in the stairwell is stolen while Boori Ma is out one afternoon. The residents accuse Boori Ma of informing the robbers and in negligence for her job and throw out Boori Ma’s belongings to begin a search for a ‘real durwan.’

‘Sexy’ is told by a non-Indian narrator about a young woman, Miranda, and her affair with a married Indian man named Dev. Miranda knows very little about India and its culture. The news that Laxmi’s cousin is recently abandoned by her husband for a younger woman intensifies Miranda’s pangs of guilt because Dev is also married. When Laxmi’s cousin comes Miranda at Boston her seven-year-old son Rohin gives Miranda some insight into his mother’s grief which eventually leads her to call off her affair. ‘Mrs. Sen’s' focuses on many isolated immigrant women of universal origin trying to assimilate but unwilling to let go of the aspects of prior life. Based on Lahiri’s mother as a babysitter of American children, wearing the intricate Indian saris, Mrs. Sen is feeling whole with the visits to the fish market and letters from India which illuminate her emptiness in the United States.

‘This Blessed House’ presents Sanjeev and Twinkle, a newly married Indian immigrant couple, finding gaudy Biblical objects hidden in Christians’ house at Hartford. Delighted by these objects Twinkle wants to display them everywhere; but uncomfortable with them Sanjeev reminds her about their being Hindu. Sanjeev doesn’t understand her spontaneity, whereas she has little regard for his discomfort. On the day of the party the guests are enamored with Twinkle. Captivated by her beauty and energy, but irritated by her naiveté and impractical tendencies; Sanjeev has conflicting feelings about her. At the end Sanjeev is giving into Twinkle and accepting her eccentricities. Consistent with Lahiri’s overall theme of isolation, ‘The Treatment of Bibi Haldar’ is about epileptic woman in Calcutta in the grudging care of her cousin and his wife and with the town’s involvement attempting to find herself a
husband and a cure for her ailments. Communal device solidifies Bibi Haldar’s identity in the accentuated isolation of her in native city. The closing story ‘The Third and Final Continent’ we meet well-adjusted and happy with realities of arranged marriage characters. The unnamed narrator tells us of his immigration to Great Britain and the United States, focusing on period from his arrival in America to prepare a home until his wife arrives after arranging documents for her immigration to America. 

It portrays a relatively positive story of the Indian-American experience as the protagonist interactions with Americans prove a high degree of tolerance and even acceptance of Indian culture on the part of them. Through cultural tone of social acceptance and tolerance, Lahiri suggests that the experience of adapting to the American society is ultimately achievable. In the United States the narrator does not lose his Indian identity. Perhaps, modeled upon aspects of her parents' lives in the United States, Lahiri suggests through this story that the loss of Indian identity is at the root of the isolation so many of the other characters experience. Lahiri comments on the cultural differences and similarities in the two cultures and introduces the idea of loss of cultural identification through passing generations. The narrator expresses his intention not to let his own son experience this loss and this concern by first generation immigrants for their sons is unique in the collection.

There are many connections between Lahiri's works *Interpreter of Maladies* and *The Namesake*. Lahiri demonstrates how much of a struggle immigration can be, as in *Interpreter of Maladies* the stories revolve around South Asian immigrants in the United States, Indian encounters with Americans or two cultures colliding into one another; *The Namesake* also has the themes of immigration, collision of cultures and the importance of names. Moving between events in Calcutta, Boston and New York City, the novel examines the nuances involved in being caught between two conflicting cultures with their highly distinct religious, social and ideological differences. Krushna Chandra Mishra has aptly said,

Lahiri raises the question of the identity of the individual as it is constructed in the society through the interplay of forces beyond his/her control. This seemingly irresponsible exercise of the authority of society heaps unintended problems and pitfalls on the individual and leaves one tainted and wounded. She also underlines that identity of the individual, consistently affected by society, is something which one has to accept through a process of reflections and negotiations.
The constant struggle of first generation immigrants and their children to find their places in society is portrayed in *The Namesake*. The Ganguli parents struggle to adapt to a different culture and their children Gogol and Sonia struggle to respect their roots while adapting to American society. The issue of names and identity is presented in the novel. Ashima does not use Ashoke’s name because according to her a husband's name is something intimate and therefore unspoken and cleverly patched over. This shows how important is the privacy to the Bengali families.

Bengali children are usually given one pet name, used only by the family and close friends and another that is used by the rest of society. Gogol’s pet name is because his official name sent in a letter from his grandmother in India gets lost in the mail. His father named him Gogol after his favorite Russian writer Nikolai Gogol. Gogol is to be called Nikhil, a good name, by teachers and the other children at school, but he attempts to reject a dual identity by rejecting his proper name and wants to be called Gogol by society as well as his family and this causes him years of distress. The importance of a namesake and identity is central concept in story of the novel.

Gogol suffers from the uniqueness of his name throughout his life living in the United States where children are often ashamed of their differences from others. Though Gogol is a native born citizen, Americans never view him as an American, so during adolescence he desires to blend in and to live unnoticed. Uma Parameswaran explores,

> The desire to act and dress like everyone else is one way for visible minority children to make themselves invisible; and another is to downplay racial slurs as one would skinniness or obesity or various disabilities that are targets of torment. (Parameswaran 36)

A struggle between two cultures comes as the Gangulis wish to raise Gogol and Sonia with Bengali culture and values, but they grow up relating mostly to their peers and the surrounding culture in the United States. Much later in their lives they begin to truly value their Bengali heritage. When in college, Gogol rejects his identity completely and becomes Nikhil because Gogol is not just a name; it signifies all his discomfort in two different cultures, so he dreads his visits home and his return to a life where he is known as Gogol. Away from home at college in an American culture, Gogol lives as Nikhil so happily for many years, detaching himself from his roots and
his family as much as possible. Gogol’s identity is embellished by both cultures and this leads him to learn that he cannot fully abandon or attempt to diminish either but mesh the two together and be able to stand on his feet. He feels no longer ashamed of himself, but proud of his name and all that it means.

Just like Lahiri’s other books, her second collection of short stories *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) reflects life with two separate cultures and how people cope with one and the other. The title ‘Unaccustomed Earth’ is taken from a phrase used by Nathaniel Hawthorne in his novel *The Scarlet Letter* that refers to new places free of one’s ancestors and the past. The title story is about relationship between three generations: the father, his daughter and her son. A retiree widower father visits his daughter's new home in the suburbs of Seattle. The story explores the family issues of the difficult gender roles in America, such as Ruma's Indian heritage, her sense of obligation to care for her father, her decision to leave her successful legal career to raise children and her husband's hard work to support the family. Unhappy with his once traditional lifestyle and enjoying his newly found independence in his travels and a relationship with a female friend, her father tries to persuade her to continue her legal career while being a mother. The limited communication between the father and daughter is because both are afraid to acknowledge that they have moved away from their culture of origin and have embraced the new culture. The cultural and universal themes are not predictable. Akash is the third generation of immigrants, who is fascinated with his grandfather's foreign habits and language, as he is completely immersed in the new culture.

‘Hell-Heaven’ explores complex human emotions such as loneliness, love and jealousy while describing drastic change in people over the time. As a graduate student at MIT in Boston, Pranab Chakraborty is homesick and befriends Usha, a little girl and her traditional Bengali mother Aparna on the streets of Boston as they too feel homesick and lonely and empathize with him. Pranab becomes a regular visitor at Usha's house and calls Aparna as elder brother's wife. Over the time Aparna develops a unique kind of love towards him which turns into jealousy when Pranab brings home and marries an American woman named Deborah to whom Aparna keeps blaming, criticizing and reiterating that Deborah leaves and finally divorces Pranab. The unique mother-daughter relationship is developed as Aparna placates Usha by relating her own experiences about a foolish decision that she would have made. ‘Hema and Kaushik’ is in a first person address, divided into
three parts and revolves around Hema and Kaushik who have childhood acquaintances as their families being old friends because of shared culture and the common experience of adapting to a new culture and now lead drastically different lives. After twenty years, just days before they are to enter into completely different phases of their lives, they meet again by chance and they discover a strong connection with one another.

‘Year's End’ tells about Kaushik's life after his mother's death as a wanderer with unwanted change and complicated relationships with his recently remarried father, stepmother and two young stepsisters. In the last part ‘Going Ashore’ is told by an omniscient narrator, Hema and Kaushik meet after two long decades by chance in Italy. Hema is a college professor and Kaushik is a world traveling and successful photojournalist. Hema is tired of her affair with a married man and wish to marry someone she barely knows and get settled down; and Kaushik is preparing to accept a desk job in Hong Kong. They reckon their irresistible deep connection must with the lives they have chosen to lead.

1.12: The Life and literary contribution of Shauna Singh Baldwin:

Shauna Singh Baldwin is borned in Montreal and grown up in India. She holds an M.B.A. from Marquette University. She has started her literary career by coauthoring A Foreign Visitor's Survival Guide to America and still she is writing with . Her works are as follows:

2. English Lessons and Other Stories (1996).
5. We Are Not in Pakistan (2007)
6. We Are So Different Now (2009)

She has published her short fiction, poetry and essays in the literary magazines in the U.S.A., Canada and India. From 1991 to1994 she has hosted the East-Indian-American radio show ‘Sunno!’ as an independent radio producer. Baldwin has to her credit many awards including ‘India's International Nehru Award (gold medal)’ for public speaking and ‘The National Shastri Award (silver medal)’ for her English prose. She is also the recipient of ‘The 1995 Writer's Union of Canada Award’ for
short prose and also ‘The 1997 Canadian Literary Award’. Her *English Lessons and Other Stories* has received ‘The 1996 Friends of American Writers Award’. Her novel *The Tiger Claw* has been shortlisted for ‘The Giller Prize’. A hybrid of three cultures: Indian, Canadian and American, Baldwin writes, as she says, from the perspective of all three for the people she loves, ‘a hybrid, global audience, for people interested in the process of becoming human, the ways in which we live, the influence of history, philosophy, culture, tradition and memory on our sense of self’.

Baldwin has said that she and her coauthor after finishing *A Foreign Visitor's Survival Guide in America* (1992) were amazed at how much the book had taught them: about themselves; about their friendship; about their values and view of the world and about the need for accuracy in word choice.

Her ‘potent, poignant, disturbing and of immense importance’ collection of ten stories *We are not in Pakistan* (2007) portrays an unforgettable cast of characters migrating from the Central America to the American South and from the Metro Toronto to the Ukraine. The characters in these stories are male and female, young and old, rich and poor, likeable and hateful and are from different religions and nationalities: Jewish, Christian, Sikh, American, Canadian, Pakistani, Costa Rican, Ukrainian, Mexican, and Greek. World events such as 9/11, Chernobyl and India’s Partition share the stage with smaller-scale tragedies. The title story “We are not in Pakistan” focuses on 16-year-old Megan’s hate for her Pakistani grandmother. In “Only a Button” amidst the backdrop of Chernobyl a Ukrainian woman living in Moscow is unhappy for her husband’s new posting forcing her to move nearer to her disapproving mother-in-law. In the enchanting magical realism of “Naina”, unbelievably, a baby girl refuses to born to an Indo-Canadian pregnant woman living alone in Toronto, disowned by her family for having a relationship with a white Canadian and the father of her child. In “Fletcher” Baldwin presents a man involved in a game between his owner and her boyfriend that resulted in the death of an innocent neighbour. “The View from the Mountain” focuses on the friendship between Wilson Gonzales and his new American boss named Ted Grand, a wealthy investor in Costa Rica, whose suspicions following 9/11 cloud his judgment and threaten his friendship with Wilson. In “This Raghead” deeply racist views of a retired veteran Larry are seriously challenged when his health and survival depends on his Muslim medical doctor Bakhtiar. In the final story “The Distance Between Us”
Dr Karanbir Singh, a resident alien living in California, receives an email from a young woman claiming to be the child of his 1980s green-card marriage.

Examining the intersection of private lives with political and cultural convulsions, Baldwin illuminates the invisible and horrifically costly racial terrorism. Her engaging and enlightening prose explores the daily realities affected by horrific events in the life of estranged characters. Baldwin treats emotions like sadness, empathy, pity and rage which make us forget that we are reading. Uma Parameswaran observes the case of diasporic people as,

*While many have left 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)

Baldwin's stories find the unique voice of each character to discover various personalities. Baldwin’s only two stories happen in Canada and many are located in America to explain the use of wide-ranging voices and international locations as an opportunity to comment upon political issues, such as the enforcement of immigration policies.

Inspired from Noor Inayat Khan’s life, who worked against the Nazism in France, Baldwin’s *The Tiger Claw* (2004) presents an extraordinary story of love and espionage through the cultural tension and displacement. It is a spy thriller story of a woman's courage set in the 1940s in German-occupied Paris filled with racism, betrayal and hypocrisy and the evils of war. Noor’s father was a teacher of mystical Sufism. After his death Noor, along with her mother, sister and brother, is forced to accept her uncle's religious literalism and the ideas on feminine propriety. At the Sorbonne a Jewish musician Armand comes in her life and Noor falls in love with him. Her uncle forbids her to meet him, but they continue the secret meetings. Due to the 1940 German invasion of France, for being a Jew Armand separates from Noor for the sake of her safety. Noor and her family shift to England, where she volunteers to serve as a radio operator for the group of a special intelligence agency. She is trained and then sent back to the Occupied France to ‘set Europe ablaze’ with German acts of sabotage. Noor’s personal secret mission to re-unite with Armand encourages her to undertake this assignment. She carries her grandmother's gift of an heirloom tiger claw encased in gold as her talisman. The complex Noor Khan is earnestly
contemplating her absent lover from whom she conceived a child, and then aborted. The novel opens in December 1943 when imprisoned Noor begins writing in secret about the events that led to her capture. Her brother Kabir searches her in the chaos of Europe's Displaced Persons Camps after Germany surrenders in 1945. Kabir is the strongest character of all as he eventually becomes a Sufi holy man, preaching the ideals of peace and tolerance while remaining dangerously close-minded with the people he loves.

It is also a love story with mysticism and romance between a Muslim and a Jew exploring the interplay of racism, sexism and imperialism. Baldwin’s careful and based in fact research in history and politics in three continents with undercurrents of terror and prejudice reveals the shifting sands of allegiance in times of war and the duplicity required for survival. Baldwin's description of the execution makes Noor a permanent part of readers’ memory. Baldwin's this historical novel presents the dangers of tribal intolerances to enlighten contemporary peoples embroiled in their own disputes.

*The Tiger Claw* is praised as paean of miscegenation, cosmopolitanism, Sufi Universalism and love. Through Noor’s story, Baldwin elegantly comments on the universal victims of oppression to show us how embracing a multi-faceted identity in a multi-faceted world mysteriously turns victimization into resistance. Through the tale of love and betrayal in a foreign land, Baldwin has skillfully transformed elements of war and espionage in male-oriented literature into a woman’s narrative. Baldwin illustrates on how helpless individuals are resisting state-sponsored fear and hatred against their fellow citizens. A simple war-time love story turns into a discourse on tolerance and a comment on the clash of cultures in a war-torn world. This war-time espionage has many gaping wounds to be sutured and memories to be sifted through. The novel is straightforward effort to understand the workings of the resistance and the twists and turns of war, which would be enough to compensate for the neglected historical portion of the Second World War. The novel shows varied and deeply personal motivations of soldiers and the casualties of the war. It is an affecting story of moral complexity, inner conflict, dislocation and exile of a very courageous woman whose love lost amidst the turbulence of war.

*What the Body Remembers* (1999) is awarded with the Commonwealth Writers Prize for best book from the Canada/Caribbean region. Set around Partition, it focuses on the relationship between three characters. Sardarji is a wealthy Sikh
landowner. His first wife Satya has failed to bear him children. So, Roop, a young girl, is to marry him and become his second wife. Roop believes that she and Satya will be friends in the house of their husband. But there develops a very complex relationship between the old and the young woman while Sardarji struggles to find his place amidst the drastic changes when India lurches toward independence.

The novel presents paradoxically India as rich and poor and calm and chaotic country. It focuses on disintegration of a pluralistic society into factionalism and anarchy. Baldwin expertly with great confidence and without sacrificing complexity introduces history with many themes and characters. It is a Northwest Indian epic of heartbreak and honour of characters which are painstakingly researched, and set against a rich backdrop of gods, politics and tradition. The dramatic brutality in the region of Punjab seething with political unrest and the Sikh position in it during the 1947 partition of India are the compelling backdrops that entwine the fate of three remarkable characters. The novel intensely contains atmosphere of daily life in a village with dusty fields of maize and clusters of homes. The novel is a social history of the customs, traditions and mores of rural Punjab of which many are still unchanged. Baldwin marvelously layered her novel with a palpable Sikh ethos as well as a western, cosmopolitan lifestyle; imbued with fragments of conversation in Punjabi and snippets of songs and prayers. It lyrically describes the cinnamon, anise and fennel smell of Satya's kitchen and Sardarji's Oxfordian attire and his spindly-legged English furniture. While exploring memorable transformations in the characters of Satya, Sardarji and finally of Roop; Baldwin captures the churning political and religious history of modern India and Pakistan. Exceptionally, the novel filters events through a woman's eyes during the wrenching period in the history of subcontinent known as partition. Baldwin's *What the Body Remembers*, as an allegory for the partition period, places a heartbreaking family saga against a turbulent period to explore how the personal becomes the political. This woman’s perspective is valuable as women suffered most when their homes were uprooted, so this book becomes a more intimate account.

Baldwin refuses to cast characters as solely heroic or villainous as the main characters’ emotional heart with love, jealousy, infertility and religious fury and intimate lives are woven into escalating violence and impending doom in the Indian history. Capturing the tensions between the Sikhs and the rest of India through the gripping story of one Sikh family the novel opens the psyche and lore of a
community. The characters’ individual psychological journeys, predicaments, greed, treachery and fate appeal readers while opening up another world of intimate and universal humanity. It also presents a complex and cruel society in which Sikh women who are practically voiceless within their own culture and considered secondary and dramatizes the plight of Indian women with great sympathy and love. It is a sensitive portrayal of the condition of women in the Indian sub-continent without the stridency of feminism. One of the most interesting features of this fascinating book is the degree of complicity of Roop in her own fate. Satya and Roop are complex, shaded and resonant with ironies, but are not clotheshorses for feminist statements. Baldwin’s passion for her homeland and her desire to tell women’s version propel the last half of the novel. The insular world of the Sikhs with the longings, losses and compromises of simple lives serves as a picturesque backdrop for a society caught and straddles between two cultures, ideologies and religions and the inherent consequences they face.

Her fifteen insightful but mostly sad stories in English Lessons and Other Stories (1996) passionately dramatize the lives of Indian women from early twentieth century to today while expanding their world from India to Canada and North America, and from the closed circle of the family to the wilderness of office and university. The characters from different generations and social spheres provide views to draw their positions and postures. With lively, active, questioning spirit Baldwin examines the bruises and wounds endured by the immigrant Sikhs learning how to live in English-speaking North America. With cultural insight Baldwin writes about emotionally and politically loaded both sweet and sour details of tradition and culture in both North America and India.

Baldwin is expanding the world of Indian fiction in English by taking enormous risks to write frankly from an ethnic minority about her community. These precise, nuanced, sensual and autobiographical stories, based on past experience and personal problems, are distinguished by the visceral shock of truth, and focus on family, place, and politics in an elegiac tone. Almost all the stories end with the last line ironically reversing what has come before and many are given the radio-immediacy of a conversation with the next-door neighbour. Her stories describe the friction between the East and West and the traditional and modern both as fictional documents for what the Diaspora has meant to ordinary people and also as accounts of the rising awareness and strength of women. There are no dragon-slaying heroines,
merely ordinary women who find their courage in the most paradoxical of places and tap their own minds and hearts to enter the new emotional and material worlds.

After taking an overview of the literary contribution of these three writers, we come to know that these three woman writers have presented the predicament of women protagonists in their writings. As these three are diasporic women writers their personal experiences while the cross-cultural existence are supplying the raw material to their stories. Almost all the stories they have written are focusing in one way or other on the issues related to the life of women. A woman writer may better give exposure to the inner life of the woman characters than what a man can do. Ashis Gupta in an interview with Veena Singh confesses,

*I was looking at things through different characters. This is what a writer does. If I were writing about a woman I can see the world through a woman’s eyes. I can only pretend to some extent.*

(Gupta 214)

The selected texts may be studied from cultural, feministic, political, geographical, biological, psychological, sociological, economic, racial, historical, philosophical and religious points of view. Of these approaches, only feministic and cultural points of view are determined to study only the predicament of women in the cross-cultural encounters. A woman is subjected to suffer more than a man in all the ages. The problems of women are explored from different perspectives in the selected short story collections and the novels. Any type of issue related to woman is studied in feminism.

**I.XIII: The Feministic point of view and the cultural point of view:**

The feminist point of view develops out of a movement defining, establishing and defending equal political, economic and social rights and opportunities for women. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a feminist as "an advocate or supporter of the rights and equality of women". A feminist is an explicitly political stance committed to the analysis and amelioration of patriarchy, sexism and gender. The term ‘feminist’ is very broad, as some feminists choose to specify types of feminists: Liberal feminist, Marxist feminist, Poststructuralist feminist and Eco-feminist ranging from academic analyses to political and social interventions to grassroots activism. It aims to understand the nature of gender inequality by examining women's social roles and lived experience.
Feminist literary criticism is a literary criticism informed by feminist theory started with classic works of the nineteenth-century women authors such as George Eliot and Margaret Fuller. Before the 1970s Feminism has dealt with the politics of women's authorship and the exclusion of women from the literary canon as the views and representation of women's condition within literature of women authors are not considered as universal. In more complex conceptions of the gender and subjectivity the feminist literary criticism has taken a variety of new routes by considering gender in the terms of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis as part of the deconstruction of existing relations of power and as a concrete political investment. Along with the central feminist issues with the representation and politics of women's lives, the modern feminist criticism deals with issues related to the patriarchal programming within key aspects of society. It aims to develop and uncover a female tradition of writing and to interpret symbolism of women's writing so that it will not be lost or ignored by the male point of view. It also aims to rediscover old texts, to analyze women writers and their writings from a female perspective, to resist sexism in literature and to increase awareness of the sexual politics of language and style.

The liberal feminists like Marry Wollstonecraft and Simon De Beauvoir have campaigned for the equal rights with men while assuming similar status in terms of humanity, rationality and mental capability. At the same time the feminists interested in difference have recognized and sometimes celebrated the dissimilarities between men and women. The central difference between women and men has been perceived as the maternal child bearing role associated with women and the feminine arguing that women are 'naturally' more caring, compassionate and giving, and should embrace this as a positive quality, thereby undermining the negative connotations of femininity under patriarchy. They have recognized that rather than celebrating the difference, it is socially, politically, ideologically and linguistically entrenched and maintained in order to repress the women. The category of woman intersected by differences such as class, race, ethnicity, disability and ability, sexuality, age and occupation must be considered with alternative analytical tools in order to recognize sites of repression, resistance and spaces of the feminine.

Enforced by the social, political and ideological norms the practices, attitudes and socially constructed modes of behaviour considered appropriate for women vary between the cultures as they are modified by the factors of class and ethnicity within the cultures. This suggests that femininity is not a natural or biological fact, but is a
cultural product adopted by women in order to participate in a culture which functions largely in terms of the masculine and feminine binary oppositions. The feministic point of view is to expose the 'unnaturalness' of femininity and to undertake a deconstruction of the elements that construct femininity. This involves an analysis of the representation of women in ideological terms, an exploration of the discourses and discursive paradigms that construct and maintain ideals of femininity, and an understanding of the social and economic factors that maintain the marginality and lesser status of the feminine. The women, particularly under paternalistic and racist government legislations, are not considered 'feminine' and it is evidenced by the fact that they are expected to do not only women's but also men's works. While rethinking of the measures of morality, one may claim that women's morality is based on 'natural' feminine qualities such as compassion and caring, rather than abstract moral masculine principles.

The feministic point of view also examines silencing of marginalized persons, groups or perspectives by dominant ideologies or oppressive social and political structures. It also examines what remains unspoken in a text rather than what is explicitly present or spoken about and the allusions that may be made to these absences. A writer may use silence as strategic, a refusal to speak about that which is unspeakable or a refusal to say that which may otherwise be appropriated or misunderstood. This has sometimes been discussed as a strategy of resistance by oppressed minority groups.

The selected three diasporic Indian woman writers have presented the predicament of women protagonists in the cross-cultural encounters. Being diasporic women writers their personal experiences during their cross-cultural encounters are presented through their protagonists. Their stories in the selected texts are focusing on the cultural issues and the cultural problems of the women. The cultural studies help us to understand the problems of women in the cross-cultural encounters.

The cultural point of view is a result of rapidly growing cross-disciplinary analysis of the conditions that effect the production, reception and the cultural significance of literature as merely a form of the cultural ‘signifying practice’. It deals with the functioning of the social, economic and political forces and power-structures that produce all forms of the cultural phenomena and endow them with their social meanings, relative value and status. The cultural studies analyze and interpret the
objects and the social practices outside the realm of literature, meanings of which come out as the product of the social forces and conventions.

The term *cross-cultural* is introduced by an anthropologist George Peter Murdock in the field of Social Sciences in the 1930s. Usage of *cross-cultural* is for many decades restricted mainly to the Social Sciences. First, the term *cross-cultural* is referring to the comparative sense implied in phrases such as ‘a cross-cultural perspective’, ‘cross-cultural differences,’ ‘a cross-cultural study of’ and so forth, but gradually it acquired a secondary sense of cultural interactivity. The International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology (IACCP) is established in 1972 for studying of the role of cultural factors in shaping of human behavior. A *cross-cultural cultural study* is an adaptation of the term *cross-cultural* to describe a branch of literary and cultural studies dealing with the works of writers associated with more than one culture. The researchers of *cross-cultural cultural studies* often use the term *cross-culturalism* to describe the discourses involving cultural interactivity, or to promote or disparage various forms of cultural interactivity. *Cross-culturalism* is nearly synonymous with *transculturation*, a term describing processes of the cultural hybridity. As it is said that the ‘cultural heterogeneity or cross-cultural capacity’ gives an ‘evolutionary thrust’ to the imagination, the term ‘*cross-culturalism*’ has become prevalent in the cultural studies in the late 1980s and 1990s.

*Cross-culturalism* is distinct from *multiculturalism*. Whereas the term *multiculturalism* deals with the cultural diversity within a particular nation or social groups, the term *cross-culturalism* is related to exchange beyond the boundaries of a nation or cultural groups. Cross-culturalism in literary and cultural studies is a useful rubric for works, writers and artists that do not fit within a single cultural tradition. Like *multiculturalism*, *cross-culturalism* is sometimes construed as ideological, and advocates values associated with transculturation, transnationalism, cosmopolitanism, interculturalism and globalism. *Cross-culturalism* is fundamentally a neutral term as it considers the processes of cultural mixing not essential to the categorization of a work or writer as a cross-cultural. If the cultures are national, the cross-cultural is overlapping the transnational. The cross-cultural also incorporates the colonial and the postcolonial, since colonialism is a form of cross-culturalism. Cross-culturalism is the most inclusive, rather than transnationalism which depends on the nation-state; and colonialism/post-colonialism on colonized or formerly-colonized regions. In practice ‘cross-cultural’ is usually applied only to situations involving significant cultural
divergence, for example, the East and West, excluding cases of crossing between the European nations, or between the Europe and the United States.

The feministic and the cultural perspectives will help to bring out the realities included in the experiences of women, particularly in an alien geographical, social, political, economic, cultural and religious setting. Thus, the issues related to women and cultures presented in the selected texts need to be discussed in detail with reference to the selected novels and short story collections.

I.XIV: Conclusion:

At present times, people of one country are migrating to other countries in search of betterment. Migration causes many troubles in the life of people. It is necessary to acquaint the contemporary generation with such problems emerging in the cross-cultural migration. The Diasporic literature functions as a tool to discuss the predicament and problems of women due to cross-cultural encounters in migration. A comparative study of the problems faced by immigrant women helps to widen the sense of understanding intensity, to sharpen and to bring accuracy in the understanding of the issue and also helps to put forth suggestions acceptable, authentic, reliable and valid.

Indian Writing in English is believed to be the production out of the cultural amalgamations which the Indian English novel expresses through all the phases of imitation, assimilation and self-expression. The contemporary diasporic Indian English writers under study are the creative talents who have attracted attention of international readers. Indian English fiction continues to evoke colonial legacies in the contemporary society and seeks to compete with other literatures in English. The Diasporic literature is a rich resource of studying the challenges of diaspora and the various strategies of negotiation which delineate diasporic experience at various levels of place, language, customs, myths, beliefs, geographical displacement and the combat with the gape and change adopted in the process.

A number of female writers of Indian Diaspora project the individual’s predicament in the context of alienation, immigration, expatriation, exile and the quest for identity. The immigrant women carry the burden of cultural values of their native land with them to their new country, thus making it more difficult and problematic for them to adjust. Caught between cultures they are trying to maintain a balance between their dual affiliations.
The story of the Indian diaspora has provided the diasporic writers to illustrate the history and heritage of this society and its problems, its achievements, its limitations and frustrations and pay attention to their relationship with Indian. Diasporic Indian women writers’ sense of marginalization and search for roots is uniquely akin to one another. The novel configures through changes and writers’ perception found expression moving into a trans-cultural ethos and carving a niche for themselves in the sphere of post-colonial literatures.

Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri and Shauna Singh Baldwin have presented the predicament of women in cross-cultural encounters by focusing on the issues related to the life of women. The feministic point of view is assisting to explore the social, political and ideological norms and modes of behaviour considered appropriate for women, which vary between cultures as they are modified by factors of class and ethnicity within cultures. The cultural point of view is helpful for analysis of the conditions that affect the significance of literature. The issues related to women and cultures presented in the selected novels and short story collections need to be discussed in details.

I.XV: References:


20) Parameswaran, Uma. “Home is where your feet are, and may your heart be there too”, *Writers of the Indian Diaspora*, Ed. Jasbir Jain, New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 1998.


CHAPTER II
THE PREDICAMENT OF WOMEN IN BHARATI MUKHERJEE’S THE TIGER’S DAUGHTER AND THE MIDDLEMAN AND OTHER STORIES

II.I: Introduction:

Bharati Mukherjee’s novels and short stories mainly focus on the issues of Indian women and their struggle while in migration, the status of new immigrants and feelings of expatriates. She is in exile from India, expatriate in Canada and an immigrant in the United States. Mukherjee’s own struggle for identity works as motivating force behind her protagonists’ attempts to search for their identities. Through her novels and short stories, Mukherjee attempts to find her identity in her Indian heritage. About her aim of writing, in an interview, Mukherjee expresses:

...when we uproot ourselves from those countries and come here, either by choice or out of necessity, we suddenly must absorb 200 years of American history and learn to adapt to American society... I attempt to illustrate this in my novels and short stories. My aim is to expose Americans to the energetic voices of new settlers in this country.

(Mukherjee Sunday Review)

Mukherjee is at her best to draw on her experiences of the India and Canada while writing with insight about the New World in America to which she now belongs. She describes her American experience as one of the ‘fusions’ and immigration as ‘two-way process’ in which Americans and immigrants grow by the interchange and experience. She proves to be an original writer in the American multicultural literature.

Bharati Mukherjee’s most of the novels and short stories deal with the issues related to the life of women. Mukherjee represents her own experiences, feelings and problems through the stories of her immigrant women. Through her writing, she seizes upon the movement of immigration in all its intensity, confession and desperation of the people who have broken away from their cultural and historical roots. Shyam M. Asnani observes:

Since the immigrant writer speaks from the margins, his focus is off-centred. Likewise, his protagonist hardly ever takes center-stage, because it is not his-story that is being narrated. Instead, the narrative
gives voice to community life, to local or national politics, to the experience of being alienated, obscured, peripheralised, and marginalized. The quest motif, which seems the archetypal pattern in the literature of the predominant mainstream culture, and which is also conceived in terms of a metaphoric and sometimes an actual voyage, undergoes here a sea change. (Asnani 75-76)

Thus, the writing of a diasporic writer speaks for the entire community of his kind. Mukherjee focuses on the cultural shock that a person experiences after the feelings of depression and frustration at the time of adjusting between two tremendously different cultures. Mukherjee declares that she was deeply affected by the chaos and poverty of India during her own venture back to India with Clark Blaise. The same is presented in her novel *The Tiger's Daughter* (1972) through a story of a young girl who, like Mukherjee, ventures back to Indian poverty and turmoil.

Mukherjee's *Wife* (1975), the short stories in *Darkness* (1985), an essay entitled "An Invisible Woman" and *The Sorrow and the Terror* (1987) — a joint effort with her husband present her own experience of racism in Canada as a humiliated professor. In her *Wife* a woman suppressed by men tries to be the ideal Bengali wife, but due to the fear about personal instability she murders her husband and commits suicide later. The stories in *Darkness* further endeavor to tell similar stories of the immigrants and women. One of her short stories entitled "Isolated Incidents" explores her personal experiences of the biased Canadian view towards immigrants and how government agencies handled assaults on particular races. Another short story entitled "The Tenant" represents divorced immigrant Indian women and their mistreatment in the States and their experiences with interracial relationships.

In most of the stories in *The Middle Man and Other Stories* (1988), *Jasmine* (1989) and her essays Mukherjee continues writing about the experiences of women in immigration. She explores the East and West relationship in her stories through experiences of the immigrant women in the context of great melting pot of culture in the U.S.A. and Canada.

Mukherjee's *Jasmine* is a story of a young Hindu woman’s dislocation, relocation and assimilation. The protagonist Jasmine leaves India for the U.S.A. after her husband's murder. There she is raped and becomes caregiver. *Jasmine* presents that the treatment of women as subordinate is the similarity between the East and the West. Jasmine’s is a story of despair and loss, rebels against age-old superstitions and
traditions, rootless position and search for identity. The archetypal image of Kali—the Goddess of Destruction and an incarnation of Durga—the Goddess of Strength bring out the woman protagonist’s feminist trait and the strength of a woman like Jasmine.

Mukherjee in her feminist novel *The Holder of the World* (1993) continues her focus on immigrant women and their freedom from relationships to become individuals. She also uses the female characters to explore the spatiotemporal connection between different cultures that suggest the woman liberation through the historical evidences of recurrent defying and rejecting the cultural stereotypes in the historical times as well as in the contemporary society where conventional answers no longer satisfy.

Mukherjee’s *Leave It to Me* (1997) is a revenge story of an abandoned young woman and her vengeful search for real her parents. The political and emotional topics focus on the conflict between the Eastern and Western worlds and also on mother-daughter relationship. Thus, Mukherjee shifts from immigrant diasporic writer to multicultural writer and reverts to an exile’s agony to make the predicament of the woman protagonist crystal-clear.

Mukherjee’s *Desirable Daughters* (2002) is a story of three Bengali sisters. It is about the rebel of intelligent and artistic girls, nevertheless constrained by the society which has little regard for women. Though the rebels of these sisters lead them in different directions, continents and different circumstances, their experience ultimately strengthens their relationship. Mukherjee exposes the immigrant experiences through one of the Bengali sisters who lives in New Jersey among the elite class of migrant Indians.

Mukherjee’s next novel *The Tree Bride* (2004) is a mythic family story in which a five year old girl is a victim of the archaic custom of child marriage. The tradition of the child marriage with a tree is a tool in the hands of patriarchy to subjugate women. The socio-cultural history presents immigrants’ different circumstances and the impact of the Western culture on ethnic Bengali society. Mukherjee uses women’s silence as a symbol of oppression and subaltern condition and speech as a symbol of self-expression and liberation in the patriarchal hegemony. Mukherjee in an interview with Runar Vignisson expresses her opinion about the immigrant experience in all over Europe:

*Western Europe, Canada and England treat their non-European immigrants, even if they have been there for two and three generations,*
as though they are guest workers. They never accept them as real citizens. The other thing is that people who come and work in Europe, or even settle in Europe, are encouraged to retain their cultures so that it would not occur to the immigrants, the Turks for instance, to think of themselves as Danes and so on.

(Mukherjee wwwmcc.murdoch.edu.au)

II.II: The Predicament of Women in The Tiger’s Daughter:

Mukherjee's first novel The Tiger's Daughter is about the predicament of an isolated Indian expatriate woman. There is a strong autobiographical element in The Tiger's Daughter. The protagonist Tara Banerjee is an autobiographical representation of Bharati Mukherjee as an outsider in India because of Tara’s decision to leave the subcontinent to live in the North America and to marry an American mleccha (outcaste) husband. Mukherjee confesses in an interview with Dave Weich,

Tara was also the name of the protagonist in my first novel [The Tiger’s Daughter], and that character was very much me, too, so it’s obliviously a kind of alter ego that I wasn’t totally aware of when I embarked on this. (Mukherjee powells.com)

The themes of expatriation and isolation are handled with assurance in The Tiger's Daughter. The novel addresses Mukherjee's personal difficulties of being caught between two worlds, homes and cultures. It is an examination of her identity and her roots. It is a fictionalized story of Mukherjee's own first years of marriage and her return to the home for a visit to a world unlike the one that lives in her memory. The protagonist Tara Banerjee returns to India after marrying an American man and faces a different India than the one she remembers leaving. The novel offers ultimately different India to tell the tale of the relationships which face the daily difficulties due to cultural barriers formed out of the separate pasts that linger.

Mukherjee has divided the novel into four parts to present the dangling personality of Tara. The first part deals with the family background and the past of Tara and interferences of native soil of Calcutta in the process of her settlement in New York. The second part deals with Tara’s visit to India, her journey from Bombay to Calcutta and her reactions to India. The third part narrates Tara’s life at Calcutta with her Catelli-Continental friends. The last part deals with Tara’s visit to Darjeeling,
her boredom and alienation at coming back to Calcutta, her victimization in a mob and her tragic end which remains mysterious.

Twenty-two-year-old Tara Banerjee is a daughter of an industrialist known as the Bengal Tiger. Her father sends her to America at the early age of fifteen because he is afraid of situations at his motherland India. In a letter to Tara, he expresses his wish to be in America forever. He thinks that America is indeed the land of milk and honey. He thinks that if he was young, he would have sold his business and migrated to buy a poultry farm in the Midwest. Once in Kinchen Janga Hotel party at Darjeeling, the Bengal Tiger expresses his wish loudly in front of all the guests that he will settle in America. He is very ambitious to declare:

Yes, I’ll sell the firm. It means nothing to me. I’ll buy a poultry farm in America. I’ll go to America. I have initiative. Taramoni and David will live with us and help. We’ll have happy-go-lucky days again.

(Mukherjee 182)

He represents the American dreams of the young people aspiring to migrate to America or the West. But his daughter Tara feels homesick in the school at Poughkeepsie in New York. She senses discrimination when her roommate does not share her mango chutney. Even in discussions, she defends her family and country very strongly:

If her roommate did not share her bottle of mango chutney she sensed discrimination. Three weeks in Poughkeepsie and I am undone, Tara thought. Three weeks and I must defend my family, my country, my Johnny Mathis. (Mukherjee 11)

She always prays to the Goddess for power that she should not break down in front of the Americans. Whenever she feels despaired and nostalgic, she creates an India around herself. Once, she shakes out all her silk scarves, irons them and hangs them to make the apartment more Indian. Her father advises her in a letter as:

Remember love is nine-tenths prudence, one-tenth physical attraction.
Don’t do anything foolish or rash. It is your happiness that I demand.
Caste, class and province are more valuable in marriage than giddiness. (Mukherjee 13)

It is the fate only that she falls in love with an American and painfully Western man named David. Like true Indian wife, she is very dutiful, but devious in her marriage, she always fails to communicate the finer nuances of her family background and life
in Calcutta at her husband’s naïve questions about the Indian customs and traditions. Due to her split personality, she doubts the understanding of her country through her by David. Her Indianness is found in her use of typical Bengali terms and in her habit of retaining her maiden surname after marriage. Her husband is after all a foreigner and she feels completely insecure in an alien country. After return to India at her home on the Camac Street, she remembers how her life in America was full of dangers and loneliness:

*New York, she thought now, had been exotic. Not because it had laundromats and subways. But because there were policemen with dogs prowling the underground tunnels. Because girls like her, at least almost like her, were being knifed in elevators in their own apartment buildings.* (Mukherjee 33-34)

Tara uses her own ways of calculating for and preserving India in her defense against her loneliness in America by making the ‘feel’ of India with help of atmosphere and food:

*New York was certainly extraordinary, and it has driven her to despair. On days she had thought she could not possibly survive, she had shaken out all her silk scarves, ironed them and hung them to make the apartment more “Indian”. She had curried hamburger desperately till David’s stomach had protested.* (Mukherjee 34)

Tara’s doubts and conflicts are resolved by her strength, determination and quite dignity of her parents. Tara’s perspectives about India are refreshed and cleared by Antonia Whitehead’s decision to make India a home as she believes that India needs help. Tara thinks that all her hesitations and fears at abroad will be magically erased if she visits her home at Calcutta and comes to India.

In India, Tara reaches the final self-realization and reconciliation through a series of adventures and misadventures. Depressed and disgusted with the deteriorating situation of India, she finally determines to leave for the U.S.A. where her husband stays. Actually, the fusion of Americanness and Indianness in Tara’s personality results in her inability to take refuge either in her old Indian-self or in newly discovered American-self. She comes with changed outlook to India and her very first landing at Bombay fills her with disappointment. Once admirer of Marine Drive, Tara now feels it as shabby:
Tara, lagging behind with several nephews, thought the station was more like a hospital; there were so many sick and deformed men sitting listlessly on bundles and trunks. (Mukherjee 19)

Because of Tara’s supercilious attitude in the air-conditioned compartments in America, she ironically observes the Marwari as a circus animal and the Nepali as a fidgety older man with hair, both ruining her journey. Tara misses her husband David at this situation. This missing symbolizes the demand of her American self, which leads her to repent on her tour to India. She frets about David and thinks:

*Perhaps I was stupid to come without him...even with him rewriting his novel during vacation. Perhaps I was impulsive, confusing my fear of New York with homesickness. Or perhaps I was going mad.*

(Mukherjee 21)

After losing the roots in India, Tara finds India merely alien and hostile. She looks at India from her American point of view. Jasbir Jain comments:

*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 of a tourist, of a foreigner.*

(Jain 13)

She finds that the Calcutta, of which she has been homesick, has gone through many changes. She expects the happy Bengal of her childhood where children run through cool green spaces and aristocrats despair in music rooms of empty palaces; but she is confronted to Calcutta which forces weak men to fanatical defiance or dishonesty. Tara feels disgusted due to the sight of three children eating rice and yoghurt off the sidewalk, not in some furtive alley or slum; but on the Park Street where foreigners like herself walk:

*But so far the return had brought only wounds. First the corrosive hours on Marine Drive, then the deformed beggar in the railway station, and now the inexorable train ride steadily undid what strength she had held in reserve. She was an embittered woman, she now thought, old and cynical at twenty-two and quick to take offence.*

(Mukherjee 25)

The newspapers at Calcutta are full of epidemics, collusions, fatal quarrels and starvation: the vision of modern India. The trauma of her visit to India is focused with
a funeral pyre at the river bank, a small beggar girl afflicted with leprosy, beggar children eating off the street, superficiality in the life of her friends, the riots and her claustrophobic rape by the politician and her Darjeeling visit marred by ugly and violent events. In short, she comes across a kind of bewilderment on her visit to India.

Tara sees India, during her visit to India, through the eyes of the Western imagination rather than through her own childhood eyes. Tara’s efforts to adapt to the American society may be measured by her rejection and revulsion of the Indian modes of life. She feels lonely at very first reception by the relatives at Howrah station:

_Surrounded by this army of relatives who professed to love her, and by vendors ringing bells, beggars pulling at sleeves, children coughing on tracks, Tara felt completely alone._ (Mukherjee 28)

Tara’s sense of alienation in Calcutta is symbolized by her regular visits to the Catelli-Continental Hotel, where from she views the turmoil of Calcutta from the safe heights of a tourist cut off from the real India which seethes below her. The Calcutta she finds on her return is totally changed under the grip of violence between different classes of the society. Such picture of Calcutta shatters her dreams and turns her negative. Unlike Maya of Anita Desai and Kim of Rudyard Kipling, Tara finds nothing of her liking in India; instead she finds emotion of escape in the Catelli-Continental Hotel. Tara’s improprieties are related by her relatives to her American attitude to life because of her seven years stay in America and she is found as ‘stubborn’.

Though Tara declares her love and is torn between two contrary emotions, she cannot sympathize with her Aunt Jharna’s religious attempts to heal her child. Aunt Jharna questions about her lost status among the relatives due to her marriage with a foreigner. She asks Tara:

_You think you are too educated for this, don’t you? ... You have come back to make fun of us, haven’t you? What gives you the right? Your American money? Your mleccha husband?_ (Mukherjee 36)

At this moment, Tara wishes to tell her aunt what she feels, but thinks that her attempt will also be wrongly taken by her relatives. Tara strongly feels the distance that has caused her inability to correct the mistakes and misunderstandings of her husband in America on one hand, and on the other of her relatives in India. When she receives letters from her husband, she thinks that the letters are telling her that David has not understood her country through her, and that probably he has not understood her
either. Even she feels that she is failing to communicate through the letters to him what exactly she finds the different in India. She writes in a letter to David:

But at least you people can go to your analyst and he can tell you what’s the source of your problem. We can’t do that. I haven’t heard Daddy mentioned any psychiatrist friends, not one. Maybe we don’t need them. Our mess is too complicated, I’m afraid. (Mukherjee 130)

Tara is no longer able to feel a part of her family. She belongs to an old Bengal which is now lost to her, nor is she able to feel at ease with her old friends who, like her family, belong to a Calcutta which is rapidly fading and who in their different ways are as isolated as Tara. Tara forms the beast beneath them. She is caught in an antithetical tension because, on one hand her family and friends consider her marriage as an emancipated gesture and on the other hand her husband gives her no credits for cleaning bathrooms. After returning from America the antithetical feelings beset her among friends and she feels afraid of their tone, their omissions and their superior oneness. These are the same friends with whom seven years ago she has played, done homework, loved and dated. But, now her friend Reena comments:

How is it you have changed too much, Tara? I mean this is no moral judgment or anything, but you have become too self-centred and European. (Mukherjee 105)

Her friends expect her to tell about the fantasies of American life, but Tara knows the facts of violence and ghettos in the American life and could not escape from the fear of them. She feels alienated among her own friends as they seem to be not interested in her inter-caste marriage:

She feared their tone, their omissions, their aristocratic oneness. They had asked her about the thing she brought back, had admired her velours jumpsuit and electronic lady-shaver, but not once had they asked about her husband. (Mukherjee 43)

In fact, she feels that she is a woman only to clean bathrooms at home in America. Among her friends she is a foreign-return; a woman enriched with many romantic experiences at America. But the reality is stated in the lines below:

Each aerogramme caused her momentary panic, a sense of trust betrayed, of mistakes never admitted, Tara thought. In India she felt she was not married to a person but to a foreigner, and this foreignness was a burden. It was hard for her to talk about marriage
responsibilities in Camac Street; her friends were curious only about the adjustments she had made. (Mukherjee 62)

Her friends approve her foreign manners, foreign etiquette and foreign fashion; but as conservative racial purists they are, they would never approve her foreign marriage:

\[
\text{They liked foreigners in movie magazines- Nat Wood and Bob Wagner in faded Photoplays. They loved Englishmen like Worthington at the British Council. But they did not approve of foreign marriage partners. So much for the glamour of her own marriage, she had expected admiration from these friends, she had wanted them to consider her marriage an emancipated gesture. But emancipation was suspicious- it presupposed bondage. (Mukherjee 86)}
\]

Later, her friends disapprove her; they suggest that her marriage has been imprudent; that the seven years in America have eroded all that was fine and sensitive in her Bengali nature. Even they feel that Tara deserves chores like washing her own dishes and putting out the garbage. Tara notices once her friend Nilima pointedly ignoring her, while talking with her would-be groom. When Tara complaints, Reena reveals the truth to her:

\[
\text{She’s embarrassed of ‘you’, not me, my dear. She probably thinks that little man will run away if he finds out one of her friends arranged her own marriage. (Mukherjee 163)}
\]

At many times, Tara feels guilty for being one of whose existence is causing trouble to many people. She tries to cope with her own troubles, but in attempts she creates troubles for others. Her life is full of troubles both in India and America. Her strange experiences in America are narrated in the following lines,

\[
\text{New York, she confided was a gruesome nightmare. It wasn’t mugging she feared so much as rude little invasions. The thought of stranger, a bum from Central Park, a Harlem dandy, looking into her pocket book, laughing at the notes she had made to herself, observations about her life and times.... And more than the muggings the waiting to be mugged, fearing the dark that transformed shoddy innocuous side into giants fangs crouching, springing to demolish this one last reminder of the Banerjees of Panchapara. (Mukherjee 69)}
\]

Tara’s life as an immigrant and an Indian wife of an American symbolically presents the dark realities related to the life and predicament of women in alien cultures. As if
she deserves, she has to do the works which belittle her status and self-respect. The lines below indicate the same,

*In New York she had often praised herself, especially when it was time to clean the toilet or bathtub. She had watched bubbly blue action of the toilet cleanser, and had confined to David that at home there was a woman just to clean bathrooms. There was no heroism for her in New York. It appeared there would be no romance, no admiration in Calcutta either. It had been foolish, she knew, to expect admiration. The years away from India had made her self-centred. She took everything, the heat, the baggers, as personal insults and challenges.*

(Mukherjee 86)

Tara’s communication with her friends gradually becomes devoid of significance. After her terribly depressing visit to the funeral Ghats, her friends try to help her by distracting her with movies, concerts and *pakoras* at hotel. But when their attempts prove useless, they call her “a silly billy” and “a bloody bore” and even scold her. Tara’s each attempt to adjust with her friends fails and she strongly feels the breakdown and invisible gap between them. Her friend Pronob reminds her about what she is in America and which he does not wish to be: ‘nobody’. He says:

“I would hate to be an immigrant. I wouldn’t mind giving up the factory, but I’d hate to be nobody in America. How do they treat Indians, Tara?” (Mukherjee 59)

Mukherjee has presented the problems of a displaced person in the adopted as well as at the native country while avoiding the temptation of glorifying the native country and belittle and degrade the adopted one. In India, Tara’s marriage is not considered to be with a person, but with a foreigner, and she always feels the burden of this foreignness. Her friends are curious to know about her adjustments and not about her marriage responsibilities.

Though Tara feels anxious to fall in love, to her the marriage means a certain number of physical mysteries. She determines it as centering on or near the navel. Tara believes that in an Indian marriage a totally stranger groom takes his bride and rapes her on a brand new flower-decked bed. Tara feels that her mother’s attitude towards her has been changed as she is not happy with Tara’s marriage. Her mother once in a letter tells Tara that she has assured her paternal grandmother that Tara, her
only daughter is equal to ten sons. But now her mother’s attitude is changed and it is clearly sight able in the following lines,

*Perhaps her mother, sitting serenely before God on a tiny rug, no longer loved her either. After all Tara had willfully abandoned her caste by marring a foreigner. Perhaps her mother was offended that she, no longer a real Brahmin, was constantly in and out of sacred room, dipping like a crow. She thought her mother had every right to wary of aliens and outcastes.* (Mukherjee 50)

Caught between two contrasting worlds, Tara forgets many of the Hindu rituals at worships. In fact, she always stands beside her mother while performing Puja since her childhood, but today she forgets the steps of the rituals during the prayer. The incident at Shivpuja alerts her about the loss of religion and own cultural heritage:

*When the sandalwood paste had been ground Tara scraped it off the slimy stone tablet with her fingers and poured it into a small silver bowl. But she could not remember the next step of the ritual. It was not a simple loss, Tara feared, this forgetting of prescribed actions; it was a little death, a hardening of the heart, a cracking of axis and centre. But her mother came quickly with the relief of words.* (Mukherjee 51)

Today, Tara is unable to sing the *bhajan* which she used to sing in her childhood very fluently. The American culture works as an ‘invisible spirit or darkness’ which kills her simple desire to behave like an ordinary Indian.

The story represents an immigrant’s confrontation between the illusion and reality. Tara leaves India in search of her dreams and again nostalgically comes to India in search of her Indian dreams. One American girl named Antonia Whitehead, a close friend of Pronob, tells to Reena about her purpose of coming to India:

*I’m here because India needs help. The third world has to be roused to help itself.* (Mukherjee 166)

The above lines point out the Western attitude towards the third world countries. But, Tara is confused for times with the purpose of her trip to India. She is unable to express her state of mind and feelings:

*It was not a topping or sliding of identities that Tara wanted to suggest to David, but an alarming new feeling that she was an apprentice to some great thing or power. If she was pressed to tell more precisely the*
nature of that power, she would have to remain silent. It was so vague, so pointless, so diffuse, this trip home to India. (Mukherjee 130)

After reading the letters from her husband David at late night, she feels the real consolation that Calcutta provides her, which cannot be understood by her husband:  

*She thought about Calcutta. Not of the poor sleeping on main streets, dying on obscure thoroughfares. But of the consolation Calcutta offers. Life can be very pleasant here, thought Tara.* (Mukherjee 132)

Her inner-self consisting of two different cultures and two different ideologies makes any reconciliation impossible.

The attempts of Tara’s father to entertain her by a picnic to Darjeeling, appointing a poet to recite poetry for her, arranging her visit to her former school and her husband’s monsoon letters; all fail to provide her peace. At Kinchen Janga Hotel beauty contest, Tara supports the idea of bathing suit contest proposed by Miss. Whitehead. She feels insulted when one of the judges, a heart specialist offends saying:

*Really, Mrs. Cartwright. I think your years abroad have robbed you of feminine propriety or you are joking with us. You know as well as I do our modest Indian girls would not submit to such disgrace.* (Mukherjee 187)

When Miss. Whitehead unzips her dress revealing to the world her body stocking, the Bengal Tiger drags the table cloth and wraps her half naked body by it. Tara is seduced tastefully by Mr. Tundanwala while praising and admiring her as liberated and advanced. After this seduction, Tara realizes that she cannot share this knowledge of Tundanwala with any of her Indian friends. In India a friendly smile or an accidental brush of the fingers can ignite rumors; and how she could speak openly of Tundanwala’s violence. This incident leads her to realize that India no longer yields her recognition; she decides to return to New York and books an Air India flight ticket for herself. This is the escape she plans, but destiny will not allow her to escape. Before she takes off for America, she becomes a victim of the violence which starts as the marchers precede to the Catelli-Continental hotel.

