Chapter - 8
The Namesake

*The Namesake* is a critically acclaimed novel of the novelist. It is the story of a young man who faces identity crisis of all kinds in a foreign nation. The novel creates an impact about the cultural crises in foreign country. Gogol is culturally displaced man who suffers this problem of separation. The novel is a story of Immigrant family who is settled in a foreign country. The novelist describes the struggles of Indian couple, Ashima and Ashoke who face the awful loneliness in the unfamiliar land. The novelist minutely describes the condition of Indian couple who tries to make adjustment in traditional Indian culture and foreign culture. The novelist describes the struggle of Indian
immigrant couple who tries to cope up with their lives in a foreign land. Shubha Mishra elucidates –

‘These experiences are presented in a first hand manner, as The novelist herself was born of immigrant parents and she seems to understand the tiny bargains, this assimilation into a new culture has required.’ [Mishra, Shubha: 2006: 45]

The story opens with an August evening when Ashima Ganguli prepares stuff. Ashima Ganguli is a Bengali woman who migrates from Calcutta to America. She prepares a stuff which is always found in a paper cone at Calcutta platform. Though pregnant, she prepares food. The novelist elaborates the central square apartment where Ashima and her husband Ashoke live. The food often plays an important role in the novelist’s work. As she is uncomfortable in bathroom, she calls Ashoke, her husband, a doctoral candidate in electronic engineering at MIT who studies in his bedroom. When she calls her husband, she does not utter his name. In Indian society, there is a tradition not to call a husband with his name. The novelist puts forth the culture and tradition of Indian family. When Ashima calls her husband, she uses ‘Are you listening to me?’ It reflects the male dominancy in the family. The novelist here expresses that though the Indian woman migrates from India to strange countries, they stick to their tradition. The novelist demonstrates the cultural diversity. She specially refers to the Indian and American culture. The novelist emphasizes the craveness of the character for the Indian culture. Because, the culture of India has a different perspective. Nila Das aptly remarks –

‘In Indian notion, culture has both individual and social connotations, especially when it propagates the terms Kula and Shila. Kula implicates biological and cultural heredity of both an individual and a group. It is a life-long discipline and intimate conviction, a commitment to and a mutual relationship with one’s resource tradition. Shila is the behaviour pattern that individuals and groups develop for themselves. Since Kula is the received one and Shila the changing one, the two concepts stand for tradition and change respectively and make culture an ongoing process.’ [Nayak, Bhagbat: 2012: 53]
Ashima now hospitalizes in the Mount Auburn Hospital. The hospital has shined corridors and the elevator is more spacious than the kitchen of Ashima. The novelist here expresses the mental condition of Ashima. She is in a state of mind that whether the culture of this nation will suit her child. The doctor of the hospital examines and asks for waiting. In the rooms of Ashima, the other ladies accompany their husband. But, Ashima is lying lonely. She thinks about her child, its movement and appearance. She always is haunted with the thought that in India, pregnant woman is nourished by the family members.

Now, the novelist portrays the nostalgic experience of Ashima Ganguli. She always thinks about her parents and her father’s house in Calcutta. Her immigrant experiences are vividly described by the novelist. In her writing, the immigrant and diasporic elements are prominent. Mansing Kadam expresses –

‘Immigration and Diaspora are not new phenomena in India and the literature produced by diasporic Indian writers explores the multi-dimensional anxieties of ‘émigré’ life. Recently, there have been more shifts in perceptions and perspectives of these writers’ notions of individual, and their national and cultural identities.’[Kadam, G. Mansing: 2012: 67]

The Novelist describes the pre-marital life of Ashima. Her thought scatters with the arrival of the doctor. He examines Ashima and confirm about her health. He asserts about the normal health of Ashima. The word ‘normal’ hovers in the mind of Ashima. It indicates that there is no normal with Ashima for last eighteen months. She does not suffer with the pain of the pregnancy. She has a pain of aloofness. She is far away from her lovable relatives. In the hospital, Ashima always is affected with the thought of her parents. She again remembers the first meeting with Ashoke in Calcutta. She remembers Calcutta before her marriage. The novelist observes it –

‘He was the third in as many months. The first had been widower with four children. The second, a newspaper cartoonist who knew her father, had
been hit by a bus in Esplanade and lost his left arm. To her great relief they had both rejected her.' [The Namesake: 7]

Through this, the novelist expresses that in Indian families, the decisions are always taken by male. Ashima’s father always considers her view, whether Ashima likes or dislikes. Her father decides where she should marry. Here, the novelist expresses that there is no self-identity for women in the Indian family. The novelist not only expresses the condition of women in Indian family, but she beautifully discloses the layers of relations –

‘Lingering sweat from the owner’s feet mingled with hers, causing her heart to race; it was the closest thing she had ever experienced to the touch of a man.’ [8]

The first time Ashima experiences the touch of man. She dreams of her marriage with Ashoke. She always desires the support of Ashoke. But, he is engaged in his research work. The novelist elaborates the extreme condition of Ashima. She finds herself alone in the foreign land. Ashima spends a lot of time with the company of her friend and relatives. She is fond of sharing things with her mother and grandmother. But, in the foreign country, she remains alone. The novelist skillfully describes the character of Ashoke. He works at Boston. He is slightly plump, scholarly-looking, with black thick framed glass. When he first time meets Ashima he does not look upward.

Even, Ashima learns his name on the invitation letters. It describes the modern culture, where the marriage has changed its concept. But, in the country like India, the arranged marriages take place. The marriage of Ashima and Ashoke takes place. After getting married, the couple arrives at Cambridge. The novelist minutely expresses the situation of a newly married couple. In the foreign country, the Indian couple faces another problem. After arriving at Cambridge, the couple shares their day to day activities. The novelist portrays the Indian couple and their suffrage through the character of Ashoke and Ashima. The writer elaborates the couple who is distracted, exiled from their native land and they try to establish in the foreign land, but most of the times they fail. As Dilip Chitre mentioned in his poem ‘The Falling of the
Banyan Tree’, the Ariel of trees tries to ground. It is meant to establish the relation in the unknown land. It also reflects the struggle of the immigrant who tries to create their new identity in new land.

Though Ashima is pregnant and wishes to have support from family, there is no hope to return to Calcutta. They both prepare the daily stuff. Here, the writer elaborates loneliness and helplessness of the couple. Though Ashoke devotedly supports Ashima, he suffers with awful aloofness. The novelist expresses every corner of life both of Ashima and Ashoke. Ashoke is nostalgic when he remembers the incident which was carved deeply in his mind. It has changed his life.

Ashoke travels from Howrah to Ranchi. He carries a volume of stories by Nikolai Gogol. He has read ‘The Overcoat’ by Gogol many times. It has counted certain sentences and phrases embedded by the absurd, tragic yet oddly inspired story of Akaky. Akakyevich is the impoverished main character that has spent his life meekly copying documents written by others and suffers the ridicule of absolutely everyone. The character of Akaky resembles Ashoke who also spends his life in solitude. He struggles to spend his life in a foreign land. Ashoke feels the suffering of Akaky. His suffering has made an impact on the mind of Ashoke. Suddenly, the engine and seven bogies derail from the broad-gauge line. The seventh bogie, where Ashoke was sitting, capsized as well, flung by the speed of the crash farther into field. Ashoke remembers the sound of people half dead around him, moaning and tapping on the walls of the trains whispering hoarsely for help.

