CHAPTER 2

DIASPORIC PERSPECTIVES

Diaspora and diasporic experiences have attracted attention all over the world. The term ‘diaspora’ originally means the dispersion of the Jews after the Babylonian and Roman conquests of Palestine. Later, it meant the Jews living outside Palestine and of late outside Israel. For them, it meant a collective trauma, an exile and a heart-aching longing to return home. The publication of the New Testament came with a renewed meaning for the term ‘diaspora’ - the body of Christians living outside Palestine. The term has been used, since post-colonial period, in its modern sense with the reassessment of meaning, to represent any widely-spread migrant group and their descendants and the condition of such displaced people in dispersed state. Considered etymologically, the term ‘diaspora’ is derived from the Greek word ‘diaspeirein’ which means ‘to scatter about’. The ancient Greeks used this term with a meaning to refer to the citizens of a dominant city-state who emigrated to a conquered land with the purpose of colonisation and to establish an empire. The term ‘diaspora’ is defined contemporarily as movement and dynamism, origin and belonging, community and culture, along with loneliness and isolation, collective nostalgia and community memory.

Robin Cohen (2008), in his Global Diasporas: An Introduction, has listed out the different types of diasporas as Victim Diasporas, Labour Diasporas, Trade Diasporas, Imperial Diasporas and Cultural Diasporas. Victim Diasporas refer to the forced population into exile such as the Jewish,
African and Armenian Diasporas. Labour Diasporas include the mass migration of Indian and Turkish Diasporas in search of employment and economic development. The Chinese and the Lebanese Diasporas are considered to be Trade Diasporas as their migration is meant for opening trade routes and links. Imperial Diasporas are the ones who migrated to serve and maintain empires such as the British and the French Diasporas. Cultural diaspora represents the Caribbean diaspora who move through a process of chain migration.

The Indian Diaspora is estimated to be the second largest diaspora in the world. It has a diversified global presence. The movement of people from India is an absorbing story of cultural exchanges that the people of India have had with the rest of the world from the earliest times to the present-day. The Indian classical texts describe the long journeys the saints and monks undertook to spread knowledge, peace and love. A significant movement of people took place when Islam arrived in India. The Mughal rulers took to their countries, thousands of Indian men and women as artists, architects, emissaries, traders, scholars, calligraphers and musicians. During the colonial period Indian labourers, traders and professionals were taken to various countries to develop plantation economies, to construct railway networks and to serve as soldiers in the imperial military establishments. The post-independent India witnessed, around the 1950s, a large number of scholars and academicians who activated the first diaspora in the modern period moving to the Western countries for higher studies and research.

The term ‘diaspora’ means both the movement of people and the people who migrate from country to country. In order to specify the intended meaning, the researcher uses ‘diaspora’ to refer to the movement of people, ‘diasporans’ to refer to the people who start living in a different country other than their native and ‘diasporic’ as the adjectival form of diaspora.
Cohen (2008) observes that the term ‘diaspora’ carries a sense of displacement. The diasporians may have different reasons for being away from homeland but they have a hope, or at least a desire, to return to their homeland at some point, if the ‘homeland’ still exists in any meaningful sense. He ponders over the fact that the holy script The Ramayana serves as a basis for the principled life of an Indian in a foreign land. Indians live true to the preaching of The Ramayana and the central theme of the text, exile, suffering, struggle and return, reinforces the desire for ‘homeland’. He says:

Whether in orthodox or deviant forms, however, the vital attachment between diaspora and homeland had been re-established. ‘Mother India’ had reached out to her children abroad. (66)

The Indian Diaspora has not only increased in number but also gained universal recognition for the unique contribution in the settled countries and the migration of Indians as professionals, labourers and traders to the rest of the world is a continuing history of Indian migration.

The US Census Bureau’s American Community Survey reported in 2010 that the Indian Diaspora consists of about one per cent of the total population in the United States. The US Census Bureau, in general, categorises Indian Americans as ‘Asian Indians’ or in a broader sense ‘Asian Americans’ though the people of Indian origin prefer the term ‘Desi’. Indian Americans made their entry into America in two possible modes: as non-resident Indians, holding an Indian passport and migrating to America for job, residence or any other purpose and as expatriate Indians whose ancestors are the citizens of India but they are not the citizens of India and are the citizens of another country. A number of Indian Americans in America are expatriate Indians who came from the United Kingdom, Canada, South Africa, Mauritius, Malaysia, Singapore, Fiji, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica.
Like many other Indian Americans, Jhumpa Lahiri made her way to the United States from the United Kingdom. Border crossing leads to negotiation between multiple voices resulting in the constant adaptation and re-adaptation of the diasporic identity. Belonging to an immigrant family, Lahiri has real concern for the immigrants and migration subjects. Bearing a British passport and residing in America, she acts as a true representative of the displaced voices and dislocated identities. She writes largely about the human condition of Indian Diaspora in the United States. Her focus is the ‘mindscape of characters’ and ‘human predicament’ in its wider perspective. She tries to explore in her novels and short stories the double voice of the diasporic individuals, the cultural dilemmas, the psychological intricacies and the complexities of human relationship with special reference to the characters who live in the West but their parents were born in India. She relates her own experience in the Indian American context:

I think that for immigrants, the challenges of exile, the loneliness, the constant sense of alienation, the knowledge of and longing for a lost world are more explicit and distressing than for their children. On the other hand, the problem for the children of immigrants - those with strong ties to their country of origin - is that they feel neither one thing nor the other. This has been my experience. (Times of India 2007)