At the end of the novel, Joyob Roy Chawdhury, a symbol of the old world order is brutally beaten to death. It suggests of killing the past to provide space for the new to take birth and grow. The relations are damaged during the process of such cultural transactions and replacements, which is symbolically suggested in Pronob
getting injured while trying to save Tara. Tara’s end is mysterious, but it is suggested that she does not survive in the violence. Her end suggests that a person can escape from the roots either through death or by keeping on hanging forever. This is how Tara’s end suggests:

> And Tara, still locked in a car across the street from Catelli-Continental, wondered whether she would ever get out of Calcutta, and if she doesn’t, whether David would ever know that she loved him fiercely. (Mukherjee 210)

In this way, Tara’s search turns out ironically frustrating and results in her disillusionment, alienation, depression and her tragic end. It is ironic that she survives in the racial discrimination and hardship in the foreign country like America, but becomes a victim of violence and tragic death in her own native country India. Homesick at New York she comes to India to seek peace and finds her final peace in death. When death is approaching she is thinking about her American husband. This symbolically presents that she finds greater love and security with a foreigner, instead of finding it in the arms of her father and mother. One may agree with M. Sivaram Krishna, who rightly evaluates Tara’s alienation as:

> Tara in The Tiger’s Daughter finds it difficult to relate herself to her family, city, culture in general since her marriage to an American, her western education are enough sighs to brand her as an ‘alienated’ westernized woman. The implicit logic is that since she is exposed to the West and has absorbed its values she must be necessarily alienated. (Krishna 74)

II.III: The Predicament of Women in *The Middleman and Other Stories*:

Bharati Mukherjee’s *The Middleman and Other Stories* includes eleven short stories which deal with the predicament and problems of the immigrant women in America. It dramatizes the ‘immigrant experience’ and the immigrants chosen as characters are from India, China, Pakistan, Yugoslavia, Iraq, Trinidad, Sri Lanka, Germany, Italy, Hungary, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Philippines. The stories present the experiences of the immigrants before and after their immigration and bring Mukherjee the fame and recognition as an international writer. Mukherjee in an interview with Runar Vignisson declares her narrative ability as:
With The Middleman I felt that I had made another sort of breakthrough where I was talking not just about South Asian immigrants, trying on their new American identities, but that I had grown as a writer or in confidence as a writer where I could just as comfortably, automatically, take on a male voice, a female voice, a white redneck Southerner voice, a very elegant expatriate Bengali woman's voice - with remarkable fluidity.

(Mukherjee wwwmcc.murdoch.edu.au)

The influence of the social and cultural traditions and practices in the immigrants’ countries of origin is inevitable in the context of the contrasting American culture. In an interview to The Hindustan Times Mukherjee says:

It was not right to describe the American experience as one of the melting pot but a more appropriate word would be ‘fusion’ because immigrants in America did not melt into or were forged into something like their white counter-parts but immigration was a two-way process and both the whites and immigrants were growing into a third thing by this interchange and experience. (Mukherjee 03)

The immigration, transformation and changing new America are the themes at the centre of these stories. The majority of the immigrant protagonists seems at a large extends changed in their style and psyche in the process of adaptation to American culture and ethos.

Mukherjee, while rejecting the tradition of India writing in English, writes about a minority community which escapes the ghetto and adapts itself to the patterns of the dominant American culture. The concept of American family comes very different in these stories, because of the interaction between mainstream Americans and new immigrants. These stories present very disturbing or discomforting lives of women with the changes taking place under the impact of waves of immigration from non-white countries which challenge the accepted conventional codes of behaviour. Nagendra Kumar aptly observes,

These stories evoke less pathos and express no apparent animus against American social system. They concentrate on the nature of individual experience when two culturally divergent characters confront each other to establish a rapport. (Kumar iv)
Mukherjee's women protagonists face a multi-cultural society and exhibit a deep awareness of the social reality surrounding them. The multi-cultural ethos with which they are confronted leads to the struggle for a new life but not a complete break down with the past.

The title story “The Middleman” is about the dangerous career and fortunate survival of the half-caste Maria. It is narrated by an Iraqi observer character in the story named Alfie Judah. The story opens with the common motto of all the innocent immigrants who hope to learn the ropes at the host country. It portrays the ruthlessness in the struggle for survival, which has been a distinguishing feature of the American society. In America the competition is cut-throat, and the atmosphere is surcharged with violence in the dog-eat-dog condition, where only,

A man with cash and private planes can clear a fortune in Latin America. (Mukherjee 6)

The middleman narrator Alfie Judah is under extradition order, but the grace of irresistible seductress and reckless adventuress Maria, whose identity is ambiguous, helps him to make it back. Maria is the wife of master Clovis T. Ransome and she knows Alfie’s weakness is women and sleeps with him. While pointing out the difference between European women and Iraqi women Alfie proves that the women are an instrument for the masculine sexual lust:

Pinkish flesh could turn our blood to boiling lust. They were worthy of our lust. Local girls were for amusement only, a bark place to spend some time, like a video arcade. (Mukherjee 5-6)

In Iraqi Muslim culture adultery is penalized with death. Alfie remembers one experience he had in Iraq when he went to a village with a servant. He narrates:

A young woman, possibly adulterous but certainly bold and brave and beautiful enough to excite rumors of promiscuity, was stoned to death that day. (Mukherjee 7)

Maria also knows that Alfie is desperately dependent on the sympathy and support by Wilkins and her notorious gangster-adventurer husband Ransome. For Alfie ‘adultery and dark-eyed young women all forever are enthroned’ in his memory and ‘lenient Jewish upbringing’ notwithstanding. Maria with her thick dark hair and smooth dark skin seems to be mostly an Indian, whose adroit adulteries are her mainstay in surviving the Latin American landscape of violence, brutality and dog-eat-dog conditions of existence. Ransome does not allow her to visit the States.
However, suppressed and restrained Maria when sees Andreas, she yawns for the escape:

*She throws herself on him and he holds her face in his hands, and in no time they’re swaying and moaning like connubial visitors at a prison farm.* (Mukherjee 13)

She comes with Andreas to rob and kills with her own hands her husband Ransome. She kills him for a hate she has for him. She is a helpless victim of male dominance in her husband’s house. Her sufferings at the hands of Ransome are narrated as:

*Not just the beatings, the humiliations. Loaning her out, dangling her on a leash like a cheetah, then the beatings for what he suspects. It’s the power game.* (Mukherjee 19)

Her genuine tenderness makes her decide to kill Ransome rather than her vulnerable, pliable and pitiable sex slave Alfie. Alfie’s life is saved for only reason that he had ‘three times tonight’ sex with Maria. For Alfie Maria is an object of his wildest ecstasy. When Alfie feels too inferior to accept Maria’s love, she finally lives with her schoolmate and now law enforcing authority in the region Andreas.

“A Wife’s Story” is about the humiliations and insults that the immigrants have to suffer. It is narrated in the first person and in the present tense by Panna, an Indian woman ‘conspicuous in red silk sari, plump, gold paisleys sparkling on her chest’. Panna Bhatt is a woman who has won a brief respite from wifehood in India through her two-year Ph.D. course in Special Education in America. But she experiences what the immigration in America yields to the Asians. She realizes:

*It’s tyranny of the American dream that scares me. First, you don’t exist. Then you’re invisible. Then you are funny. Then you’re disgusting. Insult, my American friends will tell me, is a kind of acceptance. No instant dignity here. I play like this, back home, would cause riots, and antisocial.* (Mukherjee 26)

Panna belongs to a traditional Gujarati family in which the woman has just begun to get education. In her family her mother is beaten by her illiterate grandmother when she wanted to learn French. But an expensive education at Lausanne and Bombay makes Panna’s manners exquisite, her gestures refined and her moods undetectable. An Indian married woman now flirts like a free bird with an immigrant man in America named Imre and becomes American enough to throw herself at him in full view of everyone on the road. She finds emotional stability in the
company of Charity’s uncle. Panna thinks that because she has left home, these relations give her confidence and a new knowledge. She says:

*If I hadn’t left home, I’d never have heard of the Wuchang Uprising. I have broadened my horizons.* (Mukherjee 31)

Her husband graduates from IIM at Ahmedabad and manages a mill in India, which is more important for him than his wife. His education teaches him to overcome pain and loss and emotion.

*He’s been trained to believe in turnovers. Every morning he rubs his scalp with cantharidine oil so his hair will grow back again.*

(Mukherjee 32)

She becomes angry at the mischievous ways the Indians are projected by the American mass media. When she goes for a Mamet play with her Hungarian friend, she feels annoyed at the Patel jocks and the gibes at Indians. She feels neither being betrayed nor instant dignity, but realizes that the ubiquitous Ugandan Gujaratis make themselves the butt of ridicule and ordinary American response to them. She lives in New York with her Chinese roommate Charity Chin, a disciple of Rajneesh Osho.

Charity is in modeling business and still loves her husband Eric, though she has been estranged from him. She sleeps with her doctor and a nutritionist and a musician. Chin is quite open about the physicality of her relationships and for her love is a commodity hoarded like any other. But Indian Panna feels shy in front of the lovers, as hers is a traditional Hindu marriage:

*I’m shy in front of lovers. A darkness comes over me when I see them horsing around.* (Mukherjee 30)

Her parents search the groom for her with the help of a marriage broker. In India after marriage she needs to know her husband’s taste in food. But when she comes to New York, she broadens her horizons and settles down physically and emotionally here.

Panna learns all the time to protest effectively and widens her horizons to include all experiences as a compensation for her past hungers which she could not satisfy in India. Once, when the white American sitting next to her in the theatre rests his elbow on the arm of her seat, she speaks with the effortless meanness of well-bred displaced Third World women:

*Excuse me…..You are exploiting my space.* (Mukherjee 27)

Panna is influenced by Charity Chin’s lurid love life and it replaces her inherited notions of marital duty. But, still she is concerned about her husband when she hears
of the firebombing incident at his factory. She feels no difference between affection and love in a traditional marriage in which a wife still does not call her husband by his first name. Now, Panna dangles between two worlds of different value-systems in America and the process of change affects her, but still she hasn’t forgotten of her being married. She narrates:

*I change out of cotton pants and shirts I have been wearing all day and put on a sari to meet my husband at JFK. I don’t forget the marriage necklace of Mangalasutra, gold drop ear rings, heavy gold bangles. I don’t wear them every day. In this borough of vice and greed, who knows when, and whom, desire will overwhelm.* (Mukherjee 33)

One can note the difference between ‘put on’ and ‘wear’, the first implies the show-making and the later suggests the acceptance by heart. When her traditional Indian husband comes to America, he also acquires the American life style within ten days. She realizes that what she and her husband share must be after all love:

*My husband does not chase me around the sofa, but pushes me down on Charity’s battered cushions, and the man who never entered the kitchen of our Ahmedabad house now comes toward me with a dish tub of steamy water to massage away the pavement heat.* (Mukherjee 35)

But he confesses at the end of story to her that he has come to take her back with him to India:

*‘Panna’, he cries with pain in his voice, and I am brought back from perfect, floating memories of snow, ‘I’ve come to take you back. I have seen how many men watch you.* (Mukherjee 39)

He is afraid of her contacts with the foreign men. While he pleads with her to return home with him, the pain in his voice brings back her freely roaming far away mind to the present. And she determines not to return under the dominance of her mother-in-law and an indifferent husband:

*Tonight I should make up to him for my years away, the gutted trucks, the degree I’ll never use in India. I want to pretend with him that nothing has changed.* (Mukherjee 40)

This story ends with the optimism of Hindu wife for freedom in New York.

In “Loose Ends” Jeb and Jonda live nine years together and have so much love (sex), but the feelings of alienation and the emptiness of their relationship separate them. Jonda says to Jeb;
Look at you. I hate to see you like this, at loose ends. (Mukherjee 44)

They lie-down in the same bed for long time, but nothing happens. Jonda wants to be a mother, but Jeb doesn’t think that he has makings of a good father. It seems very clear that they live together, but there is no communication:

There is no point in us talking. We don’t communicate anymore.

(Mukherjee 44)

This story presents a highly evocative image of human beings turning into a swarm of locusts which suggest the greedy predatoriness of contemporary American society. It is reflected in the advice of Doc Healy to Jeb:

If you want to stay alive... just keep consuming and moving like a locust. Do that Jeb m’boy, and you will survive to die a natural death.

(Mukherjee 45)

Jeb has been murdering people for Mr.Vee in return of money, without any qualms of conscience. He is basically good, as he says:

I get a little sick when wives and kids are involved, old folks, neighbors, repairmen – I’m not a monster, except when I’m being careful. (Mukherjee 47)

In America one gets reputation in underworld, especially when young women are involved. But in American society the life of once morally corrupt gangster has no retake and return. Jeb expresses his realization as:

It’s life in the procurement belt, between those lines of tropical latitudes, where the world shops for its illicit goods and dumps its surplus parts, where it prefers to fight its war, and once you have settled into give and take, you find it’s impossible to live anywhere else. It’s the coke-and-caffeine jangle of being seventeen and readier to kill than be killed and to know that Job One is to secure your objective and after that it’s unsupervised play till the next order comes down. (Mukherjee 50)

Alice is the unsuspecting young daughter of Gujarati motel owner, who becomes a victim of Jeb’s act out of deep rooted grief. He rapes her and the cool and bare description of this act reflects the aspect of American society:

I pounce on Alice before she can drop down below, and take America with her. The hardware comes in handy, especially the kris. Alice lays
hot fingers on my eyes and nose, but it’s no use and once she knows it, Alice submits. (Mukherjee 54)

The next story “Orbiting” has an Italian protagonist named Renata. Her mother is a Calabrian and father is an American. Their marriage is a kind of taming of the West and everything about mother could be explained as a cultural deficiency. Renata has an affair with Vic, who easily breaks the relationship. Her parents wish her better life. Her mother has the simple faith of immigrants that the children should do better than their parents. Renata works as saleswoman for the jewelry made out of seashells and semiprecious stones out of a boutique in Bellevue Plaza. The American culture underscores the ease, rather than the abruptness with which a love affair is ruptured. Her lover Vic breaks away saying:

I’m leaving baby. New Jersey doesn’t do it for me anymore. (Mukherjee 62)

Vic is a very local boy, who talks about all the sophisticated things. Renata observes:

All over the country...women are towing new lovers’ home to meet their families. (Mukherjee 63)

Later, Renata picks up an Afghani lover named Roashan (Ro), whom she meets in an uptown singles bar. She is ready to teach him ‘how to walk like an American, how to dress like Brent (her father) but better, how to fill up a room as Dad does instead of melting and blending but sticking out in the Afghan way.’ Her parents do not enquire about her affairs considering it her personal business. The pub culture of America somehow seems to elude the girls who take assiduous efforts to get married:

He bought me a Cinzano and touched my breast in the dark. He was direct, and at the same time weirdly courtly. I took him home though usually I don’t, at first. I learned in bed that night the tall brown drink with the lemon twist he’d been drinking was Tab. (Mukherjee 62)

Renata kisses Ro in presence of her parents. She kisses him passionately to show them that she has slept with him for many times and to let them think that she will marry this man. The reasons of his migration to America are political trauma and personal dreams. Roashan flees from the persecution at home in the trouble-torn Kabul in Afghanistan to New Jersey to get an opportunity to pursue higher studies at NJIT and become an electronic engineer. He was tortured in jail in Afghanistan, but he managed to escape in much more difficult manner:
His father, once a rich landlord, had stashed away enough to bribe a guard, sneak him out of this cell and hide him for four months in a tunnel dug under a servant’s abode hut until a forged American visa could be brought. (Mukherjee 73)

His treatment to Renata is different because when they go to bar, he sits far away from Renata and watches if some poor lonely guy approaches her and buys her drinks. Renata thinks of the cultural difference. She thinks that he will take a few months to catch her culture. Each culture establishes its own manly posture and the different ways of claiming the space. He seems to be very much caught in her sexual desire. He tells her:

*Rindy, all night I’ve been up and awake. All night I think of your splendid breasts. Like clusters of grapes, I think. I am stroking and fondling your grapes this very minute. My talk gets you excited.*

(Mukherjee 66)

The attitude of Renata’s father Mr. Brent towards Ro is of superiority complex. Brent thinks that only the Americans have informed political opinions and other people stage coups out of spite and misery. However, it is unwelcome revelation for him to know that a reasonably educated and rational man like Ro would die for things that Brent has never heard of and would rather laugh about. And that is why in the end of the story; Renata realizes her true love for Ro. She declares:

*I realize all in a rush how much I love this man with his blemished, tortured body. I will give him citizenship if he asks. Vic was beautiful, but Vic was self-sufficient. Ro’s my chance to heal the world.*

(Mukherjee 74)

“Fighting for the Rebound” is a story of a Philippine woman Blanquita and her American husband Griff. Their relationship is also in the process of breaking down. Though Griff usually does not remain serious on relationships, he wishes to save this relationship with Blanquita. He advises Blanquita as:

*Let’s start this conversation over.... I’m tentative at the start of relationships, but this time I’m not throwing it away.* (Mukherjee 80)

But Blanquita feels and so always complaints that he does not love her at all and she refers to his previous relations with Wendi again and again. Griff’s all explanations fail to convince her that it has all ended long back. Now it is happening similarly between him and Blanquita. He falls in love with a sale-lady Maura, but Blanquita
would not like to lose her husband to the new lady with her silvery blonde hair. Griff feels that there is some kind of inevitability about people falling apart:

*Love flees, but we’re stuck with love’s debris.* (Mukherjee 82)

To this Blanquita yells at Griff scolding him in her well-bred Asian convent-schooled voice:

*You’re all emotional cripples. All you Americans.* (Mukherjee 85)

The irony is that the immigrants are also behaving in no different ways than the Native Americans. She would also not allow Griff to be jealous of her professional contacts. As an emotional cripple, Blanquita herself leaves Griff and then remains to a status of a nervous wreck. The practicality has more powerful impact than the emotions in the lives of the immigrant women. They expect their sex relations to yield them love, but this makes them lonely and alienated, which becomes the source of their exploitation. Some of Mukherjee’s characters take their alienation and disintegrating relationships in their stride and the American pragmatism comes to their rescue. Similarly, Jason in “Fathering” realizes that his marriage is crumbling, but seems to be recoiled to the fact. Danny, a sharp shooter in “Danny’s Girl”, exploits such lonely persons by providing the girls he brings from India.

“The Tenant” is about an Indian immigrant Maya Sanyal, who has a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature and teaches World Literature at the University of Northern Iowa. She believes that a person has to leave his home and try out his wings. She also thinks that no folly is ever lost as history is a net like the kind of safety net travelling trapeze artists fall into when inattentive or clumsy. Maya as a ‘trapeze artist’ has come out of the stability of traditional culture of Calcutta to try her best while rehabilitating herself in the new culture of New York. She wants to stay independently in America as an emancipated woman experiencing absolute freedom in her free associations with men. She has not shared truths of her life with her American friend Fran:

*She’s not yet shared stories with Fran, apart from the divorce. She’s told her nothing of men she picks up, the reputation she’d gained, before Cedar Fall, for ‘indiscretions’...She is an American citizen.*

(Mukherjee 100)

Maya sleeps with ‘married men, with nameless men, with men little more than boys.’ She keeps changing her boy-friends for the lack of adjustment and has become indiscreet. She marries with an American John Hadwen and then divorces him after
two years and then looks forward to develop new relationships. After her experience with John Hadwen she loses her ability to distinguish between men:

*Outwardly, she retained her poise, her Brahminical breeding. She treated her crisis as a literary event; she lost her moral sense, her judgment, her power to distinguish.*  (Mukherjee 107)

She thinks that instead of India, here in America she has ‘so much to catch up on’ because of negative news from India such as dowry deaths, the stoning of a neo-Buddhist or member of untouchable caste, bribery and corruption. Once she reveals to Fran:

*‘All Indian men are wife beaters’. Maya says she means it and doesn’t mean it. ‘That’s why I have married an American’. (Mukherjee 99)*

She is not only critical of the Indian way of life, but has also changed her food habits in order to hit back at it. It is highly provocative that an Indian Brahmin girl starts eating beef or any meat in America.

In contrast to Maya, Dr. Chatterji tries to avoid the confused world of the immigrants, the lostness that Maya and his nephew Poltoo feel and wants to live and work in America but give back nothing except taxes. He is horrified that his nephew is in love with an African Muslim and blames the college students who arranged a Christmas party where Poltoo met the African woman. One can notice the loss of roots in case of the second generation immigrants when Maya and Mrs. Chatterji discuss and get disturbed due to noise from the upstairs rooms:

*Upstairs the ghost doesn’t hear the music of nostalgia. The ghost thumps and thumps. The ghost makes its own vehement music. Maya hears in its voice madness, self-hate.*  (Mukherjee 105)

Mrs. Chatterji is too much Indian who feels that Poltoo will never marry the African Muslim woman and prays the Goddess chanting with a harmonium:

*Come, goddess, come, muse, come to us hapless peoples’ rescue.*

(Mukherjee 107)

This shows how the immigrants carry their faith and ethnicity to the host countries. Once Mrs. Chatterji confesses her thoughts about the limitations and restrictions of marriages on the freedom of women and this reveals the hypocrisy and hollowness in her life:

*Divorced women can date, they can go to bars, discos. They can see mens, many mens. But inside marriage there is so much loneliness.*
Maya visits the periodical room—‘an asylum for homesick aliens’ and responds to an advertisement in an Indian newspaper by Ashok Mehta seeking the new emancipated Indo-American woman with zest for life and at ease in U.S.A. and yet her ethics are rooted in Indian tradition. She is moved by the good looks of Ashok and begins to fondle him around the neck and will wait for this ‘Hindu God’ to ring her up again. But it seems from every direction that her relation with this ‘God’ is going to develop into torrid sex. Although, Maya would not disclose her various abortive relationships she has, yet Mehta knows that like him she also was not free from ‘problems’. Maya knows from her immigrant experience that love is anarchy and Brahmin isn’t caste, better it is a metaphor for breaking one small rule and the constellation collapsing. When her landlord Ted Suminiski asks her to vacate her room as he is getting married, she has no option than accepting to live with her new landlord-cum mate Fred, who has no arms. Maya is prepared to make love even to a man without arms.

“Fathering” is a story of Eng; one of the twin daughters of ‘the honeyest-skinned bar girl’ in Saigon, where Jason goes as a soldier during the Vietnam War and marries with her. Ten years later, he breaks up his marriage and later marries with Sharon. Eng comes to live with her father Jason, but she doesn’t like her step-mother Sharon. Eng behaves very strangely and speaks with the spirit of her Grandma, and always asks the spirit to help her. She wishes her father to leave Sharon and live alone with her, love only her. Sharon becomes very sick of Eng. She requests her husband:

Everything was fine until she got here. Send her back, Jase. If you love me, send her back. (Mukherjee 123)

Both, Eng and Sharon claim Jason. Perhaps, Eng’s black colour is the cause of dislike for her. Jason as a father seems to have forgotten the colour discrimination. He says:

I cannot help wandering if maybe Asian skin bruises differently from ours, even though I want to say skin is skin; especially hers is skin like mine. (Mukherjee 121)

These lines also focus on the intimacy in the relationship between a father and daughter. But his wife Sharon feels low and depressed and has to be put on sedatives. His reading of sci-fi novel for sick Eng continues even after she is asleep and the lines from the novel bring the fact of the immigrant aliens occupying the country:
Aliens have taken over small towns all over the country. Idaho, Nebraska: no state is safe from aliens. (Mukherjee 121)

The father is caught between his wife and daughter and foresees the inevitable breaking of the family. The past haunts him; from which the escape is almost impossible. This is symbolically presented in the following lines:

*The shrubs and bushes my ex-wife planted clog the front path. I’ve put twenty years into this house. The steps, the path, the house all have a right to fall apart.* (Mukherjee 122)

Mukherjee’s next story “Jasmine” illustrates the Indo-Canadian consciousness. Jasmine is an illegal immigrant using her wits to do something good with her life. Her father has paid to the Daboos for a good-earning husband. Jasmine as a girl with ambitions comes from Trinidad-’a nothing place, an island stuck in the middle of nowhere’ to America searching for opportunities for advancement. About Ann Arbor she learns that it educates and all the barriers come crashing down. She wishes to fulfill her physical and intellectual higher goals. She finds a very affectionate family in need of her service. The family is of an American married biology teacher Bill Moffitt and his wife Lara. Bill seduces Jasmine when Lara is out of the house for her performances on the road. She has no option than submitting herself to Bill:

*She was a bright, pretty girl with no visa, no papers, and no birth certificate. Nothing other than what she wanted to invent and tell. She was a girl rushing wildly into future.* (Mukherjee 138)

Intensely loved by Bill, now Jasmine determines to become a ‘flower’ of Ann Arbor.

“Danny’s Girls” brings in light the realities related to the life of Indian young girls supplied to the white Americans to satisfy their sexual lust. Another important aspect of the story is that it focuses the life conditions of the immigrants in the U.S.A. The story is narrated by a young boy, whose father has left his mother for a Trinidad woman and he is being brought up by his mother. He tells the truth about his parents:

*He (his father) sat around Lini’s house moaning about the good old days and grumbling about how life in America was until finally the women organized a coup and chucked him out. My mother sold papers in the subway kiosks, twelve hours a day, seven days a week.*

(Mukherjee 141-142)

The corrupt immigration officers take bribe to let the illegal migrants to enter and live in America. The narrator narrates the truth:
The immigration inspectors never suspected a thing. I never understand why men would pay a lot of money – I think the going rate was fifty thousand rupees – to come here. (Mukherjee 142)

Danny’s real name is Dinesh. He is an Indian who supplies girls to the American sahibs and earns money in dollars. He sells Indian docile girls to hard-up Americans for real bucks. The rate for an old world wife, who knows her place and would breed like crazy is at least twenty thousand dollars. Danny would promise to send money to the girls’ family in India and their parents and relatives feel very happy for getting money for the curse of having daughters. Aunt Lini is a shrewd businesswoman, a widow who lends money to needy immigrant in America for rate double the prime and if she senses any risk, it is triple the prime. The narrator’s mother believes and tells others that her son is going to Columbia University for the Engineering School, but in reality he assists Danny in smuggling and supplying Indian girls to Americans. The Indians are supposed to work only as accountants and engineers in the America. The narrator tells:

Out in Flushing we got a different message. Indian boys were placed on earth to become accountants and engineers. Even old Idi Amin was placed on earth to force Indians to come to America to become accountants and engineers. (Mukherjee 145)

The immigrants also have among themselves various relationships. The discrimination between the poor and the rich classes is carried forward even in immigration by the Indians. The narrator reveals:

I grew up hating rich people, especially rich Indian immigrants who didn’t have the problems of Uganda and a useless father, but otherwise were no better than I. (Mukherjee 146)

It is also truth that the immigrants, either rich or poor, have the same fate and get the same treatment by the Americans.

The teen-aged narrator feels attracted to Pammy, a daughter of rich Indian immigrant family, but her father never allows any immigrant boy around her. He then falls in love with Danny’s girl named Rosie. He dares even to rebel against Danny for the love of Rosie. He confesses:

Rosie was the kind of girl who could make me happy, but even I knew she was not the kind of girl I could marry. It was confusing. Thoughts
of Rosie made me want to slash the throats of rivals. Thoughts of Pammy made me want to wipe out her whole family.

(Mukherjee 146-147)

Mukherjee's second last story in the collection “Buried Lives” narrates the plight of a Shi Lankan Tamil teacher Venkatesan and gives an idea of the hardships and the hazards faced by the illegal immigrants in America. He faces some serious disappointments because he could not put up with the revolutionary and violent struggles of Tamil Tigers and anti-Buddhist rally of Dr. Pillai in Sri Lanka. But he travels out and eventually reaches America. He falls in love with a widow named Queenie, who will make him a future German citizen. He is one of the many undocumented transients who are accommodated like chicks, on tiered bunks in a transit motel run by a Tamil and his widowed cousin.

The last story “The Management of Grief” is a story of the plight of immigrants who lose their close relatives in a crash of plane. This tragedy brings the immigrants together under the heading of “relatives” and the issues of family relations, social relations and cultural relations come to the focus. Pam is the elder daughter of Kusum who complains that her mother loves more her younger sister. She expresses her grief to Mrs. Sharma:

   *You think I don’t know what Mummy’s thinking? Why her? That’s what. That’s sick! Mummy wishes my little sister were alive and I were dead.* (Mukherjee 182)

An Irish social worker, Miss. Judith Templeton wants to provide help from the government’s side to the affected people, but the communication gape leads to misunderstandings. She wishes Mrs. Bhave, who can better communicate with immigrant Indians in their language, to help her in this task. Templeton says to Mrs. Bhave:

   *.. I have no experience with a tragedy of this scale—and with the complications of culture, language, and customs.* (Mukherjee 183)

There are hundreds of affected people who do not speak English and some women have never handled money or gone on a bus. The old parents have never gone outside of their bedrooms and to such immigrants, Miss Templeton wants to provide financial help from the government’s side. The interpreters also lack the human touch with which the help is to be provided to them.
The tragedy and the strong emotions compel the immigrant women to change themselves. When Mrs. Bhave and Kusum carry the coffins of the dead relative to India, at the airport a policeman wants to check the coffins for doubts of smuggling. At that time, Mrs. Bhave asks very boldly to the officer:

You bastard! You think we’re smuggling contraband in those coffins.

(Mukherjee 189)

She says that once upon a time they were well brought up women, were dutiful wives who kept their heads veiled, their voices shy and sweet. But now, she dares to threaten the officer. Mrs. Bhave’s condition represents the condition of all the immigrants of the world. She tells about her trapped condition:

I am trapped between two modes of knowledge. At thirty-six, I am too old to start over and too young to give up. Like my husband’s spirit, I flutter between worlds.  (Mukherjee 189)

The discussion about the immigrants’ condition at abroad between Mrs. Bhave and Dr. Ranganathan brings in focus the realities related to their position in the host country. Mrs. Bhave narrates:

Talk is all we have, says Dr. Ranganathan, who has also resisted his relatives and returned to Montreal and to his job, alone. He says, whom better to talk with than other relatives? We’ve been melted down and recast as a new tribe. (Mukherjee 189)

The cultural difference between the Indians and the Europeans is apparent in the incident when, Miss. Templeton and Mrs. Bhave go to help the Sikh family which has lost both of the sons. The old parents refuse to sign any paper out of fear of losing everything in the host country. They hope that their sons will return. About this state of mind, Mrs. Bhave explains to Miss. Templeton:

I want to say, In our culture, it is a parent’s duty to hope.

(Mukherjee 195)

The story ends with a comment on the uncertainty and ever-changing life and fate of the immigrants:

I do not know where this voyage I have began will end. I do not know which direction I will take. I dropped the package on a park bench and started walking. (Mukherjee 189)

An American critic John Coates praises this collection of stories for its picture of collective cultural impact on both the immigrants and the Americans. He observes:
What was the greatest American novel supposed to do, back in the days when we still believed in it, if it was to take some kind of a definitive measure of our collective character, then Bharati Mukherjee has come closer to that goal with this book of stories. (Coates)

To sum up one may say that Bharati Mukherjee's works mainly focus on the issues related to the Indian immigrant women and their struggle in migration. She is at her best to draw on her immigrant experiences which are explored through the East and West relationship in context of the great melting pot of culture in the U.S.A. and Canada. Her focus is on the culture shock that an immigrant experiences after the feelings of depression and frustration while adjusting between two tremendously different cultures.

The protagonist of *The Tiger's Daughter* Tara Banerjee is Mukherjee’s autobiographical representation as an outsider in India, as she leaves the subcontinent to marry an American *mleccha* and lives in North America. Tara represents women who try to assimilate in the alien culture and to accept the changed identity while throwing away their own culture. Tara is a daughter of an industrialist Bengal Tiger. In America she senses the discrimination and always prays to the Goddess for her divine power not to break down in front of the Americans. Her feelings of the despair and nostalgia lead her to create an India around herself by hanging silk scarves in the apartment, by using the typical Bengali terms and retaining her maiden surname after the marriage. She feels completely insecure with her foreigner husband in an alien country. She comes to India to erase magically all her hesitations and fears at abroad. Tara leaves India in search of her dreams and again nostalgically comes to India in search of her Indian dreams.

A series of adventures in India leads Tara to the final self-realization and reconciliation. The deteriorating situation of India depresses and disgusts her and she at last determines to leave for the U.S.A. where her husband is. A fusion of the American and the Indian in her personality results in her inability to take refuge either in her old Indian-self or in the newly discovered American-self. It is a confrontation between the illusion and reality. This leads Tara to repent on her tour to India. She expects happy Bengal of her childhood, but is confronted to the Calcutta with beggars, children afflicted with leprosy and eating off the street, superficiality in the life, the ugly and violent riots and her rape by the politician.
Tara’s life as an Indian immigrant wife of an American presents the dark realities of the life of women in the alien cultures. Tara realizes the distance that causes her inability to correct the mistakes and misunderstandings of her American husband and her relatives in India. Her Aunt Jharna reminds her about her lost status among the relatives due to her marriage with a foreigner. Tara feels that her mother’s attitude towards her is changed because her mother also is not happy with Tara’s marriage. Tara is caught in an antithetical tension because her family and friends consider her marriage as an emancipated gesture and her husband gives her no credits. Though she does not deserve, she has to do the works which belittle her status and self-respect. She feels that she is a woman only to clean the bathrooms at home in America. She feels ignored and alienated among her own friends and family. She tries to cope with her own troubles in America and India, but in her attempts creates troubles for others. Her attempts to adjust with her family and friends fail and she strongly senses the breakdown and invisible gap.

Mukherjee has presented the problems of a displaced person in the adopted as well as at the native country. Caught between two contrasting worlds, Tara forgets the steps of the rituals during the prayers. It alerts her about the loss of religion and her own cultural heritage. The impact of American culture kills her simple desire to behave like an ordinary Indian. Her every attempt fails to provide her the peace. After her seduction by Mr. Tundanwala, she realizes that she cannot share this knowledge with any of her Indian friends and India no longer yields her recognition and she decides to return. This is the planned escape, but destiny could not allow and before she takes off for America, she becomes a victim of the violence. This suggests that a person can escape from the roots either through death or by keeping on hanging forever. In this way, Tara’s search turns out ironically frustrating and results in her disillusionment, alienation, depression and her tragic end. Her thinking about her American husband when death is approaching indicates that she finds greater love and security with a foreigner, instead of finding it in the arms of her father or mother.

Mukherjee's *The Middleman and Other Stories* comprises of stories dealing with the problems of the women immigrated in America. Their social and cultural traditions and practices at homeland are inevitably contrasting to the American culture. The immigration, transformation and changing new America are the central themes of these stories. Her immigrant woman protagonists get changed in the style and psyche in the process of adaptation to the American culture and ethos.
Mukherjee’s stories present very disturbing or discomforting lives of the women in the multi-cultural society, where they exhibit a deep awareness of the social reality surrounding them. The multi-cultural ethos leads to the struggle for a new life without complete break down with the past.

“The Middleman” portrays Maria’s ruthless struggle for survival where her adroit adulteries are her mainstay in surviving at the Latin American landscape of violence, brutality and dog-eat-dog conditions of existence. “A Wife’s Story” is about the humiliations and insults that the immigrant Indian married woman suffers. She becomes enough American to flirt like a free bird with Imre and thinks that leaving home has given her these relations, confidence and a new knowledge. In New York, she broadens her horizons and determines not to return under the dominance of her mother-in-law and an indifferent husband. “Loose Ends” focuses on the feelings of alienation and the emptiness in relationships of the immigrants due to the lack the proper communication and suggests the greedy predatoriness of the contemporary American society. In “Orbiting” immigrant Italian Renata’s breakup with Vic represents ease in the American culture, rather than the abruptness with which love affairs are ruptured. Renata picks up an immigrant Afghani lover Ro and very much caught in sexual passion she sleeps with him for many times. Her American father with superiority complex thinks that the other people stage coups out of spite and misery.

“Fighting for the Rebound” is a story of the breaking relationship of an immigrant Philippine woman with her American husband because of the complaints and reference to his past relations. Blanquita herself leaves Griff and then remains to a status of a nervous wreck. The practicality of life turns them lonely and alienated which becomes the source of exploitation. In “The Tenant” an Indian immigrant Maya Sanyal believes that a person has to leave his home and try out his wings. She comes out of the stability of traditional culture of Calcutta to try in the new culture of New York as an emancipated woman experiencing absolute freedom in her free associations with men. For her India is suffering with the dowry deaths, discrimination, castism, bribery and corruption. In America Maya has slept with many nameless men, changing her boy-friends for the lack of adjustment and has become indiscreet. When her landlord asks her to vacate her room, Maya is prepared to make love even with a man without arms. “Fathering” is a story of a black coloured Eng who comes to live with her father Jason and strangely speaks with the spirit of her
Grandma. She wishes her father to leave her step-mother Sharon and live alone with her and love only her. The claim of Eng and Sharon on Jason causes inevitable breaking of the family. The past is haunting him; from which the escape is almost impossible.

“Jasmine” is about an illegal Indian immigrant woman searching for a good-earning husband and opportunities for advancement to fulfill her higher goals in America. Jasmine is blackmailed and seduced by her master, an American married biology teacher Bill Moffitt. “Danny’s Girls” brings in light the realities related to the life of Indian young girls supplied to the white Americans to satisfy their sexual lust. It focuses on the corrupt immigration officers and the life conditions of the immigrants in the U.S.A. “Buried Lives” narrates the hardships and the hazards faced by the illegal immigrants to find citizenship. “The Management of Grief” is a story of the condition and emotions of immigrants who lose their close relatives in a crash of plane. The tragedy brings immigrants together and the issues of family relations, social relations and cultural relations come to the focus. The cultural differences between the Indians and the Europeans cause communication gape and misunderstandings and the social workers like Miss. Templeton feel unable to provide help to the affected people. Once well brought up, shy, sweet and dutiful Indian wives are totally changed. They represent the condition of all the immigrants in the world.

Mukherjee has realistically presented problems of the young women of Third World immigrant population, who cherish the dream of emigrating to America for higher prosperity. The dreamed American is different from real complex one with the smugglers, robbers, pimps and middlemen. She portrays the situations and difficulties of the desperate immigrants’ activities. To conclude, one may agree with S.K. Tikoo who comments:

“Bharati Mukherjee succeeds in a big way in welding the socio-cultural theme of immigration and transformation with the romantic theme of love and romance which makes the American dream of the immigrants a realizable possibility”. (Tikoo 147)

II.IV: Conclusion:

Mukherjee’s The Tiger’s Daughter presents the image of a woman who tries to assimilate in the alien culture and to accept the changed identity while overthrowing her own culture. Tara faces the problems of alienation and isolation in
both the host country and at her motherland. Tara’s spirit is different with which she overthrows the Indian culture and adjusts with the American. She feels tension between the two socio-cultural environments, between the feelings of rootlessness and nostalgia as an outsider in a no-man’s land, where she struggles for the survival. There she carves her own new territory and develops a new personality with emotional ties to both the homeland and the adapted land. This new self makes her forget her native culture and her return to India results in feeling India as an alien country, as she has lost her native taste and touch. In fact, her new self is responsible for the disruption of her pleasure, but along with it the deteriorating social change and her new perspective towards Indian poverty and dirtiness culminate in her discomfort, frustration and disgust.

The predicament of the woman protagonist of Mukherjee particularly shows that she has to go through deep suffering while realizing her ambitions and experiencing a sense of liberation from the tradition. She needs to surrender her inherited cultural notions and prejudices during the process of transformation into a new person flowering in the new culture. She survives on her very optimism and struggle to find her goals in an alien country. The immigration is naturally followed by a process of adjustment and transformation of her personality. This transformation affects her marital union with husband, who belongs to a different caste, culture and value-system. Before their relationships develop immigrants have to pass through a process of a partial liberation from their inherited past values. They have to sacrifice their pre-union relationships or cultures and affirm outright acceptance of the new arrangements.

Mukherjee’s immigrant married or divorced women protagonists in *The Middleman and Other Stories* have an inclination to form relationships which terminate in the sexual misadventure. They pick up and mix with the men so freely and satisfy their sensuality without stopping to form the new arrangements. We cannot call them truly liberated women. Their disorderly conducts and promiscuity cause doubts about their notions and dreams of immigration and settlement in the United States. A question comes to one’s mind that whether this disorderliness is a feature of the entire American life or only the reality of the life lived by immigrants there? They make United States a mini-world infested with contrasting shades of the religious and political ideologies. The unstable marriages and marriages breaking up too soon cause the pathetic condition of the immigrants who grow into freaks and
emotionally unbalanced individuals. The life chosen by the immigrants may appear to be seriously deficient in a moral system of their traditional culture of origin.

In fact, Mukherjee's immigrant women try to be completely liberal in the matter of sex to solve their problems, but contradictorily that creates more serious problems in their lives. These immigrants mainly belong to the lower rungs of the society in their countries of origin. They have innate to repudiate their past which they do by going as far as they can and so entering a country which provides them the unrestrained liberty to realize their identity and bring the best out of themselves. A majority of the immigrant women particularly use sex as a means to establish relationships with the Americans. It is an ephemeral bond which connects most of the characters in the stories. They constantly move away from each other and while establishing new relations the pattern remains the same.

With the real, modern and lifelike characters, Mukherjee realistically presents the cross-section of immigrant population. They represent people from the Third World countries, who cherish the dream of emigrating to America for higher prosperity and then after the arrival aspire to settle permanently there. Her presentation of situations and people are characteristically American. The American experience is too complex as everywhere the smugglers, robbers, pimps and middlemen are arranging on commissions anything one desires. She portrays with great fidelity the details of the situations and difficulties the people face in getting visas and travel documents or foreign exchange. She has given very a realistic picture of the touts who fleece the desperate immigrants and underground activities of the guerrillas. Mukherjee presents America accommodating immigrants as a country like India with its unity and diversity of cultures, religions, faiths, customs, ideologies, languages, dress, food habits and etc. To the immigrant women in America, the concept of family life seems to be totally different than the Indian in terms of security and stability. The past life of the Indian women seems to be rich and gorgeous, but the chosen married or immigrant life in America proves so disgusting.

Mukherjee’s abundant use of erotic and sexual elements in each of the stories as a fixed pattern sounds unrealistic. The story begins with the woman protagonist’s process of immigration or settling down and ends with her invariably making love with a partner of the opposite sex, who is fully rooted in the American soil. It seems that the powerful protest from the housewife or the husband against the adulterous sexual adventure of the protagonists is not considered seriously. Her stories give an
impression that the moral norms do not exist at all and the sexual promiscuity is a socially recognized and accepted fact. The stories suddenly switch over to the sensual and romantic scenes and seem to develop a tendency towards the pornography. She has given the equal dignity and equal freedom to both the women and men, who are neither restrained nor bound by the obligations towards their children nor the collective family responsibility. It is quite strange that the protagonists’ dreams of a bright future are free from prejudices of the narrow social and cultural background. How these dreams can only be realized in the cosmopolitan or humanistic atmosphere available in America? Actually, the people of free spirit keep on moving from one continent to another continent in search of better opportunities, material prosperity or spiritual quest. Only the immigration from the Third World countries to the West is considered and the Eastward movement of the Westerns is ignored, which too may have similar adventures.

However, Mukherjee’s stories emphasize with the immigrants’ overriding sense of attachment to their nation of origin which supersedes all other problems and they pursue their personal development and goals contributory to the strength of nation. They desire not only for the social and cultural conglomeration but also for a transformation into a new person.

II.V: References:


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CHAPTER III
THE PREDICAMENT OF WOMEN IN JHUMPA LAHIRI’S THE NAMESAKE AND INTERPRETER OF MALADIES

III.I: Introduction:

Jhumpa Lahiri is a young writer of the Indian background who belongs to the second generation of the non-immigrant Americans. Her novels and short stories are set at the large submerged territory of 'cross-culturalism’. This cross-culturalism does not allow understanding fully the meaning of her protagonists’ straddling the line between two cultures. One of the scholars Jaydeep Sarangi aptly comments:

Jhumpa Lahiri’s stories are the gateways into the large submerged territory of 'cross-culturalism’. It is a metaphor to share cultures... something that will allow them/us to share, instead of dividing, what is on either side. (Sarangi 116)

Jhumpa Lahiri emphases the Indians for whom India is a strange land. Her personality is shaped by her still Indian parents and frequent childhood visits to the India. Her works present the complicated individuals who express their emotions and experiences. Nalini Iyer examines:

Lahiri's strength as a story teller is characterization. The people she creates are real, alive, complicated, and individual. She never descends into stereotypes nor does she engage in grand generalizations about social and political relationships. Instead, she sweeps her reader through a range of emotions and experiences and lets her characters speak for themselves. (Iyer 07)

Once acquainted with her characters, the readers never forget her characters.

Lahiri presents the conflicts and struggles that the immigrants face in the interpersonal relationships and the stress of daily existence. Avoiding the direct explanations, she merely mentions the issues and leaves them for the reader to get a chance to finish or contribute to the story. Another her impressive aspect is her ability to write in the voices of both the genders. On writing from the male perspective, in an interview in the Houghton Mifflin Books online "Reader's Guide" for The Namesake, Lahiri declares:
It was an exhilarating and liberating thing to do . . . It’s a challenge, as well. I always have to ask myself, would a man think this? Do this? (Lahiri houghtonmifflinbooks.com)

This method of narration from both the perspectives facilitates her ability to balance the gender representation in her books. Lahiri writes about the second generation Indian-Americans while using her personal experiences as raw material. She draws all stories upon the different aspects of her Indian background, as some stories take place in India; others involve the lives of Indian immigrants in the United States. Lahiri explains her own lack of self-understanding through the relationships between the American-born Indian characters and India, characters defined by isolation of some form or another, feeling of missing something vital to the identity and the question identity and their future. She uses the unnamed narrator to tell about her own immigration and she does not let herself lose her Indian identity in the efforts to become an American. In an interview with India-West, Lahiri admits:

*I'm lucky that I'm between two worlds . . . I don't really know what a distinct South Asian identity means. I don't think about that when I write, I just try to bring a person to life.*

(Lahiri India-West Sept. 2003)

Lahiri’s Interpreter of Maladies (1999) focuses on the inabilities of the characters to communicate with the important people in their lives and the lack of communication pushes them in exclusion, loneliness and in the search for fulfillment. These stories focus also on the complex and conflicted world of the Indian immigrants caught between two cultures in the United States. She uses the themes of conflict in relationships between the couples, families and friends to explore the ideas of isolation and personal and cultural identities. Her characters frequently encounter the unresolved identity crises because of their inabilities to reconcile their American identity with their Indian identity. Her characters' cultural isolation causes their extreme personal isolation. The sense of isolation governs the events in each story.

Lahiri’s novel The Namesake (2003) deals with the themes of immigration and conflicting collision of cultures with highly distinct in religious, social, and ideological differences. The Ganguli family struggles to find the places in the American society, while respecting their roots during adapting to the American culture. Ashima focuses the privacy of Bengali culture. The struggle between two cultures begins when the Gangulis wish to raise their children with the Bengali culture
and values in the surrounding culture of the United States. Much later in their lives the second generation immigrants truly begin to value their Bengali heritage.

Lahiri’s next collection of stories *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) reflects how the people cope with two separate cultures in the new places free of one’s ancestors and the past. It repeats a maternal womanism, but for quite opposite effects and again the physical and cultural maternities become a duty to share for the female and male protagonists. It tells the stories like a mother caught between the career and obligation to children and a father explores issues of the difficult gender roles in America. It explores the complex immigrants’ emotions such as loneliness, love, jealousy and homesickness which compel them to empathize with others. It also presents the stories about the immigrant couples who share the common experience of a new culture and discover a strong connection with one another; about a mother’s death affects relationships among son, father, stepmother and two young stepsisters and about a woman’s complex affair with a married man.

Lahiri suggests that the loss of Indian identity is at the root of the isolation that well-adjusted and happy immigrant characters experience. These characters work to keep intact their connection with India. Though they have become the Americans, they have not ceased to be the Indians. But in some ways, Lahiri herself struggles to understand Indian culture. One may agree with Chakrabarty who observes:

*Lahiri’s works reveal how such a dream of homogeneity is subverted by the absent presence / present absence of the country of origin in the case of the diasporic Bengalis / Indians.* (Chakrabarty 26)

### III. II: The Predicament of Women in *The Namesake*:

The second book by Jhumpa Lahiri *The Namesake* is a story of the predicament of two generations of the immigrants. It portrays how in the immigration and collision of cultures struggle comes out for the motherhood. It explores various problems in the identity building for the first and the second generations of the immigrants. Lahiri in an interview to Houghton Mifflin Company confesses about the source of the identity crisis in her works:

*The question of identity is always a difficult one, but especially so for those who are actually displaced, as immigrants are, or those grow up in two worlds simultaneously, as is the case for their children. The older get, the more I’m aware that I have somehow inherited a sense of*
exile from my parents, even though in many ways I am so much more American than they are. (Lahiri houghtonmifflinbooks.com)

The novel *The Namesake* examines the nuances that are involved in being caught between highly distinct in religious, social and ideological differences of two conflicting cultures. It’s a story of Ashima Ganguli who arrives in Boston as a young bride after her arranged marriage and realizes how isolated she has become while preparing to deliver her first child in a hospital at Massachusetts.

In fact, an Indian woman wishes the emotional support at least at the time of her first delivery. At home in Calcutta, Ashima might be surrounded by all the women in her family, but in the United States she struggles through the language and cultural barriers, as well as her own fears as she delivers her first child. In America she feels nothing normal. She can bear the physical pains, but she is more afraid of the consequences of the motherhood in a foreign land:

*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.* (Lahiri 06)

She misses her favorite Indian food during her pregnancy. She nostalgically tries to compensate for it on her own:

*Ashima has been consuming this concoction throughout her pregnancy, a humble approximation of the snack sold for pennies on Calcutta sidewalks and on railway platforms throughout India, spilling from newspaper cones.* (Lahiri 01)

She still carries a copy of the Bengali magazine *Desh* to everywhere, which she has brought to read on her ride to Boston. She reads nostalgically each of the short stories, poems and articles a dozen times.

At the beginning of the novel the issues of culture and identity are presented. Ashima does not use her husband Ashoke’s name openly. According to the Bengali-Indian culture:

*It's not the type of thing Bengali wives do...a husband's name is something intimate and therefore unspoken, cleverly patched over.*

(Lahiri 02)

Ashima has immigrant friends like Maya and Dilip Nandi and Dr. Gupta as the substitute for her Indian relatives to welcome her son in the world. She feels the pity for her son:
Without a single grandparent or parents or uncle or aunt at her side, the baby's birth, like most everything in America, feels somehow haphazard, only half true. As she strokes and suckles and studies her son, she can't help but pity him. She has never known of a person entering the world so alone, so deprived. (Lahiri 24-25)

Ashima misses the Bengali naming ceremony and the guidelines from elder women in her family in India. The American rule is that a mother cannot leave the hospital before giving the child a legal name. According to Indian tradition, Ashima's grandmother is chosen for naming her son, but the latter never arrives and soon after the grandmother dies. They need to break away from their naming tradition. In America there is a tradition of naming after the ancestors which is contrary to the Bengali culture:

This sign of respect in America and Europe, this symbol of heritage and lineage, would be ridiculed in India. Within Bengali families, individual names are sacred, inviolable. They are not meant to be inherited or shared. (Lahiri 28)

However, Ashoke names his son as ‘Gogol’ after the name of his favorite famous Russian author. This is the same Russian writer whose book saved him in the rail accident. In that accident many people died, but Ashoke survives and only his back breaks. The Bengali children are given two names according to their culture: one that is a pet name, used only by the family and close friends and another is a good name used by the rest of society. So, later Gogol’s public name becomes ‘Nikhil’. Ashima approves this name given after the same Russian favorite writer Nikolai Gogol. The America regulations compel the Indian immigrants to make the adjustments with their original culture. But she is unhappy at missing the letter by her grandmother containing an identity for her son:

She told him she liked it well enough, though later, alone, she'd wept, thinking of her grandmother, who died earlier in the year, and of the letter, forever hovering somewhere between India and America, containing the good name she’d chosen for Gogol.

(Lahiri 56)

The letter symbolically represents the hanging and blank identity for the immigrants. Later, Gogol rejects his proper name and wants to be called as Nikhil by the society and his family. This first attempt to reject a dual identity causes him the years of
distress. The importance of a namesake and the identity becomes a central concept throughout the story of the novel as Gogol struggles with his Indo-American identity and rebels against his parents throughout the life.

Ashima’s physical mothering results in the caretaker’s role that leads to the cultural maternity which embodies individual, familial and communal identity formulation and nurturing. The Indian cultural burden for a woman compels her to adjust with the situation without complaining for the sake of her son and her father’s prestige.

*The apartment is drafty during winter, and in summer, intolerably hot. The thick glass windowpanes are covered by dreary dark brown curtains. There are even roaches in the bathroom, emerging at night from the cracks in the tiles. But she has complained none of this. She kept her disappointment to herself, not wanting to offend Ashoke, or worry her parents.* (Lahiri 30)

The novel is a stunning example of the physical and cultural womanist maternity of a mother protagonist supported by the positive Indian-Americans. Ashima accepts the reality that there is no one to assist her in the America and the very lack of such amenities is the American way of life. She feels so lonely at her house when her husband is at his work. Her husband Ashoke feels guilty for putting her in such a loneliness, by bringing her in America:

*Early mornings, when he senses that she is quietly crying, he puts an arm around her but can think nothing to say, feeling that it is his fault, for marrying her, for bringing her here.* (Lahiri 33)

When her husband goes to the university and she is alone at the house with Gogol, she suffers from sleeplessness. She alone sits and cries for the whole day, cries as she feeds her son, cries between the sleeping and feeding and cries after the postman’s visit as there are no letters from Calcutta. Even she cries at finding no answer to her calls to her husband at his department. She spends hours in the apartment napping, sulking and rereading her same five Bengali novels on the bed. All this represents an Indian immigrant woman’s loneliness in an alien country.

The life of an immigrant is like the pregnancy forever. Ashima is shocked to know about her father’s death and in America there are no relatives to meet and console her. Gradually, she becomes a cultural mother for her community in America and starts gathering people from the same background around her. Her all friends in
America hail from Calcutta and for this reason only they are friends. All the immigrant husbands are teachers, researchers, doctors and engineers in America. Their wives are homesick and bewildered and turn to Ashima for the recipes and advices. It focuses on the fact that men are busy in working somewhere out of the house, but women lonely at home suffer more than their husbands. Ashima continues to celebrate the Indian ceremonies and functions and at all such functions she recalls and misses her relatives in Indian. Her feelings at the time of Annaprasan ceremony highlight her inner self:

血糖’s eyes fill with tears as Gogol’s mouth eagerly invites the spoon. She can’t help wishing her own brother were here to feed him, her own parents to bless him with their hands on his head.

(Lahiri 40)

Ashima nurtures the intercultural identity growth of her son Gogol. Essentially, her motherhood is a set of behaviors based on the caretaking, management, nurturance, education, spiritual meditation and dispute resolution. Ashima becomes a mother of culture for herself, her son and many young Bengali-Americans and fosters the new cultural transmissions. Lahiri interweaves Ashima’s physical maternity with the communal maternity:

As the baby grows, so, too, does their circle of Bengali acquaintances… (Lahiri 38)

Ashoke and Ashima give their daughter single name to avoid the confusion which arose with Gogol's two names. They decide in advance on the name for the baby, but at this time they have to break with the Bengali culture of having two names. However, nicknames are hard to avoid in the Bengali families, so Sonali’s name ends up being Sonia. The daily life of immigrants in an alien culture demands them to adjust with the existing circumstances.

They have learned that schools at American will ignore parents’ instructions and resister a child under his pet name. The only way to avoid such confusion, they have concluded, is to do away with the pet name altogether, as many of their Bengali friends have already done.