The moaning and crying sound of the people hovers on the ear. The torn page of ‘The Overcoat’ is hung in the hands of Ashoke during the accident. He remembers it throughout his life. After the accident, he moves to his parent’s house in Allipore. Ashoke now feels alone. He only hears the voices of his relatives, noisy, crowd and the bustle of Calcutta. His life with the house continues. As the months pass, Ashoke begins to envision walking away from the place in which he was born. The novelist has a skill to reveal the every layer of emotion. He also skillfully arranges the past incidents and present situation of the character. The writer makes link between the past and
the present. The novelist describes the accidental event of Ashoke, when he is waiting in the hospital –

‘He was raised without running water nearly killed at twenty-two. Again he tastes the dust on his tongue, see the twisted train, the giant overturned iron wheels.’ [21]

Ashoke is haunted with the memories of an accident. In the present situation, he again just waits in the hospital. It twists his mind as he already experiences the disaster of life. The novelist expresses it –

‘He was born twice in India, and then a third in America. Three lives by thirty.’ [21]

The novelist then unveils the third life of Ashoke in America. It indicates the plight of Ashoke. The life in a foreign land seems like a new birth. As a child always tries to establish new bond of relations, the immigrant tries to adjust their life in the foreign country. They have to adjust according to the situation. The child has not its own identity. The immigrant also faces the same problem. They try to maintain their life according to the condition. They face the problems of the establishment in a new land.

The second section of the novel starts with the birth of a baby boy. Ashima desires somebody help her in this situation. She is unable to express her feeling to the hospital staff. Ashoke, on the other hand, waits outside for the news. He waits in the hall agitatedly and he thinks of his own suffering in the hospital. When a nurse arrives with the child, it just looks like a ‘white parcel’. The couple faces the new problem of nourishing the small infant. The problem arises about the raising of the child. Though the happy moment takes place in their life, the couple is serious –

‘They sit in silence, the three of them as still as stones.’ [24]

It indicates how a Bengali couple survives in a foreign land. Both, Ashima and Ashoke think about the future of the boy. Ashima always wishes that her first delivery would be at her father’s home at Calcutta. But, she gives birth to a
child in America. In India, joint family always makes matters. Ashima and Ashoke both arose from a joint family. But, in a foreign country, there is no joint family. And hence, they both feel alone. In a strange land, Ashima misses her mother. She thinks that the baby has its grandparent, uncle and many more. But, no one is present in the foreign country. The baby is alone and alone –

‘She has never known of a person entering the world so alone so deprived.’ [25]

The novelist expresses the condition of Indian couple in the foreign country. She describes in detail the deeper sensation of Ashima. The later thinks that her child will grow in the company of the family members. But, the child has only family of its mother and father. She weeps that the entry of the child is alone and quite. There is no joy or happy events as it is found in India. Ashima thinks that the suffering and aloofness which she feels from last few months are now destined for her child forever.

Ashima struggles to find her own identity in the strange land. The newly born Indian infant may suffer with the same in future. Now, Ashima and Ashoke think about the name of the baby boy. In Bengali tradition, the naming ceremony is prepared with the blessing of the grandparents. It is a grand ceremony which is celebrated in Bengali families. Ashima and Ashoke wait about the letter from Indians which contains the name for the infant. Though the letter was sent a month ago, it has yet to arrive. Ashoke and Ashima think that they should wait for the next letter. And, they think, truly an infant does not really need a name –

‘Names can wait….’ [25]

Ashima and Ashoke think that in India, the parents take enough time to name their child. Even, the names are not registered, until the child reaches at six or seven year. They think that they follow the tradition and wait for the letter. The novelist here elaborates that there is a cultural difference between two different countries. In Bengal, the name giving is an important ritual. But, the migrants from India are confused, whether they stick to the tradition or to
follow the new trends and culture of foreign countries. Bhagbat Nayak expresses –

‘Culture of naming a new born is a practice in every society. The novelist narrates this practice with bicultural implications. According to Indian custom parents feel particularly privileged when the child is given a name by the grandparents elder members of the family. But in American custom a name is chosen at Baptism or after the name of the family predecessors. In any case, the culture of naming is important for the parents in every community and religion.’[Op.Cit: 54]

The novelist expresses the cultural difference and the plight of Indian couple. The Indians in the foreign countries struggle to establish a bond between their own culture and foreign culture. The immigrants also hope that their new generation which grows in a foreign land should follow the Indian culture, but they find it difficult. They suffocate between the western and their own culture. The novelist beautifully portrays the cultural crises between Indian families through the characters of Ashoke and Ashima.

The novelist skillfully elaborates the condition of Ashima and Ashoke. The couple thinks about the pet name. It is the culture of western countries to have a pet name. In Indian family, the pet names are private and are called by friends, family and other close relatives. In India, all have their peculiar pet names. Ashima’s pet name is Monu and Ashoke’s is Mithu. The novelist deeply studies the Indian and especially Bengali culture. She is always fascinated with Indian culture. She propagates that in Bengal all have pet names and it is called ‘dakname’ i.e. pet name. But, they have the good names also. It is also called, ‘Bhalonam’. ‘Bhalo’ in Bengali means good. The good name is an identity to the outside world. The novelist describes that the good names are appeared on a public place. The novelist explains it through the letter by Ashima’s mother. She writes Ashima’s name i.e. ‘Bhaloname’ on envelop and her pet name ‘Monu’ inside the letter. Eventually, the nurse asks about the name and Ashima answers that the name will decide her grandmother. When nurse enquires about grandmother –
‘Ashima laughs, her first genuine laugh after giving birth.’ [26]

Ashima’s laugh indicates her deep pain. The genuine laugh of Ashima reveals the awful aloofness. The depression of Ashima is vividly described by the novelist. Further, the novelist elaborates the laugh that indicates the inner pain of Ashima. She deeply suffers for sustaining her own feelings and emotions. In hospital, doctor informs Ashoke that for compiling of hospital birth certificate, they must choose a name for their son. The couple is now in deep distressed situation. They are in confusing state, whether they wait for a letter or follow the rules of hospital. The contradictory situations arise here for Ashoke and Ashima. On one side, they feel satisfied to have a baby boy, a first ‘Sahib’ of Ganguli family, but on the other hand, they are in confusion. The novelist seriously elaborates the element of cultural differences between two different countries.

The Indian couple tries to stick to the tradition of Indian culture. But, now, they fall in a real trouble about the name of the newly born infant. They are in confusion whether to follow the foreign tradition to have a name of ancestor. But, they also think of a great Bengali tradition. The name of the ancestors in India has a symbol of honour. The culture of naming in a foreign nation is ridiculed in India. The individual names are sacred in India. They are not meant to be inherited or shared. Again, Ashoke remembers the train accident which is deeply rooted in his mind. He also remembers *The Overcoat* and the torn page which cramped tightly in his fingers. He suddenly murmurs ‘Gogol’ and the child has its name ‘Gogol’. Ashima accepts this name because she knew that the name stands not only for her son’s life, but her husband’s life also. The novelist beautifully portrays the hollowness of the foreign culture and the situation which faces the new problems by the couple. The Indian couple falls in the clutches of the situation. The novelist expresses the problems of the immigrants through the characters of the Ashoke and Ashima.