A constant vision of mother land is unavoidable in the settled land but at the same time the sense of non-belongingness cannot be ignored. In spite of the attempts at unification, the migrants remain at the border and the unaccepted alien visions, caused by dislocation, never desert them. Lahiri’s novels *The Namesake* and *The Lowland* and short story collections *Interpreter of Maladies* and *Unaccustomed Earth* portray immigrant experiences. Most of the Indian American characters are caught between the two worlds – one the native land (India) and the other the alien land (America) and they are unable to enter either as they have strong and indelible ties to their native visions and
have learned the art of understanding and retaliating the alien voices in order to preserve, cultivate and enhance their native visions. Their diasporic identity is inevitable and it occurs at every stage where they have to decide their future and settlement. The first generation diasporans are good at deciding this whereas for the second generation diasporans, it takes time to think over and decide which world to choose. They continue this kind of mental state, ‘in-betweenness’, for some time or throughout. Gogol Ganguli in *The Namesake* manages to understand somehow the alien visions, while Kaushik in *Hema and Kaushik* miserably fails to understand either. This best reflects the inner self and personal experience of Lahiri. She recollects her experience as a diasporic child:

As a young child, I felt that that the Indian part of me was unacknowledged, and therefore somehow negated, by my American environment, and vice versa. I felt that I led two very separate lives. (About.Com 2012)

*The Namesake* is a generous and inspiring rendering of the conflict between Indianism and Americanism. The generation gap and the multicultural environment lead to the sweeping difference between the parental generation and their children. The parents long for home, feel rootless and displaced but for the children, being born and brought up in the host country, longing for home is not intense and they become familiar to the surrounding. Ashima and Ashoke, in *The Namesake*, are haunted by their past. If any fatal news arrives from India, they are heart-broken and feel a sudden fear of chillness passing through their spines. But for the second generation immigrants, like Gogol and Sonia, the pain of loss is less intense.

Loneliness is one of the burning problems of the diasporic community in the nation of their choice. Ashoke and Ashima experience this issue immediately on landing in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Men manage the situations as they go out and meet their companions either in their workplace
or in the learning environment. It seems Ashoke is also doing well and has no complications in adjusting himself to the acquired atmosphere. For Ashima Ganguli, the Bengali woman, it is horrifying. Women in India usually confine themselves to the kitchen and depend mostly on their husbands. Ashima, in her American household, feels lonely and isolated. For her, life in America is a life-long pregnancy since she is always preoccupied with the Indian tradition, culture and the memories of her life in Calcutta. She dwells physically in America but is bonded mentally to India. Her experience in a new land never comforts her. However, her efforts to overcome this bond continue till the end. Both Ashoke and Ashima have always been thinking of going back to their mother country once they have finished their work in America. The text brings out the mental state of Ashima:

For 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. (NS 49)

Ashima is able to understand her displacement and loneliness in a short period of time especially during the birth of her son Gogol in an American hospital. Bringing up a child in a new land without previous experience is more painful and challenging to anyone who is brought up in Indian customs. Here, in India, child birth is a celebrated occasion. On seeing the nearest and dearest surrounding her to take care of her and the baby, the mother forgets the ordeals she underwent during labour. Until the baby grows old enough to understand the surroundings and situation, the elderly people at home will take care of it. But for Ashima, things are different. She cannot imagine the situation in which she is going to bring up the child in America without the assistance of her parents and grandparents. Out of frustration, she tells Ashoke to ‘hurry up’ and finish his degree: ‘I’m saying I don’t want to
very soon, she is able to associate herself with other Indian-Americans so that she may not be lost in the strange land as a stranger. She befriends the Montgomerys, their landlords, a few Bengalis, Maya, Dilip Nandi and Dr. Gupta, a post-doctoral fellow from Dehradun. However, she cannot resist pitying her son born ‘without a single grandparent or parent or uncle or aunt at her side’. She considers it a ‘haphazard’ and ‘has never known of a person entering the world so alone, so deprived’ (25). She cries while feeding Gogol, while patting him to sleep and after the mailman’s visit when there are no letters from India.

In spite of all her worries and longings, Ashima is passionate enough to understand Ashoke’s mission and adjust herself to the present world of reality that demands explicit boldness and psychological transformation. She makes her life lively and Americanised when the Gangulis move to the house in Cambridge which inhabits many Indian-Americans. Even in terms of her day-to-day life she begins to accept the American way of life especially in shopping, chiefly preferring second sale:

At first Ashima is reluctant to introduce such items into her home, ashamed at the thought of buying what had originally belonged to strangers, American strangers at that. But Ashoke points out that even his chairman shops at yard sales, that in spite of living in a mansion an American is not above wearing a pair of secondhand pants, bought for fifty cents. (NS 52)

Diasporic individuals are destined to lead a double life, one with Indian sensibility and the other with American adaptability. The first generation Indian Americans, with a view to preserving their native visions in the new land, teach their children Bengali language, literature and history by giving some special classes and expose them to Indian beliefs, customs, religion, food and habits. The children are also groomed to cope with the
American way of life. Once when the children have grown up, the necessity to live double life persists. They live one for themselves and the other for their children. They observe all Hindu religious ceremonies as true representatives of the native land. They also celebrate Christmas and Thanksgiving for the children, as they have been acculturated in the alien land. Time and space slowly transform the diasporic individuals towards a perfect understanding of the settled country. The time and space Ashima took to transform is almost similar to that of Lahiri. Lahiri herself admits in an interview that ‘according to my parents I am not American, nor would I ever be no matter how hard I tried’. For her ‘one plus one did not equal two but zero’ since her ‘conflicting selves’ always cancel ‘each other out’. When she grows up and understands the traditions of both the sides, she admits that ‘one plus one equals two’ both in her work and in her ‘daily existence’, and accepts ‘that a bicultural upbringing is a rich but imperfect thing’. Ibrahim Khalilullah (2009) in his article points out that:

Lahiri tries to show the way these immigrant Indians assimilate in a changed perspective, shows that characters no longer behave as traumatised refugees but their endeavour is to negotiate the twist and turns of their life situation in a changed scenario of America that seems to provide opportunities. (119)

Ashima also makes this statement true. In the beginning, she tries to teach her children Bengali language, customs, tradition and culture though their interests lie somewhere in the American aspects of life.