(Lahiri 61-62)

Ashima learns about the Christmas for Sonia and Gogol, because her communal maternity is tied to her physical maternity. Once isolated and frightened Bengali Ashima now goes for the Christmas party at Cambridge which displays her
own liberation. It’s her cultural adjustment for the sake of her children that she starts celebrating Christmas, but the real challenge before her is to teach them about the Indian religious celebrations. Her ability to mother herself culturally is laid forth through translating the Christian Christmas holiday into Bengali language, while simultaneously explaining her own cultural rituals for the Bengali-Americans. She is always afraid of the American life style and she tries to protect her children from catching that life style. She remembers Alan and Judy’s apartment:

-just beyond the ceiling yet so different from her own, piles everywhere, piles of books and papers, piles of dirty plates on the kitchen counter, ashtrays the size of serving platters heaped with crushed-out cigarettes. (Lahiri 31-32)

Ashima sends Gogol to the Bengali language lessons held in the home of one of their friends. Teachers are considered similar to God in the Indian culture. But, the American school teachers, like Mr. Lawson, cannot survive the fifty-minute class without excusing for a cigarette and the girls in the class insist that the male teachers are indescribably sexy and have ranging crushes on them. Gogol’s American school arranges a study tour to a graveyard to read only the American surnames written on the stones. He is old enough to know that he himself will be burned, not buried. He feels very bad for this cultural fact. Ashima is not happy to know about the graveyard trip which doesn’t match to her Indian ethics:

Only in America are children taken to cemeteries in the name of art. What next, she demands to know, a trip to the morgue? In Calcutta the burning ghats are the most forbidden of places, she tells Gogol, and though she tries her best not to, though she was here, not there, both times happened, she sees her parents’ bodies, swallowed by flames. (Lahiri 70)

In America her children grow with the surrounding circumstances. They watch MTV, cut their pants off the bottom and follow the life style of America, which she tries her best to prevent and it turns out in the quarrels. Her daughter Sonia takes the English lessons from the same Mr. Lawson, joins a dance class and goes to the parities with boys. She develops a typical American smile in her face. There are frequent quarrels between Ashima and Sonia:

Ashima lives in fear that Sonia will color a streak of it blond, as Sonia has threatened on more than one occasion to do, and she will
have additional holes pierced in her earlobes at the mall. They argue violently about such things, Ashima crying, Sonia slamming doors.

(Lahiri 107)

Ashima ensures how to retain her cultural heritage throughout the familial and communal developments from powerless to powerful and even empowering the circumstances.

Gangulis feel strange among their relatives during the occasional visits to India. When returned to America, they feel that they are the only Gangulis in the world. In America there is nothing that can remind them of their hundreds of relatives in India. To Gogol and Sonia the eight month’s stay in India passes like a dream. And when they return to America, they mix up with their friends so quickly which becomes difficult for their parents:

They call up their American friends, who are happy enough to see them but ask them nothing about where they’ve been. And so the eight months are put behind them, quickly shed, quickly forgotten, like clothes for a special occasion, or for a season that passed, suddenly cumbersome, irrelevant to their lives. (Lahiri 88)

The first generation immigrants nurture the multicultural identity for their next generation. This provides them another means to explore the self and origins. Due to his name Gogol’s unique cultural identity forms the story of identity and self-discovery. Ashoke’s multi-cultural heritage, integrating elements of Russian literature, Bengali culture and American geographical space create a Bengali-American space for Gogol. By inscribing Gogol’s name on a birth certificate, Ashoke textually bestows a cross-cultural identity for him. Living in the United States where immigrants feel often ashamed of their differences from others, Gogol also suffers from the unique difference of his name. During adolescence, he desires to blend in but lives unnoticed as Americans never view him as an American. Being away from home at college makes it easy for Gogol to reject completely his identity as Gogol and become Nikhil. But at times, he feels as if he’s cast himself in a play, acting the part of twins, distinguishable to the naked eye and yet fundamentally different. He dreads his visits home where he is known as Gogol. To him his name ‘Gogol’ signifies all his discomforts to fit into two different cultures. Moreover, it is the name after his father’s favorite author and not his. And, Gogol is not the first name of the writer. So, Gogol Ganguli not only has a pet name turned into the good name, but a last name
turned into the first name. He knows none in the world, in Russia or India or America or anywhere, who shares his name, not even the source of his namesake:

*He hates having to tell people that it doesn’t mean anything ‘in India’. He hates having to wear a nametag on his sweater at Model United Nations Day at school. He even hates signing his name at the bottom of his drawings in art class. He hates that his name is both absurd and obscure, that it has nothing to do with who he is, that it is neither Indian nor American but of all things Russian.* (Lahiri 76)

As much as possible Gogol detaches himself for many years from his roots and his family. Gogol goes away from his family to Yale with a changed name and that sets up the barriers between Gogol and his family. The distance between Gogol and his parents continues to increase.

Gogol wants to be an American and not a Bengali. As attempts to do so, he starts smoking secretly from time to time when he and his friends get together to listen to records at one another’s homes. He becomes bold enough to kiss a girl in a party. He goes home less frequently, dates the American girls and turns angry when anyone calls him Gogol. During his college years, he continues to smoke cigarettes and marijuana and to go to many parties. When once he participates in a party at Ezra Stiles with a fake ID, he loses his virginity to a girl he cannot remember. For the first time, he introduces himself as Nikhil, a newly achieved identity, to a girl wearing a plaid woolen skirt and combat boots and mustard tights.

*The Namesake* portrays the constant struggle of the first generation immigrants and their children to find their place in the society. According to Dubey:

*The immigrant experience is complicated as a sensitive immigrant finds himself or herself perpetually at a transit station fraught with memories of the original home which are struggling with the realities of the new world.* (Dudey 22)

The first generation immigrants struggle when they adapt to a different culture and their children struggle while trying to respect their roots and adapting to the American society. Due to this difference, perhaps, they go far away from each other:

*He didn’t want to go home on the weekends, to go with them to pujos and Bengali parties, to remain unquestionably in their world.* (Lahiri 126)
Once, Gogol surprises his mother by calling the New Haven as a home. His three month’s stay there gives him the feeling of being at home. On the other hand, in spite of Ashima’s twenty years in America, she cannot bring herself to refer to Pemberton Road her home. Frustrated with the America, much later in their lives, the second generation immigrants truly begin to value their Bengali heritage.

Gogol is deeply attached with his white American college sweetheart Ruth. Though he sleeps with her, he cannot imagine her in his kitchen in the place of his mother. He never dares to tell his parents about her. His parents always point out the examples of Bengali men who marry the Americans and the marriages end in divorce. But, Gogol pities for his parents when they speak to him in this way and for having no experience of being young and in love. This brings out the generation gap between the immigrant parents and their children. Later, when Gogol and Ruth separate for the spring and summer vacations, the first time his longing for Ruth makes him realize the longing of his parents for the people they loved in India.

At a panel discussion about the Indian novels written in English, Gogol comes to know about the adjectives used for the immigrants like him in America. The Americans call immigrants ‘ABCD’, which stands for ‘American-Born Confused Deshi’. He also learns that the ‘C’ could stand for ‘conflicted’ and ‘deshi’ for ‘countrymen’ means ‘Indians’. He feels that the term is quite appropriate for him because during the trip to India his and Sonia’s American English accent always creates the confusion for their aunts and uncles. Moreover, his living with a pet name and a good name in America, where such distinction does not exist, surely is emblematic of the greatest confusion of all. In America, he avoids any ABCD friends because they remind him too much of the way his parents choose to live befriending the people only for the past they happen to share.

During his job in the New York City, Gogol becomes rather stiff and perpetually angry personality. He meets a very attractive and rather socially aggressive American girl named Maxine. She belongs to a very wealthy American family. Completely immersed in the love of Maxine, Gogol becomes a member of her family and helps them in the cooking and shopping. When Gogol introduces Maxine to his parents, Ashima dismisses Maxine as something that Gogol will eventually get over. Gogol envisions his mother’s feelings and reactions to the emotions and events he encounters. Gogol observes the difference between his mother and the American parents of Maxine at a dinner party:
His own mother would never have served so few dishes to a guest. She would have kept her eyes trained on Maxine, 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. (Lahiri 133)

Gogol compares the maternity and hospitality, especially of his American girl friend Maxine’s mother Lydia, with his own mother and concludes that the maternity is cultural. In observing Lydia, Gogol is struck by her difference from Ashima. Lydia entertains effortlessly, spends money lavishly and is very comfortable to acknowledge not only her daughter’s relationships but also her sex life. Gogol realizes the fate of his relationship with Maxine as a piece of cultural eccentricity. He loves Maxine for her American house and her parents’ American manner of living:

*He loves the mess that surrounded Maxine, her hundreds of things always covering her floor and her bedside table, her habit, when they are alone on the fifth floor, of not shutting the door when she goes to the bathroom. Her unkempt ways, a challenge to his increasingly minimalist taste, charm him. He learns to love the food she and her parents eat, the polenta and risotto, the bouillabaisse and osso buco, the meat baked in parchment paper.* (Lahiri 137)

Gogol realizes a total alienation from his Bengali roots when Lydia, Maxine and Gerald joke about mistaking his cultural and ethnic heritage as Italian. They are entirely unknown to his cultural values and background which are so central to his identity. Gogol realizes that he cannot deny his connection to his mother’s culture, her maternity, his proximity to his mother’s essentialism and his own need for the American-Bengali hybridity. In effect, he becomes an object of the comparison through which Lydia and her friends are allowed to better express their Americanness. Gogol tires to entirely mask his Bengali identity. Gogol’s realization results in immersing himself into an entirely Bengali-American relationship with his then-wife Moushumi.

Ashima is left all alone at house when Ashoke goes for the research project in Ohio and her children study somewhere in the other towns. She misses her husband and children so much. Once again alone at home, Ashima remembers her parents’
greeting cards send to her from India over last twenty-seven years. Whenever she is alone at home, she reads nostalgically all letters of her parents:

*She has saved her dead parents’ letters on the top shelf of her closet, in a large white purse she used to carry in the seventies until the strap broke. Once a year she dumps the letters onto her bed and goes through them, devoting an entire day to her parents’ words, allowing herself a good cry. She revisits their affection and concern, conveyed weekly. Faithfully, across continents – all the bit of news that had had nothing to do with her life in Cambridge but which had sustained her in those days nevertheless.* (Lahiri 160-161)

Ashima develops the cross-cultural sisterhood with the American co-workers at the library, where an American librarian offers her a job. She works at the library to pass the time. She makes her first American friends of women at work who are also living alone like her because they are divorced. It truly manifests Ashima’s cultural growth and represents her exploration into the American culture that is alike and yet different to her own. Lahiri shows Ashima’s similarities and differences to her American co-workers. They too are isolated, but their reasons differ, and because of her culture Ashima would never be alone despite divorce.

Ashoke dies of a massive heart attack and shortly changes everything to Ashima, Sonia and Gogol. At this time, Gogol realizes the cultural importance of the death rituals. Ashima throws away and sends back all the greeting cards for the Christmas. Her friends suggest her to go to India to see her brother and cousins, but she refuses to escape to Calcutta:

*She refuses to be so far from the place where her husband made his life, the country in which he died. ‘Now I know why he went to Cleveland,’ she tells people, refusing, even in death, to utter her husband’s name. ‘He was teaching me how to live alone’.*

(Lahiri 183)

Gogol slowly withdraws from Maxine as he tries to sort out his emotions. Maxine admits that she feels jealous of his mother and sister. This accusation strikes Gogol so hard that he has no energy to argue anymore. Gogol breaks off the relationship and begins to spend more time with his mother and sister. Maxine later gets engaged to another man. Sonali lives with Ashima occupying her childhood room once again.
She leaves the house early in the morning to take a bus and then a train to downtown Boston. Both of them observe their totally changed mother:

*Their mother has become thinner, her hair gray. The white column of her part, the sight of her bare wrists, pains Gogol when he first catches sight of her. From Sonia he learns of how their mother spends her evenings, alone in her bed, unable to sleep, watching television without sound.* (Lahiri 189)

Ashima changes to the extent that she is ready to accept Maxine as her daughter-in-law. She asks Gogol to patch-up the things with Maxine. She is ready to make all the adjustments for the sake of her dear son’s happiness. But, Gogol denies any possibility of Maxine in his life. After the breakup with Maxine, Ashima suggests Gogol to meet Moushumi— a daughter of her Bengali friend, the unfortunate as her intended American groom changed his mind at the last minute. Though reluctant to meet Moushumi, Gogol meets her anyway to please his mother. Moushumi Mazoomdar is his childhood friend who shares the same culture and background. They have celebrated the Christmas together in each others’ houses. This focuses on the oneness that the immigrants share in the America. Their common raising brings them together and they feel attracted towards each other and eventually get married. Gogol and Moushumi’s relationship is an example of the cultural identity construction. They are the Bengali-Americans who rely too much on the typical Bengali identity stereotypes such as over-education, preoccupation with the parental influence and the city and suburb living and the seeking to carve out their own identity. Their wedding is not what they wanted. They would have preferred a sort of venues their friends choose, but it is selected by their parents. After marriage Moushumi’s dissertation completion remains an excuse for her not being a mother.

However, tied down by the marriage Moushumi becomes a restless and begins to regret for what she has done. Gogol often feels like a poor substitute for Moushumi’s American ex-fiancé Graham. The predicament of Moushumi focuses on the failure and frustration in attempts to get united with the Americans. Graham’s refusal at the last stage indicates the impossibility of union between Indian and American:

*She was supposed to have been married a year ago, a wedding that he and his mother had Sonia had been invited to, but her fiancé, an*
American, had backed out of the engagement, well after the hotel had been booked, the invitations sent, the gift registry selected.

(Lahiri 192)

Similar to Gogol, Moushumi also shares the habits like smoking cigarette, drinking wine and working as an independent in the city. She hates her parents’ moving to America from London. She hates America for its vastness and less likeness with the India. At her twelve, she makes a pact with two other Bengali girls that she will never marry a Bengali man. They write a statement vowing never to do so. They spit on it at a time and bury it somewhere in the parents’ backyard. She also hates the Indian way of marriages. During her college days her American dreams are not fulfilled and when she goes to Paris, she begins to fall effortlessly into the affairs. The line below focus on her life in Paris:

With no hesitation, she had allowed men to seduce her in cafes, in parks, while she gazed at paintings in museums. She gave herself openly, completely, not caring about the consequences. . . . Some of them had been married, far older, fathers to children in secondary school. The men had been French for the most part, but also German, Persian, Italian, Lebanese. There were days she slept with one man after lunch, another after dinner. They were a bit excessive, she tells Gogol with a roll of her eyes, the type to lavish her with perfume and jewels. (Lahiri 215)

The relationship between Gogol and Moushumi seems to be an adjustment, not love, imposed upon them by their parents and the situation. Their parents are friends. Their contact is artificial and imposed. This is something like their relationship with the cousins in India and it lacks even the justification of the blood ties. Their visit to Paris renews Moushumi’s happy, liberal and full-of-joys past life she enjoyed once. It becomes an urgency of her life to regain the same happiness again. In a party attended with Moushumi at her friends’ house, Gogol realizes the reality of American cultural hypocrisy:

They are an intelligent, attractive, well-dressed crowd. Also a bit incestuous. The vast majority of them knew each other from Brown, and Gogol can’t even shake the feeling that half the people in the room have slept with one another. (Lahiri 236)
The difference between Bengali and American leads towards the impossibility to mesh them together. Though frequently with them in the parties, Gogol realizes how mismatched the American couples are:

And yet as much as Moushumi enjoys seeing Astrid and Donald, Gogol has recently began to notice that she is gloomy in the aftermath, as if seeing them serves only to remind her that their own lives will never match up. (Lahiri 238)

Moushumi receives a letter of approval for the research grants. Had she got it before her marriage, she would have accepted to go to France. But now she has the husband and marriage to consider. Then, she contacts a man named Dimitri—the same person who was the first to attract her sexuality and they begin an affair. After her adulterous act, Moushumi on one hand feels guilty and on the other she feels at peace. This is very complicated feeling that justifies her adultery, as if something like this is expected and the most necessary:

She wonders if she is the only woman in her family ever to have betrayed her husband, to have been unfaithful. This is what upsets her most to admit: that the affair causes her to feel strangely at peace, the complication of it calming her, structuring her day. (Lahiri 266)

When Gogol finds it out, they get divorced. By breaking the marriage of Gogol and Moushumi, Lahiri implies that the hybrid Bengali-American identity itself contains the kind of essentialism for the purer types of identities by which the Bengali and Caucasian-American identities are sometimes typified. Ashima feels guilty for causing Gogol to meet Moushumi and considers this as an American cultural influence which causes a severe damage to the Indian ethical and moral values:

How could she have known/ but unfortunately they have not considered it their duty to stay married, as the Bengalis of Ashoke and Ashima’s generation do. They are not willing to accept, to adjust, to settle for something less than their ideal of happiness. That pressure has given way, in case of subsequent generation, to American common sense.

(Lahiri 276)

Ashima changes totally by learning to do the things on her own. Though today she wears sari and still puts her long hair in a bun, it is not like she was in the Calcutta. Now, she decides to return to Indian with an American passport. Her daughter Sonia remains with her for the moral duty after her father’s death. When
Sonia marries, Ashima makes plans to travel and live with different portions of her family at different times during each year. But there are several other important observations to be made on this encounter. In America she misses India and when in India she will miss America.

At the end, Ashima sells the family home to live in India with her siblings for half of the year. Ashima begins a new chapter of her life, in which she plans to travel, split her remaining years between the Calcutta and America. As she sells her house, which is no longer necessary in her retirement, she hosts a final Bengali-American party to mark the end of her days in the home she shared with her husband, son and daughter on Pemberton Road. In the party, Ashima is honored by the guests for her communal maternity and they will miss Ashima’s encouraged cultural learning:

People talk of how much they’ve come to love Ashima’s Christmas Eve parties, that they’ve missed them these past few years, that it won’t be the same without her. They have come to rely on her, Gogol realizes, to collect them together, to organize the holiday, to convert it, to introduce the tradition to those who are new. (Lahiri 286)

Her daughter Sonia prepares to marry a Chinese-American man named Ben. This is most notable in Ashima’s pride, after Gogol’s failed marriage to the Bengali-American Moushumi that her daughter Sonia is marrying for the love to a Chinese-American rather than for the mutual cultural similarity or because of the cultural tradition:

Something tells her Sonia will be happy with this boy—quickly she corrects herself—this young man. He has brought happiness to her daughter, in a way Moushumi had never brought it to her son.

(Lahiri 276)

Gogol finally learns that the solution is not to abandon fully or attempt to diminish either of the cultures, but to mesh the two together. Gogol is not fully in tune with his identity until he realizes that he is made up of the both, and instead of weakening, his pride is strengthened. He feels proud of his identity and the meaning of his name and his roots. Gogol accepts his name and picks up a collection of the stories by the Russian author that his father has gifted as a birthday present many years ago.
The novel describes the struggles and hardships of the Bengali-Indians who immigrate to the United States. To conclude one may agree with Indira Nityanandam who critically observes:

*This novel explores the process of cultural mingling with Ashima being the least inclined to lose her Indian identity and be swamped by the new culture. The novel is the expatriate’s voice attempting to make meaning out of the web in which she finds herself.*

(Nityanandam 15)

Though never explicitly addressed by name, Jhumpa Lahiri’s feminist manifestations provide an insightful point of exploration. While manifesting it unintentionally, she presents the challenges and critiques of feminism. One must agree with Bhagabat Nayak who appreciates the novel as:

*Lahiri’s The Namesake projects Ashima and Gogol as cultural survivors in America’s multicultural milieu. They demonstrate the lives of hybridity, inbetweenness and liminality. It is difficult for them to maintain cultural insularity, and like millions of immigrant Indians they essentialise their life in the cultural available of America. but finally it is their contra-acculturation and rooting for India that allows them peace and consolation in moments of catharsis.*

(Nayak 147)

**III.III: The Predicament of Women in Interpreter of Maladies:**

Lahiri’s *Interpreter of Maladies* is a collection of nine short stories which highlight the frequently neglected predicament of the female Diasporas. It consists of three previously published and six new stories; all present the different aspects of Lahiri's Indian background. The stories are about the predicament of second generation Indian-Americans caught between two cultures, one they inherit and another they adapt. What Suman Bala says about this collection of short stories is agreeable. She states:

*Her range is really wide, spanning three continents, moving effortlessly from Boston to London, to Calcutta, and even Dhaka, her stories tell us about the lives of Indian immigrants, of people navigating between the strict traditions they have inherited and the baffling New World they encounter every day.* (Bala 14)
Lahiri deliberately tries to give the idea of the trauma of self-transformation through the immigration and the diasporic struggle to keep hold of the original culture in the foreign cultures which results in the broken identity. With help of the common language, rituals, religion and relationships the Indian-Americans try to maintain their culture in the new surroundings. Pashupati Jha and T. Ravichandran in their article observe:

*These conflicts may be with the confines of a couple’s life in their own house or may spread out to two different cultures that have not gone through the process of acculturation. Sometimes, it also spills over affecting a particular society inhabited by people with contrasting attitudes. Thus, all the stories in the collection finally boil down to the maladies of maladjustment.* (Jha and Ravichandran 69)

The women protagonists in these stories construct their own unique racial subjectivity and engender agency. For them, the cooking constructs the communal and personal identities, interrelationships and the home. Nearly all of the characters are defined by the isolation in which they feel that they miss something vital to their identities. Thus, they defy simple explanations of what problems they face due to the lack of self-understanding.

The first story “A Temporary Matter” presents immigrant Shoba’s predicament through her disintegrating relationship with her husband Shukumar. Due to the birth of a dead child, she changes from an attentive wife to become more aloof and self-absorbed at the age of thirty-three. In fact, Shukumar’s own apathy and grief are at blame. He never covers up the neglect throughout the house for which he holds Shoba accountable. On the other hand, he neither comforts Shoba in her grief, nor even realizes the seriousness of their relationship problems. Shoba leaves the house first for her job and Shukumar gets up late.

They are very much detached from each other after the birth of a dead child. Shoba’s mother comes to live with them. She is a religious woman who prays twice a day for the healthy grandchildren. But when Shukumar’s mother is with them, Shoba stays out of the house for long hours and goes to martini with her friend Gillian. Now at home, they are experts in avoiding each other. They spend more time on the separate floors. She is financially independent and keeps the bonuses from her job in a separate account in her name. At home, she is such a careless wife who treats the house as a hotel:
Shukumar removed her satchel and her sneakers to side of the fridge.

She wasn’t this way before. She used to put her coat on a hanger, her sneakers in the closet, and she paid bills as soon as they came. But now she treated the house as if it were a hotel. (Lahiri 06)

Shukumar hurts his gums when he uses the cheap brush bought in a sale by Shoba. He takes over the kitchen and prepares the food for both of them while combing through her cookbooks every afternoon. Against the culture, which they have abandoned in the process, they eat separately:

For months now they’d served themselves from the stove, and he’d taken his plate into his study, letting the meal grow colder on his desk before shoving it into his mouth without pause, while Shoba took her plate to the living room and watched game shows, or proofread files with arsenal of colored pencils at hand. (Lahiri 08)

When the electricity is cut off for one hour every night for five days, they spend each of these nights in the dark sharing the secrets with each other, the things they had never confessed before. The lights off reminds Shoba of the India. Shukumar hasn’t spent much time in India because when his father took him for the first time to India, he had nearly died of amoebic dysentery. His father never took him to India again till he died, but later Shukumar develops an interest in India. Shukumar and Shoba’s bold confessions and sharing the secrets lead to their impending separation:

It sickened Shukumar; knowing that she had spent these past evenings preparing for a life without him. He was relieved and yet he was sickened. (Lahiri 21)

Every bold confession reveals a larger flaw in their marriage. The story is about a failed relationship, a defeat and the hardships of communication and relationships.

“When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine” focuses the facts related to the immigrant characters working to keep intact their connection with India, though they have become Americans. It also presents the affinity that the Indian and Pakistani immigrants feel for each other when they meet outside somewhere in the Europe. They speak the same language, laugh at the same jokes and look more or less the same. They face the same problems in America:

The supermarket did not carry mustard oil, doctors did not make house calls, neighbours never dropped by without invitation, and of these things, every so often, my parents complained. (Lahiri 24)
They maintain the ties with their motherland in their own ways. Mr. Pirzada has two watches, one on his wrist showing the American time; and the other in his pocket showing the local time at Dacca. About their sameness, the narrator Nalini observes:

Most of all I remember the three of them operating during that time as if they were a single person, sharing a single meal, a single body, a single silence, and a single fear. (Lahiri 41)

Bangladeshi Mr. Pirzada is a teacher living in the America for his research dissertation and had not heard anything about his family in Dacca for last six months. His life in America focuses on the adjustments a person needs to do out of his homeland:

The grant was a great honor, but when converted to dollars it was not generous. As a result, Mr. Pirzada lived in a room in a graduate dormitory, and did not own a proper stove or a television set of his own. (Lahiri 24)

Mr. Pirzada does not like the American culture for its thank-giving attitude for everything, even for the failure. He comments:

What is this thank-you? The lady at the bank thanks me, the cashier at the shop thanks me, the librarian thanks me when I return an overdue book, the overseas operator thanks me as she tries to connect me to Dacca and fails. If I am buried in this country I will be thanked, no doubt, at my funeral. (Lahiri 29)

The story focuses on the tensions, worries and sorrows of the immigrants regarding the relatives left at their native land. The woman narrator's father expects the American schools to teach her about the current events of the Indian subcontinent. He expects them to teach specifically about the war between India and Pakistan. But the schools in America teach the American history and American geography every year. The narrator is very much American who goes to the parties with her friends at Halloween. However, the parents in this story do not appear serious with their daughter's cultural habits. They forget Mr. Pirzada and continue with their daily routine.

The story brings to light the realities of the life of the daughters and wives who live alone at home when the man of the house migrates out of the country. Mr. Pirzada’s twenty year old wife and seven daughters between the age of six and sixteen face the riots during the wars in Indian subcontinent. Their life in Bangladesh and the
life of the narrator’s family in America project the different problems that the women face in both the situations.

“Interpreter of Maladies” presents the predicament of second generation immigrant family. It also presents a relationship between the American-born Indian characters and India. Indian-American Raj and Mina Das come on vacation to visit their parents in India with their children Ronny, Bobby and Tina. India is the country of their heritage. All the children’s wearing a visor suggests that one day their vision will be as distorted and deformed as their parents’ visions are today.

At the beginning of the story, Raj and Mina quarrel on who will take Tina to the toilet. When Mina takes her daughter to the rest room, she doesn’t hold the little girl’s hand in hers. This shows how detached a mother Mina is. Mr. Raj Das is a science teacher in America and shows his American manners while greeting to Mr. Kapasi, a hired middle-aged tour guide-cum-driver for the day. Mrs. Das shows her American lack of affinity and interest in Mr. Kapasi at the first greetings. Mr. Kapasi observes Mr. and Mrs. Das’ childishness and immaturity. Both, Mr. and Mrs. Das seem to be immature parents:

> Mr. and Mrs. Das behaved like an older brother and sister, not parents. It seemed that they were in charge of children only for the day; it was hard to believe they were regularly responsible for anything other than themselves. (Lahiri 49)

Mrs. Das sits in the back seat without sharing her puffed rice to anyone. Mr. Das wishes to capture the tough realities of the Indian world through the lens of his camera and to share them with his American friends after he returns. This will help them to project the real India, which is blinded to the American characters. He takes the pictures of the starving peasant, openly ignoring the peasant's fundamental reality.

The Das couple addresses each other by the first names while talking in presence of their children. Thiers is an arranged marriage. They are childhood friends sleeping in the same bed on Friday and Saturday nights and their parents never catch them doing anything. After marriage Mrs. Das is too young and overwhelmed to have a child quickly. She loves nursing and warming milk for the baby. She seems quite lonely at home when her husband goes out to the work:

> Eventually the friends stopped calling her, so that she left at home all day with baby, surrounded by toys that made her trip when she walked or wince when she sat, always cross and tired. (Lahiri 64)
Mr. and Mrs. Das seem selfishly indifferent to their kids. When her husband and children get out of the car to sightsee, Mrs. Das sits in the car, eating the snacks she offers to no one else, wearing her sunglasses as a barrier and painting her nails. When Tina asks her to paint her nails as well, Mrs. Das just turns away and rebuffs her own daughter. Mrs. Das always wears her sunglasses, her taxi window does not roll down and Mr. Kapasi watches through the rearview mirror; all these facts prevent her to see directly the world outside.

Good-natured Mr. Kapasi, besides being a tour-guide, does a job of interpreter in a doctor’s office as he speaks many languages, which enables him to save the lives of patients. His wife feels insulted and belittles his job at the doctor’s who failed to cure their son of the typhoid fever. He also thinks that his occupation is a waste of his linguistic skills. But for Mrs. Das it is a “romantic” and a big responsibility as the health of the patients depends upon Mr. Kapasi’s correct interpretation of their maladies. The short company of Das family leads Mr. Kapasi to realize the same grief and lack of romance with wife in his life:

*She did not behave in a romantic way towards her husband, and yet she has used a word to describe him. He wonders if Mr. and Mrs. Das were a bad match, just as he and his wife were.* (Lahiri 53)

Mr. Kapasi develops a romantic interest in Mrs. Das. He takes an opportunity of a private conversation with her for future correspondence and building a relationship to translate the transcontinental gap between them. Mr. Kapasi finds her different from other European women he has seen:

*He had, of course, seen plenty of bare limbs before, belonging to the American and European ladies who took his tours. But Mrs. Das was different. Unlike the other women, who had an interest only in the temples, and kept their noses buried in a guidebook, or their eyes behind the lens of a camera, Mrs. Das had taken an interest in him.*

(Lahiri 58)

Mrs. Das reveals the secret story of her son Bobby’s birth out of her adultery, an extramarital affair with a Punjabi guest. She hopes Mr. Kapasi, whom she describes as an ‘interpreter of maladies’, to interpret her feelings and make her feel better as he does for his patients by translating without passing judgments. Mrs. Das looks for this understanding from him while seeking absolution for the secret of her
adultery. In confessing to Mr. Kapasi, she endows him with a sort of priestly powers and expects her confession to draw out forgiveness and consolation.

The sexual tension between Mr. Kapasi and Mrs. Das is central to the story. Mr. Kapasi sees the Das family as a unit and he never suspects that Mr. Das is not Bobby's father. His Indian idea of the family deforms the reality of the situation. He cares and develops attentiveness to every move of Mrs. Das. On the other hand, the Das parents exhibit complete carelessness, negligence, ignorance and completely self-centeredness.

The story centers upon the interpretation and its power as a vehicle of understanding, a means of communication and connection, something for which both Mr. Kapasi and Mrs. Das yearn. Both feel disconnected from their spouses and their families. Unhappy and dissatisfied with their lives, Mr. Kapasi interprets Mrs. Das’ marital situation in relation to his own. And she asks him to interpret her secret marital violation as a connection exclusively between them. But disappointed Mr. Kapasi points out her guilt and offers his "interpretation" of this as a factor in her family's "maladies". She angrily storms off and violently walks towards her family trailing the crumbs of puffed rice snacks, which invite monkeys to trail her. The neglectful Das parents don’t notice that the monkeys surround their son Bobby. The monkeys isolate the son born of a different father and begin to attack Bobby. Mr. Kapasi rushes in to save him and returns Bobby to his parents.

“A Real Durwan” presents the predicament of Boori Ma, a feeble 64-year-old stair-sweeper woman or durwan who in exchange for her services lives on the roof of an old brick building at Calcutta. She is deported to Calcutta during the partition after separation from her husband, four daughters, two-story brick house, a rosewood almari and number of coffer boxes whose keys she still wears. She continuously tells the contradictory stories of her past, about her daughter’s extravagant wedding, her servants, her estate and her riches. But she tells the seductive and compelling stories which let her contradictions rest. She says:

*Mustard prawns were steamed in banana leaves. Not a delicacy was spared. Not that this was extravagance for us. At our house, we ate goat twice a week. We had a pond on our property, full of fish.*

(Lahiri 71)
She is a refugee, an immigrant and her accent in Bengali makes it clear. Her life, she says, is composed of such grief that no one can dream it. She is a victim of the changing time.

Boori Ma’s services resemble to that of a real durwan. Normally, it is not a job for a woman, but she honours the responsibility and maintains a vigil as if she was the gatekeeper of a house. The Dalal family often gives Boori Ma food and takes care of her ailments. Mrs. Dalal has a soft corner for Boori Ma and occasionally gives her some ginger paste with which to flavor her stews. When Mr. Dalal gets promoted at work, he improves his home with a sink and the building by installing a sink in the stairwells. Mr. Dalal wishes that this sink will be useful for Boori Ma. Like a typical Indian woman, Mrs. Dalal is unhappy at her husband’s wasting money on the unnecessary things. She complains:

Who even heard of it? I still cook on kerosene. You refuse to apply for a phone. And I have yet to see the fridge you promised when we married. (Lahiri 77)

Mr. Dalal plans to go on a trip to Simla for ten days and promises to bring Boori Ma a sheep’s hair blanket. While the Dalals are away, the other residents become obsessed with making the pairs of the building.

All the residents feel jealous of the Dalal family for their progress. Their jealousy turns dangerous for Boori Ma. Boori Ma spends her life savings on the special treats while circling around the neighborhoods. While the Dalals are out for a trip, Boori Ma feels lonely as her waiting for them lasts long. She hopefully waits for the blanket that Mr. Dalal promised to bring for her from Simla. The lines below focus on her heart-touching predicament:

Her mornings were long, her afternoons longer. She could not remember her last cup of tea. Thinking neither of her hardships nor of earlier times, she wondered when the Dalals would return with her new bedding. (Lahiri 81)

However, while Boori Ma is out one afternoon, the sink in the stairwell is stolen. The residents accuse Boori Ma of informing the robbers and for the negligence in her job. Though Boori Ma protests, the residents continue to accuse her because of all her previous inconsistent stories. Her skills of narrating the stories of past glories turn upon her and betray her present. The residents of the apartment do not believe her. They argue:
For years we have put up with your lies. You expect us, now, to believe you? (Lahiri 82)

The residents' obsession with materializing the building redeems their focus on the remaining members like Boori Ma of their community. The story concludes as the residents throw out Boori Ma’s belongings and begin a search for a “real durwan.”

The story is an example of the predicament of a woman after the effects of modernization which lead women to poverty ridden life. Deep-rooted tradition of the caste system is still a part of the social structure in India. The women are paid poorly and exploited for long labor-hours. They are seen as replaceable and disposable. Boori Ma is given food and shelter instead of legal salary. Boori Ma is thrown out of her shelter because the community sees her as an inferior and unequal.

The next story “Sexy” presents the predicament of a young American woman Miranda and two immigrant Indian women: Laxmi and her cousin. Miranda falls in love with a married Indian man named Dev while his wife is in India for a few weeks. At the first meeting Miranda is unable to discern Dev’s nationality. However, she is instantly infatuated by his charm and feels the thrill of being with an exotic older man. Dev compares her to the Indian women of his knowledge. He admires her for moving out of Michigan, where she grew up and had education, to Boston where she knows no one. But Miranda thinks that this is a very common for an American girl and not a thing to be praised for. In the Mapparium of Christian Science Center, Dev calls her ‘sexy’ and it carries her away:

> It was the first time a man had called her sexy, and when she closed her eyes she could still feel his whisper drifting through her body, under her skin. (Lahiri 92)

But, later it becomes a sign of an unhealthy relationship.

She has heard very little about the India and its culture from an Indian friend at work, a married woman named Laxmi. Miranda compares herself to Laxmi and wishes that she too will have a photograph with Dev on the display:

> Within days of meeting him, when she was at work, Miranda began to wish that there were a picture of her and Dev tacked to the side of her cubicle, like the one of Laxmi and her husband in front of the Taj Mahal. (Lahiri 89)

The plight of Laxmi’s cousin who is recently abandoned by her husband for a younger woman highlights the pangs of guilt of snatching a married man. Laxmi’s reactions to
her cousin’s passiveness indicate her angry feministic and aggressive feelings. She says:

*If I were her I'd fly straight to London and shoot them both. I don’t know how she can just wait this way.* (Lahiri 97)

Miranda feels guilty for the lack of understanding the Indian culture which causes abandonment of Laxmi’s cousin by her husband. Miranda remembers her childhood Indian neighbors named Dixits. The picture of Goddess *Kali* at Dixits’ house frightened her. The description of the photograph of *Kali* reveals her lack of the understanding of the Indian culture:

*It was a painting of a naked woman with a red face shaped like a knight’s shield. She had enormous white eyes that tilted toward her temples, and mere dots of pupils. Two circles, with the same dots at their centers, indicated her breasts.* (Lahiri 96)

One day Laxmi’s cousin comes to Boston and Miranda is asked to babysit her seven-year-old son Rohin. The small Rohin brings Miranda into his mother’s grief and she eventually leads to call off her affair with Dev. Rohin tells Miranda about his mother:

*My mother has puffiness. She says it’s a cold, but really she cries, sometimes for hours. Sometimes straight through dinner. Sometimes she cries so hard her eyes puff up like bullfrogs.* (Lahiri 104)

Like Dev, he too calls her ‘sexy’ describing the meaning of it as ‘loving someone you don’t know.’ Further he explains what his father has done:

*That’s what my father did. He sat next to someone he didn’t know, someone sexy, and now he loves her instead of my mother.*

(Lahiri 108)

Rohin calls her attention to the immoral and inhuman aspects of being the “other woman.” She decides to tell Dev that it is not fair to her and his wife to continue their illicit relationship and gradually breaks up with him.

The food has cultural symbolic significance in the story. When Miranda visits an Indian grocery, she comes across the Hot Mix that Laxmi always eats, but the grocer tells her it is too spicy for her. Seeking excuse for being in an Indian store Miranda feels uncomfortable and doesn’t buy the Hot Mix. This feeling of ostracism highlights her uncomfortable relationship with Dev as she knows so little about him and his background, and yet their relationship is so intimate. She repents for not
understanding more about the India. The featured couple ends up separating, but Miranda is actually stronger to end her relationship with Dev because she can see no potential in it.

“Mrs. Sen's” focuses on the predicament of an isolated immigrant Indian woman trying to assimilate in the American society without losing her prior life. Mrs. Sen, a university professor's wife, demonstrates the power that the physical objects have over the human experience. The isolated immigrants of the universal origin try to assimilate but unwilling to let go off the aspects of their life in the homeland that do not fit. Mr. Sen says:

*Here, in this place where Mr. Sen has brought me, I cannot sometimes sleep in so much silence.* (Lahiri 115)

Lahiri says in an interview with Newsweek that Mrs. Sen has found basis in her mother as a babysitter of the American children. Mrs. Sen is preoccupied with the presence or lack of material objects that she once had. She is homesick and lacks the meaningful social connections because of her item-centric nostalgia. While describing the difference between India and America to Eliot she says:

*At home that is all you have to do. Not everybody has a telephone. But raise your voice a bit, or express grief or joy of any kind, and one whole neighborhood and half another has come to share the news, to help with arrangements.* (Lahiri 116)

Mrs. Sen clings to the material possessions whether it is the fish from her native Calcutta or her special vegetable cutting blade. For her, the wedding ring that Americans wear as a sign of being married carries the fear of losing it. But the scarlet powder she puts in a dot above her eyebrows has no fear of losing it. She firmly rejects the new experiences such as the canned fish or even something common like car driving. Her only happiness is the visits to the fish market and the letters from India, which prove her emptiness in the United States. She is unhappy for not visiting her sister and her baby in India. She expresses her fears:

*My sister has had a baby girl. By the time I see her, depending if Mr. Sen gets his tenure, she will be three years old. Her own aunt will be a stranger. If we sit side by side on a train she will not know my face.*

(Lahiri 122)

It is a fact that the Americans are not a barrier in Mrs. Sen’s acclimation. The fisherman at the market takes the time to call her and reserve her special fish. The
policeman questions, but does not indict her after her car accident. For all intents and purposes, the people in the story make it easy for Mrs. Sen to embrace the life in America. But she refuses any assimilation while continuing with saris, Indian canapés and putting off the prospect of driving. Through the power of material objects, she remembers the stories imprinted on her blade, her saris and her grainy aerogram. She is unable to seek her happiness in America where the situation leads her towards frustrations. An eleven-year old Eliot begins to stay with Mrs. Sen after the school. Eliot tells Mrs. Sen that his mother invites a man from her office for dinner and they spent the night in her bedroom. Eliot avoids narrating his mother about Mrs. Sen’s behavior, but the lines below focus on the exile and loneliness she experiences:

_He didn’t tell her that Mrs. Sen paced the apartment, staring at the plastic-covered lampshades as if noticing them for the first time. He didn’t tell her she switched on the television but never watched it, or that she made herself tea but let it grow cold on the coffee table._

(Lahiri 128)

Mrs. Sen, while preparing the food, tells Elliot the stories of her past life in Calcutta, which helps her to craft her identity. The story is occupied with a woman’s lists of produce, the catalogs of ingredients and descriptions of recipes, the act of preparation and colorful collection of saris from India. Whenever she is melancholic and missing her family in India, she plays the recorded voices of her relatives as a connecting string to her happy past:

_Another day she played a cassette of people talking in her language—a farewell present, she told Eliot, that her family had made for her. As a succession of voices laughed and said their bit, Mrs. Sen identified each speaker. ‘My third uncle, my cousin, my father, my grandfather.’_

(Lahiri 128)

Mrs. Sen purchases the fish from a local seafood market which reminds her of the home and holds the great significance for her. However, reaching the seafood market requires the driving which she resists learning. At the end, she attempts to drive to the market in absence of her husband and meets an accident. Eliot soon stops staying with Mrs. Sen thereafter. Thus, it’s a story of an immigrant woman’s failure to assimilate in the adapted culture. Her attempts to raise herself up to the surrounding by learning to drive result in losing the obtained and maintained identity as a caretaker.
“This Blessed House” presents the predicament of a newly married Indian immigrant woman Twinkle. Sanjeev and Twinkle explore their new house in Hartford which was previously owned by the fervent Christians. They find the gaudy Biblical objects hidden throughout the house. Delighted by these beautiful objects, Twinkle wants to display them everywhere in the house. But Sanjeev is uncomfortable with them and reminds her of being the Hindu, not Christian. He tries to maintain his ethnic identity.

*It puzzled him that each was in its own way so silly. Clearly they lacked a sense of sacredness. He was further puzzled that Twinkle, who normally displayed good taste, was so charmed. These objects meant something to Twinkle, but they meant nothing to him.* (Lahiri 128)

When Sanjeev plans a party for his coworkers, he worries about the impression they might get from the interior full of the Biblical figurines. Sanjeev has a well position in his office. The argument over display of the objects reveals other problems in their relationship. A compromise is reached after tears. In the very second month of their marriage certain things frustrate him. He feels betrayed for the way she sometimes spits a little when she speaks or leaves her undergarments after removing them at night at the foot of their bed, rather than depositing them in the laundry hamper. The real cause lays in their parents’ difference. Her parents live in the California and his in the Calcutta. They are friends and arrange the meeting of Sanjeev and Twinkle. Unlike Sanjeev, she is grown up in California and doesn't have any background knowledge of the Indian cooking. However, she surprises him with her spontaneous creative streak in the kitchen. Although annoyed by her unauthentic Indian food, he is still pleasantly surprised by the meal she serves him. His attitude toward her food mirrors his attitude toward her. Sanjeev doesn’t understand Twinkle’s spontaneity whereas she has little regard for his discomfort.

Their relationship after all seems to be an adjustment. Twinkle is abandoned at her twenty-seven by her American lover, who fails as an actor. Sanjeev also is lonely with an excessively generous income for a single man and has never been in love before. She captures Sanjeev by her beauty and energy and compels him to give into her and to accept her eccentricities. She even dares to call Sanjeev ‘silly’ in front of him. She has developed a kind of dislike for the India and it is focused in the case of food in following lines:
Indian food, she complained, was a bother; she detested chopping garlic, and peeling ginger, and could not operate a blender, and so it was Sanjeev who, on weekends, seasoned mustard oil with cinnamon sticks and cloves in order to produce a proper curry. (Lahiri 144)

On the day of the party, the guests are enamored with Twinkle. Sanjeev is irritated by her naiveté and impractical tendencies. For times he repents for not thinking of the other options for his wife. He thinks with a flicker of regret of the snapshots of the prospective brides his mother used to send him from Calcutta who could sing and sew and season lentils without consulting a cookbook. He does not know if he loves Twinkle. He once says her that he does love her, but she also never declares her love for him. She leads the party guests for discovering a large bust of Jesus Christ in the attics. Disgusted Sanjeev obediently carries the object downstairs. His feelings and adjustment may be understood in the below lines:

The pang intensified as he thought of her running to the bathroom to brighten her lipstick, and eventually rushing to get people their coats, and finally rushing to the cherry-wood table when the last guest had left, to begin opening their housewarming presents. (Lahiri 155-156)

This action may either be interpreted as a final grudging act of the compliance in a marriage that he is reconsidering.

“The Treatment of Bibi Haldar” is about the predicament of an isolated epileptic woman in Calcutta, attempting to find herself a husband and a cure for her ailment. She lacks the education and healthcare. Jhumpa Lahiri in an interview with Arun Aguiar declares:

It’s about a misfit, a young woman, living in a rundown building in Calcutta, and she’s in the care of her cousin and his wife, who run a shop. She’s epileptic, and she lives a very sheltered life; so she’s rather naïve. (Lahiri interview with Arun Aguiar)

If Bibi Haldar had access to the proper healthcare and a good doctor, her illness may have been diagnosed correctly and she would have received the right medication. Her living condition is worst:

Her daily occupation consisted of sitting in the storage room on roof of our building, a space in which one could sit but not comfortably stand, featuring an adjoining latrine, a curtained entrance one window without a grille, and shelves made from the panels of old doors.
Lahiri says that the story is basically about the town's involvement in Bibi's search for a husband and her own sense of happiness. The community solidifies the identity of Bibi Haldar because she has no real family. Through the communal device the story identifies the accentuated isolation of this character in her native city even when surrounded by the same people that have always surrounded her. Her cousin Mr. Haldar replies to those who argue for her heath:

*What won’t be cured must be endured. Bibi has caused enough worry, added enough to expenses, sullied enough the family name.*

(Lahiri 163)

And his wife answers to the question of her marriage worrying about the high expenses for it:

*And waste our profits on a wedding? Feeding guests, ordering bracelets, buying a bed, assembling a dowry?* (Lahiri 164)

Later, Haldar’s wife gets convinced that Bibi’s presence would infect the unborn child and wraps the woolen shawls around her tumid belly; gives her separate soaps and towels and her plates are not washed along with the others. At last, by end of the year, the family moves away leaving an envelope containing three hundred rupees for Bibi. The pregnant Bibi delivers a son. The father of that child is not discovered, but all the residents of the apartment help Bibi to raise the child. The story ends with happy note that Bibi is cured of her ailments.

“The Third and Final Continent” presents the predicament of the first generation immigrants who wish their own children not to experience the cultural loss. Lahiri addresses the realities of arranged marriages and the long process of assimilation into the American culture from an Indian perspective. Mala, the wife of the narrator, is married to him by her parents due to the fear of not getting her married ever.

*...the fact that she did not possess fair complexion, and so a string of men had rejected her to her face. She was twenty-seven, an age when her parents had began to fear that she would never marry, and so they were willing to ship their only child halfway across the world in order to save her from spinsterhood.* (Lahiri 181)

The unnamed narrator tells us of his immigration first to the Great Britain and then to the United States and about the six-weeks in America until the arrival of
his wife. After an arranged marriage ceremony in India, Mala waits in India while her documents for the immigration to America are arranged. The protagonist searches a house for them to live in when she arrives.

In the United States well-adjusted and happy with wife, the unnamed narrator does not want to lose his Indian identity. This ‘unnamed’ represents every immigrant. The loss of Indian identity is at the root of the isolation that he experiences. Perhaps, modeled upon the aspects of her parents' lives in the United States, Lahiri's presents a first person account of an Indian man arranging for the arrival of his new bride, as he lives under the roof of an aged American landlady. The American lady Mrs. Croft represents the American pride. She again and again informs the narrator:

*A flag on moon, boy! I heard it on the radio! Isn’t that splendid?*

(Lahiri 179)

The story brings out the vivid differences between the narrator’s bachelor life and married life journey that he takes while understanding his bride. It boldly comments on the cultural differences and similarities in the two cultures. Mrs. Croft’s daughter Helen’s detachment and lack of worry for her mother is in contrast to the caring nature and sympathy of the Indian narrator. The sense of isolation and a coming together in order to survive are evident in both of these relationships. At the end of the story, Lahiri introduces the idea of the loss of cultural identification through passing the generations by mentioning the college aged child of the couple. The narrator reveals his intention not to let his own son experience this loss:

*So we drive to Cambridge to visit him, or bring him home for a weekend, so that he can eat rice with us with his hands, and speak in Bengali, things we sometimes worry he will no longer do after we die.*

(Lahiri 197)

In contrast to the depictions of resistance to the Indian culture, this story portrays a relatively positive story of the Indian-American experience.

The protagonist’s obstacles and hardships are much more real. His human interactions demonstrate a high degree of the tolerance and even acceptance of the Indian culture on the part of the Americans he meets. It happens only with them who come to the USA under the qualification of being a “professional, scientist, or artist of exceptional ability” contributing to the reputation of Asian-Americans as being intelligent, mannered and a model minority. In this story, the reason of the narrator’s meeting with Mrs. Croft is his employment at MIT, which is a venerable institution of
the higher learning. Mrs. Croft comments on his sari-wrapped wife by calling her “a perfect lady.” Their reputation as a model minority has been firmly cemented, building a reputation for the Asian-Americans with remarkable educational and professional success, serving as the cultural backdrop. Hinting at the reason of the protagonist’s general sense of acceptance, Croft’s daughter Helen also remarks that Cambridge is “a very international city.” By ending on a cultural tone of the social acceptance and tolerance, Lahiri suggests that the experience of adapting to the American society is ultimately achievable. The family lacks the conflict that plagues the immigrant characters; this is due to the fact that these characters work to keep intact their connection with India. Though they have become the Americans, they have not ceased to be the Indians.

To sum up one may say that Jhumpa Lahiri’s emphasis is on the conflicts and struggles that the Indian immigrants face in the interpersonal relationships and the stress of daily existence in America. Her novel The Namesake deals with the problems and the struggles of motherhood in immigration and collision of the cultures at an alien country. It focuses on the struggles of the first and second generations of the immigrants during their process of assimilation with the American society. The first generation struggles with two cultures while raising the second generation with the Bengali cultural values but they cannot help growing up relating mostly to the surrounding culture in the United States. The Gangulis struggle to find their places in the society while respecting their roots during adapting to the American society. There are the themes of immigration, cultural conflict and religious, social and ideological differences.

Ashima’s isolation and loneliness at the hospital during her delivery lead her to nostalgically recall her relatives in the India. She misses her favorite Indian food and remains connected to India through the Bengali magazine. The Indian convention of naming the baby in a naming ceremony contrasts to the American law which compels them to name the baby before the discharge. The Indian culture of two names causes a number of troubles in the lives of the Indian immigrants. The letter from her grandmother is hanging forever and it symbolically presents the ever hanging identity and position of the immigrants. Ashima stands as an example of the cultural practice considered suitable for the Indian women that they should adjust with their husband and the situation. Her loneliness at the house when her husband is at work speaks for
the inevitable predicament of the women after the marriage. She is an alienated and lonely and suffers from sleep deprivation.

The immigrants have to change their patterns of culture during the assimilation in a foreign culture. The Ganguli couple abandons their Bengali culture of two names to avoid the confusion and problems at the time of naming their daughter. Indian Ashima dislikes the American life style. She does not like the American education and teachers who teach her children very much the American way of life. She tries to keep her children away from it. She joins her son to the Bengali language and culture lesson at one of her friend’s house. Their visit to India brings out the difference between the responses of the first and second generations of the immigrants. This focuses on how hard it is for the first generation to forget the bond with the native land and comparatively easy for the second one. Indian-American Gogol fails to establish a concrete relationship with his American girl-friends because he cannot imagine any American woman in the kitchen at the place of his mother. The very idea disgusts him and gradually he breaks away from both of them. In an attempt to adapt fully to American life Gogol gets involved in Maxine, but realizes his mother’s cultural values and impossibility of being with Maxine permanently. Gogol realizes the fate of relationship with Maxine as a piece of the cultural eccentricity.

The novel brings forth the fact that the Native Americans use terms like ABCD for the immigrants there. This highlights the question of their assimilation with them. The death of husband brings tremendous change in the life of Ashima. Gogol breaks up with Maxine after his father’s death but Ashima is such a true Indian mother that she is ready to accept Maxine as her daughter-in-law for the sake of her dear son’s happiness. She takes the responsibility of getting her son married and introduces him to a Bengali girl named Moushumi, whose intended American groom deceives her at the last minute. Gogol and Moushumi’s relationship is an adjustment, not love, imposed upon them by their parents and the situation as a cultural identity construction, which slowly leads them to regret for what is done. The failure and frustration in attempts to get united with the Americans indicate the impossibility of India and American union. Ashima feels guilty for causing and realizes the American cultural influence which destructs the Indian ethical and moral values. Sonia, her daughter decides to marry a Chinese-American and Ashima plans to travel between
India and America. In America she missed India and now in India she will miss America.

Lahiri’s stories in *Interpreter of Maladies* focus on the immigrant characters’ inabilitys to communicate that push them in the exclusion, loneliness and search for fulfillment. The conflict in relationships explores the ideas of personal and cultural isolation. The characters face identity crises due to the lack of abilities to mold the American and Indian identities. Indian background affects their life in the America. Even the American-born Indian characters face the isolation and the feeling of missing identity and the lack of self-understanding. The loss of Indian identity is a reason of the isolation that the characters experience. They try to keep their connection with India though they have become Americans.

“A Temporary Matter” presents disintegrating relationship between the immigrant Indian husband and wife due to birth of the dead child. In the dark they reveal the secrets to each other, which lead to their impending separation. “When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine” presents the affinity and sameness among the Asian immigrants out of their motherlands somewhere in the Europe. The story focuses on immigrants’ tension, worry and sorrow for the relatives at their native land. “Interpreter of Maladies” presents the relationship between the American-born second generation Indian immigrant and India. The Das couple highlights the selfishness, childishness, immaturity, detachment and lack of affinity and secret of adultery in the Americanized Indian immigrants.

“A Real Durwan” presents the predicament of a 64-year-old stair-sweeper woman deported to Calcutta during the partition. It is an example of the modernization which causes women to be on the path to poverty. “Sexy” presents an American Miranda’s affair with a married Indian man. But Miranda feels the pangs of guilt of snatching husband due to the lack of understanding of the Indian culture and when seven-year-old Rohin brings her into his mother’s grief, she calls off her affair with Dev. “Mrs. Sen's” focuses on isolated immigrant Indian women trying to assimilate without losing their original culture. The homesickness and lack of meaningful social connections cause item-centric nostalgia and Mrs. Sen clings to the material possessions. Despite American support, she refuses to assimilate.

“This Blessed House” presents a newly, married immigrant Twinkle who is a very mush American abandoned by her American lover before the marriage. Being Hindu, Sanjeev feels uncomfortable with the display of beautiful Biblical objects
everywhere in the house. This reveals the other problems in their relationship like parents’ difference and adjustments. “The Treatment of Bibi Haldar” focuses on an isolated epileptic woman in Calcutta, who depends on the care of her cousin and his wife. At last, Bibi is pregnant before marriage and delivers a son of unknown father but all the residents support Bibi to raise the child. “The Third and Final Continent” presents the first generation immigrants’ long process of assimilation into the American culture, who wishes their children not to experience the cultural loss. It boldly comments on the cultural differences and similarities in the two cultures. Mrs. Croft’s daughter Helen’s detachment and lack of worry is in contrast to the caring nature and sympathy of the Indian narrator. The social acceptance and tolerance suggest that the experience of adapting to the American society is ultimately achievable.