The novelist elaborates condition of Ashima. In India, the mother and her newly born baby is nourished by the relatives. But, in a foreign land, the couple always misses their relatives on such a situation. Ashima and Ashoke
bring up their new born baby in a well furnished flat. But, they think it
difficult to bring up a child without having any older member in the family.
The first time Ashima visits the new house with her child at the newly well
furnished flat at England. Though the house is well furnished, it is not all what
she has expected. She dreamed of the house which she had seen in English
film. Ashima imagines the foreign countries through the film, when she saw
Ashoke first time. But, the reality is a different one. Still, she does not make
any complaints. She is typically Indian woman who never complaints. They
always adjust their dreams according to the condition. They have not their
own dreams.

The expectations dissolve in the responsibilities. Ashima’s expectation
disappears when she dwells in a foreign world. Her own feeling and emotions
are suppressed in the family responsibilities. But, she still maintains the
situation. The novelist here shows the difference between Indian woman and
foreign woman. The Indian woman and her world is her family only. Her own
emotions and expectations are related towards her family. Her own feeling
vanishes. Her dreams are stagnant. But, still, she does not complaint –

‘But, she has complained of none of this. She has
kept her disappointment to herself, not wanting, to
offend Ashoke, or worry her parents.’ [30]

Ashima represents the typical Indian woman who struggles for her own
identity. She always dreamed of her marriage life. But, their own identity is
lost in the family responsibilities. Ashima never complains the situation or
disappointment which she has after getting married. But, in deep her mind, she
suffers. She suffocates between her own feelings and responsibilities. The
novelist tenderly elaborates the Indian woman through the character of
Ashima. Her plight in the foreign land and responsibilities as a mother and as
a wife beautifully is expressed by the novelist. Through the disappointment of
Ashima, the novelist portrays the Indian women and her sufferings. The
family moves to the Montgomery. The place is far from the previous one. The
place is lonely. There is no rush or bustle of vehicles. The place is totally
different than the house of Ashima’s father at Calcutta.
Ashima’s father’s house is filled with bustle and noise. This kind of bustle is a part of Ashima’s life before marriage. She talks with neighbours. She takes part in various ceremonies and specially Durga Puja, which is celebrated grandly in Calcutta. But, here there is no neighbor, no sharing and no celebration of the festivals. She wants to share the problems to the neighbours. But, at this place, it is hard to find a person to talk. The life style and culture is totally different. The women in a foreign country are different –

‘Judy always wears blue jeans torn up into shorts once summer comes…’ [31]

Judy is the free woman. She always wears which she wants to wear. There is no restriction as it happens with Ashima. She always wear sari. It is a tradition of India that after getting marriage the women always remain in saris. There is no freedom to wear jeans and tops. Judy works for women’s health. The novelist beautifully compares Ashima with Judy. Judy is a free woman with her own thought and of course, she has her own identity. But, on the other hand, Ashima searches her own identity. Actually, she tries to adjust herself in a foreign country. She suffers with the current family situation.

Ashima finds herself in a gloomy apartment. And she accepts that there is no one to clean the house or shop the groceries or prepare the meals on the days she is tired or homesick. Hence, Ashima expects that her child should grow in the company of his own relatives. She always asks Ashoke –

‘I’m saying I don’t want to raise Gogol alone in this country. It’s not right. I want to go back.’ [33]

Ashima deeply feels the hollowness of the relations in the foreign country. When Ashima introduces her family with Judy, she feels no moisture relations between the family members. Hence, she wants to grow her child in India where relations maintain. But, in reality, it is impossible for Ashoke to get his degree. The above lines denote the agitation of Ashima. She wants to go to India. She suffocates in the foreign culture. The novelist describes the cultural crises in the foreign countries. She also expresses the strain between relations.
Ashoke realizes the problem of Ashima. Ashima suffocates in the foreign culture –

‘Early mornings, when he senses that she is quietly crying, he puts an arm around her but can think of nothing to say, feeling that it is his fault for marrying her, for bringing her here.’ [33]

Ashoke too suffocates in the foreign country. He has limited friends and most of them are Bengali migrants. He too realizes the situation which he faces from last few years. But, without complaint, he spends his life and adjusts according to the situation. Ashoke feels homesickness. He also wants to go to Calcutta. But, it is hard to do now. He hides the suffocation and sufferings and pains of loneliness. Every character in the novel suffers and searches for their identities. We may think that Ashima only suffers with loneliness and misses the culture and country. But, Ashoke too misses and suffers with the same. He hides the things. But, they are shown in his behaviour. The aloofness which is felt by Ashima is not considered by any one. Even though, Ashoke too does not feel this, she worries, in alone when she remembers her mother and father. When she looks Gogol, she feels that the child is alone and she cries. Even when Ashoke is not available at phone, she cries. She deeply feels that she is alone in this city. This awful loneliness and aloofness haunts the memory of Ashima. She tries to adjust herself and hence, how she engages herself in the home duties. She always brings stuff for food preparation. Though she engages herself in the household duties, her mind hovers with the solitary life –

‘She begins to pride herself on doing it alone, in devising a routine.’ [34]

She engages herself in household duties. But, she thinks about her own feelings and emotions. She is engaged with Gogol. And now, she becomes a good mother. But, she always misses the life before marriage. Her own wishes scatter in the responsibilities. Ashima engages herself in preparing Gogol and her daily routine. But she deeply thinks about Gogol. She always misses her parents when she is alone in the house –
‘At times, staring at the baby, she sees pieces of her family in his face - her mother’s glossy eyes, her father’s slim lips, he brother’s lopsided smile.’ [35]

It reveals that Ashima misses her family. In the face of her child, she tries to find the family. But, she cannot find herself in the face of Gogol. It propagates that she has not her own reflection in the Gogol. And, actually, she misses herself in the face of Gogol and in the foreign country also. Ashima engages herself in the company of Gogol. She prepares him, singing Bengali song and feeds him regularly. The letter from Calcutta always is sent regularly from her mother and father. Her mother always writes –

‘These are the most crucial months. Every hour there is a change. Remember it.’ [36]

Ashima needs her mother in these conditions. But, she is far away from her mother. Actually, in Boston, she always accompanies with her Bengali friends. But, she needs her mother’s support. Still, the couple waits for the letter which contains the name for Gogol. But, they learn through the letter of Ashima’s father that the Grandma has had stroke and paralyzed. Her father has written –

‘Prepare yourself Ashima. Perhaps you may not see her again.’ [36]

Ashima loves her grandmother very much. Her grandma always shares the life experiences which she had. She always guides Ashima in a critical situation. But, now, Ashima perhaps may not see her again. Ashima stuns with the news about her grandmother’s condition. She cannot share what she thinks even Ashoke too cannot recognize the situation of Ashima. She sits near the window and remembers the events which she has spent with her grandmother. The novelist explains the Bengali culture when Ashima remembers the pre-marriage incidence –