She teaches him to memorize a four line children’s poem by Tagore, and the names of the deities adorning the ten-handed goddess Durga during pujo: Saraswathy with her swan and Kartik with his peacock to her left, Lakshmi with her owl and Ganesh with his mouse to her right. (NS 54)
When Gogol is in the third grade, they send him to Bengali language and culture lessons every other Saturday, held in the home of one of their friends. (NS 65)

At the same time she has an urge to make her children familiar with American English with American accent in order not to be isolated in their school in terms of their Indian accent:

Every afternoon Ashima sleeps, but before nodding off she switches the television to channel 2, and tells Gogol to watch *Sesame Street* and *The Electric Company*, in order to keep up with the English he uses at nursery school. (NS 54)

The first generation Indian-Americans, Ashima, Rina Mash and Mira Mash, like Lahiri’s parents, never fail to follow what they carried with them from their mother country whereas the second generation Indian-Americans, Gogol, Sonia and Moushumi Mazoomdar, like Lahiri herself, find it difficult to identify themselves either with the people at home or with the society outside. The parents go on insisting on the children being true to their native land but the more they are focused, the less they pay attention with an excuse that they are living in America. Unable to make both ends meet, the characters, at one point of time, face identity crisis for which nobody is to be blamed except the inner consciousness which travels carrying the Indian psyche moulded with Americanism.

Ashoke and Ashima, the first generation immigrants, uphold Indian values. India is constantly present in the novel due to the presence of Ashoke and Ashima. Lahiri’s yearning for Indian sensibility is best exposed through them. On landing in Calcutta,

Ashima, now Monu, weeps with relief and Ashoke, now Mithu, kisses his brothers on both cheeks, holds their heads in his hands. Gogol and Sonia know these people but they do not feel close to them as their parents do.
Within minutes, before their eyes Ashoke and Ashima slip into bolder, complicated versions of themselves, their voices louder, their smiles wider, revealing a confidence Gogol and Sonia never seen on Pemberton Road. (NS 81-82)

Their visits to India give vent to their physical and emotional displacement. Their return to the immigrant land is more painful and agonising but inevitable since their siblings have smelt the roots in the new land:

Gogol knows that his relatives will stand there until the plane has drifted away, until the flashing lights are no longer visible in the sky. He knows that his mother will sit silently, staring at the clouds, as they journey back to Boston. (NS 86-87)

Lahiri personally admits that she has ‘always felt integrated with the place [India]’. While recollecting the problems of immigrants, Jaydeep Sarangi (2005), in his article entitled Bond without Bondage: Bharati Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri, speaks of uprootedness:

Feeling at home can be an indication of a process, which is known as adaptation. Man cannot be uprooted thoroughly from his socio-cultural fixity. Yet, none can transcend his cultural identity; certainly no great writer like Jhumpa Lahiri does. (143)

The sense of displacement prolongs to the first generation immigrants. In spite of the fact that these displacements are either for the betterment of the personal or family life in relation to the financial aspects, as in the case of Ashoke or for the sake of the spouse and marital bliss, as in the case of Ashima, the cultural distortion taxes to the core. Unable to meet and talk to the hundreds and hundreds of relatives in India, life becomes distressing and lonely to the immigrants and they feel fatigued and aged. When Ashima thinks of her dear ones in India, she almost feels that she has lost everything:
Even those family members who continue to live seem dead somehow, always invisible, impossible to touch. Voices on the phone, occasionally bearing news of births and weddings, send chills down their spines. How could it be, still alive, still talking? The sight of them when they visit Calcutta every few years feels stranger still, six or eight weeks passing like a dream. Once back on Pemberton Road, in the modest house that is suddenly mammoth, there is nothing to remind them; in spite of the hundred or so relatives, they have just seen, they feel as if they are the only Gangulis in the world. (NS 64)

One of the most significant traits of the immigrant existence is the striking of balance between the two worlds – the homeland and the adopted one. The love and respect for one’s roots is never out of mind and the first generation immigrants always expect their children to practise the customs of their mother country. Lahiri herself realises:

My mother has lived outside India for nearly 35 years; my father nearly 40. Since 1969 they have made their home on the United States. But there were invisible walls erected around our home, walls intended to keep American influence at bay. Growing up, I was admonished not to behave like an American, or worse to think of myself as one. (Lahiri 2000)

Like those invisible walls erected by Lahiri’s parents, Ashima has drawn a boundary line which she never crosses in spite of the fact that it meant an exile to her. Growing up in Calcutta, surrounded by crowds of family and loved ones, Ashima finds her singular foreignness in Boston. The lack of familiarity with her surroundings in Boston, the absence of a large and affectionate family, the strangeness of language, all contribute to Ashima’s sense of helplessness and isolation. For her ‘nothing feels normal’ (6). The inevitability of life makes her learn a life in the foreign land. ‘Like Ashake, busy with his teaching and research and dissertation…, she too now has something to occupy her fully…’ (35). When she started adjusting herself to the alienness of her life in Cambridge, she learns to maintain a fierce contact
with her hometown, Calcutta, and her family through a sequence of letters, written and received. Further, she establishes contacts with the Bengalis living nearby and seeks the comfort of being one with them like her own family:

As the baby grows, so too does their circle of Bengali acquaintances…. Every weekend, it seems, there is a new home to go, a new couple or young family to meet. They all come from Calcutta, and or this reason alone they are friends…. The families drop by one another’s homes on Sunday afternoons. (NS 38)