III.IV: Conclusion:

Both *The Namesake* and *Interpreter of Maladies* contain themes of the conflict in relationships between the couples, families and friends. Lahiri explores the ideas of personal and cultural isolations and identities through these relationships. The characters in both the texts frequently encounter the crises of identity which are tied to their inabilitys to reconcile their American identity with their Indian identity. Particularly, in the short stories in *Interpreter of Maladies* Lahiri often leaves these crises unresolved. As a result, her works give the readers a rather bleak outlook on the future of her characters. One might imagine that this aspect reflects some of Lahiri’s issues about the character’s real-life analogues. She often correlates her characters’ cultural isolation with the extreme personal isolation, suggesting that the cultural isolation causes the personal. The instances in which this cultural isolation is resolved or avoided are generally accompanied by a similar resolution or avoidance of the personal isolation.

Lahiri’s fiction focuses on the struggle of the Indian-American women. These women create and nurture the individual and collective identities. Their identities are as the Americans, the Bengalis and the mixture of both the identities in their new American landscape. She manifests a curious way of attributing a power to the women in her fiction. By placing her female characters in the traditional roles such as nearly silent, often jobless housewives and/or mothers, Lahiri displays, through the inner monologue and narrative of her female characters, their impact on other
characters’ consciousnesses and their communal bonding. In short, she displays their great power. These women use the constant re-evaluation of the cross-cultural Indian-Americans to improve their lives and the lives of those around them. In short, though situated as outwardly powerless in the Western society, Lahiri reveals her female characters’ inner adaptability. Such is the case of Ashima and Gogol in *The Namesake*.

Ashima does not possess the kind of physical strength attributed to the women and men of the diaspora in their endurance of the slavery and racial violence. Inspite of Ashima’s cultural maternity and her cultural essentialism is in vain. The culture in its purest form cannot be saved, if ever it even exists. The oppression Ashima faces is wholly unlike the oppression experienced by the other members of diaspora. In this novel the Indian family is not forced in the exile. Lahiri’s critique of the classism is not nearly as overt and explored as the classism in Bharati Mukherjee’s Indian-American novel *Jasmine*, where poverty controls the destiny and destituteness of the protagonist Jasmine.

The second generation immigrants are undoubtedly a self-named, self-definer and family-centered. They seek to be a role model and are committed to struggle, to retain their original identity elements and to create the positive intercultural exchanges. Gogol’s whole identity as a flexible role player is that of a respectful of women and elders, a moral and a female compatible. He is a supportive, ambitious, fathering and, of course, loving. But his elements as a strong protector do not stand out. Additionally, some of the womanistic characteristics he displays are very subtle. Indeed, Lahiri’s presentation of the male characters leads to the question that how the Indian-American woman might envision her relationships with men.

The narrative implies that the cultural retention is important but that equally important is the revision of cultural elements so that they are useful and realistic. For example, Gogol sees no use for the Bengali religious ceremony. But when faced with the death of his father, he finds solace in the Bengali religious tradition of mourning. Gogol reveals usefulness of his Bengali identity that he can revise and retain to pass on to his children. Ashima and Ashoke not only pass on the maternity they received from their parents, but in exchange they too learn from Gogol and Sonia, that suggests a woman’s maternal instinct which moves from the older generation to the younger and vice-versa.
The stories of Jhumpa Lahiri in *Interpreter of Maladies and Other Stories* whisper and scream the traces of India in the life of immigrants existing simultaneously in two cultures: the American reality and the sphere of Indian tradition. Lahiri’s experiences in Calcutta nourish an interest in seeing the things from the different points of view. Her perspectives range from a cab driver/tour guide to that of an adult recounting her child-like fascination. The character details make assertions about the sense of isolation that governs each event of the story. To conclude, one may agree with Somdatta Mandal who states:

......we go on basking in Lahiri’s glory and feel proud that apart from the beauty queens who put India on the world map, we have appropriated a literary figure, who though born in England, brought up in Connecticut and now living in New York, can be claimed as a desi writer too, though her own idea of India is “of the mind” only. In the definition and re-definition of the Diaspora, for the time being at least, Jhumpa Lahiri is a writer who can hold own way in any grouping—among Indian writers in English, among story specialists, and among American literary stars. (Mandal 30-31)

Lahiri’s immigrant characters are not at a loss of the cultural identity, but rather relieved when they adjust to their new world with help of the power of relationships and the personal connections though they regret for the cultural displacement due to the separation from their original cultures.

III. IV: References:


IV. I: Introduction:

Shauna Singh Baldwin is a writer of short fiction, poetry, novels and essays. Baldwin is an Indo-Canadian author who presently lives at Milwaukee in the U.S.A. She is an award winning writer and an author of the several books including the famous novel *What the Body Remembers* (1999). She is honest about her characters and she compels the readers to think about the world in which they live or the parts of ignored past. About the role of a fiction writer, Baldwin in an interview to Lindsay Pereira declares:

*Fiction writers continue to play the role we have always played -- we tell the lies that tell the truth. I find it's the paradox of my life as a writer that if I yearn for tolerance, I have to write about the effects of intolerance. To demand justice, I find I must explore injustice. And if I yearn for the return of liberal secular individualism I have to engage with and examine Fascism, Fundamentalism and other forms of group-think.*

(Baldwin [www.sawnet.org/books/writing/ssb_ia.html](http://www.sawnet.org/books/writing/ssb_ia.html))

Baldwin’s *English Lessons and Other Stories* (1996) passionately dramatizes the predicament of Indian women who expand their world from India to Canada and North America and from the closed circle of the family to the wilderness of the office and university. Baldwin examines the bruises and wounds endured by the immigrant ethnic minority while learning how to live in the English-speaking culture both in the North America and in India. The Diasporic friction between the East and West as well as in the traditional and modern causes the rise in the awareness and strength of the women. The ordinary women find their courage while tapping their own minds and hearts to enter the new emotional and material worlds. Like Mukherjee and Lahiri, Baldwin also draws on her personal experiences of being an immigrant in the U.S.A. In her Keynote speech delivered at the Great Lakes Writer's Conference Baldwin states:

*I'm a hybrid of three cultures, Indian, Canadian and American and I write from the perspective of all three. Today my answer is: I write for the people I love, a hybrid, global audience, for people interested in the*
process of becoming human, the ways in which we live, the influence of history, philosophy, culture, tradition and memory on our sense of self.

(Baldwin Great Lakes Writer's Conference)

Baldwin’s *What the Body Remembers* (1999) focuses on the predicament of a woman who fails to bear a child and another young girl whose polygamous marriage turns her to the status of a second-wife. The girl believes in the friendship with her co-wife but there develops a very complex relationship between the old and the young woman while their husband struggles to find his place amidst the drastic changes when India lurches towards the independence. The novel records the longings, losses and compromises between the cultures, ideologies and religions. It lyrically describes the cinnamon, anise and fennel smells in a woman’s kitchen. They speak for the psyche and lore of a community in which the power again and again shifts between the women. A woman’s emotional ancient heart is presented with full of love, jealousy, infertility and religious fury. Exceptionally, the novel filters through a Sikh woman's perspective during the wrenching period of the partition when the personal became the political. This woman’s perspective is valuable as women suffer most when their homes are uprooted; the grueling uses to which women’s bodies and spirits are put and their abuses at the hands of men. It pictures a complex and cruel society built around the plight of second-class Indian women through a sensitive portrayal of the condition of women in the Indian sub-continent without the stridency of feminism. It also presents a complex and cruel Sikh society in which women are practically voiceless within their own culture and considered secondary. It dramatizes the plight of Indian women with great sympathy and love.

Baldwin’s *The Tiger Claw* (2004) is based on the life and the predicament of Noor Inayat Khan who was an enigmatic woman fought against the Nazism in the German occupied France. Baldwin’s research in the history and politics at the time of First World War and the dangers of tribal intolerances enlightens the contemporary readers who are embroiled in their own disputes. It presents a story of a woman’s extraordinary love, courage and espionage along with her search for the identity in a multi-faceted world. It is a thriller story of a woman's displacement after her father’s death and the cultural tension due to the racism, miscegenation, sexism, cosmopolitanism and the evils of betrayal and hypocrisy in the war and imperialism. Noor Khan succeeds to escape from her family's religious literalism and ideas on the feminine propriety and wins her cross-cultural love for a Jewish named Armand, from
whom she conceived a child and then aborted. She shifts to England and volunteers to serve for a special intelligence English agency which trains her and sends her back to the Occupied France. Her personal secret mission to re-unite with her lover Armand encourages her, but she is eventually captured, imprisoned and executed. It is an affectionate story of the moral complexity, inner conflict, dislocation and exile of a very courageous woman whose love is lost amidst the turbulence of the war.

Baldwin’s We are not in Pakistan (2007) presents the predicament of women facing the cultural convulsions and racial terrorism while migrating from Central America to the American South and from Metro Toronto to the Ukraine. Baldwin’s wide-ranging voices and international locations, as stories happen in Canada and America, provide an opportunity to comment upon the enforcement of immigration policies.

Baldwin is a diasporic writer whose roots are in India. In a Speech at Montreal Shauna Singh Baldwin states about her belonging to the category of the writers:

I began calling myself a diasporic Indian writer in 1996 when my first book of fiction, English Lessons and Other Stories, was published. I was in a category of one at the time, and even when What the Body Remembers was published in 1999, I got puzzled looks from journalists on each continent at my self-description. But as you see today, there is now recognition and acknowledgment that the Indian diaspora exists and that some of us are scribes.

(Baldwin www.sawnet.org/books/writing/SSB_CCA.html)

IV.II: The predicament of Women in Shauna Singh Baldwin’s The Tiger Claw:

In The Tiger Claw the predicament of a woman is too close to the reality as it is based on a real woman Noor Khan. She was an immigrant Muslim Indian who volunteered as a radio operator for Churchill’s Special Operations Executive and was dropped behind the Nazi lines in the Occupied France in 1943. She was born to an Indian immigrant man, a Sufi aristocrat, musician, teacher and an American woman related to the founder of Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy. The young, brave and daring Noor Khan was born in Moscow, raised in Paris and lived in London from the start of the World War II and aliased Norah Baker, Jeanne-Marie Regnier, codenamed Madeleine and was eventually caught by the SS and executed at Dachau because her radio transmissions from inside the Occupied Europe provided the vital information
that aided the Allied Forces for their successful Normandy landings. She was a writer of children and posthumously was awarded the George Cross by the British Government and the Croix de Guerre by the French Government for the exemplary services she rendered to the Allied Forces during the World War II.

This real story interests Baldwin to find out the predicament of Noor Khan. Shauna Singh Baldwin once has declared in an interview that ‘fiction is telling a lie in order to tell the truth’, and it is applicable to The Tiger Claw as she has told the story of Noor Khan using more than the just known facts. The story of The Tiger Claw takes birth out of the silences, conflicting and significant facts and gaps that Baldwin researched and discovered. The horrible attacks on September 11, 2001 give rise to the Islamaphobia and unleash a wave of distrust, disgust and fear of “others” in the Western world. Baldwin not only hits at the Western projection of Muslims, but also at the Islamic jihadists by reviewing the historical facts of fifty six years back in 1944, on the same date September 11, a 30 year-old Muslim woman was being prepared for execution by the Gestapo at Dachau in Germany. Baldwin in an interview to Lindsay Pereira declares:

Noor's story has been told by writers who have exoticized, eroticized, blamed and glorified her. What attracted me to Noor was her hybridity, and that like me, she was a second-generation diasporic Indian with strong emotional ties to India, though her actual time in India was really very short.

(Baldwin www.sawnet.org/books/writing/ssb_ia.html)

The beginning of the novel acquaints the readers with the predicament of Noor in a bleak German prison cell. The cruelty with which the captured men or women are treated during the World Wars is exposed through the miserable condition of Noor. It also focuses on the inhumanity during the wars in which a lovable woman has no excuses. Noor is shackled hand and foot and freezing from the winter’s cold. Noor’s captor, Herr Vogel shows little sympathy to allow her onionskin paper on which he directs her to write children’s stories. The German officer Herr Vogel who keeps Noor hostage is certainly cast as a bad and lascivious character and yet he also works to give Noor better accommodations and provides the paper on which much of the story is being told. But ambiguous Vogel’s feelings of the kindness do not redeem him of the evils he commits. Noor secretly writes letters to “ma petite”- the spirit of her aborted child which she conceived with the love of her life Armand Rivkin. The
readers learn Noor’s courageous and heartbreaking story through these letters in a thrilling third-person narrative which are kept secret from her captor.

The predicament of women in the Eastern world focuses on the similar evils on a domestic basis through its treatment of women. Noor’s mother is an American woman from Boston. After marrying to a Sufi musician and teacher from India, she becomes an American convert to Islam. The immigrant Indian Muslim family suffers from the skin and color discrimination in the first world. When Kabir speaks with an American black soldier during his search for Noor, he remembers how America treats his father for his black colour of the skin:

Abhajaan had returned from a performance tour to the States, annoyed by reviewers who devoted more inches to ‘the lightness of his coloured skin’, his ‘exotic dress and accents’, than to the music he so cherished. America, said Abhajaan, had the strange idea that what it called ‘freedom’ was possible without justice in society. (Baldwin 22)

Kabir feels glad at the sergeant’s comments for being at Paris instead of at Boston. In the French society the blood distance from petty royalty is the measure of excellence and the skin colour goes unnoted. The black American sergeant also confesses to Kabir his experience of the colour discrimination in London. He says:

I started noticing how I talk. Realized that on the telephone, on the radio, even when they could not see me, they could hear the colour of my skin. So I figure I’ll just talk different- fool ’em whenever I went.

(Baldwin 23)

The black American sergeant has troubles with the white folks in his unit. He further tells Kabir that Negros will settle down anywhere in the world and do their own business which is not possible for them in the America due to their coloured skin.

Kabir never imagines himself and his sister fighting for England: the same British lords and ladies who mock at the French for their defeat and betrayal of the democracy and Indians for their non-violence struggle for the independence. If Kabir fails to report for duty in Paris as per the schedule, that would lead to match their prejudices against the Indian men and confirm their worst opinions about the refugees from France. He has very good records as a pilot, but the British Major never expects promotion for him because of his Indian blood. After coming to London the family receives the treatment of the subaltern:
If there hadn’t been a war, she might have said she was Muslim just so the English might understand that Indian Muslim women were not as they imagined: weak, meek, stupid or spineless. (Baldwin 44)

It is the war which compels them to adjust and surrender to the situation; otherwise, Noor might have proved wrong the British assumptions regarding the Indian women. Noor realizes her father’s love for his ‘home’-India, but for her the ‘home’ is where her love Armand is:

Since her own displacement to England she understood how Abhajaan must have felt all through his sixteen years as an immigrant to France: duty-bound return “home”. For him, home was India. For Noor, home was now wherever Armand might be. (Baldwin 48)

Noor’s father is a Sufi professor and spiritual attaché to the Russian Imperial court. She is borned in the Kremlin on January 1, 1914. Her name “Noor” indicates as her father explains the meaning—Light of soul; the light required to dispel the world’s fear. In her childhood her family moves to Paris where her father, a spiritual man of noted tolerance, lectures on the Sufi way to the enlightenment. Extremely close to her liberal father Noor grows up in the France. However, Noor also suffers from the discrimination for being a daughter. Though she is elder than Kabir, her father never chooses her as his heir. According to the Sufi tradition, it is the son whom he bestows his mantle:

And besides, even if Noor was older, Kabir was the eldest son, the son on whom Abhajaan bestowed his mantle. Abhajaan chose him to bridge the gulf between earth and heaven for his followers. Of course, that choice followed the Sufi silsila tradition, but the memory of his initiation ceremony was still comforting. (Baldwin 33)

Noor’s father dies and her conservative and religious minded uncle Tajuddin and her brother Kabir govern the family, assuming the role of family patriarch. When the family moves to India, Noor and Kabir, the second-generation of the immigrants, feel discriminated here among the relatives in India:

Noor absorbed India naturally, as if born there, whereas young Kabir was painfully aware that though he knew his Qur’an better than any of his India cousins, he wasn’t Indian enough and his cousins dubbed him a lousy batter and an even worse bowler. (Baldwin 33)
Her mother is the most adventurous woman in her family. Her mother’s father has vanished somewhere due to the gambling debts. Her life after orphanage with her older stepbrother and his wife slowly becomes similar to an unpaid domestic servant. Then she marries Abhajaan and receives a Muslim name, upholds husband’s religion and she follows all the traditions. After Abhajaan’s death her life also equally changes like her daughters’. When grandmother Dadijaan comes to Paris to join them, she discovers that her daughter-in-law, her son’s widow, Rukhsana Begum née Aura Baker habitually bares her legs beneath a dress. It evokes Dadijaan’s deep and abiding suspicions.

Noor’s uncle is mortified to know that his niece has fallen in love with Armand Rivkin- a Jewish pianist. He attempts to destroy their love. Under his headship, Noor is subjected to follow strictly all the customs of Islam, crushing Khan’s nuanced inheritance and all the liberalism she inherited from her father. It is enforced in the same way the Nazis inflict terror on the same reign of Europe including book burnings and forcible confinements. The following lines reveal how Noor believes in her father’s liberal teachings:

*If you speak of tolerance while planting a hedge between yourself and your neighbour, as my uncle Tajuddin did, as many in France did, your hedge will one day be replaced by a fence, then a low wall, then a high wall and finally fortifications.* (Baldwin 121)

Baldwin creates an intense love affair between Noor and a Jewish named Armand Rivkin. Both suffer from and are the victims of the religious and political terrorism in France. Armand once plays a Brahms which Noor feels reached through her ribs and taken her heart in his hands. However, their love is sacrificed due to the worst situation for the Jews and immigrants in the German occupied France during the World War II. Armand explains to Noor:

*We cannot be together without marrying— your reputation must be considered. And Noor, this is no time to marry a Jew. There can no longer be any promise between us. You are—you must be—free. Free to marry someone else.* (Baldwin 53)

Noor’s mother always advises her not to love someone pertaining to other religions as she has experienced the confusion and pain herself of mixing the blood and religion. Later, when Noor goes to France as a secret agent and meets Madame Dunet—the woman who does the operation of Noor’s stomach to abort the child—she comes to
know that her own mother has secretly advised, managed and financed Noor’s operation. Madame Dunet tells Noor the real reason that her mother and she agreed for abortion:

*Your mother and I understood one another. She understands blood too, you know? I told her, not one more Jew should be allowed to enter the world.* (Baldwin 364-365)

Her mother wants Noor to marry one of the rentier classes who dabble in the Sufism at the school in Suresnes and secure the family by alliance. She tells Noor about her own sacrifices in love for Abhajaan and how Dadijaan and the Indian family have considered her his concubine for the years until she bears a son. Whether it is motherland or a foreign land, the cultural obligations are carried with the family wherever it goes. Noor expresses her realization as:

*I learned that my body belonged not to me but to my family, and it was my uncle’s right to say yea or nay to marriage. Because I lived in Paris, he said, didn’t mean I was no longer Indian and Muslim. He expected me to deposit my life in his care, and was so hurt and then insulted at my slightest hesitation.* (Baldwin 75)

And, towards the end of the novel in the prison Noor reviews her life and says:

*All my life, elders and superiors had told me how to live, who and what to like, what to do, how to do it. And even if I didn’t obey every injunction, my rebellions were small, mostly verbal. Always, I had seen myself as I “should be” not who I was.* (Baldwin 391)

Her uncle lectures on Love, Beauty and Tolerance and on relationship between Love, Lover and the Beloved. However, in case of his own nice he wishes Noor to marry a Nawab and to secure the Indian branch of the family alliance. He discourages her by saying that she is not better than a Montmartre prostitute and threatens if she continues to speak to Armand again, everyone: Mother, Dadijaan, Kabir and Zaib would never see or speak to her again. When she brings her Red Cross nursing certificate, he compares her achievement to joining a brothel:

*He roared that she would bring down her family in the eyes of the world, that a daughter of his khaandaan, the feudal House of Khans, should never be educated past her baccalaureate, should never work outside home.* (Baldwin 170)
Uncle Tajuddin never allows Noor or Noor’s Mother or Noor’s young sister Zaib to have issued an identity card or a license to drive in all the years they lived in Paris. He never allows them to hold a bank account either and all the women in France need permission from a male relative. When the SS captain throws away the books at Monsieur Hoogstraten’s Institution, Noor remembers her own Uncle Tajuddin at Afzal Manzil decides that all the books by writers unknown to him are to be banned, destroyed and thrown out. Even the books of other religions collected by Abhajaan are the first to be thrown out without caring for the emotions of Noor’s mother. When he first comes to know about Noor’s relationship with Armand, he shouts that he has no objection with Armand’s religion, but he objects only at work of Armand’s mother as a washerwoman. He blames the American example of Noor’s mother for the scandalous situation. The elders in the family do not care for the young woman’s feelings as if her feelings have no value at all. Noor confesses:

*Mother and Uncle never asked me to describe the life I dreamed of composing.* (Baldwin 73)

Noor’s love for Armand is so strong that she will wait for him and wait for the situation to become favourable till the end of her life. She is very much hopeful for regaining her love in the France and endures all the physical pains and struggles hopping meeting with Armand:

*All through her toughening-up and training, she had been suspended in a semi-life, preparing, anticipating and waiting, waiting, waiting for her chance- insh’allah –to return to France. Twenty-nine years old and feeling her life had yet to begin.* (Baldwin 44)

Armand is not afraid of her Uncle’s threats or of the bomb blast, but they are living in the France where she needs Uncle or Kabir’s permission to marry. After her two and half year of hardships in preparation, if Colonel Buckmaster rejects her to send to France only for being an Indian, she determines to find her own way. She will find another way to leave the charming London and even join the Maquis in France.

Noor’s brother Kabir forbids to precede the relationship between Armand and his older sister. He is a young man fully inspired by the Islamic philosophy and a “tyrant-in-training.” The following lines focus on the masculine power that dominates a woman’s freedom in the immigrant Indian Muslim family:
Eighteen that year, he was tyrant-in-training, eager to assert his newly minted masculine authority, eager to pronounce my sentence first, verdict afterwards. (Baldwin 74)

In fact, he is afraid that if his sister marries a Jew, her husband will inherit their Afzal Manzil and that is very disgusting to him. The men in the Muslim family assume more liberty in the marriages and the women seem to be compelled to follow the wish of the elders. Noor’s father dares to marry an American woman and in the epilogue the readers are told that Kabir marries Angela—the name indicates a Christian identity—without caring for the disapproval:

--Kabir had married Angela despite the explicit disapproval of every Indian family member including old Uncle Tajuddin--- (Baldwin 556)

The fact that in 1930s France the men of the family had the legal right to stop a woman’s engagement focuses on the denial of the right to chose for women in so called civilized modern Europe. The courageous and rebellious Noor marries secretly with Armand and it is the marriage without synagogue or mosque sanctification of their nuptials and without witness except the stars over the Paris. Noor represents every woman’s psychic condition when she falls in love with a man of different caste or religion. She has two opposite forces in her. On one hand, she loves Armand and on the other, she loves also her family. She is too weak to break her blood ties, too anxious to please and too frightened of penury. She is unable to protest Kabir to exclude the man she trusted, admired and loved most for her life. She believes that Kabir is protecting her and trying to prevent the further mistakes. She explains her situation:

I was travelling in two directions at once, and every magical hour with Armand become one hour stolen from my approved destiny as someone else’s wife. Every hour I spent with him became tinged with the melancholy of probable farewells, yet every hour we were together we became more essential to each other. (Baldwin 64)

While looking at the tiger claw around her neck, Noor wonders about the women who wear it before her and feels her womanhood is impossible to understand for Armand. A man can never feel what it is to be woman. She thinks:

A tigress, perhaps. Maybe she was hunting or in defense of her cubs. I often wonder about the women who wore it before me for luck and
courage, Armand, haven’t you ever wondered what it would be like to be a woman? Today or perhaps in another time? (Baldwin 118)

Noor needs to send something to Armand which will communicate her presence near the concentration camp and she selects the tiger claw for it, thinking that he will sell and get some money in return. She knows how precious and valuable it is:

...not only how precious it was to Noor, linking her always to India, her grandmother, Dadijaan, and the generations of women in her family who had worn it, but he would also know she gave him something to batter or sell, should his life depend on it. (Baldwin 233)

Uncle Tajuddin and her brother Kabir mark the line between good and evil. They force Noor with the choice between defying her family and turning against her heart. Noor’s father teaches her veena and allows her to massage his feet when he returns from his tours. Kabir once dreams that Noor is lying dead on the grass. This innate possessiveness in him is quite natural, but his male is conscious when he grows up and starts dominating the females in the family. Female dominance, as in the case of Noor, is something that hurts and unacceptable to Kabir:

All of them- Mother, Dadijaan and Zaib- had relied on her; so he was, well affronted that she hadn’t leaned in similar fashion on him. (Baldwin 12)

Noor is compelled to stop seeing Armand and she feels devastated and lonely. Her life is not in her own hands, the oppressive forces in the family and society influence it. Noor observes:

Someone always regulates my surroundings, affecting the air I breathe. Other people’s decisions have governed each moment of my life, limiting each choice by past decisions, decisions made by others before they ever met me. (Baldwin 535)

Later in the prison, Noor feels ashamed of her mother and brother who considered her as a woman and not as their beloved daughter or sister. She confesses:

I was ashamed of them, and ashamed for them. Their actions showed coinciding reasons to see me as a woman but never as Noor. Mother: her aspirations to bourgeois respectability. Kabir: the newly won masculine authority of majority. (Baldwin 366)

Defying her family, Noor and Armand continue their clandestine intimacy. The bond between them is so powerful that even the Nazis couldn’t squash their
enduring passion. Due to the war between Germany and France, Noor’s family shifts to the England while Armand’s family stays in the France. After shifting, Noor quickly becomes desperate as she discovers that Rivkin and his mother were unable to flee. When Germany invades France, Noor feels despaired for not ever seeing Armand again because a Jew might not survive at the hands of tyrant Germans. Baldwin skillfully articulates the feelings inside Noor’s broken heart as:

*With Armand, I was unconscious of being woman, unconscious of him as man. With him I could act, and he had liberty to feel. I loved him for what he confided in me, the glimpse of his forbidden inner core, for the things I could say only to him when he shared my body and was enclosed by me. In those moments there was nothing impermeable between us, no trivial differences to separate us.* (Baldwin 117)

Hopping return to France and revenge on Nazis, Kabir secretly helps the resisting group of the people. He unwittingly introduces Noor to his new friend who is recruiting the bilingual women for the resistance. One factor is money; but the real cause is that he doesn’t want his sister to touch the unrelated men by being a nurse:

*Admit the real reason: he meant to spare Noor the remotest chance she might be ordered to clean bedpans, swab blood, tend strange men. War be damned, at the time, he couldn’t stomach the idea that if Noor becomes a nurse on active duty, she, his sister, his unmarried sister, would touch, hold, bathe men’s naked bodies - unrelated men.*

(Baldwin 11)

Ironically, his younger sister Zaib becomes a doctor and though unmarried she probably everyday touches the unrelated men and wounded soldiers.

Noor is ready to do anything to return to the France and find her lover who has disappeared with his mother into the maw of the Holocaust. Haunted by the feeling that she has abandoned her love, Noor joins a British espionage cell and volunteers for an assignment hopping that will bring her back to the France. Noor is accepted and is offered training. As a resistance agent Noor is trained to be a radio operator and to take on a second identity as Nora Baker - one of the many names she will eventually assume. When she arrives in France, she plays Anne-Marie Régnier, a woman caring for her sick aunt and to other spies in her resistance network she is known as “Madeleine”. And in some ways she doesn’t seem completely comfortable in any one of these identities. She has to break her fast during the Ramzaan because
she needs to assure the uniformed German army men that she is one of the natives of France and not an immigrant Indian. In India swastika symbolizes the health charm. But in France the cross symbolizes the male power through the right bent spokes and the female through the left bent. But for the Germans it means one power only- male: the red for blood; the white for Aryan purity and the black for Hitler’s intent to obliterate the ‘others’.

Noor has a secret rendezvous with other agents. She transmits the messages from various safe houses and risks capture at every turn. One of the secret agents named Gilbert once demands her sexually. And she rejects, but the fear ever haunts her that rejected and angry Gilbert might inform the Gestapo about her. She rents an apartment across the street from Drancy near the concentration camp where she knows Armand is being held. At great peril she sends him a message through the tiger claw pendant which she always wears for the luck and courage. At that time, when the buses carry the captured away from Drancy, Noor very emotionally prays to Allah:

Allah, you know how the suffering of Al-Hallaj, let not my Armand suffer hunger, wound or pain. Allah, if he has been sent to Germany, don’t let them treat him harshly. I would take his place, Allah. Let them take me, not him. (Baldwin 251)

Noor must wade her way through oppression and hypocrisy from all the sides; her beloved Armand could be killed by the Germans at any time; her French and British colleagues fight against the occupation of France, while the Britain still occupies India; she learns of the dark family secrets; and one by one members of the spy network are being ratted out by a double agent. Noor says at one point, “I’m a member of every tribe,” to which one French resistant named Viennot responds:

It’s very dangerous thinking. One must know very definitely to which tribe one belongs. (Baldwin 420)

Noor is betrayed for the numerous times in the novel and the betrayal can come from anyone. While in France among the secret agents, she says that they all have to believe that they are doing right or they would kill themselves. Her fellow agents were looking at her as a woman and willing for her body. She tells about her experience with Viennot:

All through August and September, Viennot attempted to meet me at his apartment, always mentioning that his wife was absent on vocation.
He said he could fix my transmitter if it ever broke—and once upon a
time I would have pretended to be very stupid, pretended I didn’t understand his advances, or that he was waiting for complete impoverishment to steer me down the road to selling my body.

(Baldwin 424-425)

Noor is often in dialogue with Allah, asking favours, making promises and reaffirming her faith. Noor relies on her religious beliefs to motivate herself, but the actions of others become the worst that befall her. In overcoming or accepting the obstacles, Noor follows the Sufi path to realize herself as a woman and as a human being. When she shoots two SS soldiers to death, she repents for her act. She has already taken out the life of her child ‘ma petite’. She wonders if Armand comes to know about her being a murderer, will he accept her love? Feeling guilty for violating her father’s religious teachings, she thinks:

Would Armand ever accept her again, knowing she had killed? He had forgiven her once, years ago. Could he whose love always called to her best and highest self forgive her again? (Baldwin 315)

Noor Khan is a terrorist in the eyes of the Nazis and a heroic symbol of the French resistance. It seems that when she is caught by the SS, she has in her room a notebook with a complete record of her transmissions in the code and plain language: a lavish gift for the Nazis. Baldwin’s offhand comment on this serious breach of protocol at the end of the novel is “as if no other wireless operator was ever arrested with code books in hand”. Noor is kept in the dungeon which has not even the straw mattress and she has to doze off on the damp stone floor, insects crawling over her and rats gibbered and squeaked when her clog hit its hide. She is given the soup once every three days and water each day. Herr Vogel, the jailor uses many tactics for Noor to break down to confess and reveal the secrets of her spying agency. He uses to show her the photographs of the cruelty with which the captured are treated:

A prisoner buried vertically up to his chin a hole, an SS man pointing his rifle at him. A naked woman suspended upside down with metal clamps about her ankles, her eyes gouged and bleeding.

(Baldwin 311)

The above lines focus on the cruelty that a war carries and also on the worst treatment given to the captured man or woman.

Her mother’s being of an American origin causes the trouble for Noor. When Vogel comes to know about her as mixed blood-offspring on an Indian prince and an
American mother, he considers her as his enemy—an American. Vogel reminds her about fascism which is also rising in the America; the Americans would like to deport all foreigners, leaving just enough of other species and races to do the labour that soils their hands. He considers her resident of nowhere and insults her calling again and again ‘mischlinge’. He humiliates her by enquiring:

\[
\text{It must feel terrible, not to belong anywhere, to be a rootless cosmopolitan, never to be satisfied anywhere, to always be comparing one place to another. (Baldwin 470)}
\]

Noor’s multiple identity lands her in the trouble when she is captured.

The novel has a direct narrative telling about Noor’s training for her mission, arriving in the France, meeting the other members of her shadowy cell, finding the safe houses for her transmissions and also a retrospective narrative composed of a journal she writes in secret while imprisoned by the Nazis at Pforzheim in Germany before her execution. The letters are addressed to “ma petite,” and the readers gradually come to realize that she is talking to the foetus she aborted when Armand impregnated her. She is happy that she has not delivered the child in the turbulence of the destructive war. She explains to the spirit of ‘ma petite’:

\[
\text{When I think of this war, I am glad I delayed your soul, for you would have entered the world Vogel and Uncle Tajuddin prefer, a world that wants its bloodline pure, its people destructive or acquiescent. (Baldwin 152)}
\]

Noor thinks that they should try to change the world in a better place before bringing the child back in the world. She expects the world in which they and others like them will be free to marry, free to keep their faiths and honouring faiths of others, just as her Abhajaan taught. Once she advises her unborn child’s spirit:

\[
\text{Say no to all oppression, whether it rises from those you love or from an enemy, for the shame and self-hatred your mother carries for not resisting when I was younger are worse by far. (Baldwin 109)}
\]

Such type of story is common in the Second World War books, plays and films. But what makes Baldwin’s novel different is the Muslim worldview through which Noor lives and observes her life. The Occupied France is a metaphor for Imperialized India, which makes the British an uncomfortable parallel to the Nazis. But the politics is not quite that simple because the France as a Western nation can sometimes be cast in the occupier’s role as well. The predicament of French women
as Noor observes during her espionage is similar to the Indian women. The narrator compares three dark maidens lifting dome of the Richard Wallace with the poor women in India laboring on the construction site, except that these are not the women of flesh and blood.

The colonization and oppression of people, countries and individuals are the central themes in *The Tiger Claw*. Noor feels that the British are hypocrites when they denounce the German occupation because they too have been colonizers in the India. When one of her French co-operatives complains about the Nazis calling his countrymen “chimpanzees,” Noor remembers:

*The British used such tactics in India and Indians were called ‘brown monkeys’ in London. The French had like terms for Algerians, Moroccans and Tunisians—personal indignities trivial compared with arrests and torture, distractions from the colonizers’ plunder.*

(Baldwin 327)

She remembers that at the lycee her teachers often blamed the ills of the world on the inflow of the immigrants, immigrants coming to France from anywhere and everywhere. The foreign-born people like herself who live in the France and even those like Armand born in the France of the naturalized parents are the targets of the blames. However, they reserve a special distaste for the immigrant Jews. A French lady Renee Garry once reveals to Noor:

*You’re too young to understand, Anne-Marie. Jews and immigrants led France into this war, and now the Germans imprison us all.*

(Baldwin 172)

Renee opens her home for Noor and other agents; such hospitality to strangers is a part of the life in places like India, but not usually exhibited by the Europeans. Renee betrays Noor and other agents, unfortunately, including her own brother by reporting to the Gestapo about Noor in exchange of her husband Guy’s release from the camp. Later, Renee is charged for the betrayal and a committee of four women jurors, all wives-of-POW organizations is appointed. It is very impossible that a French woman, a white European will be convicted by the panel of the white women for denouncing an immigrant Indian Muslim woman. And, they offer her a clean chit.

At the end of the book when a Holocaust survivor Armand Rivkin, a Jew minority is talking to Noor’s brother Kabir, who wonders if Armand will go to Palestine, Armand devastatingly says ‘no’:
I’d only exchange the watchtowers and barbed wire of Auschwitz for the watchtowers and barbed wire of the kibbutz. And now, with the bomb—I don’t want Gentiles to have us all in one place.

(Baldwin 552)

At the beginning of the novel when Kabir is searching for Noor, he comes across German soldiers willing to surrender and he thinks of what will happen to them now that the war is over, he wonders on how much retaliation had really been necessary? The British, Germans, French and Jews are all viewed as the illegitimate interlopers. In his Review of the novel Samyukta praises the book as:

The tale is woven with a rich tapestry of details that makes the book a very satisfying read, allowing the reader a strong sense of familiarity with the characters. Some of the words linger long after putting the book down. (Samyukta www.sawnet.org)

A careful research on the three continents yields Baldwin a competence to portray the predicament of a Muslim woman and teach the readers about the racism, sexism and imperialism. Baldwin’s writing style is ponderous and over-laden with details. The description of Noor’s espionage work moves along at a snail’s pace and the romance with Armand never comes alive for the readers because he is offstage behind a concentration camp wall most of the time. Baldwin in an interview to Lindsay Pereira suggests:

Read it as a demonstration of Noor’s progress along the Sufi path searching for her beloved, as the tale of a woman trying to resist every effort to define and classify her, or as the tale of how a woman can do a great job and end up saving France from Fascism while being a believing Muslim wearing a headscarf -- oh yes, in France. Read it as a story of how an ordinary radio operator -- only a cut above a typist -- became crucial to the successful invasion of Europe to save the continent from the Thousand-Year-Riech. Read it as a tale of love and betrayal, an allegory for our times, or a tale that says we must love so deeply and fiercely that love will outlive our bodies. Read it in many ways. (Baldwin www.sawnet.org/books/writing/ssb_ia.html)

Baldwin portrays Noor as a heroic and there can be no doubt of the young woman’s courage and determination, even if her judgment may have been false. The readers come to know from the beginning that Noor will end up imprisoned. How she
is caught? Who betrays her? Will she ever be released? Will Kabir find her? Will she and Armand be reunited? These questions are sustaining and maintaining the interest as Baldwin paces the story like a nail-biting thriller, revealing only a little bit at a time. To conclude one must agree with Shashi Tharoor who in advance praises the novel as:

A deeply felt, richly evocative novel that resurrects and reinvents a remarkable life, The Tiger Claw tells an affecting story of love and loss amidst the turbulence of war and human dislocation. It confirms Shauna Singh Baldwin as a major literary voice that transcends the borders that divide human experience.

(Tharoor www.shaunasinghbaldwin.com)

IV.III: The predicament of Women in Shauna Singh Baldwin’s English Lessons and Other Stories:

Shauna Singh Baldwin's English Lessons and Other Stories focuses on the predicament of previously neglected Sikh women under the Sikh masculinity by mapping onto the wider historical contexts of immigration to North America and globalization and consumerism in India. Susan Chacko comments in his review of this collection of short stories with following lines:

"English Lessons and other stories" is Shauna Singh Baldwin's second book, a collection of fifteen short stories that revolve around Sikh women in three different countries -- India, Canada, and the United States. They range from a 10-year-old girl in Indian Punjab, through mothers whose children are studying abroad, to young immigrants in Canada and the US, to an elderly lady in a retirement home in Canada. (Chacko www.sawnet.org)

The first story “Rawalpindi 1919” presents the predicament of a mother, a Sikh woman whose son is migrating to Europe for three years to pursue the higher education. Her husband loves the chapatti she prepares with love. She follows the traditions of not uttering the name of husband and covering head with chunni in front of husband. She is a caring and loving mother who always thinks of her sons. Her elder son is a poet, a gentle and kind but not a businessman and the younger one Sarup is worldlier. She worries about his marriage:
Twenty-one years old and Choudhary Sahib had found no bride worthy of him-yet. (Baldwin 11)

While cooking Sardarni Sahib thinks about her son’s encounters in his migration to England. She expects that her son will not change when he returns from Europe:

...her boy could go to Vilayat, to the white people’s country, to learn from their gurus in their dark and cloudy cities – her youngest – and then return to Rawalpindi, and his people would know no difference. (Baldwin 11)

She imagines how he will live in the England where he will need enough turbans to keep his Sikh identity. Her husband washes his hands after shake-hand with a British man; and now her son is going to live among the English boys and will pollute his hands. She also cares for the food he will have to eat in the England - ‘only boiled food with not a single chilli all the time’ – to which Sarup would never become used to.

Her son studies in Imperial College and reads Thelma, a love story written by a woman called Marri Corrilli. Sardarni sahib does not believe that a woman has written a fat book herself. She thinks:

But maybe she was a poor woman who could not afford to get a munshi to write down her thoughts. (Baldwin 13)

At the end of the story, she demands her husband to buy the chairs and plates in the house when her son returns from England.

“Montreal 1962” presents the predicament of a Sikh wife living with her husband in Canada where her husband is asked to take off his turban and cut the hair short to have the job. These turbans carry so much cultural and religious affiliation and affection in the life of a Sikh woman. They stand as a symbol of their tradition. She has never seen her father, her brother and her husband without a turban. But, these turbans appear to be bed-sheets or curtains to the Canadian dry-cleaner woman without eyebrows. The Canadians expect and compel her husband to sacrifice his cultural identity and tradition to suite the new world:

You must be reborn white-skinned – to survive. (Baldwin 15)

The detailed description of the process of washing, drying, folding and wearing the turbans focuses on the love and attachment a Sikh woman has with them.
It carries a strong cultural significance for the Sikh community. For the protagonist the red colour of a turban stands for the blood of the Sikh martyrs:

*I unfurled the gauzy scarlet on our bed and it seemed as though I’d poured a pool of the sainted blood of all the Sikh martyrs there.*

(Baldwin 17)

When the woman protagonist ties the turban to her head, it reminds her of the cultural heritage of her community:

*In the mirror I saw my father as he must have looked as a boy, my teenage brother as I remember him, you as you face Canada, myself as I need to be.* (Baldwin 18)

She wishes her husband not to lose the traditional and cultural identity before the Canadians who do not know what it takes to wear a turban for the Sikhs. She declares:

*And so, my love, I will not let you cut your strong rope of hair and go without a turban into this land of strangers. The knot my father tied between my chunni and your turban is still strong between us, and it shall not fail you now. My hands will tie a turban every day upon your head and work so we can keep it there. One day our children will say, “My father came to this country with very little but his turban and my mother learned to work because no one would hire him.”* (Baldwin 18)

“Dropadi Ma” speaks about the predicament of two women: an old woman maid and the narrator’s grandmother whose son migrates to Canada. Dropadi Ma is an old servant in a Sikh family. She uses to tell the stories to children in the family including the narrator. Even the narrator’s uncle Sukhimama has been taught by her. She is an expert in telling a variety of stories:

*the story chant, smoothly re-entering webs of treachery, violence and sacrifice upon sacrifice, every story is set in an age of obedience where the only conflict lay between duty and duty. Stories to keep a child wandering too far.* (Baldwin 19)

Sukhimama’s marriage is arranged with an unfamiliar girl from a rich family. Dropadi Ma will not be taken to Bangkok for Sukhiji’s wedding as she is after all a servant of the family:

*Dropadi Ma wanted to be there too, I felt it, for Sukhimama was the eldest boy, the one she had taught most. But Dropadi Ma was, at the*
end of all, only a servant, and we all knew the question would not arise. (Baldwin 20)

The narrator grandmother arranges her son’s wedding to a girl fixed by the family at Bangkok. But, Sukhi does not want to marry the same girl as he knows nothing about her. He is living in Canada and that makes the difference. His mother says:

Did they addle your brain in Canada? You should have stayed in England, sir. The English understand these things. (Baldwin 20)

She thinks that the culture of Canada exploits her son and if he was in the England the things might have been different. In Canada there may not be the tradition of blessing from their elders, but Sukhi does not forget it as he touches his head to Dropadi Ma’s feet for the blessings. When she comes to know that Sukhi is not willing to marry the girl his family has fixed for him, Dropadi Ma takes back the bangle she has offered to the proposed bride and gives it to Sukhi to give it, perhaps, to one he likes in the Canada.

“Family Ties” focuses on the predicament of a girl in the Sikh family who feels discriminated by her parents and searches for the reasons for the same. It focuses on the three women: the girl narrator, her mother and her aunt. Her mother calls her fatty. Her mother is mad after the imported things and always quarrels with her husband over the matter of extra money. She wishes him to get the posting at Delhi:

They are fighting again over money. Always money. She says Dad should be like every other government employee—take a favour here, a perk there, a bribe here, have a little consideration for his family. Try to get a Delhi posting- she says it’s the only place a government servant can make better money. (Baldwin 26)

The only reason that she marries him is that he has not asked for the dowry. She likes the Chinese hairdresser girl, the French brands and even orders the cook to make the Western food. Her daughter is recommended glasses and she worries about her marriage. She discourages her daughter by saying:

How will anyone marry you now, you ungrateful child. (Baldwin 38)

Her daughter’s low vision is a family tie as Chandani, her innocent Aunt who is raped by the Muslims at time of the partition and has drawn her child as if she suffers from the low sight. The narrator’s mother gives her son more and more pocket money and when she comes to know that he is addicted and almost mad, she repents:
My only son. What have I not given him? He doesn’t talk properly anymore…. Who will look after me when I get old? (Baldwin 39)

The madness her son carries is also the family tie as Chandani is also mad when her brother denies taking her back to his house due to her being raped by the Muslims.

Her father is always haunted by the past memories of the partition period. He trains her brother at shooting by a revolver. He considers the possibility of the war with Pakistan. He advises his son:

\[ \text{Beta, I don’t know if you will ever need this. But there is a war now, and I want you to know how to use it to defend this little kukri.} \]  
(Baldwin 28)

At another time again he guides his son:

\[ \text{If the Muslims come and your sister is in danger, you must shoot her rather than let her fall into their hands.} \]  
(Baldwin 28)

She is shocked at the teaching of her father to her brother regarding the treatment to her in the danger. The little daughter of ten feels like a kukri:

\[ \text{My breath comes fast when I hear this, and feel his hand on my head like the kukri must have felt the chicken-seller’s pudgy gentle hand reaching into her cage.} \]  
(Baldwin 28)

Later, when she comes to know about her brother’s smoking cigarettes, he threatens her not to tell their father about it. Otherwise he will kill her. He says:

\[ \text{If you try it, you’d be dead.} \]  
(Baldwin 34)

He is told that she belongs to him and he has power to wish her life or death. Her parents wish to send her brother to the University of Toronto in Canada for the higher education. On the other hand she is sent for the schooling to Miss Shafi, a Muslim woman left behind by her relative who went to Pakistan after the partition. She is asked to use shampoo every two days to make her hair thick so that someone will marry her. Her mother brings a contraption for her to swing against every day and try to grow taller. She wears her Mummy’s old salwar kameezes altered to her size. All these facts expose how a girl is discriminated and a boy is favoured in the Indian families.

Against the pride and honour of the family and religion, the lives of daughters and sisters have no values. The predicament of the aunt of the narrator brings to the focus the facts during the partition of India. Her eighteen years old aunt Chandani Kaur is abducted by the Muslims during the partition period in 1947 and she has a son
after being raped by the Muslims. She survives as Jehanara Begum. However, when fond by the social workers, her brother says:

*...his sister was dead and he was sorry for her troubles.* (Baldwin 33)

She thinks that her son is the obstacle and she kills her own son with her hands. Nand Singh, a servant of the family, tells the narrator:

*Then again this Jehanara Begum wrote to your father, saying the baby was gone now and again asking to be taken back.* (Baldwin 33)

The sacrifice of her own son does not come to her rescue and she goes mad.

‘Gayatri’ projects the predicament of two women totally contrasting to each other. Gayatri is a conservative and Reena is a modern. Reena is sister-in-law to Gayatri. She is an educated and has recently joined a job as an Airhostess. She speaks the American English and stays in a hotel, instead of staying with her brother. She develops a friendship with an American and later marries him without asking her brother and parents about it. It is to their surprise that she marries with a black American.

Gayatri is not happy and is worried about Reena’s different way of life. She is of the view that the American men use women and then they are left without marriage. She says that the Americans, particularly:

*...sleep with women, but they don’t marry them.* (Baldwin 45)

She thinks that her sister-in-law is a selfish woman as she does not care for her family’s reputation and goes against the tradition to pursue her own dreams. She is of the view that Reena marries a black American, who might belong to the lower caste and thus cuts the head of the family for which she worries and is afraid.

In “Simran” Baldwin presents the predicament of a mother and her daughter. The story acquaints with Amrit-an India Sikh mother caring for her daughter returning from America after four months. She is a teacher and is worried about her nineteen-year-old unmarried daughter. Her daughter Simran studies hard. She follows her mother’s advice to stay clear of the Americans and not to make friends with other foreign students while studying in the States. Amrit is of the opinions that Americans do everything themselves and they spoil the servants. She thinks that the America teaches her daughter to lie to her parents. When she sees a copy of the Koran in Simran’s bag, she feels ruined by her daughter:

*Veeru is even old enough to remember the sight of Sikh women, raped and disgraced by Muslims, walking home to Amritsar. And my*
daughter comes back from America with a copy of Koran? I don’t know what is in it- I only know it is the book that gave its believers permission to kill us. (Baldwin 50)

She feels that her daughter has completely lost the Sikh culture:

Even her limbs imitated American discipline; her gestures were wider, and when she wore a sari I was dismayed that she no longer walked with graceful glide, but strode as firmly as any shameless blonde woman. For this I sent her to America? (Baldwin 50)

The family spends fifteen thousand dollars on the daughter’s foreign education and bears the dire predictions of friends. And to their surprise, their daughter becomes:

...a monster, an ungraceful, rebellious, selfish monster. (Baldwin 57)

As a caring mother Amrit feels that she has to protect her daughter’s reputation.

When a Muslim boy named Mirza tries again and again to contact Simran in India from America on telephone, Amrit feels confirmed that her daughter has a love affair with him in America. At first a copy of the Koran and now the frequent phone calls at night times lead her suspicions to turn in to confirmation. Amrit doubts even her daughter’s virginity:

I even began to worry if she was still virgin. (Baldwin 63)

In fact, Simran has no such relationship with Mirza. They are just friends; no matter he is in love with her. But Simran becomes a prey to her parents’ suspicious nature and fears of the possible disgrace if their daughter loves and marries a Muslim. They decide not to send her again to America where her lover and their enemy is waiting for her. An innocent young girl’s opportunity of having the higher education in America is sacrificed due to the age old dislike and rivalry between the Sikh and Muslim communities. On the other hand, a true love of Mirza is also sacrificed due to the same.

Like “Montreal 1962”, Baldwin’s another story “Toronto 1984” focuses again on the predicament of an immigrant mother Bibiji and her daughter Piya. They live in the Canada. Piya works in a Canadian multinational company which forbids her to wear the salwar kameez. She feels that she has an ethnic individualism in her earrings. She is a very patriotic young woman who denies standing in praise of the British Queen in the party. She says:

My face flamed red. I finally understand what they wanted me to do.

They wanted me to stand and toast the British Queen, the symbol of the
empire my grandfather fought against for independence, the one whose line had send my grandfather to prison. (Baldwin 69)

After this incident her Chinese-South African colleague suggests that she must work hard to save from the rage of her boss. Her boss belittles her by saying:

_I would never have hired you if I had known you are a damn Paki._

(Baldwin 70)

But she feels her pride in the Indianness betrayed when her trip to the motherland is cancelled because of Indira Gandhi’s murder in India.

Bibiji is a widow living with her son and daughter in Canada. She worries about her daughter Piya. She always advises her son to think of Piya’s marriage:

_But now I don’t like this too-much freedom. I’m telling you something bad will happen._ (Baldwin 68)

She thinks that it is a duty of her son to find a match for his sister. She is a caring mother worried about her children. She demands at her son:

_So tell your boss you have to get your sister married, he will give time-off; are you not the foreman? And when have you ever taken time-off? That was because you were sick. Tell him two weeks. It is very important._ (Baldwin 70)

The Congress workers take her son to the sterilization camp to make an operation before he has a chance to father a son. It is not the mother who heads the family after death of her husband; the son takes his father’s place. It is clearly mentioned in the conversation between Bibiji and Piya:

_It’s all settled. You will come with us. Bhaiya has said so, and I am asking you to be a good girl and listen to his wishes. If your father was here, he would tell you for me – but what can I do, one poor foolish widow._ (Baldwin 72)

She wishes her children not to become too much Canadian.

“Lisa” presents the life of three young Indian women: Lisa, Brenda and Jaya. They are modern in the sense that they go to Hooligan’s Bar to drink the wines and for smoking. Lisa works as an aerobics instructor and Brenda in the print shop, while Jaya has classes to join. Lisa has an affair with an Indian and who impregnates her. She thinks that they are in love, but Brenda reminds her:

_Love is an American invention. It has nothing to do with Indian marriage. My mother says it comes after marriage._ (Baldwin 79)
Lisa also wishes not to marry the Indian, whom she calls son-of-a-bitch, but will give birth to the baby and will pull him to the court. She angrily reveals her intentions:

*I’m gonna slap that bugger with paternity suit and he’ll be paying child support till he’s a hundred.* (Baldwin 78)

Her friend Jaya advises her to abort the child, but Lisa is not ready to kill a life. Jaya reminds her even the cockroaches also have life. She is sure that the man will not take the responsibilities of the child. And the same happens when a girl child takes birth. Jaya is of the opinion that if it was a boy, the man might have taken the responsibilities. At the end of the story, Lisa finds the job of telemarketing for the opera where she can carry her child, but there is no one to help her by babysitting that night.

“A Pair of Ears” focuses on the predicament of an old deaf widow who has immigrated in Delhi during the partition. She is taken care of by another old woman called Amma. She has two sons; the elder one is Jai—an astrologer at abroad and the younger one is Balvir—working in Bombay. The mother has given Balvir twenty-five percent of the house legally by signing the papers. But he wants her to give the entire house to him and Jai so they don’t have to pay the taxes when their mother dies. He wants to convert the house into a tall building. He wants her to live in a smaller house as she does not need this big house for herself. The mother rents the ground floor and it is the only support for her in her old age. She wishes that her son Balvir to live with her at Delhi in the same house. She hopes for his child’s company and happiness. He comes to live with her after winning her heart and her agreeing to allow him to construct the upper floor. She thinks:

*It will be nice to have company. I have felt so alone since your father left us.* (Baldwin 94)

But Balvir is very selfish son:

*Balvir’s ‘concern’ is like a kisan’s for a crop of jute – how much can be harvested and how much will it bring?* (Baldwin 84)

Once the mother reveals the reason to Amma:

*Amma, money – the very prospect of money – is changing my son.*

(Baldwin 85)

The mother has her memories of the past with the house and does not want to demolish or reconstruct it. She tells to Balvir:
Your father told me never to move from this house. You know, we built it together, selling the jewellery we escaped with during the partition. I can still see him walking with me through these rooms the first time, telling this house would replace all we had lost. (Baldwin 90)

One night, Balvir comes drunk at home and asks to the photograph of his father:

What does a widow need with all that money? (Baldwin 93)

The mother gives money to the driver for petrol and tells him to treat Balvir’s wife Kiran with respect. She pays all the phone bills and her son buys whisky in the cases on his mother’s account at the market. When Kiran breaks a glass bangle, Balvir buys her a new one of gold. This all goes on, but the mother never minds it. Once the mother asks her grandson Manu to call the driver to bring her car; while denying he tells her:

You can’t order me around. Daddy says you’re nobody. (Baldwin 95)

This reply frustrates her and she decides to get a stay-order from the court to stop the construction her son has started. She succeeds, but is helpless to draw him out of the house. To this her son Balvir replies with threat:

I’ll never try to help you again, Mama. You just wait and see. I’m going to have to defend this case and you’ll be the one to be sorry.

(Baldwin 97)

In court he wins the favour saying that,

...he will really look after her, say he and Kiran will be kind.