‘Before leaving, Ashima had stood, her head lowered, under her late grandmothers portrait, asking him to bless her journey. Then she bent down to touch the dust of her Dida’s feet to head.'
‘Dida I’m coming’, Ashima had said. For this was the phrase Bengalis always used in place of good-bye.’ [37]

The novelist here expresses the great Indian culture to admire the grandparents. Ashima deeply is associated with her grandmother. She always needs the support of her grandmother. It is not found in the foreign countries. In India, the joint families always fill with the parents and grandparents. But, as there are nuclear families in the foreign countries, the support of grandparents rarely is found. As the baby grows, Ashima and Ashoke decide to celebrate the Bengali ceremony to feed rice to Gogol –

‘The occasion: Gogol’s annaprasan, his rice ceremony. There is no baptism for Bengali babies, no ritualistic naming in the eyes of god. Instead, the first formal ceremony of their lives centers on the consumption of solid food.’ [38]

The novelist compares the culture of India and foreign countries. In foreign countries, baptism ceremony is celebrated in church by father. But, in Bengal, the first ceremony of any child in their life is food eating, the first solid food after six months. Both Ashima and Ashoke follow the customs of the rituals in the company of their Bengali friends. Though there is no one from the family of Ashoke and Ashima, they follow the Bengali culture. Both think that it is needed to their child Gogol to follow and understand the great Indian culture.

The novelist successively elaborates the first function of the life of Gogol. Ashima and Ashoke wear perfect Indian costume. Ashima takes keen interest to fulfill all the needful things she wants that her child should understand the Indian rituals throughout his life –

‘The final bowl contains payesh, a warm rice pudding Ashima will prepare for him to eat on each of his birthday as a child, as an adult even, alongside a slice of bakery cake.’ [39]

The ceremony continues and Ashoke tells Dilip Nandi, one of his close friends to feed first rice to Gogol. Actually, in Bengali, the first rice to the
child to be feed by mother’s brother. But, in a foreign land, Ashima and Ashoke celebrate the ceremony without any relatives. Ashima still thinks of her parents –

‘Ashima’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.’ [40]

Now as ceremony proceeds the next is a final ritual in the ceremony, the moment they have all been waiting for. To predict his future path, Gogol offers a plate holding a clump of cold soil, a ball point pen, and a dollar bill, to see if he will be a landowner, scholar or businessman. But Gogol touches nothing. Actually Ashoke think that Gogol should grab pen and became scholar. The novelist expresses the Bengali culture –

‘Only then, forced at six months to confront his destiny, does he begin to cry.’[40]

Here the novelist propagates that how a six months child decides his future. Actually it is a Bengali ritual. It is a part of their life. The novelist explains the culture of India. The novelist expresses that Ashima and Ashoke strictly follow the culture of India. In a foreign country, the couple follows their tradition.

Here, the novelist shows Ashima as a typical Indian woman who is well connected with her mother. She cannot imagine the world without her mother. She needs her mother when she faces troubles. She feels a desperate loneliness. She is in need of her mother’s support –

‘In spite of her dread she feels a thrill; this will be the first time she’s heard her mother’s voice in nearly three years. The first time, since her departure from Dum Dum airport, that she will be called Monu.’ [44]
Though Ashima’s mind is filled with emotions and feelings, she cannot talk Ashoke. After putting down the receiver, Ashoke goes to kitchen and drinks water. Something is serious which he goes to share with Ashima –

‘He continues to shake his head, and then he reaches across to her side of the bed and presses her hand so tightly that slightly painful. He presses her to the bed, laying on top of her his face to one side, his body suddenly trembling. He holds her this way for so long that she begins to wonder if he is going to turn off the light and caress her. Instead he tells her what Rana told him a few minutes ago, what Rana couldn’t bear to tell his sister, over the telephone, himself that her father died yesterday evening, of a heart attack, playing patience can his bed.’ [45-46]

The novelist here expresses deep grief of Ashima. She dreams the visit of Calcutta which she prepares for a long time. Now, she visits prior to the time. But, the big difference is that she cannot see her father any more. Ashima now feels deep sorrow. Though she cannot express it to the Ashoke, she feels what she has lost. They leave India six weeks before. But, Ashima cannot picture the bare head of her mother –

‘But this time no image of her family comes to mind. She refuses to picture what she shall see soon enough: her mother’s vermilion erased from her part, her brother’s thick hair shave from his head in mourning? [47]

The novelist not only portrays the good culture of India, but she also expresses the mourning ceremony. As per the tradition, when the husband dies, the woman should wear white sari and her vermilion vanishes from the forehead. She cannot wear green bangles afterward. The novelist here minutely pictures the culture and tradition of India which is rarely found in other countries. Ashima is eager to meet her mother before this incidence happens. Now, she refuses to visit India. She often tells Ashoke –

‘I don’t want to go.’ She says turning towards the dark oval window. ‘I don’t want to see them. I can’t’ [47]
Ashima cannot reveal her deeper mourn to Ashoke. She cannot imagine her father’s house without him. Death creates a deep impact on the mind of Ashima. Ashoke and Ashima migrate from Boston to the suburban area. Actually, Ashoke accepts the position in the university which causes their migration. The job is everything that Ashoke has ever dreamed of. He has always hoped to teach in a University rather than to work for a corporation. But,

‘For Ashima, migrating to the suburbs feels more drastic, more distressing than move from Calcutta to Cambridge had been.’ [49]

Ashima now feels more distressing. Ashoke never considers Ashima. He cannot imagine how Ashima feels when she migrates from city to the suburbs. Now, Ashima feels more aloof than Cambridge. The place itself causes the deep distress –

‘She is stunned that in this town there are no sidewalks to speak of, no street lights, no public transportation, no stores for miles at a time.’ [49]

In a new migrated land, Ashima now feels more despair, as she experienced pregnancy. She experiences the life which now vanishes in time. There is no kind of joy or happiness which she always dreamed when she first time migrated from India. Mansing Kadam elucidates it –

‘…….. Being a foreigner, Ashima is beginning to realize, is a sort of lifelong pregnancy- a perpetual wait, a constant burden, a continuous feeling out of sorts. It is an ongoing responsibility, a parenthesis in what had once been ordinary life, only to discover that the previous life has vanished, replaced by something more complicated and demanding. Like pregnancy, being a foreigner Ashima believes, is something that elicits the same curiosity form strangers, the same combination of pity and respect’ [Kadam, G. Mansing: 2012: 68]

The novelist compares the condition of Ashima with pregnancy. It is difficult for her to adjust at new place. That experience cannot be imagined by Ashoke. He cannot consider the pain of Ashima. Now, Gogol enters a nursery
school run by the university. Ashima and Ashoke decide to admit Gogol in the nursery. Now, Ashima again feels alone. Her lot of time spends on Gogol. But, now, in a new house, she is alone.