Passive acceptance of facts and practices is the principal characteristic of the diasporic community. Ashoke and Ashima are not exceptions. While naming their first born, Gogol, they wait for the letter carrying a good name for their child from Ashima’s grandmother in India but the letter never arrives and they wait till Gogol is admitted in school. After a prolonged waiting, they come out with a good name to be officially recorded in the school register but to their dismay, Gogol refuses to accept the change and the school authority leaves it to the preference of the child. The Bengali couple tries to adopt the twin naming system followed in India but they could not do so as the host country demands only one name that too before leaving the hospital after child birth. It is customary in India that people have two names, one good name and one pet name. The good names, usually insisting on some meaning, will be used for official purposes and the pet name, usually meaningless, will be used at home by the family, relatives and friends.

When Ashima has started making Cambridge her home, Ashoke is hired as an assistant professor of electrical engineering at the University and they have to move to the suburbs of Boston which is ‘more distressing than the move from Calcutta to Cambridge’ to Ashima (49). What upsets them more than the move is the fact that their children go against their wishes when they attain age. It is the country which has more influence on the children and not the parents as they are living in America. For the children, living in
America is an excuse. They need not follow the footprints of their parents since the law of the land respects individual freedom in all aspects of life. While Ashima is longing for the care of her parents, she is deprived of such privileges as her husband had decided to take up his career in America. But seeing ‘her children’s independence, their need to keep their distance from her, is something she will never understand’ (166).

For Ashima, cooking and sharing of food are central activities which are inextricably linked with family and social function. To compensate for the absence and loneliness of her alien life, Ashima constantly seeks new engagements and friendships. Mary Douglas, a social anthropologist, is of the opinion that the cooking and eating of food encode social relations and each meal carries forward something of the meaning of other meals. The Gangulies look for occasions in which they can throw parties and share the food that is cooked with the help of the people who crave for the familiar taste of home just as she has. One such occasion is Gogol’s birthday:

Gogol’s Fourteenth Birthday. Like most events in his life, it is another excuse for his parents to throw a party for their Bengali friends… As usual his mother cooks for days beforehand, cramming the refrigerator with stacks of foil-covered trays… Close to forty guests come from three different states. (NS 72)

In the very beginning of the novel itself, one can perceive that Ashima is longing for a familiar atmosphere of being at home. She tries to create familiarity by evoking familiar tastes and smells in her apartment in Boston. She prepares a common snack which is available anywhere in Indian streets. But the snack does not offer her the same taste and smell and fails to give her the feeling of being at home.

Ashima’s gradual affirmation of America is found in her encounter with a few incidents. When the Gangulies are getting ready to make their first
trip to India, Ashima loses her bag in the train and is worried that she cannot afford to buy all those things again. But Ashoke calls ‘the MBTA lost and found’, and ‘the following day the bags are returned, not a teaspoon missing’ (43). She considers it a miracle and exclaims that only in America this is possible. Her apprehension of Americans is a positive connotation that she is capable of understanding the American vision beyond her native vision. The Gangulies buy their own house and settle in the foreign land is another connotation that they are trying to merge their identities with those of their fellow Americans. Ashima comes to America when she is only 19, with her husband Ashoke, leaving behind Calcutta, the city where she is born and brought up, her family and relatives. The nostalgia of her family and home country makes her not to part with the ‘tattered copy of desh magazine’ (6) even after many years of survival in a foreign land. Later, when her husband leaves for Ohio, by getting a prestigious temporary fellowship, and her children are away on studies, she is expected to join him as she has nothing to do at home without anyone but contrary to others’ expectations, she decides to stay at home. She accepts her house at Massachusetts to be her own world where she has seen her children grown. The unforeseen death of her husband further deepens her attachment to America. She renounces her wedding bracelet and washes the vermilion from her parting of hair but does not want to go back to Calcutta immediately. She wants to stay back in a place where ‘her husband made his life, the country in which he died’ (183). It is essentially an Indian sense or sentiment which makes Ashima look back at America.

Diasporic sensibility keeps on changing as time and place change. It means one thing to the first generation and a different thing for the second generation. The first generation is hesitant to accept changes but the second generation finds it convenient to adapt itself to the new environment. Ashima always wears sari, applies vermilion on her forehead, cooks Indian food and
befriends the Bengalis nearby. Ashoke, having escaped miraculously from death, keeps on moving with any sort of atmosphere having in mind ‘Let’s keep going’ (18), the words uttered by somebody on seeing his condition after the fatal accident. Gogol takes to American ways of life and dates with many girls. On one occasion, he wants to spend his vacation with the American girl Maxine and her parents. When he conveys this to his mother Ashima, she becomes speechless and has nothing to do but to accept it. The text reads like this:

“I’m going to spend a couple of weeks in New Hampshire.”

“Oh,” his mother says. She sounds at once unimpressed and relieved. “Why do you want to go there, of all places? What’s the difference between new Hampshire and here?”

“I’m going with a girl I’m seeing,” he tells her. “Her parents have a place there.”

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

Sonia also dates with an American, Ben, and ‘her children’s independence, their need to keep their distance from her’ (166) is a mystery to Ashima and she feels that ‘she has given birth to vagabonds’ (167).

The unfortunate death of Ashoke is a shock to Ashima. He dies in an atmosphere where there is nobody nearby. When his parents died, he could not be present in India to perform the last rites and his death also takes place without the nearness of his dear ones. His death leads to Gogol’s imminent transformation and realisation and he looks back at his father’s life as a success story. After coming home with his father’s ashes, he renounces his affair with Maxine. He thinks of settling in life and leading a holistic life like that of his parents. Gogol, the offspring of the Indian Diaspora, could not stop
looking back at his own national identity. He understands the necessity of marriage and the life thereafter. His longing to bring up children, similar to his parents’, is basically Indian.