(Baldwin 98)

When the lower floor resident leaves the house, Balvir requests the court to restrain her from renting the downstairs until a family understanding has been arrived at. This stops her only income and she is helpless and she dies very soon. And her servant Amma cuts her Mem-Saab’s hand immediately after her death, fills the silver glass with her blood and spreads it everywhere in the house. This is a sign of the tie that the mother had with the house. Then Amma leaves to live with her relatives.

“Nothing Must Spoil This Visit” is a story of a Canadian woman Janet who comes to India with her husband to realize what it means ‘to be a woman’ for the Indian women. She marries Arvind, who was formerly engaged with his childhood relative-friend Chaya. But his mother married her with her younger son Kamal. This decision is taken because of the Indian way of thinking about a woman’s reputation:
An innocent motorcycle ride through the Simla hills and you can end up married to a different man. (Baldwin 123)

The story seems to be about the loss of the cultures as Kamal’s sarcastic comment indicates the same. He says:

*Arvind is shorter only because he no longer wears a turban.*

(Baldwin 108)

When Janet comes in the family, she uses two buckets of water leaving none for Chaya to bathe. She asks the cook to use too much milk and sugar in her constant cups of tea till there wasn’t enough left by the evening for Chaya to make yoghurt. Very nostalgically Arvind takes his wife Janet to see the places of his childhood memory in India. He changes his life style as soon as he comes to India. Janet also tries at the Indian costumes to please and win hearts of the members of her husband’s family in Indian.

*As soon as they’d arrived at his parents’ home, Arvind had changed from pants and a jacket and a tie to a white kurta-pyjama and sandals. When she’d worn a sari, thinking to please Papaji, the whole family had applauded.* (Baldwin 112)

Kamal is not happy to know that his father wishes to give a big share of the family property to Arvind. He thinks that he has a son to follow the family line, but his brother and his foreign wife have no child and thus father needs not to give him any part of the property. Having no children is very seriously considered in the Indian family culture. Arvind has to play the middleman’s role between his foreigner wife and his Indian family. When Janet fails to understand the importance of cloths in India, Arvind explains to his mother:

*Janet comes from a young country, Mumji. Women in Canada believe in learning by experience.* (Baldwin 112)

The difference between Janet and Chaya is clear as they represent the two countries, two cultures and two mind sets:

*She (Chaya) was always slow. It really didn’t matter – she came from good blood and she had given him (Kamal) a son. What more was there? At least she wasn’t like Janet, brash and talkative, asking questions as though she had right to answers.* (Baldwin 117)

Janet observes Chaya very closely and thinks:
Would the Arvind she knew today have been happy with so passive a woman? Never an opinion, never any talk. Spoken at but mostly ignored. Rewarded with jewellery and sweetness for that silent, respectful obedience. And always that beautiful, ephemeral, meaningless smile. (Baldwin 127)

The real woman is a woman who makes a man love her and what Arvind has seen in Janet is the question. When Janet appears in her new Indian family, she is considered as a woman who needs not a man. Janet remembers and realizes what Anyu, her friend in Canada, said to her;

This marriage will not work if you have to live in his country..... You could never live in India; you are a woman raised in freedom.

(Baldwin 124)

In the Indian culture a woman has less freedom of wish for her love. A successful woman is a woman who can adjust at her best with the changed circumstances. Her happiness is considered in her being a mother than anything else. It comes apparently through Mumji’s answer to Janet’s question on the sacrifice of love between Chaya and Arvind. Mumji explains to Janet:

Love, shove. I gave to Kamal and she was protected, nor ruined nor cast out. She has been treated well, like a daughter. She has been blessed with a son; what more could she ask for? After all, I chose her because I saw from the start she would be an adjustable woman.

(Baldwin 130)

It seems that a woman’s selection and reputation depend on her adjustability. Janet feels sorry for Chaya as she has sacrificed her love and contrary to it, Chaya feels very sad for Janet as she has no child. When it comes out in the discussion between them that Arvind is not capable of being a father; Chaya laughs at herself and says:

(I laugh) at myself for wanting all these years a man who could not have given me my son. (Baldwin 137)

For her a man who cannot produce children is not man even worth loving.

“English Lessons” presents the predicament of an Indian woman married to an American, who takes her to the States just to become a prostitute and a source of his earnings. Kanwaljit is an Indian woman married to an American named Tony and comes in the States to ‘live like a worm avoiding sunlight’. They have a son named Suryavir. She lives underground as her green card has not come. She is prohibited to
meet any Indian there. He compels her to dress in pants so that she looks like a Mexican and though she is his wife, he introduces her to others as his girlfriend. He wishes her to speak English to pass her immigration interview and to memorize her amnesty story. She totally changes and wants to erase her past identity. She says:

I told Valerie I will change my name. I asked her to call me Kelly. No one here can say Kanwaljit. And Kanwaljit is left away in Amritsar, before the fire. (Baldwin 141)

She thinks that if she returns to her father, it might be a disgrace and shame for her Indian family.

She is threatened of reporting to the immigration office by another American woman who has an affair with Tony. They live together for two years. She shares bed with Tony. Tony pays the same woman their life savings for a marriage certificate. Because of this woman, Kanwaljit comes to live with Tony in America. Kanwaljit asks her English teacher how to say:

Is not two years of our life enough? Is not my worm existence, my unacknowledged wifehood, enough for you? Enough that I call myself his girlfriend, my son his bastard? (Baldwin 141)

Tony shares Kanwaljit with another American man who has the immigration forms in his hands. The man frequently blackmails her. Kanwaljit confesses:

He looks like Tony, only younger. And he still laughs at me, waving pictures of Tony with her. Telling me Tony left me for an untouchable, a hubshi. Threatening to tell my parents if I would not open my legs to him. I did. Rubba-mer. I did. (Baldwin 142)

Tony warns Mrs. Keogh, the English teacher, not to teach Kanwaljit more than she knows, but just enough for her to get a good-paying job at Dunkin’ Donuts or maybe Holiday Inn. He warns Mrs. Keogh:

She will learn quickly, but you must not teach her too many American ideas. (Baldwin 143)

“The Cat Who Cried” is a story of an Indian woman who lives with her husband, two children and mother-in-law in America. Her mother-in-law Mataji believes the old Indian stories of the good and bad omens. Mataji is suspicious that her son Prem wants to marry the woman he met in America. She believes that the woman has bad influence over him. When married to Prem in India, her mother-in-law makes it clear that she is not to be trusted with money. She also warns her son
that he must not be influenced by his over-educated wife. Mataji once gives out her daughter-in-law’s necklace to some cousin whose dowry she is trying to collect. Her husband Prem does not get a job where he will neither give nor take bribes to survive and they shift to America with the help of his elder brother. In America she feels that she is forgetting Hindi year by year as it is more difficult to her to understand Mataji without her dentures. Prem has got a job of selling the health and life insurance to the other expatriate Indians. Mataji spends six months of the year visiting each of her sons in turn. When Mataji hears a cat’s cry as a sign of the bad luck and starts praying in puja-room, she also joins her along with children in the prayer. Mataji once expresses her wish that she is going to give their house on Aurangabad Road to Prem on the condition that he will return to India.

Prem also wishes to return to India. He thinks that ten years in America are enough to earn money. But his wife is not willing to go back. He is afraid of the American influence on his children and asks his wife:

_You think I want my daughter to paint her face and have a boyfriend by the time she’s twelve and my son to join a gang and bring home some New Age junkie? You just leave these decisions to me._ (Baldwin 149)

She gets a degree from Boston University. Though there is a lot of discussion on her working out of the house, she finds a job. She convinces Prem by telling him:

_I have just decided I need to get out during the day and allow Mataji to enjoy the children. That’s all._ (Baldwin 150)

She is an Indian woman trained and advised by her mother who carries the same teaching throughout her life. She keeps silence as her mother advises her:

_Yes, you are going back. And you are going to be silent. No one will ever be able to say that you were raised to be troublesome. Do you want them to say that all your education made you like some American feminist?... Be careful when you use that word. Men become afraid. If you want to survive, you must always let a man believe he has you under control. Silence is an excellent instrument, beti. Use it well._

(Baldwin 151)

But the silence too has its limit and when she comes to know that her husband has requested the agency to deposit her salary in the account they have opened to collect money to return to India; her silence breaks and the quarrel starts. As she does not wish to return to India, she boldly announces:
I told you, I don’t want to go back to India... Well, then, go back to India alone. (Baldwin 152)

She is ready to live alone in America, but will not return to India at any cost.

“The Insult” is a story of the two immigrant Indian sisters’ momentary loss of the honour for each other in America. It is narrated by Neelu, the daughter of one of the sisters. Both the sisters belong to the Sikh community living in America. Uncle Harjit and Aunty Nimmi always come to the narrator’s family. Aunty Nimmi works in a dentist’s office. She has three little sons. She is quite an American in her way of the life and way of thinking. She says that she is going to India without her sons as they do not like India. She informs the narrator’s family:

Nahiji – they don’t like India. They say it’s too dirty and has too many people. (Baldwin 156)

Neelu’s family doesn’t like such statements by Aunty Nimmi. While discussing on Neelu’s marriage, she declares while taking the issue so lightly:

Girls find their own partners now-days. Neelu is an American girl – you won’t even have to give her a dowry if she finds a fellow here. (Baldwin 156)

This comment by her hurts Neelu’s mother. Neelu’s mother answers her that they have not allowed her to go with the boys for dating. It is acceptable in only movies and they want a nice boy from a good Sikh family from India. There are many Sikh boys in America, but they all have cut their hair and don’t wear the turbans for making more money. She also wishes her sister to find a suitable boy for Neelu as she is planning to go to India. However, her sister Aunty Nimmi does no good job for her daughter and when she marries Neelu to a ‘good Sikh fellow’ from Delhi without turban, she sends no invitation of the wedding to her sister. She takes a type of revenge by insulting Aunty Nimmi’s honour. Her sister later realizes her mistake and wishes Neelu’s mother to ask her husband to help them in selling their house. At the naming ceremony of Neelu’s baby, her mother gives Aunty Nimmi the honour of naming the baby. The influence of the American culture causes many ups and downs in the relationships between the immigrants. The Sikh families living in an alien country like America again come together by forgetting the insults for each other.

“Jassie” is about a sixty-five year old immigrant mother Jassie who lives in a room with her son-in-law’s mother, Elsie. These two old women are together as Jassie’s daughter Minni and Elsie’s son Ted are married and they are the only
supports to both of them in their old age. The story focuses on the cultural and religious differences between these two old women. Her son-in-law is an African-American Christian. Jassie explains:

_We have little in common, Elsie and I. Only that we are both mothers, and our children are married._ (Baldwin 162)

Jassie has two mothers and is equally loved much by both of them. She is of the opinion that American women have no tradition of loving children. She believes:

_This was difficult for white women who had never known the love of children to understand._ (Baldwin 162)

She is a very much religious and always prays her Gods. She remembers that in the convent school along with the proper British lady’s English, she was taught by the teachers the Christian prayers. She remembers:

...they asked us to pray for the health of the Pope and all the bishops and archbishops, although these men were not their husbands, I felt these men were those who had power over my teachers, so I prayed – but not to their God – that they would be generous. (Baldwin 163)

She also remembers that the school introduced her to a ballroom dancing where she met Firoze and flirted with him for some time. They had the same background as both knew English history and not of their own. They expected the servants to have darker skin than their own. But Jassie marries the man her father chooses. He takes a house in the old Delhi as dowry. He fathers first a daughter and then two sons. She names her daughter as Yasmeen in the memory of Firoze, but family calls her Minni. At the end of the story when Elsie has anxiety attack and asks Jassie to read the Christian prayers for her, she imagines the possibility of her learning the namaaz easily as she learned the rosary of Elsie. She still carries her memories of the first love with her from India to America and will continue with it till death. In this way, the story highlights the expatriate sensibility of an immigrant woman who lives while recalling her happy past as a remedy to cope with the present alienation and loneliness.

The last story of this collection “Devika” is about an Indian immigrant woman living with her husband in Canada. She seems to be a mad under the dominance of masculinity. She develops an imaginary existence of a woman whom she calls Asha, which is her name before the marriage. In fact, Asha is one part of her dual split personality. She wants to do whatever Devika cannot do in her real life. Her all suppressed feelings are boldly expressed by Asha. She is the one who has sworn
never to be married. However, it seems that her father was very proud to have a daughter married to someone settled in the Canada and a big stockbroker named Ratan. In Canada, she is nostalgically thinks about her home in Delhi. She always thinks:

*It may be sunrise; her mother would be bowed in puja, chanting the aarti. May be the sun had already risen at home.* (Baldwin 169)

After marriage she lives in India for a year waiting for a visa. She remembers Ratan very little because only a few days she has seen him in Delhi during the marriage days. She remembers mercifully the honeymoon night full of pains. When she comes to Canada, she finds her husband greatly influenced by his elder sisters who also live in Canada. Ratan always takes her to meet them. Devika is a very good woman winning the hearts of people:

*That was her specialty. To read others and to know what they expected. Then to do her best to satisfy, to choose as they would have her choose.* (Baldwin 172)

Her mother used to advise her:

*Docile girls are good, Asha.* (Baldwin 172)

She is all alone at home when her husband goes out for the work. She spends the whole day in the cooking, cleaning and waiting for him. Ratan also faces many problems at work, many due to Devika’s (Asha’s) psychic acts and behaviour. His boss Mr. Peter Kendall is sick of the smell of Ratan’s curry; and once someone says:

*why those immigrants don’t leave their battles at home.* (Baldwin 175)

Also, the clients lose from Ratan’s hands. Once Mr. Kendall tells Ratan that:

*Mr. Berton doesn’t like a Paki managing his money. He has nothing against you personally, you know. He would just prefer to be with someone else.* (Baldwin 181)

When her husband Ratan comes late, she worries and thinks of what she will do if her husband dies in the Canada. Ratan changes as he starts drinking the wines, going with friends for the parties etc. He wishes his wife to change into some Canadian cloths:

*Whereas he... he was moving up in life now. He tried to imagine Devika in a black velvet skirt and a white silk jacquard blouse, like Peter Kendall’s wife.* (Baldwin 175)
He expects Devika to wear a dress and pantyhose and not a nose ring. He demands her:

\[
\text{You must try and learn some Chinese and Italian dishes, too. I want to ask Peter Kendall and his wife to dinner next month.} \quad \text{(Baldwin 176)}
\]

They feel lonely among the faceless and nameless people in the cars for miles and miles around in the foreign country. To fill her loneliness Devika thinks that Asha also lives with them. She always places three plates on the dining table, one for Asha. Devika smokes and blames the imagined Asha. Asha expresses what Devika thinks. She complains:

\[
\text{...how white-skinned people think they look clean all the time so they don’t bathe. Chi, dirty people.} \quad \text{(Baldwin 181)}
\]

She always complains about how homesick she feels. She demands a camera for Asha and takes only the pictures of Ratan as if she wishes him as whole. Once, while going to his one of the sisters, Devika tries to remove her dupatta caught in the door of car and meets with an accident. Her arm breaks and she is hospitalized. There she finds the death to Devika and she becomes completely Asha. Thus, the story ends with the suppressed split taking over the normal personality of Devika and she follows her suppressed dreams in Canada. Baldwin in her Keynote speech delivered at the Great Lakes Writer’s Conference declares:

\[
\text{In it, I began to move past my lived experience and personal problems to enter the earliest form of role-playing-game, the virtual reality game that predates computers: the world of fiction.} \quad \text{(Baldwin Great Lakes Writer's Conference)}
\]

One should agree with the praise for the book on her website, which states:

\[
\text{In 15 insightful but mostly sad stories, Baldwin examines the bruises and wounds endured by immigrant Sikhs learning how to live in English-speaking North America... Baldwin writes with seeming ease about life in both North America and India. She devotes loving attention to details of tradition and culture... They are both emotionally and politically loaded, both sweet and sour... English Lessons is a fascinating collection rich in cultural insight. These are life lessons worth sharing.} \quad \text{(www.edmonton.journal)}
\]

Shauna Singh Baldwin is an Indo-Canadian writer who possesses tremendous strength to compel the readers to think about the present world and the ignored past. Her The Tiger Claw presents the predicament of Noor Khan, a Muslim Indian who
volunteered as a radio operator in occupied France in 1943. It is a thriller story of a young and brave immigrant woman in Moscow, Paris and London. Baldwin hits at the Western projection of the Muslims as well as the Islamic jihadists by reviewing the historical facts of a Muslim woman executed by the Germany. Noor is cruelly treated in shackled hand and foot and freezing from the winter’s cold. She is kept alive on little soup in the dungeon, without the straw mattress and insects crawl over her. The jailor Herr Vogel uses many tactics to reveal the secrets of her spying agency. He considers her resident of nowhere and insults her frequently by calling ‘mischlinge’. The Occupied France is a metaphor for Imperialized India, which makes the British an uncomfortable parallel to the Nazis. A French lady Renee betrays Noor by reporting to the Gestapo about her. Later, Renee is charged for the betrayal, but it is impossible that a white French woman will be convicted by the panel of white women for denouncing an immigrant Indian Muslim woman.

Noor’s American mother is an adventurous woman from Boston who presents the evils of domestic basis for women. The cultural clash begins as she marries an Indian Sufi music teacher. Her Indian family considers her concubine until she bears a child. She advises Noor about the sacrifices in love and not to love someone of the different religion to avoid the confusion and pain of mixing the blood and religion. The cultural obligations are carried with the family wherever it goes. The Indian Muslim family suffers from the skin and color discrimination in the first world. But Kabir and his sister are fighting for the same British who mocked at the Indians for their non-violence struggle for the independence. Kabir is a subject to the prejudices against the Indian men and the worst opinions of the refugees from France. The immigrants are compelled by war to adjust and surrender to the situation.

Noor suffers from the discrimination for being a daughter. When Noor’s father dies, her conservative uncle Tajuddin and younger brother Kabir govern the family despite she is the elder child. Noor feels ashamed as her mother and brother considered her as a woman and not as their beloved daughter or sister. Paradoxically, her uncle lectures on Love, Beauty and Tolerance and attempts to destroy her love for a Jewish pianist Armand Rivkin. He wishes Noor to marry a nawab to secure the Indian branch of the family alliance. He destroys all books by the writers unknown to him, even the books of other religions collected by Abhajaan. For the scandalous situation because of Noor’s relationship with Armand, he blames the American example of Noor’s mother. Both the lovers are the victims of religious and political
terrorisms and their love is sacrificed in the worst situation for the Jews and immigrants in the German occupied France during World War II.

Kabir is inspired by the Islamic philosophy and afraid that if his sister marries a Jew, he will inherit their Afzal Manzil. The men in the Muslim family assume more liberty in the marriages as Noor’s father and Kabir have married with the women of other religion without caring for the disapproval. Noor’s devastated and lonely condition represents a woman in love with a man of different religion. She is hanged between two pulling forces, the oppressive forces in the family and the society. Kabir unwittingly introduces Noor to the recruiting officer because he doesn’t want his sister to touch unrelated men by being a nurse.

Noor joins a British espionage cell with hope to come back in the France. Her fellow agents like Gilbert look at her as a woman and wish for her body. She becomes a murderer for her love. Because of a careful research on three continents, Baldwin is competent to portray the predicament of a Muslim woman and teach readers about the racism, sexism and imperialism.

Shauna Singh Baldwin's *English Lessons and Other Stories* focuses on the predicament of Sikh women suppressed under the masculinity in the North America and India. “Rawalpindi 1919” presents worries of a caring and loving Sikh mother whose son migrates and the change required when her son returns from England. “Montreal 1962” presents the predicament of a Sikh wife living in Canada where her husband is asked to take off his turban and cut hair short to have the job. The story reveals a Sikh women’s the culture and religious affiliation and affection with turbans “Dropadi Ma” opens the heart of an old maid in a Sikh family who realizes that Sukhi is not willing to marry the girl his family has fixed for him and protests by taking back the bangle she had offered to the proposed bride and gives it to Sukhi to give it, perhaps, to one he likes in the Canada.

“Family Ties” focuses on the life of women in Sikh families. A Sikh mother is mad after imported things and extra money. Her daughter’s low vision and son’s madness are the family ties with innocent aunt Chandani. Chandani is raped by Muslims at the time of partition. She has drawn her child as if she suffers from low sight. She goes mad when her brother denies taking her back to his house. Against the pride and honour of the family and religion the life of daughters and sisters have no values. “Gayatri” projects the predicament of totally contrasting two women: conservative Gayatri and modern Reena. Gayatri worries and is afraid that Reena has
married a black American who belongs to the lower caste and thus, has cut the head of the family. In “Simran” an innocent daughter’s opportunity of have the higher education in America is sacrificed due to the age old dislike and rivalry between the Sikh and Muslim communities. “Toronto 1984” presents struggles of a mother and her daughter in the Canada. A Canadian multinational company forbids very patriotic young Piya to wear salwar kameez and she denies standing in praise of the British Queen.

“Lisa” presents the life of three young Indian modern immigrant women: Lisa, Brenda and Jaya. Lisa has an affair with an Indian and is pregnant. She delivers the girl child and Jaya thinks that if it was a boy the man might have taken the responsibilities. “A Pair of Ears” focuses on an old deaf widow immigrated in Delhi due to the partition. Once, her grandson tells her that his Daddy says she is a ‘nobody’ and the court case starts and she dies very soon. In “Nothing Must Spoil This Visit” a Canadian woman Janet struggles to realize what means ‘to be a woman’ for the Indians. Janet tries to please and win the hearts of members of her husband’s family in India. Janet and Chaya represent the difference between two countries, two cultures and two mind sets. “English Lessons” presents the condition of Kanwaljit, an immigrant Indian woman in American who becomes a prostitute and a source of her husband’s earnings. She cares for her father’s reputation and honour, so silently suffers through living underground, prohibition to meet any Indian, blackmailing, sexual exploitation and compelled to dress in pants and introduced as a girlfriend by her husband. Her America husband has an affair with an American woman and has shared Kanwaljit with another man who blackmails her.

In “The Cat Who Cried” an Indian woman who lives with her family in America doesn’t wish to go back to India after ten years. She is trained and advised by her mother to keep the silence but when she comes to know that her husband has requested the agency to deposit her salary in the account they have opened to collect the money to return to India; her silence breaks and the quarrel starts. “The Insult” is a story of ups and downs in the relations between the immigrant sisters belonging to the Sikh community living in America. One is quite American and another is too Indian. “Jassie” is about a helpless sixty-five year old mother living in a room with her son-in-law’s mother, Elsie. The story focuses on the past of Jassie and the cultural and religious differences between these two old women. The last story “Devika” presents a split personality of a nostalgic Indian immigrant woman living with her husband in
Canada under the dominance of masculinity. The suppressed split takes over the normal personality of Devika and she follows her suppressed dreams in Canada.

IV.IV: Conclusion:

Through the predicament of Noor in The Tiger Claw Baldwin answers the rising religious fundamentalism today, the emergence of the extreme Right worldwide and the branding and packaging of people these days as Indian Sikh man, British Muslim terrorist, French white Supremacist, American redneck and Saudi Muslim woman. The novel takes the readers in a meditative experience and explores the real life and world of its characters. It leads to wonder that if the times in which Noor lived are any different from our own? In his review of the novel MJ Stone comments:

*The historical fiction about Khan – a.k.a. Jeanne-Marie Reneir, a Muslim woman who fought with Resistance fighters in France during the Second World War – strikes a resonant chord in today’s war-torn world.* (Stone [http://hour.ca](http://hour.ca))

*The Tiger Claw* is a harrowing story of a courageous woman’s predicament in the face of racism, betrayal, hypocrisy, loyalty and love on one hand and the veils of war on the other. The novel brilliantly reveals the allegiance in the times of war and the duplicity required for the survival when all who are operating underground are interdependent, but no one can be trusted fully. This is a historical novel about the complex Noor Khan’s earnest predicament; especially when contemplating about her absent lover and the child they conceived and then aborted. Her brother Kabir eventually becomes a Sufi holy man, a paean to Sufi Universalism. He preaches the ideals of peace and tolerance in cosmopolitanism. He remains dangerously close-minded with the people he loves. He is the strongest character of all. Baldwin declares in her speech at Montreal:

*What matters is that most diasporic writers write about India and Indians with love instead of contempt, offering glimpses of a complex active people with high aspirations. Through our writing, we have certainly reinterpreted India for ourselves, revisited it and taken our readers with us. Diasporic writers have revisited subcontinental history, as each ethnic immigrant and second generation group has done for their "old countries".*

(Baldwin [www.sawnet.org/books/writing/SSB_CCA.html](http://www.sawnet.org/books/writing/SSB_CCA.html))
Baldwin’s stories in *English Lessons and Other Stories* capture attention through imagery and the details of tradition and culture. In the stories all the details are purposeful. These stories provide views of the characters from different generations and social spheres and of their positions and postures. Baldwin examines the bruises and wounds endured by the immigrant Sikhs while learning how to live in the immigration. These are truth delivering, emotional, sweet and sour stories. The family, place and politics are rendered like precious intaglios. Baldwin’s story is a metaphor of the life, family and universal values. To understand the meanings intended through the metaphor, the readers must be attentive to the cultural nuances. Baldwin portrays the Indian collectivist cultural values contrasting to the individualistic values of the West.

Baldwin shows that traditionally woman has to learn to keep the silence. The women who don’t comply with the traditional modes of living are severely punished. The women are sometimes simple, but show that every person has unique and extraordinary qualities. Baldwin has a good measure of compassion for the characters, especially the women she depicts in her complex and multi-layered stories, as a lesson in good literature. She shows the compassion, empathy and the love of a housekeeper for her dead mistress who was treated badly by her greedy son and daughter-in-law. In her Keynote speech delivered at Writer's Conference, Baldwin confesses:

> I have learned from writing that the distinction is irrelevant. Writers don't write because some of us live outside India where writing is magically elevated to the status of "literature." Writers, whether we use narrative or not, write because it helps us make sense of the world, contribute to it, rail at it with a non-violent socially-acceptable weapon -- language.

*(Baldwin Great Lakes Writer's Conference)*

Baldwin reveals the complicated textures of the lives of South Asian women in all their absurdities and painful truths. She is adept at entering the minds of her characters to reveal the different ways her protagonists think about the traditional and ethical values and the ways they act on their own choices. Baldwin writes first for radio, giving them the immediacy of a conversation with a restrained passion which describes the friction between the East and West and the traditional and modern. While never sentimentalizing or overplaying the emotion, her stories provide some of the inside stories for the Diaspora and also account of the rising awareness and
strength of women who must tap their own minds and hearts to enter the new worlds, both emotional and material. Her heroines are merely ordinary women who find their courage in the most paradoxical places.

In this collection Baldwin brings several interrelated issues of race, gender, ethnicity and immigration by interpreting and evaluating the experiences particularly of the immigrant Indian Sikhs. Baldwin declares her purpose of writing in the same speech. She says:

I also had to find an acceptable answer to the question -- for whom do you write? I'm a hybrid of three cultures, Indian, Canadian and American and I write from the perspective of all three. Today my answer is: I write for the people I love, a hybrid, global audience, for people interested in the process of becoming human, the ways in which we live, the influence of history, philosophy, culture, tradition and memory on our sense of self.

(Baldwin Great Lakes Writer's Conference)

These stories present concerns of the Asian, American, black, Eastern, ethnic, immigrant, minority, diasporic, hyphenated, hybrid, inferior, subaltern, other, refugee, outsider, expatriate and many more people in the world. Nevertheless, besides the identity of immigrants, it focuses on the life and the predicament of Asian Diasporas in the Western world.

IV.V: References:


CHAPTER V
A COMPARISON OF PREDICAMENT OF WOMEN IN THE SELECTED TEXTS FROM THE FEMINISTIC AND CULTURAL POINTS OF VIEW

V.I: Introduction:

A comparison of the predicament of women in the selected novels and short stories is helpful to bring out the similarities and differences in the immigrant women’s experiences and behaviour. A comparative study sharpens and brings accuracy in the understanding of the intensity of women’s issues under discussion in the selected literary texts. It is also necessary to acquaint the contemporary generation with the problems emerging due to the cross-cultural migration. The conclusions drawn on the basis of a comparative study may be more acceptable, authentic, reliable, valid and general. Thus, a comparison is necessary between the predicament of all the women protagonists in migration, the reasons and effects of their problems and sufferings and the way they prefer to come out with the problems.

Though, Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri and Shauna Singh Baldwin carry a collective diasporic consciousness, they are the woman writers of Indian diaspora who use different approaches to look at the problems of immigrant women. Though they may or may not agree, these three Indian diasporic women writers are the feminists because through their writings they explicitly or implicitly try to define, establish and defend the problems of women and the equal rights and opportunities for women. In a way, by focusing on the issues related to women they advocate and support the rights and equality of women. Their writing is explicitly political which analyses and ameliorates the patriarchy, sexism and gender. They explore the nature of gender inequality by examining women’s individual, familial and social roles during their cross-cultural experiences. Theirs is an analysis of women from a female perspective and an attempt to expose and resist the sexism and sexual politics.

The female protagonists of these three women writers fight for the equality with men and independent or similar status by attempting to create their own identity. The female protagonists of these three women writers attempt to create their own identity by fighting for the equality and independence. These women are presented as more deserving and having more humanity, rationality and mental capability while celebrating their difference from the men in the cross-cultural world. The predicament of women in the selected texts exposes the social, physical, psychological and cultural
repression of women as entrenched and maintained by the patriarchy not only in their homelands but also in the adopted lands. The women attempt to prove that the practices, attitudes and modes of behaviour considered appropriate for women are not natural but cultural products. Such modes of behaviour differ between the cultures because of the factors of class and ethnicity within the cultures. It suggests that the femininity is man-made cultural product adopted by the women in order to participate in a culture which functions largely in terms of the masculine and feminine binary oppositions. They focus on the social and economic factors that maintain the marginality and lesser status of the women.

Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri and Shauna Singh Baldwin have presented and examined the sufferings of marginalized women in the oppressive socio-cultural structures in the context of cross-cultural experiences. They have explored themes such as the sense of longing, physical and mental displacement, assimilation, loneliness, failed relationships, in-betweenness, rootlessness, language barriers, marital difficulties and misunderstandings. Sometimes they present these facts explicitly, but most of the times they are unspoken and provide the readers a scope for the allusions. The use of silence or absence seems to be strategic as it suggests something unspeakable and becomes an instrument of the resistance for the oppressed women. A careful study of the predicament of their female protagonists reveals that the women suffer through many feministic issues like identity crisis or quest of the women; isolation of the women; double marginalization of the women; the women’s sexual exploitation; disillusionment of the women and the women’s nagging sense of the guilt.

V.II: A Comparison from the Feministic Point of View:

The Post-colonial literature includes the literature by the voiceless classes and feminism is reciprocal to the subaltern studies as it confronts the multidimensional manifestation of the deep rooted cultural, social and political injustice. The feministic approach helps to explore the diasporic female subject produced by the history. The sufferings of the immigrant women need a more careful study in the wider context of feminist studies. The existing myths demarcate the activities of the women on the basis of the physical differences between man and woman. It is scientifically proved that in the human society the women are naturally prepared for some specific works. The child bearing capacity of the women is also considered as one of their special
works and it is said that women are ‘naturally’ fit for it and it is ‘unnatural’ to expect any intellectual business from them. The writings of women are always seen as feminist business by the male critics. Shashi Deshpande observes:

*It is curious fact that serious writing by women is invariably regarded as feminist writing - A woman who writes of women’s experiences often brings in some aspects of those experiences that have angered her, roused her strong feelings. I don’t see why this has to be labeled feminist fiction. A (male) critic once said about a novel of mine, “She can be quite brilliant when she is not raising her banners of protest.” What banners of protest was my thought! Any woman who writes fiction shows the world as it looks to a woman- to apply the tag of feminist is one way, I have realized, of dismissing the serious concerns of the novel by labeling them, by calling the work propagandist.*

(Deshpande 04)

All the three selected women writers have used their personal life experiences as a raw material for their literature. Thus, the authenticity of their presentation is strengthened as it is not merely based on the imagination. Bharati Mukherjee autobiographically presents her personal difficulties of being caught between the two worlds, homes and cultures. She herself leaves India to live in the North America and marries an American and later returns to India as an outsider. Her works mainly focus on the issues of Indian women and their struggles in migration, the status of new immigrants and the feelings of expatriates. Mukherjee is in exile from India, an expatriate in Canada and an immigrant in the United States. Mukherjee's own struggle with her identity works as the motivating force behind her protagonists’ attempts in search for their identities. Similar to the author, the majority of her immigrant protagonists appear to be changed in the style and psyche in the process of adaptation to the American culture and ethos. Through the novels and short stories, she attempts to find her identity in her Indian heritage. She is at her best to draw on her experiences of India and Canada while writing with insights about the New World in America to which she presently belongs. She describes her American experience as one of the ‘fusions’ and immigration as the ‘two-way process’ in which the Americans and immigrants grow by the interchange and experience. She represents her own experiences, feelings and problems through the stories of the immigrant women.
Similarly, Jhumpa Lahiri too uses her personal experiences of belonging to the second generation of Indian-Americans as a raw material for her stories and draws upon the different aspects of her Indian background by setting some stories in India and some involving the lives of Indian immigrants in the United States. Unlike Mukherjee, Lahiri is not bent on defining a number of patterns and shared experiences that would explain the outcome of the immigration process. She portrays a wide variety of the Indian-American immigrant experiences from all the possible angles. She explains her own isolation and the lack of identity and self-understanding. Unlike Mukherjee, she doesn’t become sensational while presenting the psyche of her Indian characters. One may agree with S. Robert Gnanamony who observes:

Unlike her counterparts in the US like Bharati Mukherjee and Chitra Divakaruni, who mostly bring out issues of acculturation’s aches and pains in their stories, Lahiri is not at all sensational in laying bare the psyche of her Bengali characters settled in North American culture.

(Gnanamony 67)

Like Mukherjee and Lahiri, Baldwin also has drawn on her personal experiences of being a member of the Indian diaspora. Baldwin’s Indian women too have expanded their world from India to Canada and North America. Baldwin experiences the same bruises and wounds endured by the immigrant ethnic minority in the new emotional and material Eastern and Western worlds. Moreover, quite different from Mukherjee and Lahiri, she takes a historical research to bring forth the facts related to the treatment of immigrant women in the past.

One must note the fact that the problems of immigrant women presented by these three writers are based on their personal experiences and thus are more close to the reality. While discussing the feministic and cultural issues the selected novels and the short stories need to be referred again and again. These recurring references may sound like repetition. But to trace the selected issue in all the stories, it is necessary to refer them frequently. Hence, the comparison of these reality-based problems of the immigrant women may bring out valuable guidelines for the young generation. The immigrant women face feministic problems like:

1) Identity crisis
2) Isolation
3) Double marginalization
4) Sexual exploitation
5) Disillusionment
6) Nagging sense of guilt

V.II.I: The Identity Crisis of women:

The identity of women is a central issue of discussion in the feministic criticism. The identity for Diasporic women perpetuates through the complexity of combined plurality in the singular self. They try to explore the roots in out-of-reach native land which dominates their memories. On one hand women have to gain their separate identity in the male dominated culture by breaking its norms and conventions and on the other hand they try to maintain their cultural identity by retaining the cultural patterns. In Mukherjee’s *The Tiger’s Daughter* Tara loses her Indian identity while gaining a new one in the America. Frustrated Tara returns to India and realizes that she is nowhere. In America she attempts to maintain her Indian identity by shaking all her silk scarves, ironing and hanging them to make the apartment more Indian. She always prays the Goddess so that she is powerful even before the Americans. She maintains her Indian identity by using the typical Bengali terms and retaining her maiden surname even after her marriage. She attempts to communicate her family background, life in Calcutta and her Indian identity because of her husband’s naïve questions about the Indian customs and traditions. However, she always fails. The hybridity in her personality causes a fractured identity and she doubts the understanding of her culture by her husband David. Tara loses the roots in India and finds India as a merely alien and hostile. She looks at India from the American point of view. For her friends, Tara’s identity of the childhood is now changed into a foreign-returned woman enriched with many romantic experiences in the America. Caught between the two contrasting worlds, Tara forgets many of the Hindu rituals at worships. It indicates the gradual loss of the religious identity. Her simple desire to behave like an ordinary Indian is killed by the influence of American culture which works as an ‘invisible spirit or darkness’. Tara’s identity as an unsatisfied, frustrated and betrayed foreign-return woman invites Mr. Tundanwala to seduce while praising her as a liberated and advanced woman.

Unlike Bharati Mukherjee who presents only the identity crisis of the first generation of immigrants, Lahiri’s *The Namesake* explores the problems of identity of both the first and second generation of immigrants. Farha Shariff observes:
The namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri is a story deeply attuned to feelings of shame and ethnic identity as they pertain to intergenerational difference between South Asian immigrant parents from West Bengal and their American-born children. (Shariff 01)

The financial status of Ashima’s father could afford widowed men with children or handicapped men. Fortunately, such men rejected Ashima. So she has no say in the choice of her husband under the superiority and domination of male and female subjugation. Mukherjee’s Tara struggles for her identity both in America and India. However, Lahiri’s Ashima struggles only in the America. All members of the Ganguli family frequently encounter unresolved personal and cultural identity crises because of their inability to reconcile their American identity with their Indian identity. Ashima tries to maintain her connection with India though she has become an American. The relationship between the isolated Indian-American Ashima and India is affected by the feelings of intense loss of the identity and the question of existence. The first generation immigrant Ashima nurtures a multicultural identity for her next generation, which provides her another means by which she explores herself and her origins. Ashima’s son Gogol represents a unique cultural identity because his name which forms the story of identity and self-discovery.

Like Mukherjee’s Tara who used silk scarves to retain her Indian identity, Lahiri’s Ashima too uses the objects from India for the same purpose. Alone at home, she remembers her parents’ greeting cards sent to her over the last twenty-seven years from India, which helps her to retain her Indian identity by reviving the past. Whenever she is alone at home, she reads nostalgically all the letters of her parents. She still carries a copy of the Bengali magazine Desh everywhere, which she has brought to read on her ride to Boston. She has nostalgically read each of the short stories, poems and articles a dozen times. She has the immigrant friends like Maya and Dilip Nandi and Dr. Gupta as substitute for her Indian relatives to welcome her son in the world. To maintain her Bengali identity, Ashima sends Gogol to the Bengali language and culture lessons at one of her friends.

Ashima goes a step ahead of Tara to keep her Indian identity by extending her physical mothering to a caretaker’s role that leads to the cultural maternity. Her cultural maternity embodies the individual, familial and communal identity formulation and nurturing. She gradually becomes a cultural mother for her community in the America and starts gathering the people around her from the same
background. Her all friends hail from Calcutta and for this reason only they are her friends. All the husbands are teachers, researchers, doctors and engineers and their homesick and bewildered wives come to Ashima for the recipes and advice. Ashima nurtures intercultural identity growth of her children. Essentially, her identity as a cultural mother is based on the caretaking, management, education, spiritual meditation and dispute resolution. Ashima becomes a mother of the culture for herself, her children and many young Bengali-Americans and fosters the new cultural transmissions. Her abilities to mother herself culturally are laid forth by translating the Christian Christmas holiday into the Bengali for Bengali-Americans and simultaneously explaining her own cultural rituals.

Her son Gogol’s cultural identity is unique because the letter of his grandmother containing a name for him symbolically represents the hanging blank identity for the immigrants. The importance of a namesake and identity becomes a central concept throughout the story of the novel as her son struggles with his Indo-American identity and rebels against parents throughout his life. His name symbolizes all his discomforts while fitting into the two different cultures. His attempts to reject a dual identity cause the never ending distress. At many times, he feels that he is casting himself in a play, acting the part of twins, undistinguishable to the naked eye and yet fundamentally different. Gogol finally learns that the solution is not to fully abandon or attempt to diminish either of identities, but to mesh the two together.

Ashima’s attempt for Gogol and Moushumi’s marriage is an example of the similar cultural identity construction. Moushumi is his childhood friend who has the same cultural identity. Their common identity brings them together. Like other Bengali-Americans, they too have over-education, preoccupation with parental influence, city and suburb living and struggle to carve out their own identity. Gogol and Moushumi identify the similar habits like smoking cigarette, drinking wine and working as an independent in the city. The breaking of this marriage implies that the hybrid Bengali-American identity lacks the essentialism of purer types of identities. So Ashima’s daughter Sonia’s marriage with a Chinese-American man named Ben is explicitly notable in Ashima’s pride. After Gogol’s failed marriage with the Bengali-American Moushumi, her daughter Sonia marries a Chinese-American for the love rather than for a mutual cultural similarity.

Like Mukherjee’s Tara and Lahiri’s Ashima, Shauna Singh Baldwin’s Noor presents an extraordinary search for the identity in a multi-faceted world. Her name
“Noor” indicates her religious and philosophical identity. Her father explained its meaning- ‘Light of soul; the light required to dispel the world’s fear’. Unlike Tara and Ashima who struggle to create their identity in the cross-cultural society, Noor struggles first within the family to create her identity and then in the alien war-torn world full of the risks and dangers. Baldwin raises a voice against the institution of family in a bourgeois society that determines a woman’s primary identity. The women of the time to which Noor belongs are denied a right to have their own identity. Noor’s Uncle Tajuddin never allows Noor, her Mother or sister Zaib to have issued an identity card or a license to drive in Paris. He never allows them to hold a bank account either. All the women in France need permission for the marriage from a male relative. Under his headship Noor is subjected to be strictly Islamic. Her lover Armand Rivkin’s Jewish identity causes destruction of their love. Later, as a resistance agent Noor takes on many identities as Nora Baker, Anne-Marie Régnier and Madeleine. But she doesn’t seem completely comfortable with any one of these identities. She needs to hide her original identity to assure the uniformed German army men that she is one of the native French and not an immigrant Indian.

Similar to Tara’s father’s advice to her regarding love and marriage; and Ashima’s advice to Gogol to marry Moushumi, Noor’s mother and uncle also advise her to marry someone having a similar identity. Her uncle wishes Noor to marry a nawab and secure the Indian branch of the family alliance. On the other hand, her mother always advises her not to love someone of another religion because she herself has experienced the confusion and pain of mixing the blood and religion. Unlike Lahiri’s Ashima, but similar to Mukherjee’s Tara, Noor represents every woman’s psychic condition when she falls in love with a man of different caste or religion and is ever haunted with the fear of losing the stabilized identity. She carries the two opposite forces within her. On one hand her love for Armand and on the other her love for family. Her brother Kabir introduces Noor to his new friend who recruits the bilingual women for the resistance because Kabir doesn’t want to lose the reputed identity of his family due to his sister touching unrelated men by being a nurse. When Noor says at one point, “I’m a member of every tribe”, a French resistant named Viennot responds to this: “It’s very dangerous thinking. One must know very definitely to which tribe one belongs.” This indicates that during the religious wars a person must have an identity; otherwise he or she will be threatened to death.
A person like Noor with a lost and unstable identity is betrayed for numerous times and the last betrayal comes from a French lady named Renee, who sacrifices Noor’s life for her husband’s release from the camp. Like Tara’s seduction by the politician Mr. Tundanwala, Noor is also sexually demanded by the fellow agents and the German jailor Vogel. Noor’s multicultural identity lands her in trouble when she is captured. Her mother’s American identity causes trouble for Noor. When jailor Vogel comes to know about her mother, he considers Noor as an American enemy. He considers her a resident of nowhere and insults her frequently by calling ‘mischlinge’. He humiliates her by enquiring, “It must feel terrible, not to belong anywhere, to be a rootless cosmopolitan, never to be satisfied anywhere, to always be comparing one place to another.” Tara is a victim of the European superiority complex because her husband allows her to wash toilets and bathrooms without any credit. Similarly, Noor is also a victim of the European white oneness because Renee is charged for the betrayal and a committee of four European women jurors is appointed. But, it is impossible that a French woman, a white European will be convicted by the panel of white women for denouncing an immigrant Indian Muslim woman. It becomes the politics of identity and they offer her a clean chit. The failure of Tara’s marriage with American David; Moushumi’s abandonment by her American lover Graham; Gogol’s breakup with American girlfriends Ruth and Maxine and Noor’s lost love for Jewish Armand indicate impossibility of the cross-cultural, the Western/American-Eastern/Indian identity building.

In Mukherjee’s short story “The Middleman” the irresistible seductress and reckless adventuress Maria struggles to create her own identity and she gains her identity with the help of Andreas by killing her husband Ransome with her own hands. Her suppression by Ransome creates tremendous hate for him and she kills him for that hate. Maya of “The Tenant” comes out of the traditional Calcutta in search of her identity in the New York. She creates her identity as a ‘trapeze artist’, an independent and an emancipated woman in America enjoying absolute freedom in her relationships with men. Ambitious Jasmine struggles to gain her identity from India to Trinidad to America and in the process she fulfills her higher goals. In “Danny’s Girls” the immigrant mother wishes her son to go to Engineering School in Columbia University and gain an identity as an engineer as if the Indians are placed on earth only to become accountants and engineers.
Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Interpreter of Maladies* focuses on the trauma of immigrants’ struggle to keep the original cultural identity in the foreign countries which results in their broken identities. The women in these stories construct their own unique racial subjectivity and gender agency. For them, the cooking constructs the communal and personal identities, interrelationship and home. Mukherjee’s immigrant women do not try as hard as Lahiri’s to maintain their Indian identity in the foreign land. Instead, they try to come completely out of their Indian tradition where they are denied the full freedom. Many of Lahiri’s women characters wish to mix up and marry within their community and come back to those misadventures with the foreigners. Mukherjee’s Maria, Maya and Jasmine have no familial restriction in their associations with foreign men, but Lahiri’s Mrs. Sen, Twinkle and American Miranda have their cultural pulls while joining with other foreigners. In “Sexy” the American girl Miranda feels guilty for snatching a husband due to lack of understanding of the Indian culture. The same snatching has caused abandonment of Laxmi’s cousin by her husband. The food carries the cultural symbolic significance in maintaining the Indian identity. Miranda’s feelings of ostracism highlight her uncomfortable identity with Dev, as she knows so little about him and his background. She repents for not understanding more about the India. In “Mrs. Sen’s” Mrs. Sen tells Elliot the stories of Calcutta while preparing the food, which helps her to craft her Indian identity. The story is occupied with a woman’s lists of produce, catalogs of ingredients and descriptions of recipes, the act of preparation and colorful collection of saris from India. The objects play diabolic role in shaping and influencing the immigrant’s psychology, anxieties and behaviour. The objects regulate, influence, rule and induce the human mind. Whenever Mrs. Sen feels melancholic and misses her family in India, she plays the recorded voices of her relatives as a connecting string to her happy past in India. At the end, she attempts to drive to the market in absence of her husband and meets an accident. Elliot soon stops staying with Mrs. Sen thereafter. Thus, it’s a story of an immigrant woman’s failure to create an identity in the adapted culture. Her attempt to raise herself up to the surrounding by learning to drive results in losing the obtained and maintained identity as a caretaker. In “This Blessed House” an Indian immigrant Sanjeev tries to maintain his ethnic identity. Sanjeev and Twinkle find the gaudy Biblical objects hidden throughout their new house. Delighted by these beautiful objects, Twinkle wants to display them everywhere in the house. For Twinkle, it is not the religious identity that satisfies man but the sense of affinity
and involuntary affection that exist between even strange people. However, her husband Sanjeev is full of antipathy and uncomfortable with these objects and reminds her of their being Hindus and not Christians. In “This Blessed House” Twinkle is not at all the accomplished cook like Shoba is in "A Temporary Matter”.

Unlike other stories in this collection, “The Treatment of Bibi Haldar” is about an isolated epileptic woman in Calcutta, who attempts to find herself a husband and a cure for her ailment. Though she has no real family, the community solidifies the identity of Bibi Haldar. In “The Third and Final Continent” a well-adjusted and happy wife of the unnamed narrator tries not to lose her Indian identity in the United States. Her Indian husband arranges for the arrival of her as a new bride under the roof of an aged American landlady. The American lady Mrs. Croft represents the pride in her American identity. The only reason of their meeting with Mrs. Croft is the narrator’s identity as an employee of MIT. Their reputation due to the identity as a model minority is firmly cemented. They build a reputation for the Asian-Americans with remarkable educational and professional success and serve as the cultural backdrop. Mrs. Croft comments on the sari-wrapped wife of the narrator as “a perfect lady.” The immigrant family lacks the cultural conflicts that plague the other immigrant characters. Though they have become American, they have not ceased to be Indian.

Like Lahiri’s “When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine”, Baldwin’s “Rawalpindi 1919” focuses on the changes in the identity that the relatives of the immigrants have to adopt in their life at the motherland. In this story a Sikh woman’s son migrates to England to study in Imperial College. In the end of the story, the Sikh woman demands her husband to buy stylish dishes as their son is returning from England. Like Lahiri’s Mrs. Sen who is too much attached with the Indian objects, in Baldwin’s “Montreal 1962” an immigrant Sikh woman in Canada is attached with her husband’s turbans. She wishes her husband not to lose the traditional and cultural identity before the Canadians, who do not know what it takes to wear a turban to the Sikhs. She requests her husband not to cut his strong rope of hair and go without a turban into the land of strangers. If her husband fails to find a job due to the turban, she is ready to learn to work herself for the survival of her family. The description of the process of washing, drying and wearing the turbans focuses on a Sikh woman’s love, attachment and pride in the identity. Turbans carry a strong cultural identification for the Sikh community. For the woman protagonist, the red colour of a turban stands for the
blood of the Sikh martyrs. When she ties the turban to her head, she remembers the cultural heritage of her community. Similarly “Toronto 1984” focuses on an immigrant Indian mother and her daughter, who try to retain their Indian identities in Canada. Indian Piya works in a Canadian multinational company which forbids her to wear the salwar kameez and earrings. She is very patriotic young Indian woman who denies standing in praise of the British Queen. The Queen is the symbol of the empire her grandfather fought against for the independence and the one whose line had send her grandfather to the prison. After this incident her boss insults her by declaring that he would never have hired her if he had known that she was a damn Paki. But her pride in the Indian identity is betrayed when her trip to motherland is cancelled because of Indira Gandhi’s murder in India.

Like Mukherjee’s Maya who freely embraces the American life, in Baldwin’s “Lisa” three young Indian immigrant women named Lisa, Brenda and Jaya also seek the identity as the modern civilized women by going to Hooligan’s bar to the drink wines and chain smoking. Lisa works as an aerobics instructor. During the search of independent identity, Lisa falls in an affair with an Indian who impregnates her and she is ruined when a girl child takes birth. In “English Lessons” an Indian immigrant woman Kanwaljit is compelled to be identified as a prostitute and a source of income to her American husband. Her identity is like a worm avoiding sunlight because she is living underground as her green card is yet to come. Her husband prohibits her to have acquaintance with any Indian there and compels her to dress in pants to match with an identity as a Mexican. Though she is his wife, he introduces her to others as his girlfriend. She changes totally and wants to erase her past identity. She thinks that if she returns to her father, it might be a disgrace and shame for her Indian family. She is an Indian woman without identity, who is being threatened of reporting to the immigration office by an American woman who has an affair with Tony. She is sexually exploited by an American man with immigration papers in his hands. “The Cat Who Cried” is a story of an Indian woman who struggles against the domination of her mother-in-law and husband to create her independent identity in America. Her suspicious mother-in-law Mataji believes that her daughter-in-law has a bad influence over her son. After marriage of her son Prem the mother makes it clear that her daughter-in-law is not to be trusted with money. She also warns her son that he must not be influenced by his over-educated wife. Mataji once gives out her daughter-in-law’s necklace to some cousin whose dowry she tries to collect. All these facts
indicate a mother’s attempts to maintain her superior identity over her daughter-in-law. When they come to settle in America, the daughter-in-law gets a degree from Boston University. Though there is a lot of discussion on her working out of the house, she finds a job. An Indian woman is trained and advised by her mother to keep the silence. Her mother advises her: “If you want to survive, you must always let a man believe he has you under control. Silence is an excellent instrument, beti. Use it well.” But the silence also has limit and when she comes to know that her husband has requested the agency to deposit her salary in the account they have opened to collect money to return to India; her silence breaks and the quarrel starts. She wishes not to return to India and she boldly announces: “I told you, I don’t want to go back to India… Well, then, go back to India alone.” She is ready to live alone in America, but will not return to India at any cost.

In Baldwin’s “The Insult” the migration causes the loss of honour while accepting the changed identity due to the loss of Indian identity. The two Sikh sisters belong to the Indian immigrant community in America. One of them Aunty Nimmi has lost the Indian identity while acquiring the American way of life and thinking. She is going to India without her sons as they do not like India for its being too dirty and having too many people. The narrator Neelu's family doesn’t like such statements by Aunty Nimmi. Again, she declares that now-a-days girls like Neelu in America find their own partner and they won’t even have to give her a dowry if she finds a fellow in the America. Neelu's mother wishes a suitor in a nice boy from a good Sikh family from India. There are many Sikh boys in America. They all have cut their hair and don’t wear the turbans for making more money. However, she marries Neelu with a ‘good Sikh fellow’ without turban from Delhi. She insults her sister by not sending invitation of the wedding. Thus, the Sikh families living in an alien country like America again come together by forgetting the insults for each other. “Devika” is about an immigrant Indian woman who has lost her freedom and identity under the masculine dominance in Canada. She wants never to be married. But her father feels very proud to have his daughter married to a big stockbroker in Canada. To remove her loneliness and homesickness, Devika maintains her free identity before marriage as Asha. She develops a split personality with an imaginary existence of a woman named Asha, who does whatever Devika cannot do in her real life. Her all suppressed feelings are boldly expressed by Asha. Her husband Ratan starts drinking wines and going with friends for the parties to change his identity. He wishes his wife Devika
also to change her identity by putting on some Canadian cloths like a dress and pantyhose and no nose ring. After an accident, she finds the death of her suppressed being and she becomes completely Asha. Thus, the story ends with the suppressed identity taking over the normal personality of Devika and she follows her suppressed dreams in Canada.

Apart from the stories about the identity of Indian immigrant women, Baldwin also takes the issue of the identity of Indian women in their motherland. Like Lahiri’s “The Treatment of Bibi Haldar”, Baldwin's “Dropadi Ma” also projects the lack of identity to the poor Indian women. Dropadi Ma will not be taken to Bangkok for Sukhiji’s wedding because after all her identity is of a servant of the family. In “Family Ties” an Indian Sikh woman is mad after an identity as a modern one by using the imported things and she is more Western than the Europeans. Her innocent sister-in-law Chandani is raped by the Muslims at time of the partition, which changes her fate from a lovely sister into the disgrace and defame for the family. She drowns her son, hoping that her brother will take her back. His young daughter is suffering from low sight, which is a sign of the familial identification with Chandani. The sisters and daughters have no identity in the family. In the family, a girl child experiences the feelings of rejection and discrimination on the basis of gender difference. The daughters are considered women as per the demands of the family and society. She requires to do hard domestic labour from which her brother is exempted. She is sent to an ordinary school so that she could only be married off without her consent and without a dowry.

