The impact of immigration on women in the contemporary world has become a priority for many of the women writers. The understanding of the word immigration is confined to the movement of the people into another nation. Immigration is a worldwide phenomenon. Millions of Europeans have migrated to North and South America between 17th & 19th centuries. Many of these immigrants resided in colonies established by their home countries. It is pertinent to understand that United States has been shaped by the successive waves of immigrants. Centuries of immigration have profoundly affected the culture and society of United States. Except Native Americans, rest of the population in America are either recent immigrants or the descendents of immigrants who have settled in North America over the last five centuries.
The first immigrants to America came exclusively from Western Europe. During the first decade of 17th century, settlers from England colonized Virginia and New England. Apart from the French, Spanish, Dutch immigration during 17th & 18th centuries, the greatest influx of occurred between 1840 and 1920. Immigrants during this period consisted of people from Germany, Ireland, Italy, England, Scotland, Wales, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Scandinavia, Russia and Baltic states. During 1850's Chinese immigrants entered United States via San Francisco. In the early 20th century Japanese have constituted the largest group of Asian immigrants in America. The second half of 20th century saw Indians, Pakistanis, Koreans and Philippines. Literature produced by these different ethnic groups is termed as ‘Asian American Literature’. This umbrella term ‘Asian American’ was coined in the late 1960’s to promote political solidarity and cultural nationalism. Historically, the appellation ‘Asian American’ accentuates the American status of immigrants from Asia and their descendents. King Kok Cheung in An Interethnic Companion to Asian American

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Literature (1997) observes that Asian immigration began only in 1848 with the discovery of Gold in California. The term grows out of the frustration felt by many American born citizens of Asian extraction at being treated as perpetual foreigners in the United States despite the fact that their roots are deep.

Among the immigrant women novelists of 90’s in America Bharathi Mukherjee’s prolific writings have won appreciable attention across the world. By employing a mode of social realism she has excelled her contemporaries in depicting the problems of immigrant women from India. Among all her novels Wife stands out as a unique fictional work by virtue of its insightful probing into its heroine’s psyche and its indubitable technical excellence. Surfacially, Wife is the simple story of Amit and his wife Dimple, newly married Bengali immigrants to the USA. Dimple’s ill-concealed Sado-masochistic compulsions are soon precipitated by the violence ridden and individualistic American life which culminate in her killing of her own husband.
Dimple Das Gupta is the pliant, docile, obedient and submissive daughter of a middle class Bengali family: “She thought of pre-marital life as a dress rehearsal for actual living” (2) and Dimple initially believed that marriage “would bring her freedom, cocktail parties on carpet lawns, fund raising dinners for noble charities. Marriage would bring her low” (3). She is the naive daughter of a well-to-do upper middle class Indian professional. She oscillates between fear and fantasy, constantly worrying about her “Sitar-shaped body and rudimentary breasts” (4). Her notions of marriage are rather vague, derived as they are from the exaggerated art of Indian films, movie magazines, and the advice columns in “Ladies periodicals”. The tension between her actual powerlessness and forms of freedom suggested to her by the changing Indian culture have made her sick. She reads “The Doctrine of Passive Resistance” for her university exams and expects to employ domestic passive resistance without holding affection, to win the love of the unknown husband, who is the only hope of adult freedom she has. At last she finds a matrimonial
candidate, Amit Basu, a consulting engineer, who is ideal for her emigration. Her horoscope matches and she arranges marriage by means of ubiquitous matrimonial advertisements in ethnic newspapers and magazines insistently signifying the subordinated, passive role of a daughter brought up to obey male authority: “Discreet and Virgin, she waited for real life would begin” (13).

Dimple’s psychic defect is implied in her name. Significantly the author has given the meaning of the word taken from Oxford English Dictionary: Dimple as any slight surface depression. With this psychic defect, she naturally reacts in a peevish way to all the things around her. In typical Indian fashion, Dimple moves in with her mother-in-law whom she loathes and soon becomes pregnant. She sees pregnancy as an impediment to her new beginning: “she began to think of the baby as unfinished business. It cluttered up the preparation for going abroad. She did not want to carry any relics from her old life. She does not like her new name either: ‘The name just doesn’t suit me’ ”(18). She does not love the house she
lives in. The “Lace doilies are for her so degrading that she wishes she were back in her own room in Rash Behari Avenue” (30).

Dimple does not even love Amit, her husband when he takes her to kwality. She feels “He should have taken her to Trinca’s” (21). Dimple has a subterranean streak of violence. She is uprooted from her family and familiar world, and projected into a social vaccum where the media becomes her surrogate community, her global village. It is very unnatural for a normal girl to “enjoy” the sensation of vomiting and think of getting rid of “Whatever it was that blocked her tubes and pipes” (31). Dimple “gave vicious squeezes to her stomach as if to force a vile thing out of hiding” (30). The height of her abnormality reaches when she skips her way to abortion: “She had skipped rope until her legs grew numb and her stomach burned; then she had poured water from the heavy bucket over her head, shoulders, over the tight little curve of her stomach. She had poured until the last of the blood washed off her legs; then she had collapsed. (42)
Jyothi Sen receives Dimple and Amit at Kennedy Airport. Dimple learns doing shopping in America. Dimple’s sense of her own identity and marginality frames all of her responses to her new environment, which consists generally Indians, mostly Bengalis. That the ethnography of Indians, including ‘Americanized’ Bengalis, constitutes “the experience of being abroad” is one of the many reversals of ideological positioning Mukherjee employs in Wife. When Jyothi and Amit discuss “guns and licenses” over dinner, Dimple “thought she had never really seen friends with anyone before this, never stayed with someone for weeks and discussed important things like love and death. That’s what America meant to her” (84-85). They went to a party near Manhattan near Columbia University. Vinod Khanna comments Dimple that she looked fresh and Un-Americanized. He offers a job as a sales girl to Dimple. Amit rejects this offer. For Dimple Mullick is more American than Americans. He is a chain smoker. She meets Milt Glassery.
Dimple encounters the horrific scenes of murder and violence in America where crime is the talk of the day, the rule of the land. It is in this pervasive ambience of crime that her feeling of guilt is mitigated. As M.Siva Rama Krishna says: “this pervasive atmosphere of crime dulls the edge of her own guilt” (Indian Women Novelists, 73). She was glad that an elderly couple had been fatally shot on a fishing trip so that she did not have to feel guilty about Amit.

Dimple’s mistaking the social circle of Indians for “Cultural experience” prevents her from experiencing life on the outside that would shape her view of American society. However, Dimple’s analysis of her earliest encounter with American society is from the perspective of her own cultural mornings. Turned away from her request for “five hundred grams of cheese cake” (59) with the reminder that Schwartz’s is a Kosher deli, and does not sell “milk, cheese, sour cream” (60). Dimple thinks, “In Calcutta she’d by from Muslims, Biharis, Christians, Nepalis. She was used to many races; she’d never been a communalist . . . she was caught in the cross-fire
of an American communalism she couldn’t understand. She felt she
do come very close to getting killed in her third morning in
America” (60). Her failed attempt at negotiating the cultural divide
reiterates Dimple’s inability to find her “space” within the confines
of an alien culture. That is, she can neither negotiate the cultural
barrier nor find a voice that answers to her needs, that speaks for
her, that discloses meaning for her in the chaos of her experience.

At the time of Interview Dimple ties the knot. It was her final
maidenly accomplishment. He didn’t get job. Dimple thought a
man without job was not a man at all. She thought of committing
suicide in queens. Lack of communication stipples and chokes her
voice and disintegrates her sensibility. It takes away the sanity of
her mind. She has nightmares of violence, of suicide and of death.
She has even the sensation of being raped and killed in her flat. She
is haunted by the thoughts of illusion of committing suicide and the
reality of butchering her husband. It is her nightmarish visions and
dreams that highlight her latent impulses: “That night she had new
dream; she was walking on the beach. A whale, a porpoise, a shark, she heard people say, She fought her way though a crowd that suddenly disappeared. At her feet lay Ina Mullick, in Dimple's sari, a thin line of water spilling from her mouth" (103). Dimple thought that Amit is irresponsible towards her. She felt bored. She wants to dream but Amit does not provide her fantasy life. He was merely a provider of small comforts.