Moushumi Mazoomdar, a Bengali Indian American, is also haunted by the double diasporic life. Like Gogol, she is born in America and is quite used to the American way of life. After her broken engagement with Graham, an American, she is reluctant about her marital life. The marriage between these two, Gogol and Moushumi, is a symbolic ‘return of the native’. The marriage is held in accordance with the Indian custom in front of the invited Bengali friends and their families. Gogol’s American vision does not mind Moushumi’s past and the couple leads a happy life until Moushumi’s native vision has its effects within her senses. When she meets her old acquaintance, Dimitri, in Paris, she goes to bed with him. She grieves for her infidelity but the American impulse in her urges her to part with Gogol and she decides to live with Dimitri. The parting mutually takes place as they both have acted on the same impulse. Divorce in India is seen as a sign of demoralisation of Indians but for Moushumi it is a sign of self-assertion and independence.

Jhumpa Lahiri, in her first collection of short stories, Interpreter of Maladies: Stories of Bengal, Boston and Beyond, sketches the diverse experiences of the diasporic individuals in Boston and Calcutta. The short stories present three generations of Bengali Indian expatriates to America. They go to America either to escape the political or economic instabilities or difficulties of their native land or to study or as professionals. The diasporans, facing problems of dislocations, rootlessness, alienation, discrimination and marginalisation in the migrated country, are well-illustrated in the stories When Mr.Pirzada Came to Dine, Mrs.Sen’s, Sexy and The Real Durwan. Lahiri talks of this book as:
Whether set in Boston or Bengal, these sublimely understated stories, spiced with humour and subtle detail, speak with universal eloquence to anyone who has ever felt the yearnings of exile or the emotional confusion of the outsider. (Uttam 2010)

After a Ph.D., in Renaissance Studies from Boston University, Lahiri started writing about her roots and origin as a struggling writer. Her literary sensation shows that she is diasporic in imagination but for the question of identity, a difficult one to think over, she feels that she belongs to Calcutta. Her constant sense of isolation and her present status as an immigrant create confusion within her and she says:

She is much more American than her parents. Yet it is never easy for those with her background to completely feel American either. She explains that for older generation of immigrants the challenges of exile, loneliness, sense of alienation are more acute than they are for their children. For the latter, especially those who have strong ties to their country of origin, like her, is that they feel neither one thing nor the other. And in her stories, her characters move constantly between two worlds grappling bravely with this cultural displacement. (Chandra 2000)

Lahiri’s difficulty in identifying her root and the crisis of identity are predominant almost in all her works. Choubey (2005) remarks that the personal life of Jhumpa Lahiri is the very prototype of diasporic culture. Having spent more than thirty years in the United States, she still feels ‘a bit of an outsider’. Though she has confessed that her days in India are ‘a sort of parentheses in her life’, the fact she is at heart an Indian cannot be denied. The stories collected in her debut anthology Interpreter of Maladies deal with the question of identity.

Jhumpa Lahiri’s sense of attachment to her roots finds a path to explode and the result is the publication of her first collection of short stories entitled Interpreter of Maladies. The first story in the collection A Temporary
Matter centres round the Indian American immigrant couple, Shoba and Shukumar, living in Baltimore, Maryland, in the United States. Shoba works as a copy editor and her husband, Shukumar, is working on the final chapters of his Ph.D., dissertation on agrarian revolts in India. They have experienced a great pain of losing their stillborn baby and are overwhelmed by grief. Shukumar, in search of solitude, seldom leaves the house. He stays in bed almost half the day and finds no interest and deliberation to make progress in his dissertation. Shoba, in contrast, stays away from the house as much as she can and visits the house as if visiting a hotel. She used to be an attentive housekeeper and enthusiastic cook but the house seems to remind her of her loss. They no longer go out socially or entertain at home. They, more or less, reflect Ashima in The Namesake as far as their loss and loneliness are concerned and feel defeated. The only difference between them and Ashima is, theirs is a stillborn baby while hers is full of life. Ashima is left without anybody to look after her and the baby. In Shoba’s case she went on labour three weeks before her scheduled delivery while Shukumar went to attend an academic conference on her insistence. ‘When he returned to Boston, it was all over. The baby had been born dead’ (ATM 3). Their silence comes to an end with the announcement that ‘it was a temporary matter: for five days their electricity would be cut off for an hour, beginning at eight P.M’ (1). This darkness helps them to recollect their lives in India and share ‘little things in life’ and he thinks that it is working but she tells him that just as a ‘temporary matter’ she has found and will move into her own apartment. Being the second generation Indian American, he fails to give confidence and moral support which ultimately leads to their separation. Shoba, on the other hand, though spent much of her childhood in India, fails to understand the vision of her root, the homeland, India, and leaves her husband since mutual separation is common in America. A.K.Mukherjee (2001) mentions in his article about their failed understanding of marriage and its consequences:
The marriage bond, which is still considered sacrosanct in India, is gradually slithering down under the pressure of new needs under a different background. Nevertheless, one needs another’s touch in an emotional crisis. That is why Shoba and Shukumar, failing to find any foothold of security, weep. (110)

It so happens that the first generation diasporans live in nostalgia and the second generation diasporans yearn either for nostalgic feeling or to have a knowledge about the home country. Shukumar is a foil to Gogol in *The Namesake* in this aspect. He wishes that he could have lived in India for sometime but for Gogol every visit to India is an ordeal. During his childhood, fearing that he would get infected, Shukumar’s father rarely takes him to India to join his grandparents in Calcutta. After his father’s death, ‘the country [India] began to interest him and he studied history from course books as if it were any other subject. He wished that he had his own childhood story of India’ (ATM 12). At times his sense of diaspora weakens and almost behaves equally with Gogol. Certain aspects of diasporic perceptions make him feel bored and is disinclined to learn or even to listen to. During his first meeting with Shoba, they sit side by side in