The novelist portrays the great Indian culture. Ashima wants to lead Gogol about the Indian culture. She wants that Gogol should follow the Indian culture –

“She teaches him to memorize a four line children’s poem by Tagore, and the name of deities adorning the ten handed goddess Durga during Pujo: Saraswati with her swan and Kartik with her peacock to her left, Lakshmi with her owl and Ganesh with his mouse to her right.’ [54]

Actually, in India, the cultural atmosphere already teaches the child. The grandparents always guide them how to behave. But, here, with Gogol, there is no cultural atmosphere and he does not accompany with her grandparents. Hence, Ashima thinks that she herself teaches Gogol about the Indian culture. The novelist beautifully portrays the cultural difference between India and foreign countries. She describes the plight of immigrants from India who always miss their great culture. They strive to stick to their rituals. Gogol now regularly visits his new kindergarten school.

The novelist portrays the struggles of the Indian couple. Ashima and Ashoke know that in a foreign country the name Gogol is not unique one. Hence, in future, it might be troublesome for Gogol. But, Gogol wants that name. He cannot adopt the new name. The name Gogol is his own identity. He asks his parents why he has to have new name. Ashoke says to him not to worry, and then he will remain as Gogol. Now, Gogol enters a school, but not with the new name Nikhil. The secretary enters his name as Gogol in the admission form. Ashoke and Ashima wish that Gogol should learn his nation and culture. But, in school, this does not happen –

‘Here the only official ritual is pledging allegiance first thing in the morning to the American flag.’ [60]
It shows the cultural difference. In migrated country, the couple faces the cultural problem. The couple wants that their children should learn the local culture and they also should stick to their Indian culture. But, in school, it is rarely found. Here, Ashima and Ashoke face the problem of cultural aloofness and they seriously worry about Gogol’s cultural growth. The novelist minutely reveals the relations. In the month of May, Gogol has his new sister. He eagerly watches his sister in a glass tub. Young Gogol is fascinated with the new born baby. The novelist beautifully describes the relation bond of the Indian family –

‘Shyly he gives his mother the picture hi’s drawn. Underneath the figures he’s written his own name, and Ma, and baba. Only the space under the baby is blank. ‘I didn’t know the baby’s name,’ Gogol says, which is when his parents tell him.’ [61]

Now, the couple thinks about the name of her newly born girl child. They had an experience at the time of Gogol –

‘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 for their daughter good name and pet name are one ad the same; Sonali meaning ‘she who is golden’. [62]

The couple is aware about Sonia. They again arrange the rice ceremony. These ceremonies arrange the Bengali Indians together. This time, Gogol presents in the ceremony. He too now is well acquainted with Indian culture. Now, the small Sonia also first time feels the Indian culture. There is lots of Mashas and Mashis around Sonia –

‘Unlike her complaint older brother, Sonia, seven months old, refuses all the food. She plays with the dirt they’ve dug up from the yard and threatens to put the dollar bill into her mouth. ‘this one’ one of the guests remarks, ‘this one is the true American.’ [63]

It shows the American tendencies. When Sonia put the dollar bill into the mouth, it shows the crises of culture between India and America. The
novelist here elaborates the condition of Ashima and Ashoke. The couple feels more desperate about Calcutta –

‘More deaths come, more letters arrive in the mailbox informing them of aunts and uncles no longer with them. The news of these deaths never gets lost in the mail as other letters do. Somehow, had news, however ridden with static, however filled with echoes, always manages to be conveyed. Within a decade abroad, they are both orphaned. Ashoke’s parents both dead from cancer, Ashima’s mother from Kidney disease. [63]

In a foreign country, now couple is alone. They have only memory of their relatives. Now, Ashoke and Ashima cannot present their grief. They silently express their sorrow. It shows how they suffer with the awful loneliness. They are alone in the crowded cities of America. Ashima and Ashoke not only feel sorrow and aloneness, but they also fear about Gogol and Sonia. They think that Gogol and Sonia should follow the Indian culture. In foreign countries for the sake of their children, they follow the tradition of America –

‘For the sake of Gogol and Sonia they celebrate, with progressively increasing fanfare, the birth of Christ, an event the children look forward to far more than the worship of Durga and Saraswati.’ [64]

Ashima and Ashoke decide that their children should survive in the foreign country. They always are cautious about the children –

‘When Gogol is in third grade they send him to Bengali language and culture lesson every other Saturday held in the home of one of their friends for when Ashima and Ashoke close their eyes it never fails to unsettle them.’ [65]

Gogol grows up as a teenager. Still, he does not hesitate to use his name. He tries to search and his name in books, boards of the shop boards –
‘As a young boy Gogol doesn’t mind his name. He recognizes pieces of himself in road sign; GO LEFT, GO RIGHT, GO SLOW.’ [69]

Ashoke always tells old Gogol about India and their ancestor. When in summer they visit Calcutta they introduced with the history of their family. Gogol now tries to search his own identity. He tries to adjust with his unique identity, but considers his name as absurd. The novelist describes the condition of Gogol. He reveals with an incident –

‘Looking for their own names, a handful triumphant when they are able to claim a grave they are related to ‘Smith’ they holler ‘Collins!’ ‘Wood!’ Gogol is old enough to know that there is no Ganguli here. He is old enough to know that he himself will be burned, not buried, that his body will occupy no plot of earth, that no stone in his country will bear his name beyond life.’ [69]

It shows that Gogol feels aloofness in the foreign country. He cannot find other Ganguli in the foreign country. Ashima tells him about the Indian Ghats. Actually, she denies the visit of Gogol to graveyard –

‘In Calcutta, the burning Ghats are the most forbidden of places, she tells Gogol, and she tries her best not to though he was here not there both times it happened she sees her parents bodies, swallowed by flames.’ [70]

It shows the deep impact that in India children never visit the forbidden place. But, only in America, they are taken to cemeteries in the name of the art.

The fourth section starts with the birthday party of Gogol. It is the fourteenth birthday. It is the first time he feels that it is not in Bengali tradition. To get rid of the loneliness, his family always arranges the function. It is the occasion when Bengali’s in America gather and shares their life. In the party, Gogol first time meets Moushumi. She is the only closest friend to him in age. After getting over the function, Gogol is busy in listening lesson and other music. First time, Ashoke visits the room of Gogol. This is the first time Ashoke brings the gift for Gogol. He has never given him birthday
present apart from whatever his mother buy. But, this year, Ashoke gives him a present obviously a book of Nikolai Gogol’s *The Short Stories of Nikolai Gogol*. Actually, Gogol would have preferred the other book. He always thinks about his name also –

> ‘He has never been told why he was really named Gogol, doesn’t know about the accident that had nearly killed his father’s limp is the consequence of an injury playing soccer in his teens. Hi’s been told only half the truth about Gogol: that his father is a fan.’ [75]

Actually, Gogol cannot imagine the grief and suffering of his father. However Ashoke wants that Gogol should understand the real history of his name. Though Gogol cannot reveal the uneasiness with his name, he thinks that his name is obscure –

> ‘But Gogol sounds ludicrous to his ears, lacking dignity or gravity. What dismays him most is the irrelevance of it all. Gogol, he’s been tempted to tell his father on more than one occasion, was his favorite author, not his.’ [76]

It shows the inner conflict of Gogol. Though he wants the reality about his name, but he cannot discuss with his father. He actually wants the other name rather than his present name. He thinks that there is other name which suits him. He cannot talk this, though he deeply wants to discuss it with his father. Meanwhile, Ashoke discusses it with Gogol –

> ‘I feel a special kinship with Gogol,’ Ashoke says,’ more than with any other writer. Do you know why?’ ‘You like his stories.’ ‘Apart from that. He spent most of his adult life outside his homeland like me.’ [77]

First time Ashoke express his own feeling in front of Gogol. Actually, he is deeply concerned with Russian Gogol. He always remembers his accident and the half page of ‘The Overcoat’. He asks his son that he has a special kinship with Gogol. He also spends most of his adult life outside his homeland. Ashoke himself spends most of his time outside India. Hence, he
finds the same grief in the work of Gogol. The same aloofness is expressed by Gogol in his writing.