Amit is isolated from her since he fails to nourish her fantasies, turns away from her world of dreams and delusions, her neurotic pinnings and her eccentricities. Amit simply does not fit into her own world: "She thought marriage was a chancy business; it could easily have been Jyoti instead of Amit that she had married since both were of the same caste and both were engineers" (85).

Her dislike of Amit's ways of life makes her dislike the world around her and look at its cadaverously and neurotically: "She thought of sleeping bodies as Corpses" (97). Despair sets in. She begins to detest even the sanctity of her marital ties since "marriage
had betrayed her, had not provided her all the glittery things she had imagined" (102). She even wanted to give up old friendships: “Because there was nothing to describe and nothing to preserve (120).

Dimple is perilously estranged from her own self. She is alien to it. It is her self alienation that breeds a terrible anguish in her and prompts her to murder her husband: “Her own body seemed curiously alien to her, filled with hate, malice, are in same desire to hurt, yet weightless, almost airborne” (117). Even the apartment she lives in symbolizes the laceration of her psyche, its decay and degeneration. The T.V. becomes a diabolical trap, a torment without hope of either relief of release. It becomes an object of incarceration, a menagerie to her. She is immured in it, parting for release, an escape from T.V. Watching. Even the appointment objectifies this psychic decay and degeneration: “There were too many images of corrosion within the apartment” (127).
Dimple turns towards Ina, Leni and Milt Glasses in her moments of crises. Ina and Leni fail her as friends. Thus, when Dimple is seduced by Milk Glasses, her isolation and despair become even more acute. Dimple has committed the ultimate sacrilege, the betrayal of her gendered Indian culture: “She was so much worse off than ever, more lonely, more cut off from Amit, from the Indians, left only with borrowed disguises ...like a shadow without feelings” (200). Isolated from the world outside and disappointed in Amit who, unable to find a professional position, had taken to washing dishes, Dimple amuses: “Life should have treated her better, should have added and subtracted in different proportions so that she was not left with a Chimera” (156).

Dimple cogitates upon the nine ways of dying. Set fire to sari made of synthetic fibre; head in oven: nick wrist with broken glass in a sink full of scalding dish water; starve; fall on bread knife while thinking of Japanese Samurai revivals. While waiting on the platform for the train to arrive, she thinks of containers for
husband’s ashes, “should he die a sudden death”? And wonders “What happened to the bits of bone and organs that were scanned but not totally consumed”? (168). It was becoming the voice of madness, and that leads to her decision to “Kill Amit and hide his body in the freezer” (195). She sneaked upon him and chose a spot, her favorite spot just under the hairline, where the mole was getting larger and browner. She brought her right hand up and with the knife stabbed the magical circle once, twice, seven times (213). Having thus killed Amit, Dimple has ultimately succeeded in achieving a medium of satisfaction for masochistic drives. She has turned the whole society into a punishing agent. Her descent into madness, in the final analysis is to be seen as both are affirmation and a denial of her identity as a victim of cultural displacement and patriarchal discourse.

Bharati Mukherjee, ‘The clear eyed but affectionate immigrant in American society’ (77), has become a celebrity for her distinctive approach to expatriatehood as a metaphysical experience of exile and as an agent of attitudinal change, both in the minority
and majority cultures. Diasporal dream figures prominently in all her fiction, but its treatment after her settling in America seems to be more assured and more comprehensive in its coverage of the many moods of expatriation - nostalgia, frustration and hope than in the Canadian phase of her life where uncertainty and despondency prevailed.

Dimple the protagonist in *Wife* is an extremely immature girl who constantly dreams of marriage as she hopes that it would bring freedom and love. After her excruciatingly painful and desperately waiting she is finally married to Amit Kumar Basu. Bharati Mukherjee presents the world of Dimple, a world of day-dreams and nightmares and her morbid psyche through a series of grotesque images. F.A. Inamdar in his article “Immigrant Lives: Protagonists in Bharati Mukherjee’s *The Tiger’s Daughter & Wife*” says that if the jacket of the novel claims its theme to be docility and submissiveness in dimple, it is a thematic failure. Dimple has been portrayed free and rebelling throughout the novel. She has no
inhibition in expressing whatever she feels. On the contrary, it is
Amit Basu who is a victim in India as also in New York. His
character signifies how an innocent, duty-conscious husband falls a
prey to the neurotic madness of his wife. He says that, Dimple is a
troubled spirit, belonging nowhere in the end. It could be said that
Mukherjee’s novels are truly English and not Indian alone. Brahma
Dutta Sharma and Susheel Kumar Sharma in their combined article:
“The Contribution of women to the Development of the Indian
English Novel” says: “contemporary Indian English Novel has
observed Mukherjee’s Wife has focused on the problem of
adjustment that Indians living in the West have to face.

In Dimple’s initial expectations of a change in her marriage
status and in anticipation of new experiences in the United States,
Mukherjee indicates the dilemma of the Indian Woman whose
social race, by tradition, is defined by a patriarchally encoded
culture. In a patriarchal culture marriages arranged by fathers leads
to the assumption of by the husbands over the wives. The wife is
expected to subsume her individual and private identity. As Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar *Mad Woman in the Attic: The Woman writer and the 19th century Literary Imagination* (2000) wrote, "women in patriarchal societies have historically been reduced to mere properties" (12). Dimple is an object whose subjective self conforms to and is confirmed by male ideology and discourse.

Shyam M. Ansari, in an article "Identity Crisis of Indian Immigrants: A Study of three novels" has interpreted Mukherjee’s *Wife* from the perspective of identity dilemma. Ansari has opined that, *Wife* is about displacement and alienation, for it portrays the psychological claustrophobia and the resultant destructive tendencies of Dimple Das Gupta. S. Sujatha in her article, "The Theme of Disintegration: A comparative study of Anita Desai’s *Cry, the Peacock* and Bharati Mukherjee’s *Wife* has said that, Mukherjee’s *Wife* suggests that Dimple’s predicament transcends that an individual enmeshed in the limbo of cultural shock. M.Rajeswari, in his essay, "Sado-Masochism as a literary Device in
Bharathi Mukherjee’s *Wife* has observed the novel from the perspective of its protagonists’ ill-concealed Sudo-Masochistic compulsions, which are soon precipitated by the violence-ridden and individualistic American life and culminate in her killing of her husband.

Dimple’s sense of her own identity and marginality frames all of her responses to her new environment, which consists generally of Indian’s mostly Bengalis. That the ethnography of Indians including “Americanized” Bengalis, constitutes “the experience of being abroad” is one of the many reversals of ideological positioning Mukherjee employs in *Wife*. Dimple has never had a positive vision of any kind. Even her parents remain flat characters. Her world is dominated not by the varied sounds and colours of nature but by the colourful romance that is projected in the advertisements and the stories of magazines. Even as an immigrant in America, she does not have any longing for her home. The only thing that excited her is the news from Calcutta about the romantic escapades of her friend Prixie.
Christine Gomez in his article "The on-going quest of Bharati Mukherjee from expatriation to Immigration" opines that Dimple shares the expatriate characteristic of being ill at ease both in the native culture and in the alien one. In it, not only is expatriation a major theme, but also it becomes a metaphor for deeper levels of alienation like existential alienation and self-estrangement. Expatriation is actually a complete state of mind and emotion which includes a wistful longing for the past, often symbolized by the ancestral home, the pain of exile and homelessness, the struggle to maintain the difference between oneself and the new, unfriendly surroundings, an assumption of moral or cultural superiority over the host country and a refusal to accept the identity forced on one by the environment. The expatriate builds a cocoon around herself/himself as refuse from cultural dilemmas and from the experienced hostility or unfriendliness in the new country. This is revealed in some significant images used in the novel. In Wife, the cage is an important symbol. It stands for a comfortable but restricted existence, for isolation and a denial of freedom. It is
significant that Dimple kills her husband after watching a T.V. Programme in which a birdcage figured prominently.