… a lecture hall in Cambridge where a group of Bengali poets were giving a recital…. Shukumar was soon bored; he was unable to decipher the literary diction, and couldn’t join the rest of the audience as they sighed and nodded solemnly after certain phrases. (ATM 13)

The yearning for home is a predominant feeling in the first generation expatriates. Mr. Pirzada, in the story *When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine*, comes to America on ‘a grant from the government of Pakistan to study the foliage of New England’ (PCD 24). He misses his wife and children. He used to own two watches – one on his wrist and the other a pocket watch, his wrist watch showing the American time and the pocket watch showing ‘the local time in Dacca’. In Lilia’s observation, she finds no difference between
Mr. Pirzada’s life in Dacca and her own family life in New England, except for the pocket watch Mr. Pirzada possesses:

I imagined Mr. Pirzada’s daughters rising from sleep, tying ribbons in their hair, anticipating breakfast, preparing for school. Our meals, our actions, were only a shadow of what had already happened there, a large ghost of where Mr. Pirzada really belonged. (PCD 30-31)

The diasporic people used to look for people from their country, in the host country. Like Mr. and Mrs. Ganguli in *The Namesake*, Lilia’s parents, who are from India, look for people from India in *When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine*. Unlike the Gangulis who find friendship only with the Bengalis nearby, Lilia’s parents try in some other way and find out people of Indian origin. One such search ends in finding Mr. Pirzada from East Pakistan:

In search of compatriots, they used to trail their fingers, at the start of each new semester, through the columns of the university directory, circling surnames familiar to their part of the world. It was in this manner that they discovered Mr. Pirzada, and phoned him, and invited him to our home. (PCD 24)

On inviting Mr. Pirzada over the phone to their house, they become close to each other. Also they share his feelings and worries with a sad heart and remain a moral support in the foreign land. They three think alike ‘as if they were a single person, sharing a single meal, a single body, a single silence, and a single fear’ (41). ‘At six-thirty’ every day they sit before the television along with Mr. Pirzada to look for the ‘national news’, to ‘pay attention’ to the political turmoil taking place in East Pakistan. Also Lilia insists on watching the television news since her father is more concerned about her knowledge of her homeland. Her little mind could think of their parents’ concern to the problems in Bangladesh, to the safety of Mr. Pirzada’s family in Dacca and to the people seeking safety as political refugees in the
Indian border of East Pakistan during crisis. Michael W. Cox (2003), in his article *Interpreters of Cultural Difference*, talks about the political entity, the unified sensibility of the three adults and Lilia’s understanding of the situation as:

Pakistanis and Indians have been brought together again in America, and Lilia’s reminiscence, in which she faithfully recalls the events of late 1971 as they transpired in her house and half a world away, have helped to underscore the similarity rather than the difference between Indians and Pakistanis. Indeed, Lilia had to be told of the difference midway through the story, since she had made the mistake of referring to Mr. Pirzada as an Indian: yet by the end of the story of a conflict that further divided the subcontinent into yet another political entity, it is the singleness of these three adults that serves as a final image and memory of Lilia. (127)

Lilia’s parents, having lived part of their life in India, live in the settled land with a lot of discomfort such as ‘the super market did not carry mustard oil, doctors did not make house calls, neighbours never drop by without an invitation’ (PCD 24). Apart from being alienated or feeling lonely, the daily routine becomes complicated without these amenities which were once available easily. However, Lilia’s mother could compromise with some other things and even feel proud that Lilia ‘was born here’ and is ‘assured a safe life, an easy life, a fine education, every opportunity’ (26). Her perception of Calcutta in 1970s was not optimistic, for her life in Calcutta was chaotic and there was no room for peace and prosperity. People had ‘to eat rationed food, or obey curfews, or watch riots’, ‘or hide neighbors in water tanks to prevent them from being shot’ (26-27). But still, she could sense the otherness in the settled land and the oneness with the homeland. They call their ‘relatives in Calcutta to learn more details about the situation’ (41). Lahiri, in one of her interviews, recounts the similar predicament of otherness from her parents: ‘I’ve inherited my parents’ preoccupations. It is hard to
have parents who consider another place their home even after 30 years’ (Nayar 2000).

The third story, *Interpreter of Maladies* brings out the double consciousness of the diasporic women and the perils of assimilation through the character, Mrs.Das. She is torn between the American way of life and the Indian sensibility. Physically, Mrs.Das is young and attractive but her spiritual barrenness takes her to the extent of falling ‘out of love with life’. She has no love for her children or husband and is caught in the boredom of her life as a housewife. Her depression and indifference distance her from her family and makes her unfaithful to her husband. The fact that her third child Bobby was born to her husband’s Punjabi friend, is a distressing secret which pricks her conscience. ‘For eight years’ she had ‘terrible urges’ ‘to throw things away’ and was ‘tired of feeling so terrible all the time’ (IPM 65). If revealed, it could tear the entire family apart. Considering Mr.Kapasi, the tour guide, to be the healer of her guilt, she shares her secret intending a cure but he has no remedy with him except listening to her. Nayak (2002) perceived in this regard that:

Mrs.Das’s seeking of Mr.Kapasi’s help is a kind of searching for expiation of her soul from guilt. She has realised anything secret in sex other than her husband is unhealthy. He knows that it is his noble and honest self to interpret and assist her in bringing out malady. So he desires to mediate between them to cure her ‘guilt’ and ‘pain’. (212)

Most of the Indian Americans suffer from different kinds of maladies but the second generation expatriates, like Mrs.Das, are unable to overcome the Indian consciousness of being true to their married life. The peculiarities of Mr. and Mrs.Das in bringing up the children, dressing, behaviour and mannerisms are also closely observed that ‘the family looked
Indian but dressed as foreigners did, the children in stiff, brightly colored clothing and caps with translucent visors’ (IPM 44).