Gogol blames his parents about his name. He declares that how their parent gave the name as it is uneasy, absurd and also unnatural to him. He complains his father how they give the name of that person who deprives his own life –

‘I don’t get it. How could you gives name me after someone so strange? No one takes me seriously,’
Gogol said.’ [100]

The novelist here propagates the difference between cultures. In India, a son never blames their parent about his name. He continues his name what so ever, throughout his life. It is the tradition of India. Ashoke never complains about his name or his surname, Ganguli. In India, names always inherit once it gives it stock to life long. But, in foreign country, it does not happen. Gogol does not complaint about his name. The novelist expresses it with sharp line –

‘In America anything is possible. Do is you wish.’
[100]

Then Gogol legally changes his name. Now, he becomes Nikhil instead of Gogol. He alone visits the court and completes the procedure. He does not accompany his parents. It is his self decision –

‘No one accompanies him on this legal rite of passage, and when he steps out of the room no one is waiting to commemorate the moment with flower and Polaroid snapshots and balloons.’ [102]

Actually, the novelist describes the contrast situation. She first describes the name giving ceremony with Bengali tradition. The rice giving ceremony is celebrated with Bengali friends. On the other hand, when Gogol changes his name, there is no one to commemorate. Though Gogol changes his name, it is hard to live with new name. It is just like a new birth.
The novelist here describe that Gogol though changes his name, he still fill strange to him. He still fills himself as Gogol officially his name is Nikhil but in America he still as Gogol –

‘There is only one complication: he doesn’t feel like Nikhil. Not yet part of the problem is that he used to be Gogol.’ [105]

It is different that Gogol is in dangling situation. He is aware about his parents’ attitude. It is bound with traditional Indian culture. Ashoke and Ashima now also adjusted with the new culture. Though it is hard to both of them, they realize that they have to adjust with the new culture and tradition of America. Now, it is no strange when they hear about Ruth –

‘His parents have expressed no curiously about his girlfriend. His relationship with her is one accomplishment in his life about which they are not in the least bit proud or pleased.’ [116]

Gogol is now desperate about Ruth. He thinks about her. He wishes he could spend most of the time with her. He cannot consider with Ashoke and Ashima. It is a foreign trend to have their own decision without considering parents. Ashoke and Ashima actually worry about Gogol because they think that Gogol is too young to involve in the marriage. The novelist here expresses the cultural conflict with the migrant people. The novelist describes the conflict with several incidences with Gogol, Ashima and Ashoke. She elaborates the incident when they visit the panel discussion. Here, the novelist expresses it through the lines like –

‘Gogol has never heard the term ABCD. He eventually gathers that it stands for ‘American born Confused Deshi.’ [118]

The novelist here describes the difference between American rituals and Indian rituals. Googol is surprised when Maxine’s father and mother freely share the wine which is not seen in his family. Gogol involves with her for sexual satisfaction. It shows how in a foreign country, the youth is free to do what they wish. In orthodox Indian society, there is no permission of pre-
marital sex when Gogol reveals the customs and rituals of India, his parents’ lifestyle and wearing. She astonishes to hear it –

‘She is surprised to hear certain things about his life; that all his parents’ friends are Bengali, that they had had an arranged marriage that his mother cooks Indian food every day that she wears sari and bindi.’ [138]

Gogol too is surprised in the company of Maxine and her family. He never imagines this kind of relation and lifestyle in his family. Actually, the novelist describes the difference between two different countries –

‘Seeing the two of them curled up on the sofa in the evenings, Gerald’s head resting on Lydia’s shoulder, Gogol is reminded that in all his life he has never witnessed a single moment of physical affection between his parents. Whatever love exist between them is an utterly private.’ [138]

Gogol now regularly visits Maxine’s house. He lives at Ratliff’s house as his own home. Actually, he cannot feel this in his own house. There is no conversation at the dinner table, no wine and free living. The novelist expresses the contrast of the behaviour of Gogol. He is half Indian and American. His family denies of American living culture. The novelist has deliberately arranged the situation that whenever Gogol experiences Maxine’s parents, he often realizes the differences of Maxine’s parents and his own family. The novelist describes the difference of marriage in America and India. In Gogol’s family, Ashoke takes all the responsibilities of the family. But, on the contrary, the novelist describes the difference of social customs of America –

‘He feels free of expectation, of responsibility, in willing exile from his own life. He is responsible for nothing the house.’ [142]

Gogol is far away from his family. His mother desires to visit the house, but Gogol has his own place. He cannot spend the vacation with his own family. Ashima insists him to join but he denies. The novelist elaborates
the differences of the both families. Gogol always keeps distance with his family –

‘Though she says nothing for a while, he knows what his mother is thinks, that he is willing to go on vacation with someone else’s parents but not see his own.’ [145]

Gogol always is fascinated with the Maxine’s family. Actually, he misses this type of family surroundings. His family is totally orthodox. There is no vacation or visiting the places far from the city –

‘Yet he cannot picture his family occupying a house like this, playing board games on rainy afternoons, watching shooting stars at night, all their relatives gathered neatly on a small trip of sand.’ [155]

Gogol now totally accompanies with Maxine’s family even though he cannot celebrate his birthday with his family. He actually fascinates with Maxine’s family. But, his own family misses him. Ashima and Ashoke always want that Gogol should spend some time with them. Though Gogol is far away from his family, he too misses his parents –

‘He gets out of bed, convinced that it’s his parents calling to wish him a happy birthday.’ [158]

Though Ashima now adjusts her life according to circumstances, in her deeper mind, she feels alone. She gathers the small things to get rid of her aloofness –

‘She has saved her dead parent’s letter on the top of shelf of her closet.’ [160]

The novelist describes the solitude of Ashima. At the age of forty-eight when her husband goes out of Boston for nine months on a research project, she finally seems to realize the enormity of solitary existence –

‘At forty-eight she has come to experience the solitude that her husband and son and daughter already know, and which they claim not to mind. “It’s not such a big deal”, her children tell her.
“Everyone should live o their own at some point.”
But Ashima feels too old to learn such skill. She hates returning in the evening to a dark, empty house, going to sleep on one side of the bed and waking up on another. [Sah, Binda: 2012: 74]

Ashima who spends her youth for her children is alone. Actually, she wishes that Gogol should accompany her. But, Gogol is far away from Pemberton Road. The novelist describes the depression of Ashima. The migrants always suffer with this. Then, Ashima’s only support, her husband dies. She is stunned with the words of the nurse that her husband is no more. From last fifteen years, Ashoke accompanied Ashima. He was the only one who knew Ashima. Ashima sit quietly. She had flashback of her memories with Ashoke.