In another article by Jaïwanti Dimri entitled “From Marriage to Murder: A comparative study of Wife and Jasmine” deals with the attempt of the female protagonists in the two novels to tackle the problem of loss of culture and their endeavor to assume a new identity. In the U.S. Dimple rounds up her stay in the USA with a murder while Jasmine starts her life there with a murder. For Dimple loss of old culture is neither an exciting nor an exhilarating experience. She is disillusioned on all plans – physical, mental and emotional. Freedom from the ponds of caste, gender and family instead of turning her hilarious leaves her utterly lonely and desolate. Her killing of her husband is partly an act of desperation and partly an outcome of her guilty conscience. Judging her self by the Indian standards of marriage and womanhood, she is uneasy about her extra-marital relationship with Milt Glasser. Unable to cope with the crisis, she kills her husband. Dimri concludes by
saying, "It will take many years for the likes of Dimple and Jasmine to completely sever their links with their past however exhilarating or exciting the foreign experience may appear to them" (70).

Dimple’s vision of Sita’s docility, sacrifice and responsibility is a flag with many messages. She wants to break through the traditional taboos of a wife. She aspires for freedom and love in marriage. This aim brings her indignation, grief, resentment, peevishness, spite and sterile anger. Dimple is trapped between two cultures and aspires to a third, imagined world. Living in her social vacuum, Dimple is not unlike hundreds of American men and women who believe and are betrayed by the promise of fulfillment offered by the media, and who choose the solution suggested by a violent environment. Prasanna Sri Sathupati in her essay "Psychotic Violence of Dimple in wife" points out that Dimple is not docile and submissive, she is free and rebelling throughout the novel. Rather, it is Amit Basu who is a victim in India as also in New
York. His murder signifies how an innocent duty conscious husband falls a prey to the neurotic madness of his wife.

S.P. Swain in his article “Dimple in Bharati Mukherjee’s Wife: A Study of Lacerated Self” argues that Mukherjee’s treatment of the theme of rootlessness and expatriation is totally different from that of Naipaul and Kamala Markandaya. Mukherjee delves deep into the inner recesses of Dimple’s psyche who moves from a state of mute resentment to an escalating disgust and intolerance which finally culminates in disaster. Dimple’s self-alienation breeds a terrible anguish in her and prompts her to murder her husband. A lacerated and anguished spirit, Dimple is the nowhere woman, questing for an identity. It is the gloomy corridors of her psyche that Mukherjee probes with a keen and penetrating psychological subtlety. Dimple moves from a state of mute resentment to an escalating disgust and intolerance which finally culminates in disaster. Her craving for affluence prompts her to finally marry an engineer but it is not a physical need on her part. It
is a psychic one. She is drawn into the fantasies of affluence and plenitude. As a being she is a partial woman, and her psychic obsessions are about the inadequacies of her figure and complexion.

Manju Sampat in his article “Bharati Mukherjee: The Fiction of Alienation and Identification” says Dimple struggles to adjust to life in New York City, but the culture shock is too much for her and in the end, she is driven to despair, madness and violence. She ends up killing her husband. Perhaps the killing of her husband can be viewed as being western, as Mukherjee has declared in a recent interview in Express Magazine March 11th 1990: “Dimple Das Gupta of Wife rises to murder her domineering husband, something she never would have done in India. Here she would have killed herself. But in America transformation allows her to kill him. She is my dark faced female Clint Eastwood” (10).

Helena Grice in Beginning Ethnic American Literatures (2001) examined Wife from the perspective of isolation and alienation. Helena Grice is of the opinion that Dimple encounters a
world of racism and prejudice, where Amit cannot obtain the kind of work he is qualified for and Dimple sees her flat as a refuge from the perilous landscape of New York beyond the front door: “The air was never free of the sounds of sirens growing louder, or gradually fading...and she finds herself increasingly isolated” (120). After the analytical probe into the thematic concerns of the novel, Helene Grice concludes: “Many of Mukherjee’s novels depict the new immigrant woman trapped inside her house and alone, for fear of what lies beyond the door” (4).

E.D. Karampetsos has observed in an article, “Bharati Mukherjee’s side long glances at America” that Mukherjee tells the stories of Indian immigrants who far to adjust to the culture from which they came. The result is isolation and disorientation and for Dimple, the protagonist of wife, it is a descent into madness and homicidal violence. He brings authenticity to the critical exploration of wife in trying to find relevance with Mukherjee’s dissatisfaction
with her own life in Canada, because of the official policy of minorities and the unofficial racism.

Dimple's confusion over "American Communalism" is further compounded by her inability to articulate the language either of the Americans. When Ina Mullick tells Dimple that talking to her is like "talking to a . . . porpoise", Dimple responds, "I like porpoises. . . . They are so nearly human, aren't they?" (136). But we are told, "She had seen only one in her life, and that too on television, flipping and spreading in a kidney-shaped swimming pool in a sub-urban backyard while its waited to be freighted clear across the country. A porpoise was an immense, soft, vulnerable creature. At the back of her mind floated a disturbing image of herself as child, with scanned knees and a pink taffeta bow on her head. When Ina spoke in English, her words were predatory, Dimple realized (136-137). In Juxtaposing, on the one hand, Dimple's association of the image of the porpoise's "vulnerability"
with her own as a child and on the other, her fear of the social world of Ina represented by language is her experience of the "other".

As B.A Andrews points out, "In immigrant literature language becomes a metaphor both of belonging and of not belonging" (56). Dimple is both culturally and linguistically silenced. Denied expression, Dimple is unable either to validate her experience of her identity. Feeling left out of her own cultural grouping, afraid to venture out, diffident about meeting people, Dimple spends most of her time isolated from the world outside, reading better homes and gardens and watching television: "The women on television led complicated lives, became pregnant frequently and under suspicious circumstances...murdered or were murdered" (72-73).

Dimple's subservience reiterates a culture and ideology that denies her the right to personal feelings and desires that serve her own interests, and which would allow her to forge her own identity. Brought up to defer with her father/husbands final authority to
examine and judge her every emotion and behavior, she cannot serve as an agent of change on her own behalf, because she cannot comprehend any reason to justify her feelings. Thus, when Dimple is reduced by Milt Glasser, her isolation and despair become even more acute. Dimple has committed the ultimate sacrilege, the betrayal of her gendered Indian culture. Gayatri Spivak notes that, “The will to explain is a symptom of the desire to have a self and a world . . . the possibility of explanation carries the presupposition of an explainable universe and an explaining subject” (11). The dissolution of Dimple’s mind, climaxing in her violent act, may be best understood in light of Michael Foucault’s analysis of madness in Madness and Civilization (1965). Foucault says that “we must try to return, in history, to that zero point in the course of madness at which madness is an undifferentiated experience, a note yet divided experience of division itself” (MC IX). Dimple’s murder of Amit in Wife may be viewed as that moment of dissolution.
In her distorted view of reality, her delirium, Dimple imagines Amit’s head transposed onto the television set, an image, that reiterates Foucault’s concept of “the culmination of the void” (MC 107). This point of disjunction, both from cultural and feminist perspectives, is precisely what Bharati Mukherjee discloses in *Wife*. Dimple’s madness stems from her resistance to male ideology and to her own and an alien culture, from which she forcibly disengages herself. Her violent act may be seen as an expression of her anguish and desire that lie outside the rule of reason.

In *A Literature of their Own* (1977), Elaine Show Walter notes that “The middle-class ideology of the proper sphere of womanhood, which developed in post industrial England and America, prescribed a woman who would be a perfect Lady, an Angel in the House, contented by submissive to men, but strong in her inner purity and religiosity, queen in her own realm of the Home” (14). Showalter is making her remark in the context of the “rise” of women writers in early Victorian England. More
significant, however, is Show Walter’s characterization of the “phase” of “self-discovery, a turning inward freed from some of the dependency of opposition, a search for identity” that “Literary subcultures, such as Black, Jewish, Canadian, Anglo Indian, or even American” women writers engage (4).

Post-colonial women writers writing within the margins of indigenous culture and feminism, therefore have an even more acute problem, since they have to confront the twin issues of legitimacy of feminine discourse in a patriarchal society and the nebulous cultural and social “space”. They occupy in their efforts to situate their texts within the context of feminism.

Mukherjee reiterates the marginalization of woman by exploring and exploding ways in which culture and ideology construct feminine identity. Dimple’s mistaking the social circle of Indians for “cultural experience” prevents her from experiencing life on the outside that would shape her view of American Society. However, Dimple’s analysis of her earliest encounter with
American Society is from the perspective of her own cultural moorings.