Both Mr. and Mrs. Das were born and brought up in America and he announces it ‘with an air of sudden confidence’ (45). Their parents, after retirement, prefer to stay back in India which makes the Das family visit India ‘every couple of years’ (45). The sense of belonging to the homeland is predominant with the parental generation but the second generation immigrant Indian Americans like Mr. and Mrs. Das know India only through maps and pictures. For them a visit to India is just like a visit to any other foreign country wherein they look for the scenery of interest to be photographed. Though they consider the settled land their real native land, their conscience and its frequent reflection in every day social and cultural life reminds them of their original homeland. This intermingling of these two identities, in a sense, ‘a diluted sense of identity’, is universal among the second generation diasporans and Mr. and Mrs. Das are no exception.

The dilemmas arising out of displaced identities are something which is intricately woven into the lives of the immigrants in Lahiri’s stories. Mrs. Sen’s is the story of an immigrant Indian woman in America. An eleven-year-old American boy, Eliot, is looked after by Mrs. Sen while his mother goes to work. Mrs. Sen has no friends in America and her husband, a professor of mathematics in a university, finds no time for her. She tells Eliot how she feels lonely and how her dream of living in a foreign land with her husband vanishes. Though he never speaks outwardly, he can draw a clear distinction between the American woman, his mother and the Indian woman, his caretaker, Mrs. Sen. He observes that his mother is in contrast to Mrs. Sen. In the beginning, the colour of Mrs. Sen’s dressing and make-up seem unusual but later he finds that it is his mother whose immodesty seems foreign because her hair is cropped, her pants short and her legs shaved. Michael
W. Cox (2003), in his article *Interpreters of Cultural Difference*, points out that:

> At Mrs. Sen’s, in the presence of recent immigrants, it is Eliot’s mother ironically — with whom he of course has had long association — who seems the least familiar of all, in part because she should be, readers might think, a familiar and reassuring presence. (122)

Even when posing for a photograph, Mr. and Mrs. Sen maintain a decent distance which is new to Eliot:

> Eliot looked through the tiny window in the camera and waited for Mr. and Mrs. Sen to move closer together, but they didn’t. They didn’t hold hands or put their arms around each other’s waists. Both smiled with their mouths closed, squinting into the wind, Mrs. Sen’s red sari leaping like flames under her coat. (MS 130)

Mrs. Sen’s very sense of alienation and the longing to belong somewhere is highly pronounced when she says ‘here, in this place where Mr. Sen has brought me, I cannot sometimes sleep in so much silence’ (115). She is afraid that there is no single soul to rescue her if any misfortune happens. On the contrary, in India, where telephone is not common, if she raises her ‘voice a bit or express grief or joy of any kind and one whole neighborhood and half another’ will ‘come to share the news to help with arrangements’ (116). As Nirad C. Choudhary mentions in an essay that ‘noise is the essential condition of cheerfulness’ for Indians, Mrs. Sen, having lived her life in India with a big family, wants to listen to sounds always. The eternal silence out of loneliness will almost kill her. Her obsession with the values of homeland and her own cultural background distances her from being assimilated. Her constant retelling of the stories of her past and her relationships in India make her feel at home in the present and this is an unconscious attempt of hiding from the alienated present which is always
taxing. As Homi Bhabha (1994) rightly observes in *The Location of Culture,* this past-present ‘becomes the part of necessity not the nostalgia, of living’ (938). Anupama Chowdhury’s (2009) observation throws more light on the protagonist:

Mrs. Sen’s is a poignant tale about the emotional exile and loneliness of a woman who knows that there is only one Sen in the telephone book for her small East Coast town. The protagonist of this story is a Bengali to the core. This is evident from the way she dresses, the songs she listens to, the way she intricately chops vegetables ... the way she reads out to her husband contents of letters received in Bengali, and the way she longs for fish. (17)

A conservative Indian woman, Mrs. Sen is reluctant to learn driving and unwilling to move around without the assistance of her husband. Learning to live on one’s own is the essential condition in America either for a man or for a woman. Ashima, in *The Namesake,* has succeeded in doing that. She too had some initial grudges but later she learned to handle the situation. For the first time, in the absence of Ashoke, she goes out to buy rice in Cambridge and from then on she begins to learn things. Mrs. Sen also has an urge to go out for buying her favourite fish but her attempts, first by bus and then by car, end in frustration, even though she is in desperate need of it since ‘she had grown up eating fish twice a day’ (MS 123). Like Mira Mashi in *The Namesake,* she is a dependent expatriate who will never learn such things. For her, life is an unending malady. Eliot, the American boy, can only interpret Mrs. Sen’s maladies as Mr. Kapasi does. However, they are unable to find a remedy.

The story of *Sexy* features a young Midwestern lady Miranda’s infatuation to a married Indian, Devajit Mitra. This story is a paradigm for the beauty and power of the unknown. Miranda likes Dev because he is exotic and charming and is from Bengal, a state in India, ‘a bay below and
mountains above’ (85) and Dev’s attraction for her is that she is ‘sexy’ and ‘the first woman’ he has ever known ‘with legs this long’ (89). Miranda longs for someone to love her and finds Dev suitable. When Dev’s wife is away to India, he develops a relationship with Miranda. Lahiri’s understanding of men in diaspora is astonishing when Dev is taken for study. There is an Indian concept that men will take advantage of the circumstances and be benefited out of it. Like Maxine to Gogol in *The Namesake* and Holly to Subhash in *The Lowland*, Miranda is to Dev in *Sexy*. Indian women, either in their native land or in the host country, are loyal to their husbands and chaste to their marital life. Laxmi, a diasporic Indian woman finds the extra-marital relationship ‘nauseating and absurd’ (Mukherjee 2001: 112).