Baldwin’s “Gayatri” projects two Indian women’s struggle for the identity. Gayatri tries to maintain her conservative identity and Reena gains a modern identity as an Airhostess, speaking the American English. Reena seems to be a selfish woman as she does not care for her family reputation and goes against the tradition to obtain her own identity. She develops a friendship with a black American who belongs to the lower caste and later marries him without permission. Thus, she brings a disgrace to the head of the family. A woman’s attempts to search her independent identity cause damage to the identity of her family. In “Simran” a Sikh mother finds a copy of the Koran in her daughter Simran’s bag and feels ruined of her identity because she still has not forgotten the Sikh women who are raped and disgraced by the Muslims during the partition. She thinks that her daughter has completely lost the Sikh identity as her limbs imitate the American discipline; her gestures are wider and she no longer walks
with the graceful glide, but strode as firmly as any shameless blonde woman. The family spends fifteen thousand dollars on their daughter’s foreign education and bears the dire predictions of friends and relatives. And to their surprise, their daughter becomes an ungraceful, rebellious and selfish monster. The Indian women are supposed to enjoy their suffering, while any living animal is never seen enjoying the suffering. The question of a mother’s cultural responsibilities affects Amrit’s identity as an Indian mother. The mother is supposed to be all powerful being with regard to her child, and yet she is condemned for giving too much or too little attention to her child. When a Muslim boy Mirza tries again and again to contact Simran in India from America on telephone, her mother Amrit feels confirmed that Simran has a love affair with him in America. Amrit doubts even her daughter’s virginity. Thus, Simran falls prey to her parents’ suspicious nature and fear of the possible disgrace to the identity if their daughter loves and marries a Muslim. They decide not to send her again to America where her lover and their enemy is waiting for her.

In Baldwin’s “A Pair of Ears” the mother tries to retain her identity with the house. The house she and her husband have built after immigrating to Delhi during the period of partition. She wishes not to reform the house of her love, but her son Balvir forces her for the permission to build one more floor. Later, she realizes that she has an identity as nobody in the family. Once her grandson Manu tells her that his Daddy says she is nobody. This reply frustrates her and helpless she dies very soon. Her servant Amma cuts her Mem-Saab’s hand immediately after her death to fill the silver glass with her blood and spreads it everywhere in the house. This remains as a sign of the love and attachment that the mother has with the house.

Unlike Mukherjee and Lahiri’s stories and even her own other stories, Baldwin’s “Nothing Must Spoil This Visit” presents a Canadian woman’s struggle for identity as an immigrant wife of an Indian Arvind. The story successfully projects that both the Indian and European women have to struggle for their identity in the alien cultures. Janet tries to adjust herself to suit to the identity of an Indian traditional wife but like Lahiri’s Mrs. Sen, she too fails to create her identity among the favourable foreign people around her. In India a woman’s identity and reputation depend on her adjustability. Janet feels sorry for Indian woman Chaya as she has sacrificed her love, and on the other hand Chaya feels very sad for Janet as she has no child. For Indian woman like Chaya, a man who cannot produce children is not man even worth loving.
All these three writers have presented their characters’ tendency to preserve heritage and ethnic identity which is naturally strong in every human being.

V.II.II: The Isolation of women:

In the human society women are isolated by men as ‘other’ creatures while considering them naturally weak. But feminists challenge this notion of thinking. They try to project that women are biologically, psychologically, culturally and socially more capable than men because of their capacity to participate at the same time in the general society and to maintain their feminine world. The literature of the selected three writers focuses the reality that immigrant women are culturally isolated. Woman’s isolation becomes more intense when she comes out of the stability of the cultural frame where other women of her community may identify with her. But in an alien country she feels isolated both from her close relatives and among the strange people around. She is isolated as a woman first and then as a woman belonging not to the native culture. The adjectives ‘immigrant’ or ‘foreign-returned’ isolate the immigrant women among the people at both the host and home lands.

Mukherjee's The Tiger's Daughter is about the isolation of an Indian expatriate woman. The protagonist Tara suffers from the feeling of isolation from her motherland. The American students in her American school isolate her by not sharing her mango catani, for she belongs not to their culture. Later, when she marries an American, she becomes a victim of isolation. Her American husband offers her no credits for the household work she does. She also feels that she is unable to reduce distance between her and her American husband David as she fails to communicate her cultural heritage to him. Frustrated by the failure, she thinks that her visit to India will bring her happiness back and she comes to India. She feels isolated at the very first reception by the relatives at Howrah station. Tara’s relatives relate her improprieties to her American attitude to the life because of her seven years stay in America and she is found ‘stubborn’. Her aunt Jharna reminds her about her marriage with mleccha husband, which has isolated her from the caste and community. Tara is no longer able to feel a part of her family. She belongs to the old Bengal which is now lost. She is not able to feel at ease with her old friends who, like her family, belong to a Calcutta which is rapidly fading. Isolated Tara forms the beast beneath them. After returning from America the antithetical feelings beset her among the friends and she feels afraid of their tone, omissions and superiority complex. These are the same
friends with whom seven years ago she had played, done homework, loved and dated. Later, her friends also disapprove her. They suggest her marriage has been imprudent and the seven years in the America have eroded all that was fine and sensitive in her Bengali nature. Moreover, they feel that Tara deserves chores like washing her own dishes and putting out the garbage. Once Tara notices that her friend Nilima is pointedly ignoring her while talking with her would-be groom. Tara complaints at Reena about the same. At that time Reena reveals the truth to Tara that Nilima feels that her marriage will be broken if the people come to know about her friend’s marriage with a foreigner. In India her marriage is not considered to be with a person, but with a foreigner, and she always feels the burden of this foreignness. Her friends are curious to know about her adjustments and not about her marriage responsibilities.

Mukherjee's Tara feels isolated from her husband whereas in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Namesake* Ashima feels more lonely and isolated from her family among the Americans. Ashima is an isolated immigrant Indian woman in Boston. She is a young bride after an arranged marriage preparing to deliver her first child in a hospital at Massachusetts. Unlike Mukherjee’s Tara, Ashima suffers from isolation only in the foreign country and not after returning to her motherland. Ashima wishes the emotional support at the time of her first delivery. In Calcutta Ashima might have all the women in her family around her, but in the United States she struggles through isolation. She prepares to bear the physical pains, but is afraid of being isolated mother in a foreign land. Ashima feels unhappy for missing the letter by her grandmother containing an identity for her son. Her husband remains busy in the university and she feels very much isolated at house alone with Gogol. She suffers from sleeplessness. She sits alone and cries for the whole day. She spends hours in napping, sulking and rereading her same five Bengali novels on the bed. She is shocked to know about her father’s death and in America no one comes to meet and console her. Mukherjees’s Tara runs back to India to find solution for her isolation in America. Unlike Tara, Ashima tries to find solution in America itself. To cope with the isolation, she gradually becomes a cultural mother for her community in America and starts gathering the people from same background around her. Her all friends hail from Calcutta and for this reason only they are the friends. Her son Gogol feels isolated because of his unique name. Gogol is not the first name. Gogol Ganguli has a not only pet name turned into good name but also a last name turned into the first name. In fact, he knows no one in the world, in Russia or India or America or
anywhere who shares either his name or the source of his namesake. Gogol isolates himself as much as possible from his roots and his family for many years.

When Ashima’s husband leaves for the research project in Ohio and children study somewhere in the other towns, Ashima becomes lonely at house. Ashima remembers her parents’ greeting cards sent to her since last twenty-seven years from India. Whenever she feels isolated in America, she reads nostalgically all the letters from her parents. Ashotke dies of a massive heart attack and everything changes for Ashima. After Ashotke’s death, Ashima totally isolates herself by throwing away and sending back all the Christmas greeting cards. Her friends suggest her to go India to see her brother and cousins. However, she refuses the escape to Calcutta. She decides to sell her house in America and travel between India and America for every six months. She thinks that this will help her not to feel isolated from either India or America. But it is very uncertain that she will find peace of mind at any country.

Mukherjee focuses the isolation of the first generation of immigrant and Lahiri the isolation of both the first and second. Baldwin’s The Tiger Claw presents the isolation of only the second generation immigrant Indian woman from her family and lover in the turbulence of World War II. In the beginning, the readers are acquainted with the extreme isolation of Noor in a bleak German prison cell. The miserable condition of Noor focuses on the inhumanity during the wars in which a lovable woman has no excuses. Isolated from her family and lover Noor is shackled hand and foot and freezing from the winter’s cold. She is kept in the dungeon which has not even the straw mattress. She has to doze off on the damp stone floor, insects crawl over her and rats gibber and squeak when her clog hits its hide. She is given soup once every three days and water once a day. The jailor Herr Vogel uses many tactics to disclose the secrets of Noor’s spying agency. Noor’s love for Armand is so strong that she will wait for him and wait for the situation to become favourable till the end of her life. Unlike Tara and Ashima, Noor is compelled by the members of her family to be isolated from her lover Armand and feels devastated and lonely. Haunted by the feeling that she has abandoned love, Noor joins a British espionage cell and volunteers for an assignment, hopping that it will bring her back to her lover in the France. But this attempt isolates her forever from her family and lover.

In Mukherjee’s short story “Loose Ends” Jeb and Jonda are isolated from each other. They lie down in the same bed for long time but nothing happens. Jonda wants to be a mother but Jeb doesn’t think that he has makings of a good father. In her
“Fighting for the Rebound” too, a couple is isolated from each other. Blanquita always feels and complaints that Griff has not any love for her. She frequently refers to his previous relationship with Wendi. Later, Griff falls in love with a sale-lady Maura. However, Blanquita would not like to lose her husband to the new lady with silvery blonde hair. Griff thinks that there is some kind of inevitability about the people falling apart. As an emotional cripple, Blanquita leaves Griff herself and then remains with a status of a nervous isolated wreck. In “Fathering” an isolated daughter Eng comes to live with her father Jason. When Jason stays in Saigon as a soldier during the Vietnam War, he marries ‘the honeyest-skinned bar girl’ there and they had twin daughters. Ten years later, Jason breaks up his marriage and then marries with Sharon. The isolated Eng now lives with her father Jason, but doesn’t like her stepmother Sharon. She behaves very strangely and speaks with the spirit of her Grandma and asks the spirit to help her. She wishes her father to leave Sharon and live alone with her, love only her. Sharon is also sick of Eng.

Mukherjee’s stories focus on the isolation between the immigrants who are well rooted in the foreign land. While Jhumpa Lahiri’s stories present the problem of isolation from motherland as well as from each others. Jhumpa Lahiri’s Interpreter of Maladies focuses on inabilitys of the characters to communicate with the important people in their lives, which result in their isolation. She uses the theme of the conflict in relationship between the couples, families and friends to explore the ideas of isolation. Her characters' cultural isolation causes their extreme personal isolation. The sense of isolation governs the event of each story. Lahiri portrays the characters defined by isolation of some form or another. Nearly all of the characters are defined by isolation in which they feel that they are missing something vital to their identities.

In Lahiri’s story “A Temporary Matter” an immigrant Shoba is in the process of isolation from her husband Shukumar. She changes from an attentive wife into a more aloof and self-absorbed at the age of thirty-three due to the stillborn child. Shoba’s inability to deal with her anger and frustration due to the loss of baby for whose arrival she has dreamed and planned extensively cause the disappointment and self-pity. She does not care if her marriage falls apart. In fact, Shukumar’s own apathy and grief are at the blame. He never covers up neglect throughout the house for which he holds Shoba accountable. On the other hand, he does not comfort Shoba in her grief nor does he realize the seriousness of their relationship problems. Now at home they become experts in avoiding each other by spending as much as possible time on
the separate floors. In “When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine” Mr. Pirzada’s wife and daughters live isolated from him at home when he migrates out of the country. Mr. Pirzada’s isolated twenty-year-old wife and seven daughters between the age of six and sixteen face the riots during the wars in the Indian subcontinent. When he watches the news, his eyes would look like the eyes of a hunted deer and his face expresses tremendous concern for his family in Dacca. The narrator Lilia realizes the meaning of missing someone you love, which preludes the regional and religious disparities. In “Interpreter of Maladies” Raj and Mina Das and their children are isolated from each other because of the disrespect. Mina shows her isolation when she takes her daughter Tina to the rest room while not holding the little girl’s hand in hers. This shows how a detached mother Mina is. When her husband and children get out of the car for sighting, Mrs. Das sits alone in the car. She does not share her snakes and nail paint with anyone else. When Tina asks her to paint her nails as well, Mrs. Das just turns away and rebuffs her daughter. The neglectful Das parents don’t notice the monkeys surround their son Bobby. The monkeys isolate Bobby—the son born of a different father—and begin to attack. Mr. Kapasi rushes in to save him and returns Bobby to his parents.

Unlike the protagonists of Mukherjee, Lahiri’s “Mrs. Sen's” is about an isolated immigrant woman trying to assimilate without losing her prior life. The physical objects have the power over the experience of isolated immigrants like Mrs. Sen’s. Mrs. Sen’s telling Elliot the stories of her past life in Calcutta while preparing the food focuses her feeling of isolation from her relatives in India. Whenever she misses her family in India and feels melancholic and isolated, she plays the recorded voices of her relatives as a connecting string to her happy past. In “A Real Durwan” Boori Ma is isolated from her family members during the partition of India. When her caretaker Dalal family goes out for a trip, Boori Ma feels lonely and her waiting for them lasts long. The residents of the building mercilessly isolate her from her only shelter. “The Treatment of Bibi Haldar” is about an isolated epileptic woman in Calcutta who lacks the education and healthcare. She attempts to find herself a husband and a cure for her ailment.

Unlike Mukherjee and Lahiri, Baldwin’s “Rawalpindi 1919” presents the emotional effects of isolation in the life of the members of an immigrant’s family in motherland who have to make many adjustments. Like Lahiri’s Mr. Pirzada’s wife and daughters’ isolation in Dacca, the story presents the isolation of a Sikh mother
from her son. Her son migrates to the Europe for three years to pursue the higher education. Sardarni Sahib thinks about her son Sarup’s encounters in his migration to England. She imagines how he will live in England where he will need enough turbans to keep his Sikh identity. She cares also about only the boiled food with not a single chilli all the time Sarup will have to eat in England and to which he would never become used to. In “Toronto 1984” an Indian mother Bibiji and her daughter Piya feel isolated in Canada. Piya’s Canadian multinational company tries to isolate her from her culture by forbidding her to wear the salwar kameez and earrings. When a very patriotic young woman denies standing in praise of the British Queen in the party, she becomes a victim of the rage of her boss who belittles by calling her a damn Paki. “Lisa” presents the cultural isolation of the young Indian immigrant women: Lisa, Brenda and Jaya. They are isolated from the Indian culture in the sense that they go to Hooligan’s Bar to drink wines and for chain smoking. They feel liberated, free and modern in an alien country. Lisa’s affair with an Indian who impregnates her isolates her from her friends. Lahiri’s American Miranda in “Sexy” succeeds to keep herself safe in an affair with a married Indian man Dev. However, Indian Lisa becomes a victim in the affair with an Indian. Her friend Jaya is sure that the man will not take the responsibilities of the child. After the birth of a girl child, the man denies taking care of them and there is no one to look after her child. Jaya is of the opinion that if it was a boy, the man might have taken the responsibilities. At the end of the story, she finds the job of telemarketing for the opera where she can carry her child, but there is no one to help isolated Lisa by babysitting that night. Thus, she is totally isolated as a mother of a girl child who is rejected to take care by the father and no one to take care of her child when she goes to the work. “A Pair of Ears” focuses on the isolation of an old deaf widow who immigrates in Delhi during the partition. She is taken care of by an old maid called Amma. She is isolated from her two sons; the elder one Jai is an astrologer at abroad and the younger Balvir works in Bombay. This isolated mother rents the ground floor which is the only support for her in her old age. Hoping grandchild’s company and happiness she calls Balvir to come to live with her at Delhi in the same house. But later his construction of the upper floor, court case and denial of respect or value to her lead her to her final isolation in death.

“Jassie” focuses the religious isolation of an Indian immigrant old woman and an American old woman. They live together because their children are married with each other. Indian Jassie always prays to her Gods. She always carries a sense of
isolation from her happy past in India. She remembers her convent school where she
met Firoze and flirted with him. But she marries the man her father has chosen. He
takes a house in old Delhi as dowry and gives her a daughter and two sons. She names
her daughter Yasmeen in the memory of Firoze. However, the family calls her Minni.
In “Devika” an isolated Indian woman lives with her husband in Canada. She is a
victim of the masculine dominance. To come out of the isolation and victimization in
a foreign land, she develops an imaginary existence of a woman whom she calls Asha.
In fact, Asha is her split personality who does whatever Devika cannot do in her real
life. She feels isolated at home when her husband goes out for work. She spends her
time in cooking, cleaning and waiting for him. Ratan also feels isolated at work due to
Devika’s (Asha’s) psychic acts and behaviour. His boss Mr. Peter Kendall is sick of
the smell of Ratan’s Indian spicy curry. The clients are also losing from Ratan’s
hands. The Canadian man Mr. Berton doesn’t like a Paki managing his money.

V.II.III: The Double Marginalization of Women:

The immigrant women are doubly marginalized because on the one hand they
are victims of the familial, religious, social and cultural compulsions at home and on
the other hand they are also victims of differences in the alien society. Their ethnicity,
color, culture and gender differences cause them to be doubly marginalized in the host
culture. In Mukherjee’s The Tiger’s Daughter Tara suffers from the double
marginalization not only in the foreign country but also in the mother land after her
return. The woman is always marginalized for being a woman by the male members
of the family and society. Tara’s father tries to marginalize her in the name of culture
by advising to remember that love is nine-tenths prudence and one-tenth physical
attraction and the caste, class and province are more valuable in a marriage than
giddiness. In America as a wife of an American, Tara suffers from the double
marginalization because she is a woman first and then an outsider. Her husband
wishes her to wash the bathrooms and toilets and offers no credits for the same. At her
return to India her relatives and friends also marginalize her as a foreign- return, a
wife of an America and for the loss of status and reputation due to her foreign
marriage. A shrewd politician Mr. Tundanwala rapes her because in his view she is
from America where adultery is common. He thinks that she will either agree to
accept his sexual seduction or will never disclose it to anybody if he rapes her. And
she feels unable to share the Tundanwala incident with none of her family members or her friends.

Unlike Mukherjee’s Tara who is victim of double marginalization in both America and India, in *The Namesake* Jhumpa Lahiri presents an Indian woman Ashima’s marginalization only in America. Her husband works in a university. She feels marginalized at home because there is no one who belongs to her cultural tradition. Lonely at house she suffers from loneliness and a sleep deprivation. As a physically and culturally marginalized woman, Ashima alone sits and cries for the whole day. She spends hours in the napping, sulking and rereading her same five Bengali novels on the bed. She wishes an emotional support at the time of her first delivery. At the home in Calcutta, Ashima might have all the women in her family around her but in the United States she struggles through the language and cultural barriers. The Indian cultural burden for a woman compels her to adjust with the situation without complaining for the sake of her son and her father’s prestige.

Mukherjee’s Tara escapes to India. While Lahiri’s Ashima finds solutions to her marginalization in America itself. Ashima tries to come out of the marginalization by extending her caretaker’s role to the cultural maternity which embodies individual, familial and communal identity formulation and nurturing. She becomes a cultural mother gradually for her community in the America and starts gathering people from the same background around her. Indian immigrant girl Moushumi is also marginalized. She is rejected by her American lover Graham at the very last moment of marriage because of her being a woman not belonging to his culture. Moushumi’s case focuses on the failure and frustration in immigrant women’s attempts to get united with the Americans. Graham’s turning his face at the last stage indicates the margin between the Indians and Americans. Later, in her marriage with Gogol she feels marginalized due to the marriage duties and restrictions. Moushumi receives a letter of approval for the research grants. If it came before her marriage, she would have accepted to go to France; at present she has a husband and marriage to consider.

Mukherjee’s Tara returns to India and Lahiri’s Ashima gathers other immigrants to cope with their cultural marginalization. Baldwin’s *The Tiger Claw* presents marginalized ordinary woman Noor who finds her courage while tapping her heart to enter the new emotional and dangerous world. The story takes birth from the silences, conflicting and significant facts and gaps that Baldwin discovers. The war compels Noor’s family to migrate to England and adjust with the situation. The most
adventurous woman is Noor’s mother, an American woman from Boston whose father vanished somewhere due to the gambling debts. She is orphaned and lives with her elder stepbrother. His wife slowly makes her unpaid domestic servant. Then she marries Abhajaan and receives a Muslim name and upholds her husband’s religion. She follows all the Islamic traditions. After Abhajaan’s death her life is also equally marginalized like her daughters’. When grandmother Dadijaan comes to Paris to join them, she comes to know that her daughter-in-law habitually bares her legs beneath a dress. It evokes Dadijaan’s deep and abiding suspicion. She experiences the confusion and pain of mixing the blood and religion. She tells Noor about her sacrifices in love for Abhajaan and how Dadijaan and her Indian family marginalized her as his concubine for years until she bore a son.

Noor feels doubly marginalized for being a daughter in the immigrant family. Though she is elder than Kabir, her father never chooses her as his heir. According to the Sufi tradition, it is the son who bears the mantle. Noor feels more marginalized within the family than Tara and Ashima. Noor’s father dies and her conservative and religious minded uncle Tajuddin and her brother Kabir govern the family, assuming the role of the family patriarch. Under the uncle’s headship Noor is subjected to strictly follow all the customs of Islam. Noor says about her marginalized condition: “All my life, elders and superiors had told me how to live, who and what to like, what to do, how to do it. And even if I didn’t obey every injunction, my rebellions were small, mostly verbal. Always, I had seen myself as I “should be” not who I was”. Her uncle discourages her by saying that she is not better than a Montmartre prostitute. When she brings her Red Cross nursing certificate, he compares her achievement to the joining a brothel. Uncle Tajuddin never allows Noor or Noor’s Mother or Noor’s young sister Zaib to have an identity card or a license to drive in all the years they lived in Paris. He never allows them to hold a bank account either. The elders in the family do not care for the young woman’s feelings, as if her feeling have any value at all.

They live in the France where she needs Uncle Tajuddin or brother Kabir’s permission to marry. Kabir is afraid that if his sister marries a Jew, her husband will inherit their Afzal Manzil and that is very disgusting for him. The Female dominance in the case of Noor is something that hurts and unacceptable to Kabir. The men in the Muslim family assume more liberty in marriages. However, women are marginalized to follow the wishes of the elders. Noor’s father dares to marry an American woman
and in the epilogue the readers are told that Kabir marries a Christian Angela without caring for the familial disapproval. The fact about the men’s legal right to stop a woman’s engagement in the 1930s France brings to light the denial of ‘the right to chose’ to women in the so called civilized modern Europe. While looking at the tiger claw around her neck, Noor feels that her womanhood is impossible to understand for Armand. A man can never feel what is to be a woman.

Kabir unwittingly introduces Noor to his new friend who recruits the bilingual women for the resistance. The reason is that he doesn’t want his sister to touch unrelated men by being a nurse. A woman’s career is decided by the male members in her family. Later in the prison Noor feels ashamed of her mother and brother who considered her as just a woman and not as their beloved daughter or sister. One of the secret agents named Gilbert also looks at Noor as a woman and makes sexual advancement to her. She rejects, but the fear ever haunts her that rejected and angry Gilbert might inform the Gestapo about her. Noor’s physical marginalization in a bleak German prison cell presents the cruelty with which the captured, whether a man or a woman, are treated during the Wars. It also points out the inhumanity during the wars where a lovable woman has no excuses. There she is marginalized in shackled hand and foot and freezing from the winter’s cold. A French lady Renee betrays Noor by reporting to the Gestapo in exchange of her husband Guy’s release from the camp. Later Renee is charged for the betrayal and a committee of four women jurors is appointed. How a French woman, a white European will be convicted by the panel of white women for denouncing a marginalized immigrant Indian Muslim woman? Thus, they offer her a clean chit.

Mukherjee’s short story “The Middleman” points out how in the Iraqi Muslim culture women are penalized for adultery by stoning them to death. The narrator Alfie remembers the experience he had in Iraq. Once, when he went to a village, he saw a possibly adulterous young woman, who was certainly bold, brave and beautiful enough to excite rumors of promiscuity, was stoned to death that day. Maria is an immigrant Indian woman marginalized by her American husband. Her husband Ransome does not allow her to visit the States. She becomes adulterous to survive in the Latin American landscape of violence, brutality and dog-eat-dog conditions of existence. Finally, she comes out of her marginalization by killing her husband with her own hands. In “A Wife’s Story” a traditional Gujarati woman comes out of the cultural margins of India to America for education. In her family when her mother
wants to learn French, she is beaten by her illiterate grandmother. But Panna comes out of the marginalization in her Indian family through an expensive education at Lausanne and Bombay which makes her manners exquisite, her gestures refined and her moods undetectable. To her IIM graduated husband his mill in India is more important than his wife. In India Panna has to know her husband’s taste in the food. But when she comes to the New York, she broadens her horizons and settles down physically and emotionally here. She learns all the time to protest effectively and widens her horizons to include all experiences as a compensation for her past hungers which she could not satisfy in India. This story ends with the optimism of a Hindu wife for freedom in the New York.

In “Orbiting” immigrant Renata’s mother has the simple faith of immigrants that children should do better than their parents and so she gives her daughter liberty in her associations with the men. Renata breaks up with her American lover and immediately gets a new Afghanistan boyfriend named Ro. She is independent and free of margins because of her job as saleswoman in Bellevue Plaza. In “The Tenant” Mrs. Chatterji confesses her grief over the limitations and restrictions of marriages on the freedom of women. This reveals the hypocrisy and hollowness in the life of immigrants. She thinks that the divorced women like Maya can date; they can go to the bars and discos. They can see men. While rejecting the margins of the Indian culture Maya has slept with many men in America for sustaining her stay there. She thinks that the life in India is full of margins for women. In “Danny’s Girls” a young narrator’s mother is marginalized as an abandoned for a Trinidad woman by his father. She sells the News papers in the subway kiosks, twelve hours a day, seven days a week. Danny is an Indian who supplies Indian girls to the American sahibs as if they are objects. Danny would promise to send money to the girls’ family in India and their parents and relatives feel very happy to get money for the curse of having daughters. He sells Indian docile girls to hard-up Americans for real bucks. In “The Management of Grief” Pam, the elder daughter of Kusum feels marginalized in the family because her mother loves more her younger sister. She expresses her grief to Mrs. Sharma: “Mummy wishes my little sister were alive and I were dead”. There are hundreds of affected immigrants who never have come out of their margins, they do not speak English and some women have never handled money or gone on a bus. The old parents have never gone outside of their bedrooms. All these facts highlight the double marginalization of the immigrant women in the foreign countries.
Unlike Mukherjee who focuses on the immigrant women in the Western countries, Jhumpa Lahiri’s “When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine” brings to light the reality regarding the marginalization of the daughters and wives those live alone at home when the man of the house migrates out of the country. While Mr. Pirzada is in America his wife and seven daughters face the riots alone during the wars in the Indian subcontinent. Their life in Bangladesh and the life of the narrator’s family in America project the different problems that women face in both the situations. In “A Real Durwan” Boori Ma is an old stair-sweeper woman who, in exchange of her services, lives on the roof of an old brick building at Calcutta. She is deported to Calcutta during the partition after separation from her husband, four daughters, two-story brick house, a rosewood almari and a number of coffer boxes whose keys she still possesses. She is a refugee, an immigrant whose life is composed of such a grief that no one can even dream it. She is a victim of marginalization because of the changing time. Normally, it is not a job for a woman, but she honours the responsibility and maintains a vigil no less punctilious than if she were the gatekeeper of a house. The deep-rooted tradition of the caste system which marginalizes the down trodden is still a part of the social structure in India. The helpless women are paid poorly and exploited for long labor-hours. They are seen as replaceable and disposable. Boori Ma is given food and shelter instead of the legal salary. She is thrown out of her shelter because the community sees her as inferior and unequal.

Mukherjee portrays the immigrant Indian women, but in “Sexy” Lahiri presents an American woman’s feelings of the cultural marginalization among the immigrant Indians. The small Indian boy Rohin calls Miranda ‘sexy’ describing the meaning of it as ‘loving someone you don’t know.’ Rohin calls her attention to the immoral and inhuman aspects of being the “other woman.” After this realization Miranda feels unfit, unsuitable and culturally marginalized in the Indian culture because of her lack of understanding it. She decides to tell Dev that it is not fair for her and his wife to continue their illicit relationship and gradually breaks up with him. “Mrs. Sen's” focuses on a marginalized Indian immigrant woman who tries to assimilate without losing her prior life. She retains it with the power of the physical objects. Her attempt to drive to the market in the absence of her husband shows her wish to come out of the marginalized status of a stereotyped Indian woman and to embrace the American life. But it fails as she meets with an accident. An American boy Eliot soon stops staying with Mrs. Sen thereafter. This is an immigrant woman’s
failure to come out of the marginalization in the adapted culture. Her attempt to raise herself up to the surrounding by learning to drive results in losing the obtained and maintained identity as a caretaker. “The Treatment of Bibi Haldar” is about a marginalized Indian woman in her own family due to her ailment and failure to find her a husband. She lacks the education and healthcare. Her living condition is worst. Later, her sister-in-law, Haldar’s wife gets convinced that Bibi’s presence would infect the unborn child and wraps woolen shawls around her tumid belly; gives her separate soaps and towels and her plates are not washed with the others. Before the year-end Haldar family moves away, leaving an envelope containing three hundred rupees for the pregnant Bibi.

Mukherjee's women are immigrants from different countries, but Lahiri and Baldwin’s women are mostly Indian immigrants or natives in India. Baldwin's English Lessons and Other Stories focuses on the marginalization of neglected Sikh women under the Sikh masculinity by mapping onto the contexts of immigration to North America, globalization and consumerism in India. Like Lahiri’s Boori Ma, Baldwin’s “Dropadi Ma” speaks about the marginalization of old Dropadi Ma, who is a servant in a Sikh family but an expert in telling a variety of stories. Sukhimama’s marriage is arranged and Dropadi Ma will not be taken to Bangkok for Sukhiji’s wedding as she is after all a servant of the family. In “Family Ties” a girl in the Sikh family is marginalized by her parents. Her mother calls her fatty. The mother considers herself modern by adopting the Western life style. She gives extra money to her son, which spoils him and he is addicted. Her daughter is recommended glasses and she is worried about her marriage. She discourages her daughter by asking how anyone will marry her now. The daughter is an ungrateful child. The Daughters are considered as a responsibility, load and burden in the Indian families. Her mother asks her to use shampoo every two days to make her hair thick, so someone will marry her. Even her mother brings a contraption to swing against it every day to try to grow taller. She wears her mother’s old salwar kameezes altered to her size. All these facts expose how a girl is marginalized and a boy is favoured in the Indian families. Against the pride and honour of the family and religion the lives of daughters and sisters have no values. Her father advises his son to shoot his sister if the Muslims try to catch her, but never let them find her alive. Later, when she comes to know about her brother’s smoking cigarettes, he threatens her not to tell father about it, otherwise he will kill her. He is told that she belongs to him and he has power to wish her life or death. Her
parents wish to send her brother to the University of Toronto in Canada for the higher
education. And on the other hand, she is send for schooling to Miss Shafi, a Muslim
woman left behind by her relative who went to Pakistan after the partition. Her
innocent Aunt Chandani is marginalized because she is raped by the Muslims at time
of the partition and has a son. She drowns her child as if she suffers from the low
sight. She wishes that her brother will take her in his house back if the child is gone.
But sacrifice of her own son comes not to help her in breaking the margins and later
she goes mad.

In “Simran” a young daughter of the Sikh family is marginalized by denying
her the opportunity to have education in America due to the age old dislike and rivalry
between the Sikh and Muslim communities. When Simran’s mother Amrit finds a
copy of the Koran in Simran’s bag, she feels ruined by her daughter. She still
remembers the sight of Sikh women raped and disgraced by the Muslims. The family
spends fifteen thousand dollars on their daughter’s foreign education and bears the
dire predictions of friends. When a Muslim boy Mirza tries again and again to contact
Simran in India from America on telephone, Amrit feels confirmed that her daughter
has an affair with the Muslim in America. Amrit doubts even her daughter’s virginity.
Simran falls prey to her parents’ suspicious nature and fear of the possible disgrace if
their daughter loves and marries a Muslim. In “Toronto 1984” Piya is marginalized by
a Canadian multinational company by forbidding her to wear the salwar kameez. Piya
is a very patriotic Indian young girl. She feels that she has ethnic individualism in her
earrings. When young Indian immigrant woman denies standing in praise of the
British Queen in the party, her boss insults her by calling ‘a damn Pak’. In “Lisa” a
young Indian woman is marginalized due to her mistake in her judgments. Lisa works
as an aerobics instructor and develops an affair with an Indian who impregnates her.
Her friend Jaya asks her to abort the child, but Lisa is not ready to kill the life. Jaya is
sure that the man will not take the responsibilities of the child. The same happens
when a girl child takes birth. Jaya is of the opinion that if it was a boy child, the man
would have taken the responsibilities. At the end of the story, Lisa finds the job of
telemarketing for the opera where she can carry her child. There is no one to help her
by babysitting that night.

Baldwin’s “A Pair of Ears” focuses on the marginalization of an old deaf
widow who immigrates in Delhi during the partition. She has a strong affinity with
the house. She legally offers her son Balvir a twenty-five percent share of the house.
However, he wants her to give the entire house to him, so that they don’t have to pay
taxes when she dies. Once her grandson Manu tells her that she can’t order him
around because his Daddy says she is nobody. In “Nothing Must Spoil This Visit” a
Canadian woman Janet feels marginalized in India where she comes with her husband
to realize the meaning of ‘being a woman’ for the Indian women. In the Indian culture
the real woman is a woman who makes a man love her. On this basis Janet’s being a
woman is questioned. When Janet appears in her new Indian family, she is considered
as a woman who needs not a man. She realizes gradually that in the Indian culture a
woman has less freedom of wish for her love. A successful woman is the one who can
adjust at her best with the changed circumstances. Her happiness is considered in her
being a mother than anything else. In “English Lessons” Kanwaljit is marginalized as
an Indian woman married to an American. Her American husband Tony takes her to
the States just to become a prostitute and a source of his earnings. He brings her in the
States to ‘live like a worm avoiding sunlight’. She lives underground because her
green card has not come. She is prohibited to meet any Indian there. He compels her
to dress in pants to look like a Mexican girl. He introduces her to others as his
girlfriend. He wishes her to speak English to pass her immigration interview and to
memorize her amnesty story. Being an illegal immigrant, she is threatened by Tony’s
American girlfriend and raped by an American man with immigration papers in his
hands.

In Baldwin’s “The Cat Who Cried” an Indian woman feels marginalized under
the dominance of her husband and mother-in-law in Indian as well as in America.
When she marries with Prem in India, her mother-in-law makes it clear that she is not
to be trusted with money. Her mother-in-law also warns her husband that he must not
be influenced by his over-educated wife. Mataji once gives out her daughter-in-law’s
necklace to some cousin whose dowry she tries to collect. She tries to come out of her
margins with a degree from Boston University. Though there is a lot of discussion on
her working out of the house, she finds a job. She is an Indian woman trained and
advised by her mother to keep the silence and live within the margins. Her mother
advises: “And you are going to be silent. No one will ever be able to say that you
were raised to be troublesome. Do you want them to say that all your education made
you like some American feminist?.. Be careful when you use that word. Men become
afraid. If you want to survive, you must always let a man believe he has you under
control. Silence is an excellent instrument, beti. Use it well”. But the silence also has
its limits. When she comes to know that her husband has requested the agency to deposit her salary in the account they have opened to collect money to return India, her silence breaks and the quarrel starts. As she wishes not to return India, she boldly tells her husband to go back to India alone. She is ready to live alone in America, but will not return to India at any cost. In “Jassie” old mothers-Indian Jassie and American Elsie are confined to a room. These two old women of the different religions are together because Jassie’s daughter Minni and Elsie’s son Ted are married and they support both of them in their old age. In “Devika” an Indian woman living with her husband in Canada is marginalized under the dominance of masculinity. She is the one who sworn never to be married, but it seems that her father feels very proud to have a daughter married with Ratan, a big stockbroker settled in Canada. She develops an imaginary existence of a woman, whom she calls Ash, to break the margins and do whatever Devika cannot do in her real life. Her all suppressed feelings are boldly expressed by Asha.

**V.II.IV: The Sexual Exploitation of women:**

Women are seen as an object to satisfy the sexual lusts of men and they are never considered as equal human beings in the patriarchal cultures. The feminists raise the questions on such existing assumptions in the society. Mukherjee, Lahiri and Baldwin have focused on the facts related to the sexual exploitation of women in the context of cross-cultural encounters. In Mukherjee’s *The Tiger’s Daughter* Tara represents the women who are considered subordinate to men and looked upon as instrument for satisfaction of the sexual desires. This is the similar view to look at women in both the Western and Eastern worlds. To Tara, the Indian marriage stands for certain physical mysteries centering on or near the navel. She believes that in an Indian marriage a stranger groom takes his bride and rapes her on a brand new flower-decked bed. In America her failure to be a successful wife of an American husband leads her to feel that she is nothing more than a woman to wash bathrooms and toilets and sleep in bed with husband. During her visit to India, Tara is seduced by a politician Mr. Tundanwala while praising and admiring her as a liberated and advanced. After this seduction, Tara realizes that she cannot share this knowledge of Tundanwala with any of her Indian friends. In India, where a friendly smile or an accidental brush of the fingers can ignite rumors; how could she speak openly of Tundanwala’s violence? This incident leads her to realize that India no longer yields
her recognition. She decides to return to the New York and books an Air India flight ticket. Unfortunately, she could not escape and dies before leaving.

Similar to Tara’s experience with an American husband, in Lahiri’s *The Namesake* Moushumi focuses on the failure and frustration in her attempts to get united with an American. Like Mukherjee’s Maria, Renata and Maya, Lahiri’s Moushumi also uses sex as an instrument to embrace the American dreams. During her college days, Moushumi’s American dreams are not fulfilled and when she goes to Paris, she engages herself into affairs. She allows men to seduce her anywhere openly with no hesitation and without caring for the consequences. Some of them have been married, far older, fathers of children in the secondary school. Mostly, she sleeps with the French men, but there are also German, Persian, Italian and Lebanese men. There are days she slept with one man after lunch and another after dinner. Her American lover Graham considers her as his girlfriend, but when the matter of marriage comes, he turns his face at the last stage. The failure of this affair indicates the impossibility of union between Indian and American. It is also the cause of failure of the Indian substitute in form of Gogol. Later, Moushumi contacts a man named Dimitri, who was the first to appeal her sexually in her life and they begin an affair. On one hand, she feels guilty after her adulterous acts and on the other she feels at peace. This is very complicated feeling that justifies her adultery, as if something like this is expected or the most necessary.

Mukherjee’s Tara is raped in her motherland and Lahiri’s Moushumi willingly sleeps with many men, but Baldwin’s Noor is a victim in the turbulence of the World War II. Baldwin’s *The Tiger Claw* is a story of sexism and the evils of betrayal and hypocrisy in the Western world. Her Jewish lover Armand Rivkin impregnates Noor. She is compelled to abort the child as the time is not favourable for one more Jew to enter the world. Her brother Kabir introduces Noor to his new friend recruiting the bilingual women for the resistance because he doesn’t want his sister to touch unrelated men by being a nurse. In France one of the secret agents named Gilbert wishes her sex. When she rejects, the fear ever haunts her that rejected and angry Gilbert might inform the Gestapo about her. Her fellow agents look at her as a woman and desire for her body. She tells about her experience with Viennot: “All through August and September, Viennot attempted to meet me at his apartment, always mentioning that his wife was absent on vocation. He said he could fix my transmitter if it ever broke—and once upon a time I would have pretended to be very stupid,
pretended I didn’t understand his advances, or that he was waiting for complete impoverishment to steer me down the road to selling my body”. The jailor Herr Vogel uses many tactics for Noor to break down, confess and reveal the secrets of her spying agency. He shows her the photographs of a naked woman suspended upside down with metal clamps about her ankles and her eyes gouged and bleeding.

Most of Mukherjee’s protagonists in the Middleman stories use sex as a medium for sustaining their stay with freedom in America. In Mukherjee’s “The Middleman” Maria, wife of master Clovis T. Ransome, uses sex as a medium for survival in the dog-eat-dog circumstances at America. Maria knows Alfie’s weakness is women and sleeps with him. And at the end of the story, her genuine tenderness makes her decide to kill Ransome rather than her vulnerable, pliable and pitiable sex slave Alfie. Alfie’s life is saved for only reason that he had ‘three times tonight’ sex with Maria. For Alfie, Maria is an object of his wildest ecstasy. When Alfie feels too inferior to accept Maria’s love, she finally lives with her schoolmate Andreas, who is now law enforcing authority in the region. In “A Wife’s Story” Panna lives with her Chinese roommate Charity Chin, who is a disciple of Rajneesh and is in modeling business. Charity still loves her husband Eric though she has been estranged from him. She sleeps with her doctor and also with a nutritionist and a musician. Chin is quite open about the physicality of her relationships and for her love is a commodity hoarded like any other. In “Loose Ends” a Gujarati motel owner’s unsuspecting young daughter Alice is victim of Jeb’s act out of deep rooted grief. He rapes her and the cool and bare description of this act reflects an aspect of the American society.

In Mukherjee’s “Orbiting” Renata kisses Roashan in the presence of her parents by making the kiss really sexy to let the parents know that she has slept with him for many times. Even she lets them think that she will marry this man. Roashan seems to be very much caught in her sexual passion. In “Fighting for the Rebound” the practicality has more powerful impact than the emotions in the lives of the immigrant characters. They expect their sex relations to yield them love. This turns them lonely and alienated which becomes the source of exploitation by people like Danny, who exploit such lonely persons by providing them the girls he brings from India. In “The Tenant” a ‘trapeze artist’ Maya comes out of the conservative culture of Calcutta in to the new culture of New York. In attempts to stay independently in America as an emancipated woman, Maya sleeps with ‘married men, with nameless men, with men little more than boys.’ She keeps changing her boy-friends for the lack
of adjustment and becomes indiscreet. She marries an American John Hadwen and then divorces him after two years. After the divorce she looks forward to develop the new relationships. After her experience with John Hadwen, she loses her ability to distinguish between men. The good looks of Ashok Mehta move her and she begins to fondle him around the neck. She decides to wait for this ‘Hindu God’ to ring her up again. But it seems from every direction that her relation with this ‘God’ is going to develop into torrid sex. Although Maya would not disclose the various abortive relationships she had, yet Mehta knows that like himself she is not free from the ‘problems’. When her landlord, Ted Suminiski asks her to vacate her room because he is getting married, she has no option than accepting to live with her new landlord-cum mate Fred who has no arms. She is prepared to make love even to a man without arms.

Mukherjee’s “Jasmine” is a story of a young Hindu woman who leaves India for the U.S., where she is raped and becomes caregiver. Jasmine finds a very affectionate American married Biology teacher Bill Moffitt and his wife Lara in need of Jasmine’s service. When Lara is out of the house for her performances on the road, Bill seduces Jasmine. She has no option than submitting herself to Bill because: “She was a bright, pretty girl with no visa, no papers, and no birth certificate. Nothing other than what she wanted to invent and tell. She was a girl rushing wildly into future”.

“Danny’s Girls” is a story which brings to light the realities related to the life of Indian young girls supplied to the white Americans to satisfy their sexual lust. Danny is an Indian who supplies girls to the American sahibs and earns in dollars. Danny sends money to the girls’ families in India and their parents feel very happy to get money for the curse of having daughters. The narrator’s father leaves his mother for a Trinidad woman. The young narrator falls in love with Rosie; one of the Danny’s girls. He dares even to rebel against Danny for the love of Rosie. The members of families of the immigrants assume that their daughters live very happy life in the foreign countries. In the words of Lahiri’s Mrs. Sen: “they think that I live the life of a queen…. They think I press buttons and the house is clean. They think I live in a palace.” But the reality is totally contrary.

Unlike Mukherjee, Lahiri’s protagonists do not use sex as a medium for assimilating in the American society. But the sexual relationships are accepted willingly by them and they suffer for the consequences of it. Her protagonists’ sexual relationships cause their personal and social isolation. In Lahiri’s “Interpreter of
Maladies” the Das couple is childhood friends sleeping in the same bed on Friday and Saturday nights, but their parents never caught them doing anything. During their visit to India Mr. Kapasi develops a romantic sexual interest in Mrs. Das. He takes an opportunity of a private conversation with her hoping for a future correspondence and building a relationship to translate the transcontinental gap between them. The sexual tension between Mr. Kapasi and Mrs. Das is central to the story. Mrs. Das reveals a secret story of her son Bobby’s birth out of her adultery, an extramarital affair with a Punjabi guest. She hopes Mr. Kapasi to interpret her feelings and make her feel better as he does for his patients. In “Sexy” an American girl Miranda falls in an affair with a married Indian man named Dev while his wife is in India for a few weeks. At the first meeting she is unable to discern Dev’s nationality. However, she is instantly infatuated by his charm and the thrill of being with an exotic older man. Like Dev, the son of Laxmi’s cousin little Rohin too calls her ‘sexy’, describing the meaning of it as ‘loving someone you don’t know.’ She realizes that her sexual relationship with Dev has no potential and future. So she separates herself from him. In “The Treatment of Bibi Haldar” Bibi is an epileptic woman attempting to find her a husband and a cure for her ailment. Someone secretly impregnates her and she delivers a son in Calcutta. The father of that child is not discovered. But all the residents of the apartment help Bibi to raise the child.

Mukherjee’s protagonists use sex as a medium for assimilating in the American society and Lahiri’s protagonists face the problems due to their willingly accepted sexual relationships. Baldwin’s protagonists neither use sex as an instrument nor they wish fall in it, they are mostly the victims of sexual violence. In Baldwin’s “Family Ties” the predicament of the aunt of the narrator brings to focus the facts related to women during the partition of India. Her eighteen years old aunt Chandani Kaur is victim of abduction by the Muslims during the partition. She delivers a son after being raped by the Muslims. She survives as Jehanara Begum, but when found by the social workers, her brother says that his sister is dead and he is very sorry for her troubles. She thinks that her son is the obstacle and she kills her own son with her hands. But the sacrifice of her own son comes not to the help and later she becomes mad. In “Gayatri” conservative Gayatri is not happy with her sister-in-law Reena’s totally different way of life. She is of the opinion that the American men use women and they don’t marry them and then throw them defamed and ashamed. “Lisa” presents the modern young Indian immigrant women who enjoy the real freedom in
America. During this enjoyment Lisa falls in an affair with an Indian who impregnates her. When the girl child takes birth, the man rejects Lisa and her daughter. In “English Lessons” Kanwaljit is being sexually exploited by her American husband and his American friends. She becomes a tool for his earning as he makes her a prostitute. Kanwaljit thinks that if she returns to her father, it might be a disgrace and shame for her Indian family. She is threatened of reporting to the immigration office by her husband’s American girlfriend. Her husband Tony shares Kanwaljit with another man who has forms in his hands and blackmails her. She confesses: “He looks like Tony, only younger. And he still laughs at me, waving pictures of Tony with her. Telling me Tony left me for an untouchable, a hubshi. Threatening to tell my parents if I would not open my legs to him. I did. Rubba-merery. I did.”

V.II.V: The Disillusionment of women:

Most of the immigrant women keep dreaming, hoping and expecting from the alien circumstances. At last they find nothing but the frustration. The reality brings them in the face of disillusionment. The immigrant women face disillusionment in their relationships with men within the family and society and the intensity of their feelings is sharpened in the context of cross-cultural encounter. Mukherjee’s Tara faces double disillusionment: first with her American dreams and second when she returns to India in search of her Indian dreams. The letters from her husband David to Tara prove that he has not understood her country through her. And probably, he has not understood her either. Tara’s mother feels disillusioned by Tara. She is not happy with her daughter’s inter-religious marriage. Tara is disillusioned by her relatives and friends also. The pictures of Indian- a funeral pyre at the river bank, a small beggar girl afflicted with leprosy, beggar children eating off the street, superficiality in the life of her friends, the riots and her claustrophobic rape by the politician, her Darjeeling visit marred by ugly and violent events- bring out the trauma of her visit to India. She comes across a kind of bewilderment on her visit to India. The return to America is an escape she plans, but destiny could not allow her to escape. Before she takes off for America, she becomes a victim of the violence. Homesick at New York, she comes to India seeking peace and finds her final peace in death.

Mukherjee presents the disillusionment of a first generation immigrant in the adopted land and motherland, whereas Lahiri presents the disillusionment of both the first and second generation of the immigrants in the hostland only. In Lahiri’s The
Namesake Ashima is disillusioned with the American experience as she misses the Bengali naming ceremony and guidelines from the elder women in her Indian family at the time of her first delivery. The American schools are not more than the disillusionment to her. The American teachers like Mr. Lawson cannot survive fifty-minute class without excusing for a cigarette and the girls in the class insist that the male teachers are sexy and have ranging crushes on them. Gogol’s American school arranges a study tour to a graveyard to read the only American surnames written of the stones. In Indian culture the teachers are considered similar to God. So disillusioned and frustrated with the American schools, later Ashima sends her children to the Bengali language and culture lessons held in the house of one of their friends.

Disillusioned after her husband’s death, Ashima changes to the extent that she is ready to accept the American girl Maxine as her daughter-in-law and she asks Gogol to adjust with her. She is ready to do any adjustment for the sake of her dear son’s happiness. After his breakup with Maxine, Ashima suggests Gogol to meet Moushumi, a daughter of her Bengali friend, rejected by her intended American groom who changes his mind at the last minute. Moushumi hates her parents’ moving to America from London. She hates America for its vastness and less likeness with India. At her twelve, she makes a pact with two other Bengali girls that she will never marry a Bengali man. They wrote a statement vowing never to marry a Bengali man and spite on it at the same time and buried it somewhere in the parents’ backyard. Disillusioned by her American lover Graham, she has no option than marring someone from the similar culture. She also hates the Indian way of the marriages. During her college days her American dreams are not fulfilled, but when she goes to Paris, she begins to fall effortlessly into affairs. The relationship between Gogol and Moushumi seems to be an adjustment and not love. It is imposed upon them by their parents and the situation. Their contact is artificial something like their relationship with the cousins in India. Thus, they are bound to face the disillusionment in their married life.

Unlike Mukherjee and Lahiri, Baldwin intensifies the theme of disillusionment of the immigrants in the context of World War II. Baldwin’s The Tiger Claw focuses on the disillusionment of the immigrants and Jews in the European countries during the Second World War. Noor faces disillusionment in her love for a Jewish pianist Armand Rivkin. Noor’s uncle attempts to destroy her love. Under his headship Noor
is subjected to follow the Islam strictly. He discourages her by calling her a Montmartre prostitute and threatens not to speak to Armand again. When Noor brings her the Red Cross nursing certificate, he compares her achievement to joining a brothel. Uncle Tajuddin never allows women in the family to have an identity. Uncle Tajuddin decides to ban, destroy and throw out the books of the other religions collected by Abhajaan and all the books by writers unknown to him without caring for the emotions of Noor’s mother. Noor feels devastated and lonely. Her life is not in her own hands, the oppressive forces in the family and society cause disillusionment in her life.

Due to the war between Germany and France, Noor’s family shifts to England, while Armand’s family stays in France. When Germany invades the France, Noor feels despair of ever seeing Armand again because a Jew might not survive at the tyrant Germans’ hands. She takes her personal mission of meeting Armand by being a secret agent in the occupied France. During her espionage, she breaks her Ramzaan-fast because she needs to assure the uniformed German army men that she is one of the natives of France and not an immigrant Indian. When she shoots the two SS soldiers to death, she repents for her act. She has already taken out the life of her child ‘ma petite’. She wonders that if Armand comes to know about her being a murderer, will he accept her love? A French lady named Renee betrays Noor by reporting to the Gestapo about Noor in exchange of her husband Guy’s release from the camp. When captured she is kept in the dungeon which has not even the straw mattress and she has to doze off on the damp stone floor, insects crawling over her and rats gibbered and squeaked. The jailor Herr Vogel uses various tactics for Noor to confess and reveal the secrets of her spying agency. In this way her life is full of emotional and physical disillusionments.

Mukherjee’s *The Middleman and Other Stories* presents the disillusionment of the immigrants before and after their migration. In “Fighting for the Rebound” a Philippine immigrant woman Blanquita is disillusioned in her relationship with her American husband Griff. Their relationship is in the process of breaking down. In “The Tenant” Maya is not happy with any man. Her relationships with her American partners result in disillusionment. When Maya’s landlord Ted Suminiski asks her to vacate her room as he is getting married, she then accepts to live with a new landlord-
cum mate handicapped Fred. She is prepared to make love even with a man without arms.

Unlike Mukherjee’s protagonists who are disillusioned in their cross-cultural relationships, Lahiri’s protagonists are disillusioned in their relationships within their cultural community in the context of alien country. In Lahiri’s “A Temporary Matter” immigrant Shoba and Shukumar are disillusioned in their relationship to the extent that at home they are experts in avoiding each other. They spend as much as possible time on the separate floors. At home she behaves like a careless wife and treats the house as a hotel. In “Interpreter of Maladies” disillusioned with her husband Mrs. Das secretly develops an affair with a guest. She reveals a secret story of her son Bobby’s birth out of her adultery to Mr. Kapasi. It is an extramarital affair with a Punjabi guest. However, she is disillusioned by Mr. Kapasi’s unexpected judgement. Unlike Mukherjee’s immigrant women, Lahiri in “Sexy” presents a native American woman’s disillusionment in her relationship with an immigrant Indian man. An American girl Miranda falls in an affair with a married Indian man named Dev. The meeting of seven-year-old Rohin brings Miranda into his mother’s grief and she eventually leads to call off her affair with Dev. She comes to know gradually the consequences of her relationship with Dev. She realizes the lack of understanding of Indian culture in her life. When she visits an Indian grocery, her feeling of ostracism highlights the uncomfortable relationship with Dev, as she knows so little about him and his background and yet their relationship is so intimate. She repents for not understanding more about India. Most of her stories focus on the disillusionment within the periphery of familial relationships, but in “Mrs. Sen's” Lahiri presents disillusionment in the alien society outside the house. Mrs. Sen is an isolated immigrant woman tries to assimilate without losing her prior life and is disillusioned in her attempts to do so.

Baldwin focuses on the cultural disillusionment due to the cross-cultural influences in the life of the Indian immigrants in the adopted countries as well as in the life of their relatives in the motherland. In Baldwin’s “Montreal 1962” a Sikh wife living with her husband in Canada is disillusioned as her husband is asked to take off his turban and cut hair short to have the job. The turbans carry so much cultural and religious affiliation and affection in the life of a Sikh woman. But these turbans appear to be bed sheets or curtains to the Canadian dry-cleaner woman without eyebrows. The Canadians expect and compel her husband to sacrifice his cultural
identity and tradition to suit to the new world. But she advises her husband not to lose the traditional and cultural identity before the Canadian who do not know what it takes to wear a turban to the Sikhs. In “Dropadi Ma” an Indian mother feels disillusioned because she thinks that the culture of Canada has exploited her son. Her son does not wish to marry the girl his family has fixed. In “Gayatri” a conservative Gayatri is totally disillusioned by her modern sister-in-law Reena who is educated and recently has joined a job as an Airhostess. Reena develops a friendship with an American and later marries him without asking her brother and parents about it. It is surprising that she marries with a black American who belongs to the lower caste. Thus, she brings disgrace to the family.