Jhumpa Lahiri has rendered the socio-psychological problems of immigrant women in US meticulously and effectively almost on the similar lines of Mukherjee. Her *Interpreter of Maladies*, a collection of nine stories, a maiden venture, has bagged Pulitzer Prize for fiction 2000. It is a great honour for an Indian writer writing in English. *Interpreter of Maladies* is called "Stories of Bengal, Boston and Beyond". The first story of the book, ‘A Temporary Matter’, relates to the life of Sukumar and Shobha in Boston. The temporary matter is that their electricity would be cut off for an hour for five days. The story is confined to the five days when there will be no electricity for an hour. Shobha works in an office down town where she searches for typographical errors. Sukumar was in the sixth year of his graduate school and was to enter the job market the following year. For some time, their life was not so happy as they had lost their baby. The loss of child turns
Shobha into a mechanized automation. Moreover, as Sukumar thought: “how he and Shobha had been experts at avoiding each other... and how long it had been since she looked into his eyes and smiled or whispered his names on those rare occasions they still reached for each others before sleeping” (5). Sukumar’s and Shoba’s reactions to the personal tragedy of child loss are different, though equally intense. Sukumar wants to stay in the house, seeking consolation in his inertia, putting off any movement to go out, “to get the mail, or to buy fruit or wine at the stores by trolley stop” (2). He even seeks refuge in the room which was planned for the child, “partly because the room soothed him, and partly because it was a place Shoba avoided” (98). Shobha, on the other hand forces a solitary aloofness on herself - her deliberate staying out, taking on additional projects, which she has developed around her, to enable herself to bury the loss beneath the grave of her aloof silence.

The situation changes when the electricity department announces a power cut for five days, forcing the intimacy of
darkness on them. During these power cuts Shoba turns nostalgic and says: “I remember during power failures at my grand mother’s house we all had to say something. A little poem. A Joke. A fact about the world” (12). Having thus decided, Sukumar and Shobha start revealing their untold facts to each other. Shoba tells him about the times when they were newly acquainted and when she happened to steal a look into his address book to see if he had written her address there. Sukumar in his turn told her about how he had forgotten to tip the waiter and how he went all the way back just to tip the waiter. The following nights Sukumar told her about how he once ripped out a photo of a woman in one of the fashion magazines and carried it in his books for a week. He also revealed how he hadn’t lost the sweater vest Shoba brought him for their third wedding anniversary, but had exchanged it for cash and got drunk in mid day. Shobha confesses how she avoided Sukumar’s mother who came to stay with them for fifteen days. She also told how she behaved callously showing little concern for him. She also disclosed that she had never liked the sentimental poem Sukumar
had written after meeting her. Lastly she told that she had been looking for an apartment for her and found one. She needed sometime alone. Sukumar had a mixed feeling on hearing this: "It sickened Sukumar, knowing that she had spent the past evenings preparing for a life without him. He was relieved and yet he was sickened. This was what she had been trying to tell him for the past four evenings. This was the point of her game" (21). Now it was his turn to speak and he disclosed the fact which he had sworn he would never tell her. He told that he saw their baby in the hospital and held it in his hands before they cremated him. "Our baby was a boy", he said, "His skin was more red than brown. He had black hair on his head. He weighed almost five pounds. His fingers were curled shut, just like yours in the night" (22). This last confession by Sukumar melted the ice and they started weeping together for their dead son which they should have done six months ago. It is likely that their weeping together acts as a purgative.
The second story of the collection is “When Mr.Pirzada Came To Dine”. Mr.Pirzada, a resident of Dacca, is forced to live through Bangladesh’s violent struggle for Independence through the news bulletins, while working, on a thesis in a distant land. He has no means to know the condition of his wife and seven daughters whom he had left behind in his native land. The narrator remembers those days of great anxiety when Mr.Pirzada would come to dine with them and all would assemble in front of the T.V. set: “On the screen I saw tanks rolling through dusty streets, and fallen buildings and forests of unfamiliar trees into which East Pakistani refugees had fled, seeking safety over the Indian border” (31). To her surprise, no one at school talked about the war which was discussed so anxiously in their living room. Pirzada is not Indian, Her father explained her how India was partitioned. The girl was not satisfied with her father’s explanation and herself searched for any peculiarity to be identified as non Indian. And she got it. It was Mr.Pirzada’s pocket watch, set to the local time in Dacca. “He took out a plain silver watch . . . was set to the local time in Dacca,
eleven hours a head”. The girl had a small sandal wood box, the only memento of a grand mother. She had never known. The box was so sacred to her that she hardly found anything to put inside it until Mr. Pirzada started giving her small gifts. An anxiety for Mr. Pirzada’s family whom she had never seen prompted her to invent a prayer in the form of a ritual: “I had never prayed for anything before, and never been taught or told to do, but I decided, given the circumstances, that it was something I should do” (30). This is a unique way to express one’s concern for the oppressed and the distressed. The girl told Mr. Pirzada, “Don’t worry”. “It was first time I had uttered those words to Mr. Pirzada, two simple words I had tried but failed to tell him for weeks, had said only in my prayers” (38). Mr. Pirzada flew back to Dacca after the war was over. He also wrote to them expressing gratitude and stating that all were well. Through the thoughts of small girl, Jhumpa Lahiri has thus rendered the yearning of exile and has spoken with universal eloquence.
The third story that bears the title of the collection “Interpreter of Maladies” is set in India. Mr. Kapasi the driver cum guide belongs to India. Mr. and Mrs. Das, Raj and Mina, were born and brought up in America and they have settled in New Brunswick, New Jersey. The story opens with the Das family on their way from Puri to Konark. Mr. Kapasi is not a fulltime driver. He serves as an interpreter for a doctor who has a number of Gujarathi patients, but himself does not know Gujarati. Mr. Das calls the job interesting and Mrs. Das calls it romantic, and shows interest in Kapasi. Mr. Kapasi “found nothing noble in interpreting people’s maladies assiduously translating the symptoms of so many swollen bones, countless cramps of bellies and bowels, spots on peoples palms that changed color shape or size” (51). He is eager to return home in the evening and enjoy the newspaper and a cup of tea that his wife would serve him in silence. And now he dreams of enjoying close hours with Mrs. Das.
Mr. Kapasi has developed the capacity of diagnosing the common malady in married life. He felt that Mr. & Mrs. Das were bad couple, just as he and his wife were: “The signs he recognised from his own marriage were the bickering, the indifference, the protracted silence” (53). Mr. Kapasi felt that Mrs. Das’s sudden interest in him, an interest she does not express in either her husband or her children, is a clear indication of her dissatisfaction in married life. He also imagined that in time “She would reveal the disappointment of her marriage, and in this way their friendship would grow and flourish” (55). His dream was going to be a reality when she refused to climb the hills of Udayagiri and Mr. Das along with the three children went up, leaving her alone with Mr. Kapasi. Mrs. Das did reveal her disappointment, but not in the way Mr. Kapasi had desired it. Much to his surprise he learnt that Mrs. Das second son was fathered not by Mr. Das, but by his Punjabi friend. Mr. Kapasi wanted to know why he, of all persons, should know her secret. She told that she had all along suffered from an unhealthy terrible feeling and hoped that Mr. Kapasi could suggest
some kind of remedy. Mr. Kapasi understood that she loved neither her husband nor her children and had fallen out of love with life. He felt insulted that Mrs. Das should ask him to interpret her common, trivial, little secret. “He decided to begin with the most obvious question to get to the heart of the matter and so asked, “Is it really pain you feel, Mrs. Das or is it guilt?” (66).

Unable to face the hard reality uttered by him, Mrs. Das ignored him at that moment. Without saying anything she went up the hill to join her husband and Mr. Kapasi jogged up the path. At the end of the story, Kapasi rescued the second boy Bobby from the clutches of a pack of monkeys. Alarmed and anxious, Mrs. Das wanted to leave the place. As she whipped out the hair brush from her bag to fix Bobby’s hair, the slip of paper with Mr. Kapasi’s address on it fluttered away in the wind. “Mr. Kapasi observed it too, knowing that their’s was the picture of the Das family he would preserve for ever in his mind” (69).
"A Real Durwan" is the fourth story in the collection. Set in Calcutta, the story throws light on a social malady, the selfishness and meanness of some middle class people. All the characters in the story are local residents of a particular flat building near college street. The story focuses on an old woman, a refugee from East Bengal, who was the sweeper of the stairwell of the flat building and lived under the letter boxes near the collapsible gate. Known as Boori Ma, the old woman would sweep the "four flights to the roof", and in rainy season she was seen climbing the stairs placing one hand on her swelled knee and taking the bucket and broom in the other hand. She was sixty four, with a hair in a knot no longer than a walnut. "In fact the only thing that appeared three dimensional about Boorima was her voice brittle with Borrow, as tart as curds, and shrill enough to grate meat from a coconut" (70).