Gogol feels deep silence. He is actually wonderstruck of his father’s exit. Suddenly, he feels that he missing something. Now, he deeply feels about his father’s absence. The novelist elaborates the condition of Gogol. Now, he feels his responsibilities. The novelist has explained the plight of Gogol –

‘He watches the sky whiten, listens as the perfect silence is replaced by the faintest hum of distant traffic, until suddenly be succumbs for a few hours, to the deepest sleep possible, his mind blank and undisturbed, his limbs motionless weighted down.’ [178]

Gogol remembers the Indian rituals after death. He remembers his father when his grandfather dies. The novelist here describes the Indian culture. Actually, the novelist here reveals the Indian culture which is totally different with the western culture. The immigrant always suffers with this. Here, the novelist elaborates –

‘He remembers when his paternal grandfather died, sometime in the seventies, remembers his mother screaming when she walked in on his father, who was shaving off all his hair with a disposable razor.’ [179]
Gogol is alone, living solitary life. After one year of the death of his father, he lives in New York. He cannot express his reason of aloofness –

‘Maxine going so far one day as to admit that she felt of his mother and sister and accusation that struck Gogol as so absurd he had no energy to argue anymore. And so, a few months after his father’s death, he stepped out of Maxine’s life for good.’ [188]

Gogol is frustrated with solitude. He thinks of a new friendship. Actually, he has an experience of Maxine. He is aware about it. He likes the company of Bridget. Actually, the novelist elaborates the western culture which has the impact of live-in-relation, but it is not found in India. Hence, the immigrants from India have the conflict of these types of culture. Gogol likes Bridget –

‘He likes the limitation. He has never been in a situation with a woman in which so little of him is involved, so little expected.’ [191]

Though Gogol never worries about his aloofness but Ashima, she is worries about aloneness of Gogol. She always wishes of settlement of Gogol. Now Ashima thinks that in the absence of his father Gogol should take the responsibility. The novelist here elaborates the difference between Indian and American social condition –

‘When he tells her that he isn’t even thirty, she tells him that by that age she had already celebrated her tenth wedding anniversary.’ [191]

On the insistence of Ashima, Gogol meets one of his Bengali friends ‘Moushumi Mazoomdar’. For the first time, he is attracted towards the Bengali girl, Moushumi. It is the first time that the novelist describes the Gogol’s attitude towards Indian girl. He is now in love with Moushumi. But, he hesitates to use Bengali language –

‘If his parents were in the cab they would have struck up a conversation with the driver asking what part of Bangladesh he was from, how long he’d been join this country whether his wife and children lived here or there.’ [199]
The novelist minutely unfolds the layers of the relation between Gogol and Moushumi. He beautifully elaborates the relations of the immigrants –

‘well it’s just funny to think all our lives our parents raised us according to the illusion that we were all part of some makeshift extended Bengali family, and someone actually thinks we’re related’ [204]

After spending solitary life, now Gogol is deeply interested in Moushumi. Actually, he wants to support of someone who understands his feelings. The novelist elaborates that Gogol wants the partner who understands his emotions and depth of his aloofness. Actually, no one can understand the plight of Gogol.

Moushumi also feels the deeper loneliness. Though she is accompanied with many of her friends, she feels awful aloofness. Actually, she is convinced that in her life there is no one to understand her feelings. The novelist genuinely describes the different culture of America. The immigrants are afraid about their next generation who follows the foreign culture. It is difficult for them to cultivate their culture and hand it over to their children –

‘They learned to overlook the fact that his parents were divorced, that his father had married not once but twice that his second wife was only ten years older that Moushumi’ [216]

On the one hand, the novelist expresses the cultural diversities. On the other hand, she elaborates the foreigners who fascinate to adopt the Indian culture. The novelist describes the character, Graham who wishes to adopt the Indian code and customs which he totally is unaware of –

‘He had charmed them all, learned to sit on the floor and eat with his fingers, take the dust from her grandparent’s feet.’ [216]

Though the relation between Moushumi and Graham is fare one, afterwards Moushumi realizes foolishness of Graham. He deceives her. He plays with the emotions of Moushumi. When she realizes this, she feels
nervous. Though she hides her emotions from her parents, she is scattered now. Gogol and Moushumi decide to marry. In their life, they suffer and feel alone. The families are happy and they decide the marriage, date and place. Here, the writer describes the Indian marriage culture –

‘His mother has brought him the things he is to wear, a parchment colored Punjabi top that had once belonged to his father. A prepleated dhoti with a drawstring waist a pair of nagrai slipper with curling toes.’ [220]

The novelist expresses both families of Gogol and Moushumi. In a foreign land, they still follow the Indian culture. Though they are unaware about their children, whether they are associated with the Indian culture or western culture –

‘There is an hour-long watered down Hindu ceremony on a platform covered with sheets. Gogol and Moushumi sit cross legged, first opposite each other, then side by side.’ [222]

Gogol and Moushumi are now married. Their families satisfy that their children followed the Indian culture. The newly married couple thinks about their future life. Though Moushumi Mazoomdar is now Moushumi Ganguli, she hesitates to use that name –

‘When relatives from India continue to address letters and cards to Mrs. Moushumi Ganguli she still shakes her head and sigh.’ [227]

The novelist unveils the life of Gogol and Moushumi. Though they are familiar with each other, they follow the same culture and tradition. Still, there is a line between them –

‘These are the things that make him feel married otherwise it’s the same, only now they’re always together.’ [229]

In March, Moushumi and Gogol go to Paris. She is familiar with Paris as she spent a lot time in it. But, for Gogol, it is just like to visit another new
unfamiliar unaccustomed land like Calcutta. Though he accompanies with Moushumi, he still feels alone –

‘He is mute in the brasseries where they eat their lunch, mute in the shop where he gazes at beautiful belts, tie, paper, pens; mute on the rainy afternoon they sped together at the d’Orsay. He is particularly mute when he and Moushumi get together for dinners with groups for her French friends, drinking Pernods and feasting on couscous or choucroute, smoking and arguing around paper-covered tables.’ [231]

At the table, there is a discussion about the name of the ensuing baby of Astrid and Donald. They discuss the names of the baby from the various books. The novelist has described the condition of Moushumi and Gogol –

‘Both Gogol and Moushumi are absent from these books, and for the first time all evening he feels a hint of that odd bond that had first drawn them together.’ [240]

Suddenly, the discussion is on the changing of the name. At this time, Moushumi suddenly reveals the reality of Gogol. She spontaneously expresses the name changing of Gogol –

‘He stares at her, stunned. He has never told her not to tell anyone. He simply assumed she never would. His expression is lost on her; she smiles back at him, unaware of what she’s done. The dinner guests regard him, their mouths hanging open in confused smiles.’ [243]

Gogol feels his name is strange and absurd. Actually, he has not revealed his real name in the outer world. But, Moushumi reveals it to her friends. He expresses –