In Baldwin’s “Simran” when a Sikh mother Amrit finds a copy of the Koran in her daughter Simran’s bag, she feels ruined and disillusioned by her. This is because she still remembers the sight of the Sikh women raped and disgraced by the Muslims while walking home to Amritsar during time of the partition. The family spends a lot of money on the daughter’s foreign education and bears the dire predictions of friends. But her daughter completely looses the Sikh culture. When a Muslim boy named Mirza tries again and again to contact Simran in India from America on telephone, Amrit feels confirmed that her daughter has a love affair with him in America. She decides to take prevention for the possible disillusionment because of the disgrace if her daughter loves and marries a Muslim. They do not send her again to America. Like “Montreal 1962”, in “Toronto 1984” an Indian immigrant mother and her daughter feel disillusioned in the Canada. An Indian girl Piya is disillusioned by her Canadian multinational company which forbids her to wear the salwar kameez and earrings. Her boss insults her by calling her a damn Paki. She is disillusioned when her pride in the Indianness is betrayed as her trip to the motherland is cancelled because of Indira Gandhi’s murder in India. “Lisa” presents disillusionment of a young Indian woman Lisa, who in her attempts to embrace the American life falls in an affair with an Indian and becomes pregnant. Later the same man rejects her and her girl child to take care of and she alone copes with the situation.

In Baldwin’s next story “A Pair of Ears” a son disillusions his immigrant mother. She carries her memories of the past with her house in Delhi and does not want to demolish or reconstruct it. She supports her son, but once her grandson reminds her that she can’t order him because his Daddy says she is nobody. It frustrates her and disillusioned she dies very soon. In “The Insult” the immigrant Sikh
sisters in America feel disillusioned by each other. Aunty Nimmi disillusions others with her excessive American way of life and thinking. The narrator Neelu’s family finds disillusionment in the attempts to find a Sikh boy with turban in America for Neelu. They don’t like the behaviour of Aunty Nimmi. There are many Sikh boys in America, but all have cut their hair and don’t wear turbans for making more money. The narrator Neelu’s mother marries her to a ‘good Sikh fellow’ from Delhi without turban. She sends no invitation of the wedding to her sister. She takes a type of revenge for her disillusionment by insulting Aunty Nimmi’s honour. In “Devika” an Indian immigrant woman in Canada is disillusioned because of the male dominance. Out of the disillusionment in Canada, Devika develops an imaginary existence of a free woman. Her all suppressed feelings are boldly expressed by the imaginary woman. Her father feels very proud to have his daughter married to a big stockbroker settled in Canada. In Canada her husband also dominates her life and demands her to change completely.

V.II.VI: The immigrant Women’s Nagging Sense of Guilt:

Most of the women feel guilty for being born as a woman and in addition to this the immigrant women feel guilty for being away from their home. Either the immigrant women fall a prey in the alien society or they willingly break away from their tradition. In both the cases they are confronted with frustration which results ultimately in the nagging sense of guilt. The immigrant women carry forever a sense of guilt in their heart for breaking away from their family, status, tradition, culture, religion and motherland. In Mukherjee’s *The Tiger’s Daughter* Tara feels guilty for being away from her motherland. She thinks that her all problems are due to her breakaway from India. Finally, she thinks that all her hesitations and fears at abroad will be magically erased if she visits to her home at Calcutta. She is homesick, impulsive and in confusion due to her fear of New York. At many times, Tara feels guilty for being one of whose existence causes trouble to many people. She tries to cope with her own troubles and she creates troubles for others. Her life either in India or in America is full of troubles. When she comes alone to India, she feels guilty and stupid for coming without her American husband. The American culture works as an ‘invisible spirit or darkness’ which kills her simple desire to behave like an ordinary Indian. She loses her racial, religious, cultural and feminine purity and repents for her wrong decisions throughout her whole life.
Like Mukherjee's Tara, Lahiri’s Ashima in *The Namesake* feels guilty for being away from her family in India. At home in Calcutta Ashima might have been surrounded by all the women in her family, but in the United States she struggles alone. In America she feels nothing normal. Ashima approves her son’s name given after her husband’s favorite Russian writer Nikolai Gogol. However, she feels unhappy for missing the letter by her grandmother containing an identity for her son. After breakup of Gogol and Moushumi’s marriage, Ashima feels guilty for causing Gogol to meet Moushumi and considers this as the American cultural influence which causes severe damage to the Indian ethical and moral values.

Mukherjee and Lahiri present the sense of guilt of women of the first generation immigrant, whereas Baldwin portrays a woman of the second generation immigrants. In Baldwin’s *The Tiger Claw* a daughter in the immigrant Muslim family carries forever a sense of guilt for abandoning her love in the France. Noor also carries a nagging sense of guilt for aborting the child that she conceived from her Jew lover Armand. The sense of guilt makes her love for Armand so strong that she will wait for him and wait for the situation to turn favourable till the end of her life. She is very much hopeful to regain her love in the France. She endures all the physical pains and struggles in the German occupied France while hopping for a meeting with Armand. She feels guilty when she breaks her Ramzaan fast to assure the German army that she is one of the natives of France and not an immigrant Indian. Noor is often in dialogue with Allah, asks favours, makes promises and reaffirms her faith and relies on her religious beliefs to motivate herself, but the actions of others become the worst that befall her. To overcome the obstacles Noor follows the Sufi path to realize herself as a woman and as a human being. When she shoots two SS soldiers to death, she repents for her act. She has already taken out the life of her child ‘ma petite’. She wonders if Armand comes to know about her being a murderer, will he accept her love. She feels guilty for violating her father’s religious teachings.

In Mukherjee's “A Wife’s Story” an Indian married woman Panna migrates to America for her research degree, where she feels guilty for turning away from her duties as an Indian wife. At the end of the story Panna’s husband pleads her to return home with him, the pain in his voice brings back her far away freely roaming mind to the present. But she determines not to return under the dominance of her mother-in-law and an indifferent husband. In “The Management of Grief” the immigrants who lose their close relatives in a crash of plane feel guilty for being away from
motherland and having nobody to understand their grief. Most of them do not speak English. The old parents have never gone outside of their bedrooms and some women have never handled money or gone on a bus. Pam, the elder daughter of Kusum feels guilty for being an elder daughter because her mother loves more her younger sister. An Irish social worker Miss. Judith Templeton feels guilty for the affected people because the communication gape leads to misunderstandings. The tragic emotions compel the immigrant women to change themselves. The story ends with comment on the uncertainty and ever-changing life and fate of the immigrants.

Similarly, in Lahiri’s “A Temporary Matter” when the electricity is off for one hour every night for five days, the Indian immigrant couple Shukumar and Shoba spends each of these nights in the dark while sharing the secrets with each other, the things they have never confessed before. Each of the bold confessions leads towards their separation. They both feel guilty for their past deeds. In “Interpreter of Maladies” Mrs. Das caries a sense of guilt for a secret of her adultery, out of which her son Bobby takes birth. She has an extramarital affair with a Punjabi guest. She is instinctively looking to unburden her serious guilt nagging in the corner of her heart for last eight years. She hopes Mr. Kapasi to interpret her feelings and make her feel better. While explaining to Mr. Kapasi, she frequently uses the word ‘terrible’ which shows how much pain she has undergone due to her guilt and self humiliation. This may be the real cause of her being careless as a mother. Disappointed Mr. Kapasi points out her guilt, offers his interpretation of her secret guilt as a factor in her family's 'maladies'. In “Sexy” the pangs of guilt of snatching a married man highlight the plight of Laxmi’s cousin who has recently been abandoned by her husband for a younger woman. Laxmi’s reaction to her cousin’s passiveness indicates her angry feminist and aggressive feelings. She says that if she was in her place, she would have shot them both. Miranda feels guilty for the lack of understanding this aspect of the Indian culture which causes abandonment of Laxmi’s cousin by her husband. The small son of Laxmi’s cousin Rohin brings Miranda into his mother’s grief and eventually leads her to call off her affair with a married Indian Dev. Like Dev, Rohin too calls her ‘sexy’ describing the meaning of it as ‘loving someone you don’t know.’ In “Mrs. Sen’s” an Indian married immigrant woman feels guilty for being in America away from her family and firmly rejects the American new experiences such as canned fish or even something common like car driving. Her happiness lies in only the visits to the fish market and the letters from India, which prove sense of guilt in
the United States. She feels guilty for not visiting her sister and sister’s baby in India.

In “This Blessed House” an Indian immigrant Sanjeev is irritated by his quite Americanized wife Twinkle’s naiveté and impractical tendencies. For times he repents for not thinking of the other options for his wife. He thinks with a flicker of regret about the snapshots of the prospective brides his mother used to send him from Calcutta, those could sing and sew and season lentils without consulting a cookbook. He does not know if he loves Twinkle. He once says her that he loves her, but she also never declares her love for him.

Similar to Mukherjee and Lahiri, Baldwin also focuses on the nagging sense of guilt that the Indian immigrant women suffer in the hostland. In addition to this, she also points out the sense of guilt of the Indian women living in Indian. In Baldwin’s “Rawalpindi 1919” a Sikh mother feels guilty because she sends her son away to the Europe for three years to pursue higher education. There he needs enough turbans to keep his Sikh identity. Her husband washes his hands after the shake-hand with a British man, and now her son immigrats among the English boys and will pollute his hands. She also cares for the food he will have to eat in England - ‘only boiled food with not a single chilli all the time’. In “Montreal 1962” a Sikh wife feels guilty for being in Canada where her husband is asked to take off his turban and cut hair short to have the job. The Canadians compel immigrants to adjust with their culture to suite the new world. In “Family Ties” a Sikh daughter feels guilty for being born as a girl in the communal world. Her mother discourages her by calling her an ungrateful child. Her brother is told that she belongs to him and he has the power to wish her life or death. Her parents wish to send her brother to the University of Toronto in Canada. On the other hand, she goes for schooling to Miss Shafi, a Muslim refugee woman. Her mother asks her to use shampoo every two days to make her hair thick and brings a contraption to swing against it every day to grow taller so someone will marry her. She wears her Mummy’s old salwar kameezes altered to her size. She is a victim of the pangs of guilt that her family has not forgotten, because earlier her eighteen years old aunt Chandani Kaur is abducted by the Muslims during the partition. Chandani kills her own son with her hands and later goes mad. She is a victim and suffers for no guilt other than being a girl. In “Simran” also a Sikh daughter feels guilty for being a girl in a Sikh family which denies her a chance to have the higher education in America. On the other hand, her mother Amrit feels guilty for sending her daughter in America for higher education. Amrit finds a copy of
the Koran in Simran’s bag and feels ruined by her daughter because she still
remembers the sight of Sikh women raped and disgraced by the Muslims. She feels
that her daughter has completely lost the Sikh culture. The family wastes fifteen
thousand dollars on their daughter’s foreign education. And to their surprise, their
daughter becomes an ungraceful, rebellious and selfish monster.

In Baldwin’s “Toronto 1984” an Indian immigrant young woman feels guilty
for being out of their mother- land. She lives in Canada. A very patriotic young
woman Piya works in a Canadian multinational company. This company forbids her
to wear her Indian cloths. When she denies standing in the praise of British Queen in
the party, her boss calls her ‘a damn Paki’. In “Lisa” an immigrant young woman Lisa
carries the pangs of her guilt in attempt to live with complete freedom in America.
She has an affair with an Indian man who impregnates her. She feels guilty for her
deeds when the man denies taking care of the girl child. Now she needs to search a
job where she could carry her child with her. In “The Cat Who Cried” an Indian
immigrant man Prem feels guilty for being away from India. He thinks that ten years
in America are enough to earn money. But his wife wishes not to go back. He is afraid
of the American cultural influence on his children. He thinks that in America his
daughter will paint her face and have a boyfriend by the time she’s twelve and his son
will join a gang and bring home some New Age junkie. In “Devika” Ratan suffers for
the sense of guilt because of bringing his wife to Canada and changing his life style.
He also wishes his wife to change. Devika feel guilty for losing her freedom and
breaking her oath of never marrying. She is dominated by the male members in her
family like her father and husband. She comes out of the suppression by rejecting the
submissive part of her former life and gaining a free and aggressive personality.

V.III: A Comparison from the Cultural Point of View:

A culture is a product of the social, political and ideological norms that
enforces the various practices, attitudes and modes of behaviour. The culture varies
society to society. When a person leaves his own society and tries to settle down in a
different one, the cultural clash begins. The cross-cultural issues cause tremendous
transformation in the life of the immigrants. Subha Mukherjee in her research article
states;

Cross-cultural issues have metamorphosed human lives and
transformed the lives of Indians living abroad, causing serious
The problems of women in migration as presented in the selected texts need a comparative study. For women, the femininity is a cultural product to be adopted in order to participate in a society. The above discussed all feministic problems that the immigrant women face are linked with the cultural problems, because as the feminist critics argue that the femininity is a cultural product in the human societies. The following are a few of the cultural problems of the immigrant women which are presented by the selected Indian Diasporic writers and to be taken for a comparative discussion.

1. The Cultural conflict
2. The Racial discrimination
3. A sense of dislocation
4. The Nostalgia
5. Tracing the roots
6. The Expatriate sensibility

V.III.I: The Cultural Conflict:

When a person migrates out of his motherland, he/she carries a deep rooted sense of his/her own culture to the adopted country and obviously that does not match with the native one. Thus, the cultural clash is natural. The clash of cultures is witnessed at two levels. At one level, it is in the mind of the migrated person and at the other level it is seen in his/her social interactions with the native citizens of the host country. In Mukherjee's *The Tiger's Daughter*, the protagonist Tara studies in America. Tara suffers through the clash between her Indian culture and the American culture. She tries to prove and maintain her Indian cultural identity. She always prays the Goddess for the power to never surrender before the Americans. She follows her Indian cultural upbringings even after her marriage with an American. Tara believes that in an Indian marriage culture a totally stranger groom takes his bride and rapes her on a brand new flower-decked bed. While in her American marriage, she is very dutiful like a true Indian wife. In the Indian culture a wife feels proud of doing the house hold works. In America she expects the credit from her American husband for the dirty works like washing toilets and bathrooms. She always fails to communicate the Indian culture, customs and traditions to her American husband. Tara suffers from
the culture shock that a person experiences after a feeling of depression and frustration while adjusting between the tremendously different two cultures. Her stay for seven years in America causes tremendous damage to her Indian culture and she turns into a split, a hybrid personality. She thinks that her visit to India is the only remedy for her feelings of the cultural loss. She comes to India with many expectations. But depressed and disgusted with deteriorating situation of India, finally she determines to leave to her husband in the USA.

Similarly, Lahiri’s *The Namesake* presents the large submerged territory of 'cross-culturalism', which does not allow understanding fully a meaning of straddling the line between two cultures. It focuses also on the complex and conflicted world of the Indian immigrants caught between two cultures in the United States. It deals with the themes of immigration and conflicting collision of the cultures highly distinct in the religious, social and ideological differences. Mukherjee's Tara struggles alone with the cultural crisis, but Lahiri’s Ashima struggles with her entire family to maintain her Indian culture in the powerful influence of the American cultural context. In Indian culture a woman wishes the emotional support at the time of her delivery. But in the United States Ashima struggles through language and cultural barriers. According to the Indian culture, Ashima's grandmother is chosen for naming her son. However, the letter never arrives and soon the grandmother dies. The American practice of naming after ancestors is contrary to the Bengali culture. In Bengali Culture children are given two names; one is a pet name used only by the family and close friends and another is used by the rest of society. So, later Gogol is given ‘Nikhil’ as a public name. The Indian culture puts a moral burden on a woman to adjust with the situation at her husband’s house. The same force compels Ashima to adjust with the situation without complaining for the sake of her son and her father’s prestige. Tara makes her personal attempts to maintain her cultural tradition, whereas Ashima makes it social by gathering the Indian immigrants together on certain occasions. Ashima continues to celebrate the Indian ceremonies and functions to keep her Bengali-Indian culture alive. It’s her cultural adjustment for the sake of her children that she stares celebrating Christmas. The real challenge before her is to teach them about the Indian religious ceremonies. She is always afraid of the American life style and she tries to protect her children from catching that life style. So she sends Gogol to the Bengali language and culture lessons held in the house of one of their friends. The teachers are considered similar to the God in the Indian
culture. But the American school teachers like Mr. Lawson cannot survive a fifty-minute class without excusing for a cigarette and the girls in the class say that the male teachers are indescribably sexy. Gogol’s American school arranges a study tour to a graveyard to read the American surnames written on the stones.

Gangulis struggle to find their place in the society while respecting their roots in the process of adapting to the American culture. Ashima focuses the privacy of the Bengali culture. The struggle between two cultures comes as the Gangulis wish to raise their children with the Bengali culture and values in the surrounding culture of the United States. The second generation exists in a luminal space of the cultural borderland between America and their families in the country of origin: India. Much later in their lives, the second generation immigrants truly begin to value their Bengali heritage. They watch MTV, cut their pants off the bottom and follow the life style of America, which Ashima tries her best to prevent and it turns in quarrels. Her daughter Sonia takes English lessons from the same Mr. Lawson, joins a dance class and goes to the parities with boys. Sonia develops a typical American smile in her face. There are frequent quarrels between Ashima and Sonia. Gogol wants to be an American and not a Bengali. He attempts to do so and starts smoking secretly. He becomes bold enough to kiss a girl in a party. He goes home less frequently, dates the American girls and turns angry whenever anyone calls him ‘Gogol’. During his college years, he continues to smoke cigarettes and marijuana and to go to the parties. Once he participates in a party at Ezra Stiles with a fake ID, introducing himself as Nikhil: a newly achieved identity and he loses his virginity to a girl wearing a plaid woolen skirt and combat boots and mustard tights; a girl he cannot remember.

When Ashima’s husband goes for the research project in Ohio and children study somewhere far in the other towns, Ashima finds a job in a library to pass the time. She develops the cross-cultural sisterhood with the American co-workers at the library. It truly manifests Ashima’s cultural growth and represents her exploration into a culture that is alike and yet different to her own. The American co-workers too are isolated, but their reasons differ. It is because of her culture that Ashima would never be alone despite the divorce. Ashima ensures how to retain her cultural heritage throughout the familial and communal development from powerless to powerful and even empowering the circumstances. When Gogol introduces Maxine to his parents, Ashima dismisses Maxine as something that Gogol will eventually get over. In the Indian society the young generation observes the values of respect and submission to
the wishes of elders and it is obvious that Ashoke and Ashima avert their gaze when Maxine runs her hand through Gogol’s hair in their presence. Gogol envisions his mother’s feelings and reactions during the encounters. Gogol observes the difference between his mother and Maxine’s American parents at a dinner party.

Gogol observes maternity and hospitality, especially of Maxine’s mother Lydia in comparison to his own mother and concludes that the maternity is cultural. In observing Lydia, Gogol is struck by her difference from Ashima. Lydia entertains effortlessly, spends money lavishly and is very comfortable to acknowledge not only her daughter’s relationships but also her sex life. Gogol realizes the fate of his relationship with Maxine as a piece of the cultural eccentricity. Gogol realizes a total alienation from his Bengali roots when Lydia, Maxine and Gerald joke about mistaking Gogol’s cultural and ethnic heritage as Italian. They are entirely unknown to his cultural values and background so central to his identity. Gogol realizes that he cannot deny his connection to his mother’s culture, her maternity, his proximity to his mother’s essentialism and his own need for the American-Bengali hybridity. In effect, he becomes an object of comparison through which Lydia and her friends are allowed to better express their Americanness. Gogol tires to mask entirely his Bengali culture. This realization Gogol experiences also results in immersing himself into an entirely Bengali-American relationship with his then-wife Moushumi. Maxine admits that she feels jealous of his mother and sister and this accusation strikes Gogol as so absurd that he has no energy to argue anymore. Gogol breaks off the relationship and begins to spend more time with his mother and sister.

After Gogol’s breakup with Maxine, Ashima suggests Gogol to meet Moushumi, a daughter of her Bengali friend, unfortunate as her intended American groom changes his mind at the last minute. However, tied down by the marriage with Gogol, Moushumi becomes restless and begins to regret for what she has done. Gogol often feels like a poor substitute for Moushumi’s American ex-fiancé Graham. The predicament of Moushumi focuses on the failure and frustration in attempts to get united with the American mainstream culture. Graham’s turning his face at the last stage indicates the impossibility of the India and American union. In a party that Gogol attends with Moushumi at her friend’s house, he realizes the reality of the American cultural hypocrisy. The difference between Bengali and American leads towards the impossibility of meshing them together. Though frequently with them in the parties, Gogol realizes how mismatched they are. Gogol finally learns that the
solution is not to fully abandon or attempt to diminish either culture, but to mesh the two together.

Mukherjee’s *The Tiger’s Daughter* presents the cultural clash of the first generation immigrant woman and Lahiri’s *The Namesake* presents the first and second generation of immigrant women, whereas Baldwin’s *The Tiger Claw* concentrates only on the second generation immigrant woman. The readers do not find the clash between the young and old generations in *The Tiger’s Daughter*, but *The Namesake* and *The Tiger Claw* focus on the cultural crisis along with the clash between the two generations of immigrants. In *The Tiger Claw* an Indian immigrant woman Noor is a victim of the cultural clash during the time of World War II. She rebels against the Islamic culture in which the women are suppressed in the name of culture, religion and patriarchy. She is belittled at home as a woman and later also among the Europeans for being an immigrant ‘other’ woman. The treatment to Noor’s mother as an immigrant woman in the Eastern world focuses on the similar evils on a cultural basis. Her mother always advises Noor not to love someone of another religion, someone belonging to a different culture as she has experienced the confusion and pain of mixing the blood and religions. She tells Noor about her sacrifices in love for Abhajaan and how Dadijaan and the Indian family considered her his concubine for years, until she bore a son.

Whether it is motherland or a foreign land, the cultural obligations are carried with the family wherever it goes. Though Noor is elder than Kabir, her father never chooses her as his heir because according to the Sufi culture the son bestows mantle. The love between Noor and a Jewish pianist Armand Rivkin is destroyed because of the cultural and religious difference. Her uncle Tajuddin says that Noor is not better than a Montmartre prostitute and threatens her not to speak with Armand again. Due to the Islamic cultural obligations, her Uncle never allows women in the family to have either an identity card or a license to drive or a bank account. All women in France need permission for marriage from a male relative. Education is denied to the Muslim women. When Noor brings her Red Cross nursing certificate, Uncle Tajuddin compares her achievement to joining a brothel. He blames her mother’s American example for the scandalous situation. Kabir introduces Noor to officer recruiting for the resistance because he doesn’t want his sister to touch the unrelated men by being a nurse. Uncle Tajuddin decides that all the books by writers unknown to him are to be banned, destroyed and thrown out. Even the books of other religions collected by
Abhajaan become the first to throw out without caring for the emotions of Noor’s mother. The elders in the family do not care for the young woman’s feelings, as if her feeling have no value at all.

Noor’s fellow agents like Gilbert and Viennot look at her as a helpless woman belonging to a different culture and crave for her body. She has to break away from her religious practice of Ramzaan-fast because she needs to assure the uniformed German army men that she is one of the natives of France and not an immigrant Indian. In the French culture, unlike the Indian in which the swastika symbolizes health charm, the cross symbolizes the male power through the right bent spokes and the female through the left bent. But for the Germans it means one power only- male: red for blood; white for Aryan purity and black for Hitler’s intent to obliterate ‘others’. A French lady Renee opens her home for the secret agents; such hospitality to strangers is part of the life in the places like India and not usually exhibited by the Europeans. Renee betrays Noor by reporting to the Gestapo in exchange of her husband Guy’s release from the camp. Later, Renee is charged for betrayal and a committee of four women is appointed. It is impossible that a French woman, a white European will be convicted by the panel of white women for denouncing an immigrant Indian Muslim woman. Thus, they offer her clean chit.

In Mukherjee's short story “Orbiting” marriage of an Italian woman Renata’s parents is a kind of taming of the West and everything about her mother could be explained as a cultural deficiency. Her mother is a Calabrian and father is an American. The American culture underscores the ease, rather than the abruptness with which the love affair is ruptured. Renata thinks of the cultural difference. She thinks that her Afghani lover Ro will take a few months to catch her culture. Each culture establishes its own manly posture and the different ways of claiming the space. So she is mad for Ro’s way of loving her. In “The Management of Grief” the problems arise because of the cultural difference between the immigrant Indians and the Europeans. When Miss. Templeton and Mrs. Bhave try to communicate and help the Sikh family which has lost their both the sons, the old parents refuse to sign any paper out of the fear of losing everything in the host country. They deny accepting the fact of their sons’ death and hoping for their sons to return. Mrs. Bhave explains to Miss. Templeton: “I want to say, in our culture, it is a parent’s duty to hope.” This indicates the cultural troubles during the period of disaster.
Similar to Mukherjee, Lahiri’s stories in *Interpreter of Maladies* are about the cultural clash of the second generation Indian-Americans caught between the inherited and adapted cultures. With the help of the common language, rituals, religion and relationships the Indian-Americans maintain their culture in the new surroundings. Lilia is a young immigrant Indian woman narrator of “When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine”. She is very much American who goes off to the parties with her friends on Halloween. The parents in this story, however, do not appear worried about their daughter's cultural habits. Very shortly the family forgets Bangladeshi Mr. Pirzada’s cultural identification with them and continues with the daily routine. “A Temporary Matter” has an Americanized Indian couple who still at times behave like the typical Indians. In India those who break free from their wedlock never feel socially, emotionally and psychologically comfortable. On the other hand in American culture the first marriage usually fails in a year or two. And the influence of this culture is the undercurrent behind the separation of Indian couples. Their still-born child symbolically stands for their still interpersonal relationship. Her sealing off psychologically and the lack of proper communication are very features of lonely existence in the America, which prevent her release from emotional exile and strengthening relationships.

In “A Temporary Matter” and “Interpreter of Maladies” Lahiri presents the influence of American culture which also reverses the gender roles in marriages. In Indian culture there is a set of strict rules for a husband and wife to act in private and public life. But because of the cultural influence, the Westernized Indian couples don’t follow strictly and subvert these roles in relation to the cooking, working outside the house and babysitting. In “Interpreter of Maladies” the second generation immigrant couple looses the Indian culture and when they visit India, their behaviour appears to be childish to the Indians. The story focuses on the cultural clash between the East and West. The Indian family dresses like the Americans. The illicit sexual relationship is not the privilege of the Americans, but the immigrant Indians are also susceptible to it as it is a universal phenomenon. At the beginning of the story Raj and Mina quarrel on who will take their daughter Tina to the toilet. Unlike the Indian caring mothers, when Mina takes her daughter to the rest room, she doesn’t hold the little girl’s hand in hers. Mr. Raj Das is a science teacher in America. He shows his American manners while greeting to Mr. Kapasi, a hired middle-aged tour guide-cum-driver for the day. Mrs. Das shows her American lack of affinity and interest in Mr.
Kapasi at the first greetings. Mr. Kapasi observes Mr. and Mrs. Das’ childishness and immaturity. They refer to each other by their first names in front of their children. Mr. Kapasi compares Mrs. Das with the Indian mothers and realizes that she is a detached mother. Mr. Kapasi objects calling ‘monkeys’ as the Indians call them ‘Hanumans’. Bobby asks why the driver sits to the right side, because in America they sit to the left. Throughout the story the American culture is brought in a sharp contrast with the Indian culture through the second generation immigrant family, institution of marriage, human relationships and people’s duplicity.

In “Sexy” a young American woman breaks up her affair with a married Indian due to the cultural differences. American Miranda falls in an affair with a married Indian man Dev while his wife is in India for a few weeks. She assumes that the sex between married partners is not as sensational and thrilling as the sex between a married one and his/her other. At the first meeting she is unable to discern Dev’s nationality. However, she is instantly infatuated by his charm and the thrill of being with an exotic older man. While comparing Miranda with the shying Indian girls, Dev admires her for moving out of Michigan, where she grew up and had education, to Boston where she knows no one. But Miranda thinks that this is a common for an American girl and not a thing to be praised for. She knows very little about the Indian culture from an Indian friend at work, a married woman named Laxmi. Miranda compares herself to Laxmi and wishes that she too will have a photograph with Dev on display. Miranda remembers her childhood Indian neighbors Dixits. The picture of Goddess Kali at their house frightens her. Her perception and reactions to the photograph of Kali focus on the lack of understanding of the Indian culture. The food has cultural symbolic significance in the story. When Miranda visits an Indian grocery, she comes across the Hot Mix that Laxmi always eats, but the grocer tells her it is too spicy for her. This feeling of ostracism highlights the uncomfortable relationship with Dev as she knows so little about him and his background. Little Rohin brings a sense of heinous crime in Miranda for her snatching a husband and she realizes that it is futile to continue the relationship when Dev’s beautiful wife returns from the India. She repents for not understanding more about India. Miranda is stronger to end her relationship with Dev because she sees no potential in it.

In Lahiri’s “Mrs. Sen’s” the middle aged Indian immigrant woman in America is preoccupied with the presence or lack of the material objects that connect her with the Indian culture. Like Mukherjee's Tara and Lahiri’s Ashima, Mrs. Sen also is
homesick and lacks the meaningful American connections because of her item-centric nostalgia. While describing the difference between India and America to Eliot, she says: “At home that is all you have to do. Not everybody has a telephone. But raise your voice a bit, or express grief or joy of any kind, and one whole neighborhood and half another has come to share the news, to help with arrangements.” For her the wedding ring that the Americans wear as a sign of being married carries the fear of losing it. But the scarlet powder she puts in a dot above her eyebrows has no fear of losing it. She firmly rejects the new experiences and her only happiness lies in the visits to the fish market and letters from India, which prove her emptiness in the United States. Eliot highlights the cultural difference by telling Mrs. Sen that his mother invites a man from her office for dinner and they spent the night in her bedroom. “This Blessed House” presents the cultural crisis between the newly married immigrants Twinkle and Sanjeev, who find the gaudy Biblical objects hidden throughout their new house. Delighted by these beautiful objects, Twinkle wants to display them everywhere in the house. But Sanjeev feels uncomfortable with them and reminds of their being Hindus and not Christians. He tries to maintain his ethnic identity.

Lahiri’s “The Third and Final Continent” presents the first generation immigrants who wish their own children not to experience the cultural loss. A well-adjusted and happy with wife in the United States unnamed narrator does not wish to lose his Indian cultural identity. The loss of Indian cultural identity is at the root of the isolation that the immigrant characters experience. The American lady Mrs. Croft represents the American cultural pride. The story boldly comments on the cultural differences and similarities between the two cultures. Mrs. Croft’s daughter Helen’s detachment and lack of worry for her mother stands in contrast with the caring nature and sympathy of the Indian narrator. The Sense of isolation and a coming together in order to survive are evident in both of these relationships. The narrator worries about his young son studying in Harvard University and runs with family to avail him with the rice to eat with his own hand and to speak in Bengali. He is afraid that his son will do nothing of these Indian things after his death. In contrast to depictions of the resistance to the Indian culture, this story portrays a relatively positive story of the Indian-American experience. It happens only with them who come to the U.S.A. under the qualification of being a “professional, scientist, or artist of exceptional
ability” contributing to the reputation of Asian-Americans as being intelligent and mannered model minority.

Mukherjee and Lahiri have limited their focus on the American experience only. Baldwin in addition to the American experience goes further to point out the same cultural clash in the Indian context. For Baldwin, immigration causes not only the cultural problems to the immigrant persons but also it causes trouble to the relatives left behind in the motherland. She also focuses on an American woman’s experience in India about the Indian culture. In Baldwin’s “Montreal 1962” the turbans focus on the strong cultural significance for the immigrant Sikh community in Canada. A Sikh man is asked to take off his turban and cut hair short to have the job in Canada. When the Sikh woman ties the turban to her head, it reminds her of the cultural heritage of her community. The red colour of a turban stands for the blood of the Sikh martyrs. She wishes her husband not to lose the traditional and cultural identity before the Canadians who do not know what a turban is for the Sikhs. “Toronto 1984” also focuses an immigrant Indian girl Piya’s cultural clash in Canada. A Canadian multinational company forbids Piya to wear the salwar kameez and earrings. When very patriotic Piya denies standing in the praise of British Queen, she becomes the target of her boss’s rage who belittles her by saying a damn Paki. But her pride in the Indian culture is betrayed when Indira Gandhi is murdered in India. Her mother Bibiji wishes her children not to become too much Canadian. In “Lisa” the young immigrant Indian women become victim of the cultural influence in the adopted land and later they repent for going away from their mother culture. They have become modern in the sense that they go to bar to drink wines and for smoking. Lisa develops an affair with an Indian who impregnates her. She thinks that they are in love, but Brenda reminds her: “Love is an American invention. It has nothing to do with Indian marriage.” Lisa also wishes not to marry the Indian son-of-a-bitch, but she will give birth to the baby and will pull him to the court. In “English Lessons” Kanwaljit suffers due to the burden of Indian culture. In India if a daughter returns from her husband’s house forever, it is considered as defame and shame for the family. So Kanwaljit thinks that if she returns to her father, it might be a disgrace and shame for her Indian family. She silently suffers through blackmailing, sexual exploitation and threat of reporting to the immigration department.

In Baldwin’s “The Cat Who Cried” an Indian woman comes to live with her husband, two children and mother-in-law in America and later rebels against the
Indian cultural suppression and denies returning to Indian. Her husband Prem is afraid of the American cultural influence on his children and asks his wife if she wishes their daughter to paint her face and have a boyfriend by the time she’s twelve and son to join a gang and bring home some New Age junkie. “The Insult” focuses the immigrant Sikh community living in America which struggles to retain its culture, whereas a few of them have adapted the American culture. Uncle Harjit and Aunty Nimmi are quite American in their way of life and the way of thinking. Their Americanized sons don’t like India because it’s too dirty and has too many people. Neelu’s family retains the Indian culture in America. They don’t like such statements by Aunty Nimmi and show how they still maintain their culture. Aunty Nimmi expects Neelu to find her own partner and they won’t even have to give her a dowry if she finds a fellow in the America. Insulted Neelu’s mother answers her that they have not allowed Neelu to go with boys for dating. They want a nice boy from a good Sikh family from India. There are many Sikh boys in America, but they all have cut their hair and don’t wear turbans for making more money. But Neelu is married with a ‘good Sikh fellow’ from Delhi without turban. At the end, the Sikh families living in an alien country like America adjust and alter and again come together while forgetting the insults for each other.

Baldwin’s “Jassie” is about the cultural and religious differences between the two old women Jassie and Elsie. An Indian immigrant Jassie has two mothers and is equally loved much by both of them. She is of the opinion that the American women have no tradition of loving children. At the end of the story, when Elsie faces anxiety attack and asks Jassie to read the Christian prayers for her, she imagines the possibility of her learning the namaaz easily, because she learns the rosary of Elsie easily. She still carries the memories of her first love from India to America and will carry, perhaps, to death. “Devika” is about an Indian immigrant woman’s inner conflict between two cultures while living with her husband in Canada. Devika develops an imaginary woman whom she calls Asha, which is her name before the marriage. Asha wants to do whatever Devika cannot do in her real life. Her all the suppressions and feelings are boldly expressed by Asha. Her husband Ratan is also facing many cultural problems at work. His boss Mr. Peter Kendall is very sick of the smell of Ratan’s curry. The clients also are losing from Ratan’s hands because the Canadians don’t like a Paki to manage their money. To suit to the Canadian culture, Ratan adjusts with his culture as he starts drinking wines and going with friends for
parties etc. He expects his wife to change into some Canadian cloths. Devika wants to change but her cultural ties do not permit her to do so. Thus, Devika smokes and blames the imagined Asha.

Along with these stories set in the Canada and America, Baldwin reveals the effects of migration on the relative people left behind in India. In Baldwin’s “Rawalpindi 1919” Sardarni Sahib worries about her son’s cultural encounters during his migration to England. She expects that her son will not be changed when he returns from the Europe. She worries about the cultural problems that her son will face in England. He needs enough turbans to keep his Sikh cultural identity. Her husband washes his hands after shake-hand with a British man; and now her son is going to live among the English boys and will pollute his hands. In “Dropadi Ma” Sukhi lives in Canada and that makes the difference. He does not wish to marry the girl his family has chosen. His mother is of the opinion that the Canadians addle his brain. She thinks that the culture of Canada has exploited her son and if he was in England the things might have been different. Though in Canada there may not be the tradition of blessing from the elders, but Sukhi has not forgotten it as he touches his head to Dropadi Ma’s feet for blessings. In “Family Ties” the life of Sikh daughters and sisters have no values before the culture and religion. The lives of innocent women are sacrificed due to the cultural and religious clash between the Sikh and Muslim communities. The aunt of the narrator brings to light the facts during the period of partition of India. Her eighteen years old aunt Chandani Kaur is abducted by the Muslims during the partition period and she has a son after being raped by the Muslims. She survives as Jehanara Begum, but when fond by the social workers, her brother denies taking her in his family because she has lost the purity due to the rape. She thinks that her son is the obstacle and she kills her own son with her hands. But the sacrifice of her own son comes not to help her and later she goes mad.

Baldwin’s “Gayatri” projects the clash between the traditional and modern Indian culture. An educated and independent Reena develops a friendship with a black American and later marries him without asking her brother and parents about it. Gayatri thinks that her sister-in-law does not care for her family’s reputation and goes against the culture to seek her own dreams. Reena marries a black American who might belong to the lower caste and thus, cuts the head of the Indian family. Like “Family Ties”, in “Simran” also a daughter becomes a victim of the cultural and religious clash between the Sikh and Muslim communities. An India mother Amrit
worries about her nineteen-year-old unmarried daughter who returns from America after four months. Amrit advises Simran to stay clear of the Americans and not to make friends of other foreign students while studying in the States. Amrit is of the opinions that Americans do everything themselves and they spoil their servants and the American culture teaches her daughter to lie to her parents. When she finds a copy of the Koran in Simran’s bag, she feels ruined by her daughter because she remembers the sight of Sikh women raped and disgraced by the Muslims during the partition. She feels that her daughter has completely lost the Sikh culture. The family invests fifteen thousand dollars in Simran’s foreign education while bearing the dire predictions of friends. When a Muslim boy Mirza tries frequently to contact Simran in India from America on telephone, Amrit feels confirmed about her affair with him in America. They decide not to send her again to America where her lover and their enemy wait for her. An innocent young girl’s opportunity of have higher education in America is sacrificed due to the age old dislike and rivalry between the Sikh and Muslim communities.

Baldwin’s “Nothing Must Spoil This Visit” presents a Canadian woman’s experience of the cultural clash in India. In this story Canadian Janet comes to India with her Indian husband Arvind to realize what Indian women consider ‘to be a woman’. In Indian culture a woman’s reputation depends on how much she adjusts. The younger brother Kamal thinks that his elder brother Arvind is shorter to him only because of the loss of culture as he no longer wears a turban. Janet also tries at the Indian costume to please and win hearts of the members of her husband’s family in Indian but fails completely and becomes an object of the fun. Kamal thinks that he has a son to follow the family line, but his brother and his foreign wife have no child and thus, his father needs not to give Arvind any part of the property. Having no children is very seriously considered in the Indian culture. Arvind has to play the middleman’s role between his foreigner wife and his Indian family. When Janet fails to understand the importance of cloths in India; Arvind explains to his mother that Janet comes from a young country and women in Canada believe in the learning by experience. Janet and Chaya represent two different countries, cultures and mind sets. For Indian Chaya a real woman is a woman who makes a man love her and what Arvind has seen in Janet is the question. Janet remembers and realizes what Anyu, her friend in Canada, said to her: “This marriage will not work if you have to live in his country….. You could never live in India; you are a woman raised in freedom.” In the
Indian culture a woman has less freedom of wish for her love. A successful is a woman who can adjust at her best with the changed circumstances. Her happiness is considered in her being a mother than anything else.

V.III.II: The Racial Discrimination:

Every human race creates and retains its own religion and culture. When a person of a particular race migrates out of his racial majority to an alien place, he becomes a minority and an object of the racial discrimination. He seems to be odd in his colour of skin, physical appearance, tone in language, cultural and religious rituals, personal and social attitudes and etc. In the Western countries where the white people consider themselves superior than others, the Asian and African immigrants are racially discriminated. Mukherjee's works present her own experiences of racism in the Canada as a humiliated professor, the biased Canadian view towards the immigrants and how the government agencies handled assaults on the particular races. She focuses on the immigrant women and their mistreatment in the States and their experiences in interracial relationships. In *The Tiger’s Daughter* the protagonist Tara senses the racial discrimination when her American roommate does not share her mango chutney. In discussions with them she defends very strongly her family and country. She experiences the racial discrimination with her American husband who lets her wash his bathrooms and toilets and offers her no credits for it. She deserves it for her mistake of the interracial marriage. She has to work which belittles her status and self-respect. After marriage with an American and seven-years stay in America, when Tara returns to India her Aunt Jharna discriminates her for losing the race due to her marriage with a foreigner. Her conservative racial purist Indian friends and relatives express their superior oneness. They call her “a silly billy” and “a bloody bore”. They approve her foreign manners and foreign fashion; but they would never approve her foreign marriage. It is ironic that she survives in the racial discrimination and hardship in the foreign country like America. But she becomes a victim of the violence and tragic death in her native country India.

Mukherjee presents reasons and consequences of the racial fall of an immigrant woman whereas Jhumpa Lahiri presents the conflicts and struggles that the immigrants face in interpersonal relationships and the stress of daily existence in an alien culture. In her novel *The Namesake* immigrant characters feel often ashamed of their differences from others in the United States. In the beginning of the story,
Ashima feels discriminated among the Americans in the hospital. She wishes the emotional support from the American nurses at least at the time of her first delivery. But they do nothing and in the United States she struggles alone through the cultural barriers as well as her own fears of delivering the first child. Her son Gogol experiences the racial discrimination during his birthday party when American Lydia and her friends make fun of him to better express their Americaness. Gogol realizes a total alienation from his Bengali roots when Lydia, Maxine and Gerald joke about mistaking his cultural and ethnic heritage as an Italian. They are entirely unknown to his Bengali cultural values and background so central to his identity. He becomes an object of the comparison through which Lydia and her friends are allowed to better express their American superiority.

At a panel discussion, Gogol comes to know about the adjectives ‘ABCD’ used for immigrants, which stand for ‘American-born confused deshi’. He also learns that the ‘C’ could stand for ‘conflicted’ and ‘deshi’ for ‘countrymen’ means ‘Indians’. An immigrant Bengali-Indian girl Moushumi is unfortunate as her intended American groom changes his mind at the last minute because of the racial differences. In a party that Gogol attends with Moushumi at her friends’, he realizes the reality of the American racial hypocrisy. Only exception is that Ashima develops the cross-racial sisterhood with the American co-workers at the library where an American librarian offers her a job. She makes her first American women friends at work, who also live alone like her because they are divorced. This truly manifests Ashima’s cultural growth and represents her exploration into a racial harmony between alike and yet different cultures in their essence. Ashima has similarity and difference with her American co-workers. They too are isolated, but their reasons differ, and it is because of her Bengaliness that Ashima would never be alone despite divorce.

Unlike Mukherjee and Lahiri, Baldwin presents a woman who has to face discrimination first in her own family and then among the European race in the war-torn situation. Baldwin examines the bruises and wounds endured by the immigrant ethnic minority learning how to survive during the racial war in the Western world. The Diasporic friction between the East and West in the context of war provides scope to explore the awareness and strength of immigrant Indian women. Baldwin’s research in history and politics at the time of World War II and the dangers of tribal intolerances enlighten the contemporary peoples who are embroiled in their own disputes. In context of the horrible attacks on September 11, 2001 which cause
Islamaphobia and unleashed a wave of distrust, disgust and fear of “others” in the Western world. Baldwin reviews the history of a 30 year-old Muslim woman’s execution by the Gestapo at Dachau in Germany. Her purpose is not only to hit at the Western projection of the Muslims but also at the Islamic jihadists.

Baldwin’s *The Tiger Claw* is a thriller story of an immigrant Indian woman's displacement after her father’s death and the cultural tension due to racism, miscegenation, sexism, cosmopolitanism and the evils of betrayal and hypocrisy in war and imperialism. The Indian immigrant Muslim family suffers from the skin and color discrimination in the first world. During Abhajaan’s performance in the States the reviewers devote more inches to ‘the lightness of his coloured skin’ and his ‘exotic dress and accents’, than to the music he so cherishes. When the family moves to India, like Gogol and Sonia in Lahiri’s *The Namesake*, the second-generation of the immigrants Noor and Kabir also feel discriminated at their land of origin due to their difference. The Nazis call countrymen ‘chimpanzees’ and the British call Indians ‘brown monkeys’ in London. Kabir has very good records as a pilot, but the British Major delays the promotion because of Kabir’s Indian origin. If Kabir fails to report for the duty in Paris on time, that might lead to match their prejudices against the Indian men and confirm their worst opinions of the refugees from France. In the French society the blood distance from petty royalty is the measure of excellence and the skin colour goes unnoted. The black American sergeant also confesses to Kabir his experience of the racial discrimination in London. The black colour of skin of African-American sergeant is revealed through his tone even on phone by the white Europeans. The black American sergeant has troubles with the white folks in his unit. He further tells Kabir that Negros will settle down anywhere in the world and do their own business, which is not possible for them in America due to their coloured skin. Kabir feels glad at the sergeant’s comments for being at Paris instead of at Boston.

Indian-American Noor and her Jew lover Armand Rivkin become victims of the racial discrimination. Both suffer from and become victims of the religious and political terrorism in France. Noor and Armand’s love is sacrificed due to the worst situation for the Jews and immigrants in the German occupied France during the World War II. Noor remembers her teachers who often blamed the ills of the world on the inflow of immigrants to France from everywhere. Foreign-born people like herself who lived in France and even those like Armand born in France of the naturalized parents are the targets for the blames. But for the immigrant Jews the native Christians
reserve a special distaste and dislike. Noor’s uncle destroys her love because she loves a Jew who belongs to a different race. Noor is subjected to follow strictly all the customs of Islam. Kabir is afraid that if his sister marries a Jew, her husband will inherit their Afzal Manzil and that is very disgusting for him. The men in the Muslim family assume more liberty in the marriages and the women seem to be compelled to follow the wish of the elders. Noor’s father dares to marry an American woman and Kabir also marries a Christian Angela without caring for the disapproval. Moreover, her mother always advises her not to love someone of the another religion, someone of different race because she has experienced herself the confusion and pain of mixing the blood and religion. Noor Khan succeeds to escape from her family's religious literalism and ideas on feminine propriety and win her cross-cultural love for a Jewish lover from whom she conceives a child. The child of Noor and Armand is aborted because one more Jew should not be allowed to enter the world. Noor thinks of the possibility of rejection to send her to France by Colonel Buckmaster only for her being Indian, even after her two and half years of hardships in the preparation.

She becomes a victim of the racial dislike as a French lady Renee Garry informs the Gestapo about her being a secret agent. As a captured immigrant secret agent, Noor is kept mercilessly in the dungeon which has not even the straw mattress and she has to doze off on the damp stone floor, insects crawl over her and rats gibber and squeak. She is given the soup once every three days and the water each day. The jailor Herr Vogel uses many tactics to break down Noor to confess and reveal the secrets of her spying agency. Her mother’s being of an American origin causes trouble for Noor. When Vogel comes to know about her as a mixed blood-offspring on an Indian prince and an American mother, he considers her as his enemy- an American. He considers her resident of nowhere and insults her calling again and again ‘mischlinge’. Later, Renee is charged for the betrayal and a committee of four European women jurors is appointed. But it is impossible to convict a white French woman by the panel of white women for denouncing an immigrant Indian Muslim woman. Obviously, they offer her a clean chit.

In Mukherjee's short story “Orbiting” Brent’s attitude towards Afghani Ro is of the superiority complex. He thinks that only the Americans have the informed political opinions and the other people stage coups out of spite and misery. But it is unwelcome revelation for him to know that a reasonably educated and rational man like Ro would die for the things that Brent has never heard of and would rather laugh
about. And that is why at the end of the story Renata realizes her true love for Ro. In “Fathering” daughter Eng’s black colour is the cause of dislike for her by her stepmother Sharon. But Jason seems to have forgotten the colour discrimination as a father. “Danny’s Girls” focuses on the fact that the immigrants also have among themselves different discriminations. The discrimination between the poor and rich classes is carried forward even in immigration by the Indians. The young narrator reveals: “I grew up hating rich people, especially rich Indian immigrants who didn’t have the problems of Uganda and a useless father, but otherwise were no better than I.” The teen-aged narrator feels attracted to Pammy, a daughter of the rich Indian immigrant family, but her father never allows any immigrant boy around her.

Unlike Mukherjee, the women in Lahiri’s Interpreter of Maladies construct their own unique racial subjectivity and engender agency through the cooking, which helps them to construct the communal and personal identities, interrelationship and home. Her “When Mr. Pirzada Come to Dine” projects the fact that Indians and Pakistanis are not enemies outside their countries. There is no racial discrimination or humiliation among them in America. Though Mr. Pirzada is a Muslim, his religion never clashes against the Hindu immigrant family of the narrator. Their culture is an elite-construct as the little narrator Lilia finds no difference between them. In this aspect Lahiri is quite different from other diasporic writers. In “This Blessed House” Sanjeev and Twinkle’s relationship seems to be an adjustment, because Twinkle, like Moushumi of The Namesake, is abandoned at her twenty-seven by her American lover, who tries and fails as an actor. The reason is easy to guess- the racial difference between them. Lahiri projects relatively positive racial experience in her stories than what Mukherjee and Baldwin do. In contrast to the depictions of resistance to the Indian race, “Mrs. Sen’s” portrays a relatively positive story of the Indian-American experience. Like Lahiri’s narrator of “The Third and Final Continent” and Ashima of The Namesake, Mrs. Sen also belongs to the immigrant model minority in America for whom the course of life in the Western countries is quite smoother than the other groups. It is a fact that no America people form barrier in Mrs. Sen’s acclimation. The fisherman at the market takes the time to call her and reserves her special fish. The policeman questions, but does not indict her after her car accident. For all intents and purposes, the people in the story make it easy for Mrs. Sen to embrace the life in America. In “The Third and Final Continent” the protagonist’s human interactions demonstrate a high degree of tolerance and even acceptance of the Indian culture on
the part of the Americans he meets. It happens only in case of the professionals with exceptional ability. In this story, the only reason of narrator’s meeting to Mrs. Croft is his employment at MIT. Mrs. Croft calls his sari-wrapped wife a perfect lady, because she naturally appreciates the young Indian woman who doesn’t exhibit herself. Their reputation as a model minority has been firmly cemented. Croft’s daughter Helen also remarks that Cambridge is ‘a very international city’ while hinting at the reason of protagonist’s general sense of acceptance.

Baldwin goes a step ahead of Mukherjee and Lahiri to project not only the Western attitude of the racial superiority, but also the Indian way of thinking about the religious and cultural purity. In Baldwin’s “Rawalpindi 1919” Sardarni Sahib thinks about her son’s encounters during his migration to England. Her husband feels superior and washes his hands after shake-hand with a British man. Now her son is going to live among the English boys and will pollute his hands. “Montreal 1962” highlights the fact about the racial discrimination of the Sikhs in Canada. They are compelled to cut their hair short and do not wear the turbans, which are the symbol of their cultural heritage. But the Sikh wife wishes her husband not to lose his traditional and cultural identity before the Canadians. In “Dropadi Ma” Dropadi Ma will not be taken to Bangkok for Sukhiji’s wedding because she is after all a servant of the family. “Family Ties” throws light on the reality that human race is divided between the masculine and feminine identities and the feminine is culturally considered inferior to the masculine. The girls are discriminated from the boys in the Indian families. The Sikh parents wish to send their son to the University of Toronto in Canada for higher education. And on the other hand, their daughter is send for schooling to Miss Shafi, a Muslim woman left behind by her relatives who went to Pakistan after the partition. Daughters are supposed to be a huge burden and responsibility. In the story a daughter of the Sikh family is asked to use shampoo every two days to make her hair thick, so someone will marry her. She wears her Mummy’s old salwar kameezes altered to her size. These entire facts expose a daughter’s discrimination and a son’s favour in the Indian families. For the pride and honour of the family and religion the lives of daughters and sisters are sacrificed. Her eighteen years old aunt Chandani Kaur is raped by the Muslims during the partition period and she delivers a son. Her brother denies taking her back because she has lost her racial purity.
‘Gayatri’ projects Gayatri’s Indian conservative prejudices against the Western people. Gayatri thinks that her sister-in-law Reena’s marriage with a black American, who might belong to the lower caste, is a disgrace to the family. In “Simran” an innocent young Sikh girl’s opportunity of the higher education in America and a true love of a Muslim boy Mirza are sacrificed due to the age-old dislike and rivalry between the Sikh and Muslim communities. The family dares to spend thousands of dollars on her foreign education. But when Simran’s mother finds a copy of the Koran in her bag, she feels ruined by her daughter, because she still remembers the sight of Sikh women raped and disgraced by Muslims while walking home to Amritsar at the time of partition. Her parents fear for the possible disgrace if their daughter marries a Muslim. In “Toronto 1984” an Indian girl Piya is victim of the racial discrimination in Canada. The Canadian multinational company forbids Piya to wear the Indian cloths. Piya is very patriotic young woman. She denies standing in the praise of British Queen in a party and invites her boss to discriminate her by calling her ‘a damn Paki’. In “Devika” an Indian immigrant Ratan faces many problems at work in Canada. His boss Mr. Peter Kendall feels disgusted with the smell of Ratan’s Indian curry and once someone says “why those immigrants don’t leave their battles at home.” The clients also lose from Ratan’s hands because of his belonging to the Indian race. Once Mr. Kendall tells Ratan that Mr. Berton doesn’t like a Paki managing his money, nothing personal, but he would just prefer to be with someone else. In “English Lessons” Kanwaljit’s husband Tony shares her with another man who has forms in his hands and blackmails her. She confesses: “He looks like Tony, only younger. And he still laughs at me, waving pictures of Tony with her. Telling me Tony left me for an untouchable, a hubshi”.

V.III.III: A Sense of Dislocation:

When a person migrates out of his original culture, he feels dislocated in the alien one. In the new surroundings at the host land he/she finds a very little common to his mother land and his physical, social, cultural and psychological misery lead him/her to develop a sense of dislocation. In The Tiger’s Daughter Tara feels dislocated among the fellow Americans in the school at Poughkeepsie in New York. The seven-year stay in America causes too much change in her attitude and behaviour. During her return to India, she feels dislocated among her relatives. She remains now neither an Indian nor an American. She develops a hybrid identity as an
Indian woman married with an American *mleccha* husband. Her Aunt Jharna questions her status among the relatives due to her marriage with a foreigner. She is caught in an antithetical tension, because at one hand her family and friends consider her marriage as an emancipated gesture and on the other her husband gives her no credits for cleaning the bathrooms. Thus, Mukherjee presents the problems of a displaced person in the adopted country as well as at the native country.