Though initially a sweeper, Boori Ma was almost Durwan in that flat building. She screened the itinerant peddlers, summoned a rickshaw, and could drive away any suspicious character from the
areas but in lieu of all this she would hardly get anything from the residents. A change came in the lives of residents when Mr. Dalal, happy with his recent promotion, installed a basin on the stairwell for common use. All were happy to use the basin and all of them felt an urge to do something new in their respective flats. No one however did something for Boori Ma who had to sleep on newspapers. Disturbed by different sorts of workers who were introduced to decorate different flats, Boori Ma settled on the rooftop and grew restless there. One day where she was to be fresh, the basin on the stairwell was stolen, and all residents hurled on her, accusing her of having connections with the robbers. Finally, they decided to engage real Durwan and Boorima was forced to get out: “So the residents tossed her bucket and rags, her baskets and reed broom, down the stairwell. . . . All were eager to begin their search for a real Durwan” (82). The plight of old women set against the inhuman behavior of the residents of the flat building lays bare that malady in the society. It is selfishness, callousness
and indifference. The miles that were biting the old woman symbolize the inhuman qualities.

"Sexy" is another story set in Boston, in which infidelity in married life has been detected as a growing malady. This story is based on extramarital relationship that Laxmi finds nauseating and absurd. Miranda gets herself involved with Dev in London. She was happy when Dev called her sexy, for she knew that his wife was beautiful and that he was attacked by Miranda’s sexual appeal she has been habituated to take things in this way since she started dating in her high school days. During the short period of her relationship with Dev, an Indian, she gathered quite a new experience. Miranda felt that Dev understood her loneliness, and she even wished that there were a picture of her and Dev tacked to the inside of her cubicle, like of Laxmi and her husband in front of Taj Mahal. Dev was attracted towards her for she was, “the first woman I’ve known with legs this long” (89). In their weeklong relationship they have kissed, praised and met each other
remembering the Taj Mahal, "the most romantic spot on earth", "an everlasting monument to love"(92). Miranda got elated in ecstasy of their union when Dev whispered to her "you're sexy" (91).

She is bewildered when the same remark is repeated by seven year old Rohin. Rohin’s explanation of the meaning of the term startles her into a new awareness of things. He says "it means loving someone you don’t know – 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"(107-8). Miranda realizes that blind passion for mere physical gratification fails to impart any permanent anchor in life and she puts an end to her relationship with Dev. Her visit to the church, magnificent against the clear blue sky (110), symbolizes an awakening into self-hood and a desire for permanent values in life.

“Mrs.Sen is about a lovely Bengali lady in America, a professor’s wife, who acts as a baby sitter, Eliot, a boy of eleven, is left to her care after his school is over. Every evening Eliot’s
mother comes to take him back with her and Mrs. Sen insists that she should take something. Mrs. Sen is yet to receive her driving license and she has to practice driving everyday. Eliot knows that she is rather afraid of the engine and encourages her with his words that she will soon be able to anywhere: “should I drive all the way to Calcutta?” asks Mrs. Sen letting loose her loneliness and her obsession for her homeland. Eliot is able to find out the differences between his mother, an American and this Indian lady. He also feels that Mrs. Sen is not very close to her husband. When Eliot is taking a shot of the couple “They did not hold hands or put their arms around each theirs waists” (30). Eliot is her only companion in America to whom she can express herself. But she was denied this opportunity to get herself relieved after she made an accident while driving. Eliot was lucky enough to escape injuries, but it was inevitable that Mrs. Sen’s duty as baby sitter would no more be required. That Mrs. Sen did not meet Eliot’s mother on that day was a fine little stroke that revealed her agony. Jhumpa Lahari’s hold on human psychology, her keen observation of the details in real life
and her sympathy for all, rich and poor alike, are once again explicit.

"This Blessed House" is another story set in America. It is about a newly married couple, Sanjeev and Twinkle, getting adjusted to themselves and to their new home. They had met only four months before their marriage. Twinkle’s parents who lived in California and Sanjeev’s parents who still lived in Calcutta, were old friends. Across the continents they had arranged the occasion in which Sanjeev and Twinkle met and eventually they got married. Differences in their attitudes was obvious due to their different upbringing. Twinkle linked all the images and statues associated with Christianity which were left by previous owner of the house and which were discovered by her in different corners.

Sanjeev did not like to keep those things on display as they were not Christians. But Twinkle was rigid and Sanjay failed to persuade her. Twinkle said that all those holy statues indicated that the house was blessed but she had no mind to understand that no
house can be blessed without mutual understanding and love. Sanjeev also had no idea of love, of sympathy and understanding. “He did not know if he loved her” (147). When the guests came to attend the party at their new house, they all appreciated Twinkle and the statues and in their presence. Twinkle discovered a solid silver bust of Christ from the attic. After the guests departed, Sanjeev had a full view of burst, “He did hate it. . . . Most of all he hated it because he knew that Twinkle loved it (157). The malady that affected Sanjeev could not be better interpreted. Without spending a single comment, Jhumpa Lahari has shown how one’s mind may be vitiated if there is no love.

The next story “The Treatment of Bibi Haldar”, set in a lower middle-class Bengali family in Calcutta, does not, however reveal the author’s skill in grasping human psychology. The central character Bibi Haldar has been suffering from hysteria and the doctors have prescribed marriage as the only remedy. Bibi’s parents being dead and her health being weak, it was not easy to get
her married. She begins to prepare for married life. She starts selecting sarees for marriage "The first part of the ceremony I will wear this, then this one, then this" (163). But Haldar and his wife are indifferent to her thoughts. But to get her quiet down, Haldar placed a one-line advertisement in the town newspapers: "Girl, unstable, height 152 cms seeks husband". A girl baby is delivered by Haldar's wife. They did not allow her to touch the baby. They family moves away. She is alone. She becomes pregnant and after birth of her child she gets cured and even runs a shop though there is no trace of her child's father.

The final story in this collection is "The Third and Final continent". It is about an Indian who settles as a librarian in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He was born in a poor family in Calcutta and was hurled by his ambition across the world. In his attempt to find a room he comes in contact with an old woman Mrs.Croft. He saw old woman Mrs.Croft. Mrs.Croft wants him to be punctual. He marries Mala after sometime and
leaves Mrs. Croft. He always sees old lady sitting on the bench. Her daughter Helen comes on Sunday. She comes once in a week to bring groceries to her mother. Mrs. Croft supported her children after the death of her husband. She says, "there is an American flag on the moon". Mrs. Croft died when she is 103. The comparison between Indian way of life and American way of life is established.

**Interpretation of Maladies** has conveyed the significance of Indianness and its universal relevance. The loneliness, a deep sense of remorse and emotional isolation that some of her fictional characters go through is relevant across the world. The individuals of different countries and cultures who for various reasons are forced to live away from their own country inevitably experience trying phases. Lahari’s endeavor to interpret the maladies of the mind that people suffer from and the unique manner in which she makes their own flaws has won the universal appreciation. Her remarkable insight has explored the psychological depths of her characters and revealed their inner world by a fascinating yet
descriptively simple style. We come across more reality than fancy in her fiction.