‘There’s no such thing as a perfect name. I think that human being should be allowed to name themselves when they turn eighteen.’ [245]
The novelist describes the condition of Ashima. Now, she turns in sixties. A widow is alone in her house. In these years, she is aloof, strange enough of the foreign tradition –

‘For even after thirty two years abroad, in England and now in America, her mother does not know how to drive, does not have a job, does not know the difference between checking and a saving account.’ [247]

Though Gogol and Moushumi adjust their lives according to circumstances, Moushumi is not a perfect match for Gogol. She is self-centered. She is always attracted towards the strange person. At one instance, when she gets a C.V. of Dimitri, she remembers the past. Actually, it is her sexual incidence with Dimitri –

‘Dimitri was asleep, or so she thought….. After a while she felt his hands on her leg, on the top of the white denim shirt she was wearing. And then slowly, he began to unbutton the skirt……… and the next……… his head still on her shoulder……… It was the first time in her life a man had touched her ………she had stared at him in disbelief, angry that he assumed she hadn’t broken any hearts yet, and at the same time falttered. For the rest of the journey she kept her skirt unbottended, hoping he would return to the task.’ [Nayak, Bhagbat: 2012: 58]

It is the incidence that reflects how the children of the migrated people engage and adopt a foreign culture. They freely accept the foreign trend, have pre-marital affairs. Their parents worry about this. Moushumi has affairs. But still she thinks about her parents, traditions and culture of India. She also thinks about her mother. Actually, she is surprised how her mother manages her life in a strange land –

‘She wonders if she is the only women in her family ever to have betrayed her husband.’ [266]

The strain between Gogol and Moushumi’s relationship is an example of the degradation of the culture of the immigrant in a foreign world. Though
Gogol and Moushumi are husband and wife, they are different from their parents. Ashoke and Ashima, an Indian couple, spends their life in a foreign land. They remain faithful to each other and the same is with Moushumi’s parents. But, here, Moushumi feels that the relationship between her and Gogol is not healthy –

‘She accrued him of nothing, but more and more he sense her distance, her dissatisfaction, her distraction.’ [271]

Ashima decides to spend her remaining life in the company of the relatives. She had already spent her youth in solitude, but now she decides to leave the foreign land. But, there is something in the Pemberton Road house. She hesitates to leave a house in the Pemberton Road. She has the memories with this house –

‘Ashima had felt a moment’s panic, a prospective instinct, wanting a retract her offer, wanting the house to remain as its always been, as her husband ha last seen it.’ [275]

The novelist here describes the generation gap between Ashima’s generation and Moushumi’s generation. The Marital bond between Moushumi and Gogol could not last for long and this further adds to the agony of Ashima as she herself had taken initiative for their marriage –

‘That it was she who had encouraged Gogol to meet Moushumi will be something for which Ashima will always feel guilty. How could she have known? But fortunately 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 the case of the subsequent generation, to American sense’ [Sah, Binda: 2012: 75]

Ashima remembers all the incidences, events which she spent in this house. She is deeply attached with this foreign place. She remembers her first step in this house. The wall paint and the ceiling - all acquire the memories of
her husband. She cannot reveal it to her children. Now, she thinks that this is her hometown and Calcutta a foreign one –

‘She feels overwhelmed by the thought of the move she is about to move, to the city that was once home and is now in its own way foreign.’ [278]

The novelist beautifully elaborates the plight of Ashima. She now thinks about this house. Initially, she has difficulty to establish in a foreign land. But, now, she feels that this is her native. She has raised her children in this house. This is her small world which now she is leaving –

‘and though she still does not feel fully at home within this walls on Pemberton Road she knows that this is home nevertheless the world for which she is responsible which she has created, which is everywhere around her, needing to be packed up, giving away, thrown bit-by-bit.’ [280]

The novelist describes the condition of Ashima. She had prepared this house. She makes it home. She remembers that how she had faced the solitude in these walls. How she had faced the problems of being strange in the country. She remembers how she had faced the death of her husband. But, now, the house is handed over to the strange people. There will be no stress of Gogol –

‘And then the house will be occupied by strangers, and there will be no trace that they were ever there, no house to entre, no name in the telephone directory. Nothing to signify the years his family has lived here, no evidence of the effort, the achievement it had been.’ [281]

Gogol now is surprised like that of his parents. Actually, he too goes to the same condition that his parents had experienced. For the first time, Gogol considers the experience of his father. He now feels the condition of his parents –

‘He wonders how his parents had done it, leaving their respective families behind seeing them so seldom, swelling unconnected in a perpetual state
of expectation, of longing. All those trips to Calcutta he’d once resented—how could they have been enough? They were not enough.’ [281]

Suddenly, Gogol remembers of the confession of Moushumi. The novelist describes how Gogol, who searches a god partner in Moushumi, fails in it. The discovery of her conspiracy makes Gogol scattered. His feelings vanquished—

‘It felt almost comic to him, burning in his throat. But as soon as he asked it, he knows. He felt the chill of her secrecy, numbering him, like a poison spreading quickly through his vein.’ [282]

The novelist here elaborates the emotional conflict of Gogol. He now feels alone. He remembers the events which he spent with Moushumi. The novelist here describes how in a foreign land there is no relationship. Here, the novelist compares the generations. Ashoke and Ashima live united till the end and Gogol for few years. Gogol, who is unaware about Moushumi’s conspiracy, now lament on the situation—

‘It was as if she wore away on another trip. But this time she didn’t come back. She wanted nothing of the brief life they’d had together; when she appeared on last time at his office a few months later, so that he could sign the divorce paper, she told him she was moving back to Paris. And so, systematically, as he had done for his dead father, he removed her possessions from the apartment, putting her books into boxes on the side walk in the middle of the night for people to take throwing out the rest. In the spring he went to Venice alone for a week the trip he’d planned for the two of them, saturating himself in its ancient, melancholy beauty.’ [283]

Now, this is the last incident in foreign land of Ganguli family. Though afterwards the functions will be prepared, Ashima will not be there. The novelist here expresses that the house is now crowded with Bengali friends. Gogol remembers his past. He remembers his father who reveals the reality of his name and the accident. He remembers his mother’s aloofness. He is memorized with the vacation of Calcutta. Suddenly, he feels free. He has not
any responsibility. He now remembers his childhood and his birthday when his father gifted him with a book. Though he has not read it, now he realizes it. Though the emptiness of his life upsets him, he looks solid. When he enters his old room, he remembers each and every inch of the room. He now realizes his history of name. He remembers his father –

‘The givers and keeper of Gogol’s name are far from him now. One dead. Another a widow, on the verge of a different sort of departure, in order to dwell, as his father does, in a separate world.’ [289]

He realizes the Russian Gogol for the first time. When he opens the first page of ‘The Overcoat’, he remembers his father. He thinks about his father –

‘Until moments ago it was destined to disappear from his life altogether, but he has salvaged it by chance, as his father was pulled from a crushed train forty years ago.’ [290-291]

For this time, Gogol feels silent. He is in the company of his father who appears in the form of the word, signature in the book. This gives fine ending to his life.
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