Unlike Mukherjee, Lahiri in *The Namesake* portrays dislocation of an immigrant family only in the adopted land. The immigrant Ashima and her Bengali family struggle through the sense of dislocation in the collision of cultures. Ashima feels dislocated among the Americans in the hospital where she is going to deliver her first child. She approves her son’s name given after her husband’s favorite Russian writer Nikolai Gogol though it indicates dislocation. The letter of her grandmother containing an identity for her son misses the correct location and this adds to her feelings of dislocation. Ashima accepts the reality that there is no one to assist her in the America and the very lack of such amenities is the American way of life. She feels dislocated when her husband goes for his work. When her husband goes to the university and she is alone at house with Gogol, she sits alone and cries for the whole day. Even she cries at finding no answer to her calls from her husband at his department. She spends hours in rereading her same five Bengali novels on the bed. All this presents a woman’s feelings of dislocation outside the mother country. Because of the dislocation out of her cultural set, she fears of losing her cultural heritage by the next generation. So she sends her son Gogol to the Bengali language and culture lessons held in the house of one of her friends. In the United States Indian immigrants often feel dislocated because of their differences from others. In addition to this feeling, Gogol suffers more for the unique difference in his name. During adolescence he desires to blend in, but lives unnoticed as the Americans never view him as an American. He dreads his visits to home where he is known as Gogol. To him ‘Gogol’ signifies all his discomfort to fit into two different cultures. Moreover, it is the name after his father’s favorite author and not his. And Gogol is not the first name of the writer. Thus, not only does Gogol Ganguli have a pet name turned into a good name, but the last name turned into the first name. In fact, he knows none in the world, in Russia or India or America or anywhere, who shares his name, not even the source of his namesake.
Dislocated Ashima remembers her parents’ greeting cards sent to her over the last twenty-seven years from India and whenever she feels lonely at home she reads nostalgically all the letters of her parents. Moushumi hates her parents’ moving to America from London. She feels dislocated in the American vastness and less likeness with India. Her marriage with Gogol is a further dislocation. It is because at her twelve, she makes a pact with two other Bengali girls that she will never marry a Bengali man. They write a statement vowing never to do so and spite on it at the same time and bury it somewhere in the parents’ backyard. She also hates the Indian way of marriages. Unfortunately, she marries an Indian Gogol and throughout her married life she feels dislocated.

Unlike Mukherjee and Lahiri, Baldwin’s *The Tiger Claw* presents dislocation of two lovers during the turbulence of the World War II. It is an affectionate story of moral complexity, inner conflict, dislocation and exile of a very courageous immigrant Indian Muslim woman whose love is lost amidst the turbulence of the war. Kabir never imagines himself and his sister fighting for England. The same British lords and ladies who mock at the French for their defeat and betrayal of democracy and Indians for their non-violence struggle for independence. But the dislocation due to the war compels him to fight for the British. Noor’s love for Armand is so strong that she will wait for him and wait till the end of her life for the situation to turn favourable. She is very much hopeful to regain her love in the France and endures all the physical pains and struggles while hopping for a meeting with Armand. Due to the war between Germany and France, Noor’s family shifts to England while Armand’s family stays in France. After departure Noor quickly becomes desperate as she discovers that Rivkin and his mother are unable to flee. When Germany invades France Noor feels despair for never seeing Armand again because a Jew might not survive at the tyrant Germans’ hands.

Noor also feels dislocated because her French and British colleagues fight against the occupation of France while the same Britain still occupies India. She learns the dark family secrets. One by one the members of her spying network come out as the double agents. She needs to break her fast during Ramzaan because she has to assure the uniformed German army men that she is one of the natives of France and not an immigrant Indian. In her attempts to locate her lover, she falls in more dangerous separation from him forever. When captured, the Germans keep her in the dungeon without even the straw mattress and she dozes off on the damp stone floor.
She is not given enough food and water in the jail. The jailor Herr Vogel cruelly tortures Noor to break down and reveal the secrets of her spying agency. He calls her ‘mischlinge’, a resident of nowhere.

Mukherjee's Middleman stories focus on the willing acceptance of the American life by the immigrants who wish to come out of the sufferings at their motherland. Thus, they feel less dislocated in America. Her immigrant characters accept the challenges in American cut-throat competition and the atmosphere surcharged with the violence in the dog-eat-dog condition. Her immigrant women like Maria, Panna, Jonda, Renata, Blanquita, Maya, Jasmine and Mrs. Bhave are rooted in the American way of life so firmly that they rarely feel dislocated out of their motherland.

Unlike Mukherjee's immigrant women, in Lahiri’s Interpreter of Maladies the immigrant women develop their own unique way to cope with their cultural dislocation. Lahiri’s isolated immigrants try to assimilate while unwilling to let go off the aspects of their life in the homeland. They use the cooking to construct the communal and personal identities, interrelationship and home. In “When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine” Mr. Pirzada, a Bangladeshi teacher feels dislocated in America where he hears not anything about his family in Dacca for last six months. His condition in America focuses on the dislocated person’s necessary adjustments outside the homeland. In “Boori Ma” an old woman is dislocated in Calcutta during the partition after separation from her husband, four daughters, two-storey brick house, a rosewood almari and number of coffer boxes whose keys she still wears. She is a refugee, an immigrant and her accent in Bengali makes it clear. She says that her life is composed of such grief that no one can even dream it. She is a victim of the changing time. “Mrs. Sen's” focuses on the dislocated immigrant woman trying to assimilate in America without losing her past. She firmly rejects the new experiences such as canned fish or even something common like the car driving. Her happiness is in the visits to the fish market and letters from India which prove her emptiness in the United States. “The Treatment of Bibi Haldar” is about dislocation of an isolated epileptic woman in Calcutta, who attempts to find herself a husband and a cure for her ailment.

Baldwin projects the struggle of immigrants to retain their culture in the situation of dislocation in the Western countries where the natives try to break them down. Her “Montreal 1962” presents the displacement of a Sikh wife in Canada
where her husband is asked to take off his turban and cut hair short to have the job. These turbans carry the cultural and religious affiliation and affection for the Sikh women and she has never seen her father, her brother and her husband without turban. The Canadians expect and compel her husband to sacrifice his cultural identity and tradition to suit the new world. In “Simran” an India mother Amrit repents for dislocating her daughter in America for higher education. She cares for her nineteen-year-old unmarried daughter returning from America after four months. Amrit is of the opinions that Americans do everything themselves and they spoil the servants. The America teaches her daughter to lie to her parents. “Toronto 1984” presents dislocation of an immigrant mother Bibiji and her daughter Piya in Canada. A Canadian multinational company in which Piya works forbids her to wear Indian cloths. A very patriotic young Indian woman is insulted by her boss by calling her ‘a damn Paki’. She feels more dislocated when her pride in the Indianness is betrayed because of Indira Gandhi’s murder in India. “Nothing Must Spoil This Visit” focuses on the dislocation of a Canadian immigrant woman in India. Canadian Janet tries at the Indian costume to please and win hearts of the members of her husband’s family in Indian. In “Jassie” two immigrant old women totally contrasting to each other feel dislocated because they have no other support and option in their old age except living together in a room. Jassie is very much religious and always prays to her Gods. In her childhood the convent school teaches her the proper British lady’s English and the Christian prayers. The school also introduces her to ballroom dancing. She meets Firoze there and flirts with him for some time. Today she feels dislocated in a room with a woman of other religious faith. “Devika” is about an Indian woman dislocated in Canada. Under the dominance of masculinity, she develops an imaginary existence of a woman whom she calls Asha. Devika’s all suppressed feelings are boldly expressed by Asha.

V.III.IV: The Nostalgia:

The immigrant people suffer from the nostalgia in the adopted land. They explore their motherland through the memory and reminiscence. They express their feelings of nostalgia through their behaviour and prefer certain convenient ways of coming out of it. In The Tiger’s Daughter whenever Tara Banerjee feels despair and nostalgic she creates an India around herself. Once she shakes out all her silk scarves, irons them and hangs them to make the apartment more Indian. Similarly, Lahiri’s
Ashima also misses her favorite Indian food during her pregnancy. She nostalgically tries to prepare it on her own. She still carries a copy of the Bengali magazine *Desh* to everywhere which she has brought to read on her ride to Boston. She reads nostalgically each of the short stories, poems and articles for a dozen times. In fact, Ashima is a lonely Indian woman who wishes the emotional support at the time of her first delivery. Ashima nostalgically thinks that at home in Calcutta she might have all the women in her family around her, but in the United States she struggles alone. Though Ashima approves her son’s name given by her husband after his favorite Russian writer Nikolai Gogol, she is unhappy for missing the letter by her grandmother containing an identity for her son. She nostalgically spends hours in the apartment rereading her same five Bengali novels on the bed. When Ashima’s husband goes for the research project in Ohio and children study somewhere far in the other towns, she misses them so much. Again alone at home, Ashima remembers her parents’ greeting cards send to her since last twenty-seven years from India. Whenever Ashima is alone at home, she reads nostalgically, like Mrs. Sen’s recorded voices of relatives, all the letters of her parents. Similarly, Baldwin’s Noor always remembers her happy days with her father Abhajaan and her lover Armand Rivkin. The tiger claw she wears round her neck carries the memories of former courageous women in her family. Mukherjee's Tara and Lahiri’s Ashima succeed to escape from nostalgia by returning India and gathering immigrants around respectively, but Baldwin’s Noor fails to regain her happy past till her death.

In Mukherjee's short stories the immigrant women protagonists in her have deliberately abandoned their motherland in search of their American dreams. Thus, their feelings of nostalgia and memory of the past lack the intensity that the protagonists of Lahiri and Baldwin face. Lahiri uses objects as the means of connecting the nostalgic characters to their motherland. In “The Temporary Matter” when Shukumar lights up a candle, it reminds Shoba of her homeland and it results in her nostalgic feelings. Similarly, Lahiri’s Mrs. Sen is preoccupied with the presence or lack of material objects. The objects become a means of giving vent to her nostalgic feelings. The objects connect her to her motherland. She is homesick. The lack of meaningful social connections causes her item-centric nostalgia. She clings to the material possessions, whether it is the fish from her native Calcutta or her special vegetable cutting blade. Through the power of material objects, she remembers the stories of her past related to her blade, her saris and her grainy aerogram. She is
unable to seek her happiness in America where the situation leads her to frustrations. Mrs. Sen while preparing food tells Elliot the stories of her past life in Calcutta, which help her to soften her feeling of nostalgia. Like Mukherjee's Tara and Lahiri’s Ashima, whenever Mrs. Sen feels melancholic and misses her family in India, she plays the recorded voices of her relatives as a connecting string to her happy past. Mrs. Sen purchases the fish from a local seafood market, which reminds her of the home and holds great significance for her.

Baldwin’s immigrant women’s feelings of nostalgia and memory are more intense than those of the immigrant women presented by Mukherjee and Lahiri because they are the direct victims of the discrimination in the adopted cultures. In Baldwin’s “Montreal 1962” a Sikh wife very nostalgically remembers the cultural and religious affiliation and affection with the turbans when her husband is asked to take off his turban and cut hair short to have the job in Canada. The turbans stand as a symbol of their tradition. She has never seen her father, brother and husband without turban. But these turbans appear to be the bed sheets or curtains to the Canadians. The Canadians expect her husband to sacrifice his cultural identity and tradition to suite the new world. When she ties the turban to her head, it reminds her of the cultural heritage of her community. In “Nothing Must Spoil This Visit” a Canadian woman is shocked to realize her Indian husband’s feelings of nostalgia about India. Arvind very interestingly takes his Canadian wife Janet to see the places of his childhood memory in India. He changes his life style as soon as he comes to India. In “The Cat Who Cried” an Indian immigrant woman’s husband Prem wishes to return to India. He thinks that ten years in America are enough to earn money. His wife does not wish to go back as her experience of suppression in India pulls her away from it. He is afraid of the American influence on his children. He is afraid that his daughter will paint her face and have a boyfriend by the time she’s twelve and his son will join a gang and bring home some New Age junkie. In “Jassie” a nostalgic Indian immigrant woman carries her religious faith and happy memories of the past. The teachers in the convent school teach her the Christian prayers. The school also introduces her to ballroom dancing. She meets Firoze and flirts with him for some time. But her father marries her with the man of his choice, who takes a house in old Delhi as dowry and gives her first daughter and two sons. She names her daughter Yasmeen in the memory of Firoze. In “Devika” an immigrant Indian woman in Canada is nostalgic for her pre-marriage free life in India. She is the one who swears never to get married, but her
V.II.V: Tracing the Roots:

Immigrants never easily escape from their roots whichever alien country they go. Though a few of them try to escape, they find themselves in a fractured spilt hanging between two edges. Most of the first and second generation immigrants try to trace their cultural roots in their land of origin. In *The Tiger’s Daughter* the protagonist Tara Banerjee returns to India in search of the roots. After staying in American for seven years, she faces a different India than she remembers at the time of leaving. The novel offers ultimately a different India to tell the tale of a relationship. This relationship faces the daily difficulties of the cultural barriers which have been drawn on the separate pasts that linger. Tara comes with a changed outlook to India and her very first landing at Bombay fills her with disappointment. Once admirer of Marine Drive, Tara now feels it as shabby. She thinks that all her hesitations and fears at abroad will be magically erased if she visits her home in India. Her conservative racial purist relatives and friends never approve her foreign marriage. Her aunt and her friends consider her as a person who has lost her roots in the Indian culture. At the Kinchen Janga Hotel beauty contest, when Tara supports the idea of bathing suit contest proposed by Miss. Whitehead, she is insulted by one of the judges, a heart specialist who offends saying: “Really, Mrs. Cartwright. I think your years abroad have robbed you of feminine propriety or you are joking with us. You know as well as I do our modest Indian girls would not submit to such disgrace”. Depressed and disgusted with the deteriorating situation of India, finally she determines to leave for her husband in the USA. Tara’s end is mysterious, but it is suggested that she does not survive in the violence. It symbolically suggests that a person can escape from the roots either through death or by keeping on hanging forever. In this way Tara’s search for roots turns out ironically frustrating and results in her disillusionment, alienation, depression and finally her tragic end.

Unlike Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri presents not only the first but also the second generation of the immigrant Indians who try to trace their roots in the original
country. Perhaps, Lahiri’s still Indian parents and frequent childhood visits to India shape her characters. In *The Namesake* the Gangulis struggle to find their places in the American society while adapting to the American culture. Simultaneously they try to respect their roots during the adaptation process. Ashima struggles to raise her children with the Bengali culture and values in the surrounding culture of the United States. Much later in their lives, her children truly begin to value their Bengali heritage. Ashima still carries a copy of the Bengali magazine *Desh* everywhere, which she has brought to read on her ride to Boston. This magazine is an instrument for her to get connected to her roots in India. She reads nostalgically each of the short stories, poems and articles for a dozen times. She has immigrant friends Maya and Dilip Nandi and Dr. Gupta as substitute for her Indian relatives. Her son Gogol grows in America, but his life is profoundly marked by the events that took place in the India before his birth and also by the tradition and values with which his family still tries to live in America.

When her husband goes to the university, she cries alone in the house after the postman’s visit as there are no letters from Calcutta. She spends hours in the apartment rereading her same five Bengali novels on the bed. The immigrants’ living in an alien culture demands them to adjust with the existing circumstances. Ashima sends Gogol to the Bengali language and culture lessons held in the house of one of their friends. All this represents a woman’s attempts not to lose the root which causes loneliness in an alien country. During their occasional visits to India, the Gangulis feel strange among their Indian relatives. And after returning to America, they feel that they are the only Gangulis in the world. In America there is nothing that can remind them of their hundreds of the relatives in India. Lahiri in an interview says:

> ....the problem for the children of immigrants - those with strong ties to their country of origin - is that they feel neither one thing nor the other. This has been my experience.... As a young child, I felt that the Indian part of me was unacknowledged, and therefore somehow neglected.... I felt that I led two very separate lives.

(Lahiri [www.hinduism.about.com](http://www.hinduism.about.com))

For Gogol and Sonia the stay of eight months in India passes like a dream and returning America they mingle among their friends so quickly, which seems to be quite harder to their parents. As much as possible Gogol tries to detach himself from his roots and family for many years. Gogol goes away from his family to Yale with a
changed name and that sets up the barriers between Gogol and his family. The distance between Gogol and his parents continues to increase. The first generation struggles with adapting to a different culture and their children struggle to respect their roots while adapting to the hostland society. Gogol realizes a total alienation from his Bengali roots when Lydia, Maxine and Gerald joke about his mistaken cultural and ethnic heritage as an Italian. They are entirely unknown to his cultural values and background so central to his identity. Once, Gogol surprises his mother by calling New Haven as a home. He is just for three months there and starts feeling it as home. On the other hand, in spite of Ashima’s twenty years in America, she cannot bring herself to refer to Pemberton Road as a home. In America she misses India, but at the end of the story as she planes to visit India, she will miss America. This suggests the rootlessness that immigrants are confronted with.

In Baldwin’s The Tiger Claw Noor realizes her father’s love for his ‘home’-India, but for her the ‘home’ is where her lover Armand is. Noor’s uncle attempts to destroy her love for Armand Rivkin-a Jewish pianist who does not belong to her pure Indian roots. Under her uncle’s headship, Noor is subjected to follow strictly all the customs of Islam. Her mother always advises Noor not to love someone of another religion, someone of different roots, because she has experienced herself the confusion and pains of mixing the blood and religions. Her mother wants Noor to marry a person of the rentier classes who dabbled in the Sufism at the school in Suresnes and secure the family by alliance. Whether it is a motherland or a foreign land, the culturally rooted obligations are carried with the family wherever it goes. Noor realizes that her body belongs not to her, but to her family and it is her uncle’s right to say yea or nay to her marriage. Though they live in Paris, it doesn’t mean she is no longer an Indian Muslim. Her uncle wishes Noor to marry a nawab and secure the Indian branch of the family alliance. Kabir is afraid that if his sister marries a Jew, her husband will inherit their Afzal Manzil and that is very disgusting to him. The men in the Muslim family assume more liberty in the marriages outside their roots and only the women seem to be compelled to follow strictly the roots. Noor’s father dares to marry an American woman and Kabir marries Christian Angela without caring for the family disapproval.

While looking at the tiger claw around her neck, Noor wonders about its historical roots. The tiger claw always links Noor to India, to her grandmother Dadijaan and to the generations of women in her family who have worn it. Noor has
to break away from her religious roots as her Ramzaan fast breaks because she requires to assure the uniformed German army men that she is one of the natives of France and not an immigrant Indian. Noor relies on her religious roots for the self motivation, but the actions of others become the worst that befall her. While accepting or overcoming the obstacles, Noor follows the Sufi roots for the realization of herself as a woman and as a human being. When she shoots the two SS soldiers to death, she repents for her act. She has already taken out the life of her child ‘ma petite’. She wonders that if Armand comes to know about her as a murder, will he accept her love? She continuously feels guilty for violating her father’s religious roots.

A French resistant woman Renee opens her home for Noor and other agents. Such hospitality to the strangers is a part of life in the places like India and not usually exhibited by the Europeans. As Noor’s roots are different, Renee betrays Noor by reporting to the Gestapo about Noor in exchange of her husband Guy’s release from the camp. Her mother’s American roots cause trouble for Noor. When the Jailor Vogel comes to know about her as a daughter of an American mother, he considers her as an American enemy. He considers her a resident of nowhere, a rootless person and insults her calling again and again ‘mischlinge’. He humiliates her by enquiring: “It must feel terrible, not to belong anywhere, to be a rootless cosmopolitan, never to be satisfied anywhere, to always be comparing one place to another”. Later Renee is charged for the betrayal and a committee of four European women jurors is appointed. But a French woman, a white European is not convicted by the panel of white women for denouncing an immigrant Indian Muslim woman, a woman belonging to the different roots.

In Mukherjee's *The Middleman and Other Stories* the influence of the social and cultural traditions and practices in the countries of immigrants’ origin are inevitably contrasting to the American culture. A majority of the immigrant women seems to be moved away from their roots at a large extends in the style and psyche in the process of adaptation to the American culture and ethos. In “The Middleman” Maria’s adroit adulteries move her away to mainstay in surviving the Latin American landscape of violence, brutality and dog-eat-dog conditions of existence. Panna of “The Wife’s Story” is angry at the mischievous way the Indians are projected by the American mass media. When she goes for a Mamet play with her Hungarian friend, she feels annoyed at the Patel jocks and the gibes at Indians. She feels not being betrayed, no instant dignity, but realizes that the ubiquitous Ugandan Gujaratis have
made themselves the butt of ridicule and ordinary American response to them. She is influenced by Charity Chin and her lurid love life and it has damaged her inherited notions of marital duty. But still she worries about her husband when she hears of the firebombing incident at his factory. She realizes that the escape from the roots is impossible. In “Orbiting” Renata accepts an Afghani lover Ro whom she meets in an uptown singles bar. Her love is so strong that she is ready to teach him about the American roots: ‘how to walk like an American, how to dress like Brent but better, how to fill up a room as Dad does instead of melting and blending but sticking out in the Afghan way’.

Mukherjee's “The Tenant” is about Maya Sanyal who thinks that no folly is ever lost as history is a net, the kind of safety net travelling trapeze artists fall into, when inattentive or clumsy. Maya as a ‘trapeze artist’ has come out of the stability of the tradition and cultural roots in Calcutta to try her best to root herself in the new culture of New York. Instead of India, she thinks that here in America she has ‘so much to catch up on’, it is because of the negative news from India such as dowry deaths, the stoning of a neo-Buddhist or member of untouchable caste, bribery and corruption. She believes that all Indian men are wife-beaters and that’s why she has married to an American. She is not only a critic of the Indian way of life but also has changed her food habits as if to hit back at it. It is highly provocative that an Indian Brahmin girl starts eating the beef or any meat in America. In contrast to Maya, Dr. Chatterji tries to avoid the confused world of the immigrants, the lostness that Maya feels and wants to live and work in America but give back nothing except taxes. He is horrified that his nephew is in love with an African Muslim and blames the college students who arranged a Christmas party where Poltoo met that African woman. One may notice the loss of roots when Maya and Mrs. Chatterji get disturbed from the upstairs rooms where his nephew Poltoo doesn’t hear the music of nostalgia, the ghost thumps and thumps and makes its own vehement music. Maya hears in its voice madness and self-hate. In “Fathering” the past roots are haunting Jason, from which the escape is almost impossible. He symbolically presents it in the lines: “The shrubs and bushes my ex-wife planted clog the front path. I’ve put twenty years into this house. The steps, the path, the house all have a right to fall apart”. “Danny’s Girls” focuses on the truth that the immigrants, either rich or poor, have the same fate and get the same treatment by the Americans. “The Management of Grief” is a story of the tragedy of a crash of plane which brings the immigrants together under the heading of
“relatives” and the issues of family relations, social relations and cultural relations come to the focus.

Unlike Mukherjee, Lahiri in her “A Temporary Matter” presents the second generation immigrant Shukumar who hasn’t spent much time in India because when his father took him for the first time to India, he had nearly died of amoebic dysentery. His father never took him to India again. But later Shukumar develops an interest in India. “When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine” focuses the facts that immigrants work to keep intact their connection with the original roots, though they have become the Americans. They keep the ties with their motherland alive in their own ways. Mr. Pirzada has two watches, one on his wrist telling the American time; and the other in his pocket showing the local time at Dacca. About the sameness in their roots the narrator says: “Most of all I remember the three of them operating during that time as if they were a single person, sharing a single meal, a single body, a single silence, and a single fear.” The story focuses on the tension, worry and sorrow of the immigrants regarding the relatives at their native land. The woman narrator's father expects the American schools to teach her about the current events of the Indian subcontinent when specifically the war between India and Pakistan takes place. But the schools in America teach the American history and American geography every year. But in the school library, instead of writing an assignment on American history, Lilia is caught red-hand by her teacher while browsing through the pages of the Asian history. This reveals that the second generation of immigrants also cannot escape the roots. “Interpreter of Maladies” presents relationship between the American-born second generation immigrant Indians and India. India is the country of their heritage. The third generation of the immigrants the Das children’s wearing a visor suggests that one day their vision will be as distorted and deformed as their parents' visions are today. Mrs. Das reveals a secret story of her son Bobby’s birth out of her adultery. It may be because she finds the man from India of the similar roots like herself. Mr. Kapasi expects her to be honest like an Indian wife, but she comes out with her confession as a whore. So, Mr. Kapasi reminds her of the guilt she has committed. No one so far suspects, but she loses all the love for her husband and children and feels herself erratic at times. Her suppression due to the cultural loss of roots causes her detachment for her family.

In Lahiri’s “Sexy” the food symbolically signifies the roots. An American woman Miranda develops corporeal love with an Indian married man. When she visits
an Indian grocery, she comes across the Hot Mix that her Indian friend Laxmi always eats. But the grocer tells her it is too spicy for her. Seeking excuse for being in an Indian store, Miranda feels uncomfortable and doesn't buy the Hot Mix. The feeling of ostracism highlights the uncomfortable relationship with Dev as she knows so little about him and his roots. She repents for not understanding more about India. The featured couple ends up separating, because there is no potential in it. “Mrs. Sen's” is a story of an isolated immigrant woman trying to assimilate without losing her roots. Mrs. Sen keeps her ties with India through the physical objects and through the stories imprinted on her blade, saris and grainy aerogram. She is unable to seek her happiness in America where the situation drags her always away from her Indian roots. Mrs. Sen while preparing the food tells Elliot the stories of her past life in Calcutta, which helps her to keep alive her roots. Whenever she is melancholic and misses her family in India, she plays the recorded voices of her relatives as a connecting string to her happy past. In “This Blessed House” Sanjeev and Twinkle explore their new house in Hartford, which was previously owned by the fervent Christians. They find the gaudy Biblical objects hidden throughout the house. Delighted by these beautiful objects, Twinkle wants to display them everywhere in the house. But Sanjeev is uncomfortable with them and reminds her of their being the Hindus and not the Christians. He tries to maintain his ethnic roots. One may agree with Nandini Sahu who states as:

“Jhumpa Lahiri concerns her writings with the consciousness of the need for regaining roots in the tradition on India and a rueful nostalgia towards that. Her quest for identity is a consciousness towards exile, the dynamic force working to bring about this quest is a point of active engagement between two cultures- Indian and Western.” (Sahu 107)

Unlike Mukherjee and Lahiri, Baldwin’s women protagonists at the host land more powerfully trace and maintain their roots in the motherland. In Baldwin’s “Rawalpindi 1919” a Sikh woman follows the Indian traditions and hopes that her son, who studies in Europe, will not lose his roots in India. In “Montreal 1962” the detailed description of the process of washing, drying, folding and wearing the turbans focuses on the love and attachment a Sikh woman has with them. The turban carries a strong cultural significance for the Sikh community. For the protagonist the red colour of a turban stands for the blood of the Sikh martyrs. When she ties the
turban to her head, it reminds her of the cultural roots of her community. She wishes her husband not to lose the traditional and cultural roots before the Canadians, who do not know the importance of a turban to the Sikhs. She is ready to learn to work for the survival of the family, but will not lose the roots. In “Family Ties” an Indian Sikh woman is ready to reject her cultural roots to become a modern one. She likes the Chinese hairdresser girl, the French brands and even orders the cook to make the Western food. But destiny never allows her full freedom from the roots. The past haunts the family and it cannot escape from it. Her daughter is recommended glasses and it is the family ties with Chandani, her innocent Aunt who is raped by Muslims at the time of partition, who drowns her child as if she also suffers from the low sight. The madness of her son also carries the family tie, as Chandani goes mad when her brother denies taking her back in his house. In “Gayatri” a conservative Indian woman Gayatri thinks that her sister-in-law is a selfish woman, as she cares not for her family’s reputation and breaks away from the roots for seeking her own dreams. She is of the view that Reena marries a black American who might belong to the lower caste and thus, cuts the head of the family. “Toronto 1984” presents an immigrant mother and her daughter who are very much proud of their Indian roots while living in Canada. Piya works in a Canadian multinational company which forbids her to wear her Indian dress. She is very patriotic young woman who denies standing in praise of the British Queen in the party, because the Queen is the symbol of the empire her grandfather fought against for independence, the one whose line had sent her grandfather to prison. After this incident, she bears the insult by her boss who calls her ‘a damn Paki’. But she feels her pride in Indian roots betrayed when Indira Gandhi is murdered in India.

In “A Pair of Ears” an old deaf widow immigrated in Delhi during the partition has her deep-rooted memories of the past with the house and does not want to demolish or reconstruct it. But her son Balvir wants to convert the house into a tall building. She hopes her grandchild’s company and happiness, so requests her son Balvir to come to live with her at Delhi in the same house. Once, her grandson Manu tells her that she is nobody. This reply frustrates her and she decides to get the stay-orders from the court to stop the construction her son has started. This stops her only income. She becomes helpless and dies very soon. Her servant Amma cuts her Mem-Saab’s hand immediately after her death fills the silver glass with her blood and spreads it everywhere in the house. This is a sign of the tie that the mother had with
the house. In “English Lessons” Kanwaljit is afraid that if she returns to her father, it might be a disgrace and shame for her Indian family. In America she silently suffers through threats, husband’s affair, loss of their life savings and sexual exploitation by the man with immigration papers. She suffers because she does not wish to damage the roots of her Indian family. In “The Cat that Cries” the immigrant woman protagonist’s husband wishes to return to India. For her, India carries the memory of all her suppression in the past. Now in America, she is an independent woman and wishes never to return to India. “The Insult” is a story of the two immigrant Sikh sisters, one trying to keep the ties very strong with her Indian roots and the other has almost lost her roots in the process of adapting to the American life. Aunty Nimmi is quite American in her way of the life and thinking. She declares that the American girls like Neelu find their own partners nowadays. And they won’t even have to give her a dowry, if she finds a fellow in America. This comment causes the loss of honour for her from Neelu’s mother. There are many Sikh boys in America. They all have broken away from their Indian roots by cutting their hair and not wearing turbans to make more money. But at last, Neelu is married with a ‘good Sikh fellow’ from Delhi without turban. In “Jassie” an old Indian immigrant woman sticks to her roots. Jassie is very much religious and always prays to her Gods. Her convent school introduces her to the ballroom dancing, where she meets Firoze and flirts with him for that time. But she marries the man her father chooses. She names her daughter as Yasmeen in the memory of Firoze to keep her ties with past roots, but the family calls her as Minni. “Devika” is about an Indian woman in Canada who tries to keep alive the ties with the past before her marriage with the help of an imaginary existence of a woman, whom she calls by her spinster name Asha. Free Asha is her dual split personality who wants to do whatever Indian Devika cannot do in her real life. Devika’s all suppressed feelings are boldly expressed by Asha. At last after an accident, she completely gains her Indian roots and she becomes fully the free Asha.

V.III.VI: The Expatriate Sensibility:

No migrant can totally wipe out the past memories of his motherland and be completely a new person in the hostland. The immigrants develop an expatriate sensibility out of the nostalgia and fear of losing the cultural roots in the adopted land. They explore their motherland through the memory lane, which does not match the changed contemporary situation at the motherland. Their projection of it seems to be
totally different and based on the edges of two worlds. Bharati Mukherjee in *The Tiger's Daughter* handles the themes of expatriation and isolation with assurance. The protagonist Tara has feelings of an expatriate in America as she constantly misses her mother country India. She sometimes creates the India around her by hanging her silk scarves in the apartment. When she comes to India, she still expects the India of her childhood and carries the same feelings here also. Actually, the fusion of Americanness and Indianness in Tara’s personality results in her inability to take refuge, either in her old Indian-self or in the newly discovered American-self. Similarly, in Lahiri’s *The Namesake* Ashima too has the feelings of an expatriate. She is an Indian woman who misses the emotional support at the time of her first delivery. Ashima is unhappy forever for missing the letter by her grandmother containing an identity for her son. When her husband goes to the university and she is alone at house with Gogol, she suffers from sleeplessness. She alone sits and cries for the whole day. She cries because there is no Indian rice in the house. And when she borrows from her neighbours, the brown rice instead of a white she throws it out as it does not match her Indian variety of the rice. She spends hours in the apartment napping, sulking and rereading her same five Bengali novels. In the same way, in Baldwin’s *The Tiger Claw* Noor lives with an expatriate’s sensibility when she is away from her closest to heart Armand. As an expatriate Noor most of the time lives on the line of memory of her father, her lover Armand, her aborted child, her mother, brother and uncle.

Mukherjee's stories in *The Middleman* present the women suffer in their motherland. And to get away from that suffering, they migrate to the Western world. Due to this fact, most of them do not have an intense expatriate sensibility; but they enjoy their dreams being fulfilled in the adopted land. However, Lahiri’s stories focus on the characters who fail to separate themselves from their motherland with the ease that Mukherjee's do. Lahiri’s Mr. Pirzada has not heard anything about his family in Dacca for the last six months. His worries focus on the expatriate person’s psychological trouble when he/she is outside the homeland. He keeps in his pocket a watch showing the local time at Dacca. This watch strengthens his strong affiliation with his family in the Indian subcontinent. “Mrs. Sen’s” portrays on an expatriate Indian woman trying to assimilate in America without losing the love for objects from India. For her the scarlet powder she puts in a dot above her eyebrows has no fear of losing it. She firmly rejects the new experiences such as the canned fish or even
something common like the car driving. Her happiness lies in the visits to the fish market and the letters from India, which proves her emptiness in the United States. Her anxiety for the letters from motherland, the Indian dishes, the recorded voices of family members and other things reflect the pathos of an expatriate Indian.

Similarly, Baldwin’s immigrant women form a strong expatriate sensibility due to their worst experiences in the hostlands. In her short story “Montreal 1962” a Sikh wife has the feelings of an expatriate while living with her husband in the Canada, where he is asked to abandon his Indian cultural identity to have a job. The turbans have connection and affection in her life as a symbol of her Indian Sikh tradition. The Sikh wife remembers that she has never seen her father, brother and husband without a turban. But these turbans appear to be the bed sheets or curtains to the Canadian dry-cleaner woman without eyebrows. Similarly, in “Toronto 1984” a patriotic Indian immigrant girl Piya works in a Canadian multinational company, which forbids her to wear the Indian cloths. She is very proud of being an Indian. When she denies standing in praise of the British Queen, her boss calls her a damn Paki. In “The Cat Who Cried” the Indian woman protagonist in America feels that her Hindi is fading every year as it is more difficult to her to understand Mataji without her dentures. Her husband Prem has got a job of selling the health and life insurance to other expatriate Indians. “The Insult” focuses on the expatriate Sikh community living in America. The narrator Neelu’s family still carries the Indian way of thinking in the modern Western world. They wish a nice boy from a good Sikh family from India for Neelu. There are many Sikh boys in America. They all have cut their hair and don’t wear turbans for making more money. But Neelu is married with a good Sikh fellow from Delhi without turban. In “Devika” Indian immigrant Ratan tries to come out of the expatriate sensibility by drinking wines and going for the parties with friends. He also wishes his wife to change into some Canadian cloths. Devika’s freedom before marriage is sacrificed by her father by marrying her to Ratan. With an expatriate sensibility Devika thinks that the spinster Asha is still living in her. She is unable to get free from her prior life. At the end of the story she starts living with full freedom as she was living before her marriage.

V.IV: References:


CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

In the contemporary age the people are migrating out of their motherland in search of better opportunities. Migration causes various problems in the life of migrating people. In the global-village world, it is the need of time to acquaint the new generation with the problems emerging in the cross-cultural migration. As women are considered inferior, submissive and weaker, they face more serious problems in migration than the migrant men. To the immigrant women, the burden of the cultural, moral and religious values at their motherland makes it more difficult to adjust with the new country. The Diasporic literature is the best and authentic tool to discuss the problems of women in migration. Indian Writing in English is, in a way, a product of the cultural clash with the Westerns and the clash is presented in the Indian English novel from its beginning. While evoking the colonial legacies in the contemporary society with the similar theme of cultural clash, the contemporary Diasporic Indian English writers impress the international readers. A number of women writers of Indian Diaspora portray immigrant women’s problems in the cross-cultural encounters. A comparative study of such problems helps to widen a sense of understanding and to bring accuracy in understanding the intensity and also to put forth comparatively more acceptable conclusions.

The women writers of Indian Diaspora illustrate the problems of migrants and reveal their relationship with the homeland and the host land. The women writers’ perspective to the problems of migrants is either unique or akin to one another. The women writers of Indian Diaspora like Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri and Shauna Singh Baldwin present the problems of women in the cross-cultural encounters during their immigration. The facts related to the life of migrated women may be best explored with the help of the feminist and cultural points of view.

Bharati Mukherjee’s The Tiger’s Daughter presents the psychological, cultural and feminist problems of an immigrant Indian woman while she tries to assimilate in the alien culture and after her return to India. Her immigration is naturally followed by a process of adjustment and transformation into a hybrid personality. The immigrant woman protagonist Tara suffers from many problems due to the tension between the two cultures, feeling of rootlessness and nostalgia. Tara passes through the deep psychological suffering while realizing her ambitions. She experiences a sense of liberation from her tradition. She develops a new hybrid personality with the
lost native taste and emotional touch. While surviving on her only optimism, she abandons her inherited culture during the process of transformation. On return to India this transformation causes the feeling of alienation. The new perspective in her hybrid self and the deteriorating social change disrupt her pleasure and cause discomfort, disgust and frustration. She remains neither fully Indian nor American, and this split causes the loss of the familial, social and national prestige.

Mukherjee in *The Middleman and Other Stories* realistically presents young women of the Third World countries, who cherish the dream of emigrating to America for higher prosperity and permanent settlement there. Mukherjee’s immigrant married or divorced women try to form relationships with the American men. These relationships turn in to the sexual misadventures. Most of her immigrant women particularly use sex as a means to establish the relationship with the Americans. The immigrant women constantly break away from the partners of opposite sex and while establishing the new relationships the pattern remains the same. They mix up with the men so freely to satisfy their sensuality and one cannot call them truly liberated women. Her immigrant women protagonists try to erase their past by adopting a country which provides them unrestrained liberty to realize their dreams. Their disorderly conducts and promiscuity cause the doubts about their notions and dreams of immigration and settlement in the United States. The unstable and breaking up marriages cause the pathetic condition of the immigrant women, who become emotionally uprooted and unbalanced individuals. They try to solve their problems with the help of sex, but contradictory that creates more serious problems in their lives. Mukherjee presents characteristically the American situations and experiences, which are too complex for the women as everywhere the smugglers, robbers, pimps and middlemen exploit the desperate immigrant women. She portrays the realistic picture with great fidelity of details of the situations and difficulties the immigrant people face in getting visas and travel documents or foreign exchange and underground activities of the guerrillas. In the American diversity of cultures, the concepts of security and stability of family life for women are totally different than the Indian. The past life of immigrant women is rich and gorgeous, but the chosen adopted life in America proves disgusting. They desire not only for the social and cultural conglomeration but also a transformation into a new person.

Mukherjee's abundant use of the sexual element in each of the stories sounds unrealistic because the powerful familial, cultural and moral protest is not considered
seriously. She gives the equal dignity and equal freedom to her women who are neither restrained nor bound by the obligations towards their family. The social and cultural assumptions, prejudices and background are totally neglected. She has focused only the immigration from the Third World countries to the West and the Eastward movement of the Westerns is ignored, which too may have the similar adventures.

Jhumpa Lahiri explores the conflict in relationships between the couples, families and friends to discuss the ideas of personal and cultural isolations and identities. Her immigrant women frequently encounter the identity crises, which are tied to their inabilities to reconcile their American identity with the Indian identity. Lahiri often leaves these crises unresolved. She often correlates her women’s cultural isolation with their extreme personal isolation to suggest that the cultural isolation causes the personal. In her *The Namesake* the Indian-American lonely women struggle to create and nurture their identities in the new American landscape. Lahiri attributes her women the power to gain impact on others’ consciousnesses and their communal bonding, though they are the silent and jobless housewives. In short, though projected outwardly as powerless in the Western society, Lahiri reveals her female characters’ inner adaptabilities. Ashima’s cultural growth is intertwined with the growth of her children because while educating the children, she too gains a sort of education. Lahiri makes a decisive breakdown in the culture which turns out with the potential for pessimism. A pure cultural Bengali identity is irretrievably lost when the characters come to the United States. Ashoke’s Bengali-American identity is lost along with his death. The next generation creates its own manifestation of the cross-cultural identity. The breakup between Maxine and Gogol reminds us the case of Paul Morel of D. H. Lawrence’s *Sons and Lovers*. Along with the strong cultural ties with mother, Lahiri also indicates the impossibility of a perfect union between the Indians and Americans. The breakdown in Gogol’s marriage with Moushumi is a concrete example of the failure in an identity creation within the Bengali-American culture. In other words, in the generational growth immigrants lose their roots. The immigrants remain in a perpetual search for their own definition. The blending of Indian and American cultures manifests the different cultural identities warranting a new definition for the Indian-American immigrants. Ashima does not face the troubles of the Diaspora in its endurance of slavery and racial violence. Inspite of this, her cultural essentialism is in vain. If a culture ever existed in its purest form, it cannot be
saved. The white woman Mrs. Buxton at the library helps Ashima to gain career independence and to share her Bengaliness with the American co-workers. This causes a real intercultural bonding that characterizes the global/international cooperation of women. The narrative implies that the cultural retention is important but with the revision of cultural elements so that they remain useful and realistic. Lahiri’s presentation of a Bengali-American woman proves insightful to the feministic discussion over the local and global connections and transferability of a woman. Lahiri not only brings forth the new articulations of woman-maternity but also highlights a need for further articulation of the larger feminist tenets. Lahiri’s re-locating her Bengali woman into the American soil metaphorically indicates a challenge to the regional feminism.

Jhumpa Lahiri’s stories in Interpreter of Maladies trace the influence of India in the life of immigrants existing simultaneously in the two cultures: the American reality and the sphere of Indian tradition. Lahiri’s use of the details makes assertions about the sense of isolation that governs each event of the story. Lahiri's women are not at a loss of the cultural identity, but rather relieved when they adjust to their new world with help of the power of relationships and the personal connections. They are regretful for their cultural displacement due to the separation from their original cultures. The Indian food marks the difference between the American culture and the Indian culture. The 'force' of relationships and religion seems doomed to failure because of the powerful 'sentiment' and tears of protest. While focusing on the marriage, Lahiri presents the disconnected feelings, the feelings of disorientation associated with the immigration, the cross-cultural differences and the people who feel like foreigners 'at home or abroad'. The difference lies in the manner in which characters struggle to relate to one another, to themselves and to their changing positions in the life.

Shauna Singh Baldwin answers through the predicament of Noor in The Tiger Claw to the rising religious fundamentalism today, the emergence of the extreme Right worldwide, and the branding and packaging of people in these days as the Indian Sikh man, British Muslim terrorist, French white Supremacist, American redneck and Saudi Muslim woman. Baldwin takes the reader on a meditative experience and compels to explore his/her life through the life and world of her characters. The novel leads the readers to wonder if the times in which Noor lived are any different from our own. It is the harrowing story of one courageous woman’s
predicament in the face of racism, betrayal, hypocrisy, loyalty and love on one hand and the veils of war on the other. At the same time, it is also a love story between a Muslim and a Jew told in a language of mysticism and romance. Noor’s love is lost amidst the turbulence of war and human dislocation. The novel is honest in its assessment of the inner motives and ambiguities. It confirms that Baldwin transcends the borders that divide the human experience. It is a fascinating story of a woman’s moral complexity, inner conflict and exile. Through a magnificent portrait of a very courageous woman, legendary French Resistance fighter Noor Inayat Khan, Baldwin presents a woman’s divided conscience between the drama of Nazi-occupied France and British-occupied India. The novel reminds us that sometimes only fiction can really tell us the truth.

It brilliantly reveals the allegiance in the times of war and the duplicity required for survival when all who operate underground are interdependent but no one can be trusted fully. This is a historical novel about the complex Noor Khan’s earnest predicament, especially when she contemplates her absent lover and the child they conceived and then aborted. Her brother Kabir is the strongest character of all. He eventually becomes a Sufi holy man, a paean to Sufi Universalism, preaching the ideals of peace and tolerance in cosmopolitanism, while remaining dangerously close-minded with the people he loves.

The novel is a completely riveting story of the predicament of Noor that comments elegantly on the universal victims of oppression of free will and human dignity. It portrays the life with the thousand tiny details that spring from the most involved research to show us how an embracing multi-faceted identity can turn the victimization into resistance. It shows how helpless individuals are resisting the state-sponsored fear and hatred against their fellow citizens. It links the plight of all victims, whether they are called Noor or Rivkin, through the danger, romance, concentration camps and safe houses. After burning half of the SOE files some information comes to the surface that ‘Noor was doomed spy, an innocent, slaughtered for the unworthy cause of imperialism, very naïve, extremely idealistic’.

The book poignantly addresses the obsession with race and identity through the Hitler’s Germany which gives an imaginative insight into the woman protagonist’s psyche. The book is a love story, a spy thriller and a personal journey of a woman to find herself. It traces the roots of conflicts. The story shows how the
motivations of soldiers and the casualties of war are many, varied and deeply personal.

Baldwin’s stories in *English Lessons and Other Stories* capture attention through the details of tradition and culture. All the details are purposeful. The imagery provides views about the characters of different generations and social spheres and about their positions and postures. Baldwin examines the bruises and wounds endured by the immigrant Sikhs who try to learn how to live in the immigration. The family, place and politics are rendered like the precious intaglios. Her stories are the metaphor for the life, family and universal values. To understand the intended meanings of the metaphor, one must be attentive to the cultural nuances. Baldwin portrays the Indian collectivist cultural values in contrast to the individualistic values of the West.

Baldwin presents the traditional fact that women have to learn silence and the women who don’t comply with the traditional modes of living are severely punished. Her women protagonists are sometimes simple, but show that every person has the unique and extraordinary qualities. Baldwin has a good measure of compassion for the women characters in her complex and multi-layered stories. She projects the compassion, empathy and love between the characters like Amma and her mistress.

Baldwin reveals the complicated textures of the lives of South Asian women in all of their absurdities and painful truths. She is adept at entering the minds of her characters to reveal for the readers the different ways her protagonists think about the traditional and ethical values, and the way they act on their own choices. Baldwin writes with the immediacy of a conversation with a restrained passion which describes the friction between the East and West and the traditional and modern. While never sentimentalizing or overplaying the emotion, her stories provide some of the inside stories for the Diaspora and also account of the rising awareness and strength of women who must tap their own minds and hearts to enter the new emotional and material worlds. Her protagonists are merely ordinary women who find their courage in the most paradoxical of places.

In this collection, Baldwin brings out several interrelated issues of race, gender, ethnicity and immigration by interpreting and evaluating the immigrant experience particularly of the Indian Sikhs. They represent issues related to the Asian American, black, Eastern, ethnic, immigrant, minority, diasporic, hyphenated, hybrid, inferior, subaltern, other, refugee, outsider, expatriate and many more people in the
world. Nevertheless, beside the identity of immigrants, it focuses on the life and predicament of the Asian Diasporas in the Western world.

After comparing the predicament of immigrant women in the selected texts, one can claim that the problems in immigration due to the cross-cultural encounters are increasing all over the world as the major problems. The selected novels and short stories picture acutely the problems of immigrant women. The problems faced by the immigrant women from different countries are pictured by these diasporic women novelists. In the cross-cultural marriages immigrant women suffer more than the native men. There are some differences as well as similarities in the problems that the women face in the Westward and Eastward immigrations. The feministic and cultural points of view assist to understand the major problems of women presented in the contemporary literature. The intensity and differences of the problems faced by women in the cross-cultural marriage and migration depend on the cultural, religious, social, geographical, political and economic conditions. The literature of Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri and Shauna Singh Baldwin is feministic literature. They contribute to the feministic literature explicitly or implicitly. They discuss the problems and its roots and the ways the immigrant women prefer to come out of them in context of the cross-cultural marriages and immigration.

The present research puts forward the following points to acquaint the young generation with the problems emerging due to cross-cultural marriages and immigration. The following findings may help as guidelines or suggestions to the young people aspiring to migrate outside the motherland to the other countries.

1) The immigrant women have to struggle through the crisis for their identity. The identity for Diasporic woman perpetuates through the complexity of plurality in the singular self. They lose the Indian identity while gaining a new one in America. In the host countries they attempt to maintain the Indian identity by using objects from India like silk scarves, greeting cards, letters of parents, the recorded voices of their relatives and magazines, as tolls to make the feel of Indian. The hybridity in their personality causes a multiple identity. The objects play diabolic role in shaping and influencing the immigrant’s psychology, anxieties and behaviour. They frequently encounter the unresolved personal and cultural identity crises because of their inabilities to reconcile their American identity with their Indian identity. A few of them like Ashima become the cultural mothers gradually for their community in
America and start gathering people around them from the same background. The importance of a name and identity become central concept throughout the life of the second generation immigrants as they struggle with the Indo-American identity and rebels against parents. They attempt for the similar cultural identity construction. But the breaking of such identity implies that the hybrid Indian-American identity lacks the essentialism of the purer types of identities. Along with the struggle to create their identity in the cross-cultural society, women also struggle first within the family to create an identity. They come out of the traditional India in search of their identity in the Western world. The women in these stories construct their own unique racial subjectivity and gender agency. Mukherjee’s immigrant women do not try as hard as Lahiri’s to maintain their Indian identity in the foreign land; instead they try to come completely out of their Indian tradition where they are denied the full freedom. Many of Lahiri’s women characters wish to mix up or marry within their community and come back to that even after some misadventures with the foreigners. They build a reputation for Asian-Americans with remarkable educational and professional success and serve as the cultural backdrop.

2) The immigrant women feel culturally isolated in the host land. The literature of the selected three writers focuses the immigrant women’s cultural isolation. Their women protagonists’ isolation becomes more intense because they come out of the stability of the cultural frame at the motherland where other women of their community may identify with them. But in an alien country the immigrant woman feels double isolated; first from their close relatives and second among the strange people. They are isolated as women first and then as women belonging not to the native culture of the host country.

3) The immigrant women are doubly marginalized because on one hand they are victims of the familial, religious, social and cultural compulsions at home and on the other hand they are also victims of the differences in the alien society. Their appearance, costume and color of the skin attract the people of the host land to express superior oneness.

4) Most of the immigrant women use the sex as a means to establish their relationships with the natives of the host land with the purpose of getting rooted in the foreign soil permanently. But that creates the more severe
problems in their life. The immigrant women are seen as an object to satisfy the sexual lusts by the native men and they are never considered as equal human beings in the world of patriarchal cultures. The writers raise questions on the facts related to the sexual exploitation of the immigrant women in the context of cross-cultural encounters. They are sometimes blackmailed and sexually exploited by the Native Americans.

5) The immigrant women are disillusioned when their dreams do not come true in the face of reality. Most of the immigrant women keep dreaming, hoping and expecting from the host land, but they find nothing more than the frustration. The immigrant women face disillusionment in their relationships with men in the family and then in the society and the intensity of their feelings is sharpened by the context of cross-cultural encounters.

6) In the patriarchal cultures most of the women feel guilty for being a woman and in addition to this the immigrant women feel guilty for staying far away from their home. During their adaptation to the host country, the immigrant women either fall a prey or willingly break away from the tradition, but both the cases result in the frustration, which ultimately leads to the nagging sense of guilt. The immigrant women carry forever a sense of guilt in their heart for breaking away from their family, status, tradition, culture, religion and motherland.

7) The immigrant women face the clash of cultures. When a woman migrates out of her motherland she carries the deep rooted culture to the adopted country. The cultural practices at homeland do not match with the host one. Her social interactions turn into the cultural class. The clash of cultures begins first in the mind of the dislocated woman and then in her social interactions with the native citizens of the host country.

8) The people of various races create and retain their own cultures. When a woman of a particular race migrates out of her race to an alien place, she becomes an object of the racial discrimination. She seems to be odd in her colour of skin, physical appearance, tone of language, cultural and religious rituals, personal and social attitudes etc. In the Western countries where white people consider themselves superior to others, the Asian and African immigrants are racially discriminated. The selected works of these writers present the experiences of racism in Canada and America, the biased view
towards immigrants and how the government agencies handle assaults on particular races. All of them focus on the immigrant women and their mistreatment in the States and their experiences in the interracial relationships. The Western people call the immigrants with adjectives like ‘American-Born Confused Deshi’ (ABCD), ‘others’, ‘a brown monkey’, ‘mischlinge’, ‘black’, ‘a damn Paki’, ‘an untouchable’ and ‘a hubshi’.

9) The immigrant women suffer from the sense of dislocation in the host country. When they migrate out of the stability of their original culture, they feel dislocated in the alien one because of their differences and the views of the natives to look at them. The geographical, social, political, legal and cultural setup of the host country, which does not match with her own motherland, leads her to feel dislocated among the foreigners.

10) Similarly, the immigrant women feel alienated in a totally new location at the host land and when they spend a few years there and later return to the motherland, they find the motherland also alien one, because it too passes through tremendous changes. Thus, the immigrant women happen to be alien as ‘other’ in the host land and alien as ‘a foreign returned’ in the motherland.

11) The immigrant women suffer from the feeling of nostalgia in the adopted land. They explore out their motherland through the memory and reminiscence. They express their feelings of nostalgia through their behaviour and prefer certain convenient ways to come out of it. They attempt to retain their past memories with the help of the objects like Indian silk scarves, greeting cards and letters from parents, the recorded voices of their relatives, books and magazines.

12) The immigrant women try to trace their roots in the motherland. The immigrant women never easily escape from their roots whichever the alien country they go. Though a few of them like Tara try to escape, they find themselves in a fractured spilt hanging between two edges. Most of the first and the second generation immigrant women try to trace their cultural roots in their land of origin.

13) The immigrant women carry the expatriate sensibility throughout their life. No migrant can totally wipe out the past memories of his/her motherland and transform completely into a new person in the hostland. The immigrants develop an expatriate sensibility out of the nostalgia and the fear of losing the
cultural roots during their stay at the adopted land. They explore their motherland through the memory lane, which does not match the changed contemporary situation at the motherland. Their projection of it seems to be totally different and based on the periphery of two worlds.

14) Most of the immigrant women become victims of the insider-outsider sensibilities. The immigrant woman who belongs to a different culture is considered as an outsider in the hostland. Her entire way of the life distinguishes her from the mainstream society and she becomes an object of comparison and discrimination. She tries to define herself while considering the factor of the ‘other’ in the process of it. She tries to form self esteem or articulate her identity by filling in the absences or missing parts of personality in comparison with the native others.

15) The experiences at the host land lead the immigrant women to feel at an intense loss of their culture, language, relationships, religion, heritage and roots. This feeling of intense loss is strengthened when she returns to the motherland.

16) The immigrant women pretend to be satisfied with their achieved identity, liberation, new experiences and a sort of success. Hanging between two worlds they pretend to be satisfied, but they suffer deep in their heart for knowing the fact that their life in the host land is not the dreamed one. They have to negotiate constantly with the ties they want to strengthen with their host country. They also negotiate with their ethnic cultural background that they wish to preserve or modify or fully re-invent.

The Scope for Further Research:

The present research provides the scope for the further research in the similar or related areas. There are a number of Diasporas like the Japanese, Chinese, Indian, African, Caribbean and European. The writers of all these Diasporas are producing the literary pieces. A comparative study will be a worth research if a researcher takes it between the writers from any two Diasporas. It may be between male writers of the diaspora or male and female writers of the diaspora. It may be also between the writers of different generations of the diaspora or only diasporic women writers. There are many other than the selected diasporic Indian women writers who may be taken for the similar study. These writers write essays, poems, autobiographies, plays,
travelogues, novels and short stories in English. Apart from the novels and short story collections, a researcher can take the other literary texts for the similar study. The selected texts may be studied from political, geographical, biological, psychological, sociological, economic, cultural, feministic, racial, historical, philosophical and religious points of view. Of these approaches or points of view may be taken to study the predicament of women in the cross-cultural encounters.
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