The first story ‘A Temporary Matter’ shows that for the young married couple Sukumar and Shobha marriage appears to have fallen apart. It reached a stage where it became a temporary matter. Lahiri excels as a storyteller when she combines her Indian reminiscences and the larger problem of marital discord and the apparently catastrophic end of the couple’s marriage in a single frame. Shobha’s problem is her inability to deal with her anger and frustration of losing the baby for whose arrival she plans elaborately. She hardly realizes that she is punishing herself unduly. It is only Sukumar who confesses his knowledge of baby’s sex that she finally relents the hold she kept on her emotions and sees the truth that the loss of baby has affected Sukumar as deeply as her. Each one has to bear his or her share of pain in life. But he was able to bear with it perhaps because he did what the doctor said: “holding the baby might help you with the process of
grieving” (22). Letting out the pent up feelings certainly acts like a catalyst in some ways. The marital discord is thus skillfully shown to be a temporary matter just as the interruption in electric power supply has been. The story reflects the alienation and loneliness that the immigrants face in a foreign land. The marriage bond, which is still considered sacrosanct in India, is gradually slithering down under the pressure of new needs under a different background. This story illustrates on one hand the fact that in New England marriage can be treated as a temporary matter, and on the other the reassertion of the validity of a new beginning in life. To the Indian psyche marriage is not primarily a sexual partnership, it is as Bertrand Russell puts it ‘an undertaking to cooperate in the procreation and rearing of children’. A child cements the bondage. Without child, marriage is incomplete. Engrossed in her misery, she overlooks the fact that Sukumar too, has to tread through his own private hell. Their reunion is symbolized by the Bradford couple walking arm in arm on the road. Kindling of Birthday
Candles is also symbolic, as it conveys the message of dispelling the darkness which sometimes surrounds us temporarily.

In comparison, the story ‘When Mr.Pirzada Came to Dine” is rather stale. The tragedy of Mr.Pirzada does not convey authentic poignancy. Its remains rather superficial. Mr.Pirzada, at his best, comes across as a wooden character. The only point of interest in the story is the description of the Halloween festival. The all important postscript of the story appears to be the fact that Lilia is made keenly aware of what it means to miss someone you love which precludes regional and religious disparities. Lilia has a safe life, fine education and every opportunity. She would never have to eat rationed food or obey curfews or watch riots from root top or hide neighbours in water tank to prevent them from being shot. But we are shown through Lilia’s retrospection and caned psyche that these children carry with them the past history of “origin” of their parents and grand parents and are treated with an Orientalist attitude even though they are born and brought up here. Thus Lilia faces an
identity crisis as her identity is defined in terms of the past history of parents and the fixed notions of the western culture about Indians. Lilia’s case also shows that however hard the diasporas may try to accept the education, history, values, cultures and language of the indigenous country, and paint their faces with the same color as native inhabitants do, they are never accepted on equal terms in the subject culture.

The third story ‘Interpreter of Maladies’ is a multi layered story about second generation Indian-American couples, who along with their children are visiting India and hire a tourist guide to see Sun Temple at Konark. The opening sentences describe the bickering that symptomizes this failing marriage. At the crisis point of the story, when the two of them are in car, Mina discloses to Mr.Kapasi that one of two boys was clandestinely fathered by her husband’s Punjabi-Indian friend during a brief visit. This is the malady which she hopes Mr.Kapasi will provide a remedy for. However, the interpreter of maladies can come up with: “Is it really pain you feel, Mrs.Das or is it guilt?” (66). After all he is only a
translator of native languages. The families don’t feel at home in these surroundings and want to go back soon. Being groomed in American culture they face a big cultural gap in India and hence feel displaced on their parents land. Thus, we see that Lahiri has shown so dynamically the shifting concept of ‘home’ and displacement in the successive generations of migrants.

Lahari had an interesting story to tell about the title of Interpreter of Maladies. She recalls the time when as a graduate student of Boston University ran into a “friend’s friend” who explained that he was ‘interpreting aliments’ for a doctor who had numerous Russian patients. By the time she reached home she admits she had the phrase ‘Interpreter of Maladies’ planted in her head and decided to write a story with that title. None of her stories in the book is of apprentice nature. Sumit Mitra and Arthur J. Pais write how a quite “prolific range of narrative technique that help her get at the inner weave of characters with unexpected twists in plots and situations” (India Today, Vol. XXV, 17th Nov. 2000: 74).
Bhagabut Nayak in his essay “Multicultural Commitment” says: “Mrs. Das seeking of Mr. Kapasios help is a kind of searching for expiration of her soul from guilt” (212). Most of the Indian immigrants suffering from different types of maladies are unable to get rid of Indian consciousness. A.K. Mukherjee in his essay “Jhumpa Lahri’s Interpreter of Maladies: A Study” says: “The concept of chastity haunts them like a ghost at noon. At the same time, they cannot be completely westernized in their thoughts and feelings. This dichotomy is the predicament of the Indians settled abroad” (112). They critical perceptions evince that this story has invited serious critical reception.

The fourth story is ‘The Real Durwani’s a tale of BuriMa, a refugee in Calcutta after partition. It appeals to the pathetic feelings of every human being. Her incessant value brings about her rich past and her comparisons between the past and the present life get on the nerves of the apartment residents. In a bid to give the building a face they throw Bori Ma out along with her boxes and
The eternal disparity existing between the 'haves' and the 'have not's is sharply emphasized in this story. Rashmi Gaur in her article “Nine Sketches Interpreting Human Maladies: Jhumpa Lahiri’s Interpreter of Maladies” says: “In order to escape drudgery and poverty of her life she often seeks refuge in her past-real or imagined”? He placed circumstances that change with the growing material attitude of the building dwellers who cease to be her tenants. Towards the end, the story vocalizes her heart-felt sympathy towards the Boori Ma.

The next story 'Sexy' examines the sexual relationship between Dev and Miranda and the hopelessness of extramarital affair. The relationship between the English girl Miranda and Indian Dev dies a quiet death for more than one reason. It happens not only because Miranda realizes that she can not expect more than physical fulfillment from Dev but also because of the definition that Rohin, her Indian friend cousin’s child gives to the term ‘sexy’. To him it means “Loving someone you don’t know”. Miranda realizes
that is precisely what she did. She also perceives the parallel between her desperate situation and the pathetic condition of a deserted wife. Both long for impossible relationship based on love. Miranda “Cried harder unable to stop” (109). It is important to learn that even if there is passion in a relationship if it is an affair it can destroy a family and it doesn’t matter what culture you are from.

In Mrs.Sen’s, Lahiri chronicles the struggle of a woman who finds herself cut off from her milieu. Mrs.Sen defines what emotional exile is. As in the other stories the immigrant experience is at the core of this stirring story too. In addition, we also witness this wonderful companionship between two entirely different persons. Mrs.Sen was forced to learn car driving for the sake of a job; Mrs.Sen has to fetch Eliot from his house to hers and back. It is heartening to see Mrs.Sen communicating with Eliot on equal footing despite the age difference. She expresses her joy and loneliness and shares her Indian Memories with him with great nerve. Even after Eliot has stopped coming to Mrs.Sen’s place
because as he is now "a big boy", he seems to be missing their togetherness and as a result goes through a kind of void as he watches 'the gray waves receding from the shore'. We see this common human facts well voiced by the writer. It is the emotional dependence that binds Eliot and Mrs.Sen whose only other family member leaves them on their own. Rashmie Gaur says: "Lahiri’s repetition of small daily habits and chores removing the shoes in the doorway, chopping vegetables seated on newspapers, Mrs.Sen’s constant worry about her driving skills - imparts an intensity to the narration" (146). The repetition reinforces our perception of the loneliness and the hollowness of Mrs.Sen’s life.

The next story ‘Blessed House’ is a delightful story, which puts across the point that it is not religious identity that sacrifices man but the sense of affinity and involuntary affection that exist between people, even among strangers. The previous tenants left a treasure though behind apparently wishing the best for their successors. Each finding of the treasure that she stumbles upon fills
Sanjeev’s wife Twinkle, with great joy and excitement. It started with an effigy of Christ and continued with a wooden cross with a key chain, a painting of three wise men, a 3-D Post card of St. Francis, etc. Twinkle is happy enough to arrange them on the mantel shelf. Sanjeev is full of antipathy for these Christian symbols. His mind is bogged down by inhibition and injured self-sense. Once again Lahiri touches a chord in all thinking human beings that religion doesn’t have to interfere with day to day life of people going about their business. So to his surprise Sanjeev realizes that despite the ‘dignity, solemnity and beauty’ of the silver bust of Christ, he hated it all the more ‘because Twinkle loved it’. After he discovered his ‘malady’ of possessive love, Sanjeev: “Pressed, the massive silver face to his ribs, careful not to let the feather hat slip, and followed her” (157). In this one gesture we may be assured that Sanjeev would from now onwards cope with his own passions better than before. It is truly a “Blessed House”.
The last story is “The third and final continent”. This story brings up important point such as cultural diversity and the importance of family. This story also contains moving pictures of life. They mirror the milieu in which her characters move. The Calcutta boy, who made it as a job holder in a library at MIT Boston, reminds us of many Indians who by trial and tribulation settle abroad for a better life. The bond between the landlady Mrs. Croft and the Bengali Youth is beyond explanation. It is something to be felt and understood. The old lady is well aware of people and can read them as one would read a book, despite being hundred and three. Miss Lahiri’s story brings out differences in behavior, life style and expression as observed in different continents i.e., India, Britain and the USA. The ancient lady, who lived beyond a century, never spoke more than a few words at a time, most of which she repeats daily to the young tenant like: “There is an American flag on the moon boy” (179). But he knows her loneliness and develops fondness for her and nature of acceptance of the inevitable. It grows after being told by her only
daughter that she made a living for herself and for her daughter by teaching the piano for forty years which resulted in ‘swollen knuckles’. He is also reminded of his own mother who refused to participate in life after the death of her husband. Even after he leaves Mrs.Croft’s rooms after his marriage, he thinks about her. He takes his new wife to meet Mrs.Croft. But her impressions are unfathomable on her introduction to his young wife. She spontaneously calls her a ‘perfect lady’. The fact of her judgement comes as a surprise and at once ends the strongness that existed between the newly married couple. We also understand that basically humanity is found by certain common standards of behavior and modes of perception. R.K. Shankar rightly observes: “richly detailed portrayal of a young marriage . . . an Indian emigrant’s oddly fulfilling relationship with his land lady” (2).

Anjana Basu in her review on Interpreter of Maladies says: “These stories are about encounters between Americans or Indians and Americanized Indian in America and encounters between
Indians and Indians in India” (2). Many of her stories take place in times of ‘Absence’ - absence from a spouse, from a place, or from a loved one. Anaika Sibley says: “throughout each of these stories there is a theme of hardship when one moves from one place to another” (4, http://dana.vcc.nav.edu-rgt/jhumpainterpretation:htm). Tejendar Kaur in his essay “Portrayal of Diaspora Experiences in Jhumpa Lahiri’s Interpreter of Maladies” examines experiences of diaspora in the novel. The word diaspora has been taken from Greek. Robert Cohen describes diaspora as the communities of people living together in one country who “acknowledge that the old country. A nation often buried deep in language, religion, custom a folklore - always has some claim on their loyalty and emotions” (ix). Diasporas thus live in one country as community but look across time and space to another. Avatar Brah describes the status of diasporas in the dominant culture very appropriately by saying: “All diasporas are differentiated, heterogenous, contested spaces, even as they are implicated in the construction of a common we” (184).
Most of the first generation migrants facing cultural dilemma and trying their best to retain cultural identity and cultural practices in their beliefs, values, dressing up eating menus and habits. John McLeod In Beginning Post-Colonialism (2000) observes: “These beliefs, traditions, customs, behaviors and values along with their “possessions and belongings” are carried by migrants with them when they arrive in new places” (211). Dixit’s, Mrs.Sen, Shukumar’s mother, Lilias parents, Mr.Pirzada try to stick to the mannerism, values and beliefs of their own culture and any clash between their concept of “home” and their beliefs battles them.

Lahiri is an Indian by ancestry, British by birth, American by immigration. She targets the western audience by deliberately portraying the Indian American life. She was influenced by William Trevor, Mavis Gallant, James Joyce and Antony Chekov who had initiated her literary baptism but it changed her perceptions during her frequent visits to Calcutta. A ‘Real Durwan’ and ‘The Treatment of Bibi Haldar’ express a ‘tunnel vision’ of India of
which she defends: “My own experience of India was largely that of a tunnel imposed by the single city I ever visited, by the handful of home we stayed in . . . still within these narrow confines, I felt that I had seen enough of life, enough details and drama, to set stories on Indian soil” (Outlook, collectors edition, 2000: 117).

Reviews and critics are of the view that she has only written about Bengalis in India which is ‘unwise decision’. But some of her stories are set in Orissa and Jaipur in Rajasthan which clearly disprove the critics allegation. In Mr.Firzada ‘Came to Dine’ she shows Mr.Pirzada’s cultural identity with India though he is a Bangladesi. Lahari’s Mrs.Sen presents a heart - tugging story of an immigrant who works like a baby sitter. Mrs.Sen is an Indian but Lahari describes her American position who faces a lot of problems in adjustment. In her title story, ‘Interpreter of Maladies’ Lahiri narrates the pain, guilt of a woman and sketches the character of Mr.Kapasi in a realistic and convincing way.
Rashmi Gaur in his article “Nine Sketches Interpreting Human Maladies: Jhumpa Lahiri’s Interpreter of Maladies”, observes: “She hold to minor, unimpressive and random events and is able to suggest a deep structural meaning in almost all her stories” (149). Lavina Melwani says: “Lahiri views herself as “Interpreter of emotional pain and affliction” (1). She boldly and brilliantly maps the shores of her protagonists inner worlds often blurring the lines between the concepts of optimism and pessimism, constantly underlying the fact that questions on which a meaningful happiness of life depends can be tackled in two ways - intellectually and existentially.

Santwana Haldar in an article “Jhumpa Lahiri and Interpreter of Maladies observes: “Jhumpa Lahiri has exposed the true nature of the ‘malady’ through the tidbits of their life” (152). He also says that Interpreter of Maladies contains stories which offer glimpses of inner life caught in a candid camera. Jami Edwards says that, Navigating between the Indian traditions they have inherited and
the baffling new world, the characters in Jhumpa Lahiri’s are
elegant, touching stories seek love beyond the barriers of culture
Yorker, a young Indian American Couple faces the heart streak of a
stillborn birth while their Boston neighbourhood copes with a
nightly blackout. In the title story, an interpreter guides an
American family through the India of their ancestors and hears an
astonishing confession. Lahiri writes with deft cultural insight
reminiscent of Anita Desai and a nuanced depth that recalls Mavis
Gallant. She is an important and powerful new voice.

San Francisco Chronicle wrote that Lahiri’s story telling
surpasses the excellence of any other contemporary women writer.
The review in Kirkus: “India is an inescapable presence in this
strong first collection’s nine polished and resonant tales, most of
which have appeared in the New Yorker and other publications”(1).
Los Angles Times wrote: “Lahiri’s touch is delicate yet assured,
leaving no room for flubbed notes or forced epiphanies” (1).

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*New York Times* wrote: “Lahiri announces herself as a wonderfully distinctive new voice” (2). Indeed, Ms.Lahiri’s prose is so eloquent and assured that the reader easily forgets the *Interpreter of Maladies* is a young writer’s first book. Mrs.Lahiri chronicles her characters lives with both objectively and compassion while chanting the emotional temperature of their lives with tactile precision. She is a writer of uncommon elegance and poise, and with ‘*Interpreter of Maladies*’ she has made a precocious debut. Amy Tan says that *Maladies* both accurately diagnosed and misinterpreted, matters both temporary and life changing, relationships in flux and unshakable, unexpected blessings and sudden calamities, and the powers of survival these are among the themes of Jhumpa Lahiri’s extraordinary, Pulitzer - winning debut collection of stories.

Traveling from India to New England and back again, Lahiri charts the emotional voyages of characters seeking love beyond the barriers of nations, cultures, religions, and generations. Imbued
with the sensual details of both Indian and American cultures, they
also speak with universal eloquence and compassion to everyone
who has ever felt like an outsider. Like The Interpreter of Maladies
the title story - which was selected for both the O.Henry Award and
The Best American short stories - Lahiri translates between the
ancient traditions of her ancestors and the sometimes baffling
prospects of the New World. Including the three stories first
published in the New Yorker, Interpreter of Maladies introduces in
the words of Frederick Busch, “a writer with a steady, penetrating
gaze. Lahiri honors the vastness and variousness of the world” (2).

Caleb Crain says that Jhumpa Lahiri is Samuel Richardson’s
latest heir. Her debut collections of short stories, Interpreter of
Maladies, features marriages that have been arranged, rushed into,
betrayed, in faded and exhausted. Her subject is not love’s failure,
however, but the opportunity that an artful spouse can make of
failure - the rebirth possible in a relationship when we discover how
little of the person we know. In Lahiri’s sympathetic tales, the pang of disappointment turns into a sudden hunger to know more.

Emerson once wrote to the “Power resides in the moment of transition from a past to a new state.” Like Mrs. Sen most of Lahiri’s characters move between the Indian subcontinent and the United States. They date, find vacation, emigrate and work across cultural and national borders. In the parallax of this double perspective, a shattered jack of lantern may obscure a child’s understanding of Bangladesh war for independence. Obscure, but not erase: Lahiri’s stories are rendered more powerful by the sense of cultural transition and loss. “Everything is there” (113). Mrs. Sen says of India, but her story begins with the fact that she herself no longer is. Lahiri’s Indian Americans struggle for dignity out of their element, like ornate shells left behind by the tide still lacquered and colored with the wealth of the sea, incongruous on a beach of democratic sand where the only decorations are patterns of drift.
As is natural for a young writers, Lahiri spends some of her time exploring the terrain slaked out by her literary precursors. Like Carver, she writes about young couple who have fallen out of love and are playing a bitter sweet game amid the detritus of their life together. Like Hemingway, she writes about a tour guide, who has more heart than the bourgeois couple who hire him. Like Isherwood, she writes about an earnest young man studying his landlady, whose classified habits at first unnerve him and then draw out his tenderness. But none of her stories are apprentice works. Lahiri revises these scenarios with unexpected twists and to each she brings her distinctive insight into the ways that human affections both sustain and defy the cultural forms that try to enclose them.

Jhumpa Lahiri’s finely turned ear for irony is readily apparent throughout Interpreter of Maladies. Her ability to fuse this sense of irony with compassion for her characters is particularly adept in two stories: “A Real Durwan”, where Bhoorima, sweeper of the
stairwell and teller of tall tales, falls victim to the greed and envy of the apartment building dwellers and "sexy" where co-incidence breeds introspection in a woman having an affair with a married man.

The effect of one’s culture and the expectations it imposes particularly on its female members is deftly highlighted in “Mrs.Sen’s”, a tale of an immigrant whose fear driving puts her in conflict with her university professor husband, and “The Treatment of Bibi Haldar”, woman who “suffered from an ailment that baffled family, friends, priests, palmists, spinsters, gem therapists, prophets, and fools.

*Interpreter of Maladies* takes us through the countryside of India, where heat and dust are seen languorous or onerous. With each story, she draws believable characters in both ordinary and extraordinary situations making the task seem sweetly effortless in the process. The range of her talent and imagination is broad but never loses its focus in its execution. She has the unique ability to
paint the worlds of both the immigrant and the native in imitative allowing for immersion in detail while simultaneously placing them in a grand, sweeping perspective of universal truth. As Gowri Raurnanayan says: “To her reader, she is able to communicate “the extraordinariness of experience”(ix) - evoked by “the ordinariness of expression”, herein lies her success (The Hindu Literary Review April 16, 2000: p.ix).

When we examine Wife and Interpreter of Maladies as the representative works of South Asian immigrant women experiences there is a dire necessity for a serious critical elucidation in the light of contemporary culture. Dimple Dasgupta, the protagonist in Wife stands as a representation to every middle class young women. Infected with the fantasy of marriage she believes that marriage will introduce her to the world of glitter. Dimple marries Amit Basu before emigrating to America and receives a severe jolt to her fascination when her conventional mother-in-law renames her as Nandini. Though she is terrified by the news of migration, she
trains herself to the likes of her husband. She abortions her pregnancy resolving not carry any relics of her past life to America. She succumbs to American culture. She carries adultery outrageously. Fascinated by the idea of killing her husband, she stabs Amit seven times and cools her psychological imbalance. From the perspectives of Feminism and Post-Colonialism the novel fails to find a balanced critical reciprocation. It overrates the transformation of women immigrants in America. The theme stands for the subjugation of women’s identity and consciousness at the backdrop of American capitalism and consumerism. Asian women are turned into terrible murderers of their husbands. Murdering husbands is not the culmination of Feminism nor does it signify the end of Feminism. America is shown to be the bedrock of all eccentric activities. Exploring the past history of colonized nations, if one goes for the critique of past history, there are umpteen examples of wives killing their husbands. One needs to look into various reasons that provoke and inculcate the idea of killing the husbands. Even before her marriage in India, Dimple is
depicted as succumbing to her consumerist culture. If the devotional meaning of wife is dismantled by American consumerism or American immigrant situation, it should not be amplified as the valid reason. Dimple is depicted as the protagonist allured and entrapped in the entanglements of American culture. The very depiction of Dimple Dasgupta is from the plank of exposing the failure of Americanism in satisfying the basic necessities of immigrant women. These women are blind to the social inequalities and gender imbalances in India. Self-realization dawns on these characters in the very failure of America. Dimple remains as an isolated immigrant. The novel subscribes to the aspects of Post-Modernism. Jean Baudrillard’s Simulations become an accurate analytical work. Jean Baudrillard in America (1988) announced that T.V. and Cinema are America’s reality. Wife is completely based on Television culture of America. Dimple is victim of T.V. and images. Though she displays the sings of succumbing to the world of images in India itself, it becomes wretched when she goes to America. Television which is an
archetypal cultural medium of post modernity and represents ‘depthlessness of cultures in Frederic Jameson’s interpretation, plays havoc in Dimple’s life. Domestic sphere becomes a perfect playground for the intrusion of images. These images often convey the apocalyptic messages predicting the doomsday in the lives of the people. Dimple as an immigrant falls an easy prey to the images and succumbs to insanity. From the perspective of Jean Baudrillard the invasion of the images transform reality into hyper reality. Dimple’s life is absorbed and swallowed by the hyper realistic world. In the ecstasy of hyper reality, Dimple murders her husband ruthlessly. The protagonism of Dimple evinces the subscription to the propositions of Post-Modernism.

Jhumpa Lahri’s Interpreter of Maladies presents different shades of women’s experiences. All the short stories offer us a kaleidoscopic view of the immigrant experiences of women. The stories portray the oscillating social positions of women between India and US. Stories are set in West Bengal, Bangladesh & US.

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All the stories offer us an in-depth analysis of Women's psyche. The psyche and individuality of women are subjected by the maladies of culture. Each story has a character that interprets maladies. The diagnosis of the maladies is done by these characters. In the first story, Sobha acquires enlightenment in darkness and experiences purgation in crying. She realizes that the death of the child is equally depressing to the parents. She becomes conscious of masculine sensibilities and realizes the agony of a father over the death of the child. This realization dissolves her malady. Mr. Kapasi is the true Interpreter of Maladies in the third story "Interpreter of Maladies". In this story, he diagnoses the malady in the marriage life of Mrs. Das by pricking her consciousness. Social malady is projected in the character of old sweeper woman known as 'Boori Ma'. Kicking of the old woman by the residents evinces the plight of the old woman. Laxmi in the story 'Sexy' awakens to selfhood and values in life by coming out of the absurdity of extra marital relationship in the companionship of seven year old Rohin. Twinkle in the 'This Blessed House' is the representative women
whose mind is constituted by the images of Christianity. Reality constituted by the images is transitory. It projects that the absence of love mars the reality influenced by the images. This goes almost in tune with the characterization of Dimple in Mukherjee’s *Wife*. If marriage is presented as the reason for malady in these stories, it is shown as the only remedy for the malady in the story ‘The treatment of Bibi Haldar’. She gets cured of the hysteria after the marriage.

It is from the perception of portraying a complete picture of the immigrant experiences of women *Wife* and *Interpreter of Maladies* are considered and examined. If *Wife* has portrayed the singular facet of Women’s immigrant experience, *Interpreter of Maladies* has portrayed pluralistic experiences of women in India’s immigration experiences a kind. Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri viewed the life of woman from the vantage point of immigration. Immigration is freshly defined in the light of Women’s perspective.
The narration of these two works is on socio-literary level. Women at the centre of immigrant experiences bring in the very complete and general understanding of immigration.