Miranda’s co-worker Laxmi’s cousin’s husband left her for a woman in London whom he met on an airplane. ‘After nine years of marriage’, it is unusual in a country like India, ‘her cousin’s husband had fallen in love with another woman’ (Sexy 83). The otherness of each other is the attraction for Miranda and Dev. Laxmi, owing to her acquired manifestations of individuality, which her cousin lacks, tells Miranda, ‘if I were her, I’d fly to London and shoot them both, ... I don’t know how she can just wait this way’ (97). Miranda could bring a parallel between Dev and Laxmi’s cousin’s husband but only Rohin, the cousin’s son, puts sense into her head that she is doing ‘a heinous crime and it was futile to continue the affair for long especially when Dev’s Madhuri Dixit-like wife came back to the States’ (Gnanamony 103). When Rohin tells her his interpretation of the word ‘sexy’ - ‘loving someone you don’t know’ (107), Miranda realises that the attraction between her and Dev is purely physical. It was exactly what Rohin’s father did and it made him live with the emotional damage, so his presence brings Miranda’s guilt to the surface. Mukherjee observation of this fact is that Miranda ‘would not be the real cup of tea for Dev’ and adds that:
Love does not mean to be sexy. It rather means being in each other’s thoughts. Indians living abroad try to be smarter than the natives although they forget that in basic emotion there is hardly any difference between the East and the East... Sometimes emigrants, especially Indians, behave like upstarts. (Mukherjee 2001: 112)

Lahiri is not blind to the facts like the humiliation faced by the diasporic Indian in America. Miranda’s neighbourhood encompasses one Indian family, the Dixits. Mr.Dixit is an amusement to the children of the neighbourhood when he jogs ‘each evening... in his every day shirt and trousers, his only concession to athletic apparel a pair of cheap Keds’ (Sexy 95). The neighbourhood is indifferent to them. This leads their children to mock at the children of the Dixits as ‘“dig shit” under their breath and then burst into laughter’ (95). Mrs.Sen’s Indian hospitality to the American woman, Eliot’s mother, is despised, though her Indian relatives think that she lives ‘the life of a queen’. Gogol is laughed at by his friends for his name sounds similar with ‘goggle’ and ‘giggle’. Lilia is called ‘Indian witch’ (PCD 37) by the American neighbours during Halloween. Twinkle is questioned whether her last name is ‘Little Star’ (TBH 153). Indian immigrants suffer humiliation not only in America but also in every dominant civilisation. Most of the diasporic writers give a hint on these aspects too. Especially, the works of Bharati Mukharjee reflect the cruel realities of life of the settled diasporans in an alien land. She herself has lived in many countries and her wider experience enables her to say that only in America she finds the assimilation of all nationally and culturally diverse people.

Lahiri’s emblematic depiction of Indianness is universally acclaimed. The problems and misfortunes faced by diasporic characters are clearly outlined in all the stories. This Blessed House is special of its kind because the conflicting characteristics of the two, belonging to the same diaspora that too within the same family, are brought out brilliantly. It is the
story of a newly wed young Indian couple, Sanjeev and Twinkle, making their life in the United States. One remains more resistant and the other easily adapts to Western culture with ease and curiosity. Twinkle remains curious and respectful towards Western and Christian culture but Sanjeev is shocked to know that his wife Twinkle is fond of these Christian relics. He, being an immigrant, struggles to hold on to his roots – his national and religious identities. She, being the daughter of the second generation immigrants, assimilates to American culture by developing a self-identity which separates her from his conservative characteristics. The very sight of the Christian symbols in his newly-bought house ‘puzzled him that each was in its own way so silly. Clearly they lacked a sense of sacredness…these objects meant something to Twinkle, but they meant nothing to him’ (TBH 138).

Sanjeev comes to America with his native vision and values which help him to elevate his position in the work place in a very short span of time. His education in MIT, after the formative education in India, does not bring in him any change of personality. He even says that he has no love affair. He is determined to fit in with his professional and Indian associates. His profession remains a basis for him to come off more reserved and conventional than Twinkle. He is unadventurous and exacting. He is with a vision that his role as a husband is a responsible and dominant position. Twinkle, far away from the diasporic concepts, is free-spirited and does not care for fine details. She shows interest neither in revealing her national identities nor in hiding them. Unlike Sanjeev, Twinkle has already assimilated to the American culture and lifestyle. She is on her second marriage with Sanjeev. Her first marriage with a jobless American is the outcome of her assimilated American frame of mind. She is neither Moushumi, in The Namesake, nor Hema, in Hema and Kausik, nor Shoba, in A Temporary Matter but resembles Sonia, in The Namesake who marries an American and settles without complaints in life. Twinkle is a perfect American showing not much care to cleanliness and
minute details like the spilling of ash on the floor or flushing the cigarette buts in the toilet. Her ability to find interest in unimportant and irrelevant matters or things and Sanjeev’s inability to understand her interests are the reasons for the conflict between the two. His lack of understanding of his wife and her attachment towards unimportant objects make him think ‘of the snapshots his mother used to send him from Calcutta, of prospective brides who could sing and sew and season lentils without consulting a cookbook’ (TBH 146). However, it is Twinkle who encourages him to assimilate to the adopted land, though he shows resentment. Ultimately, Sanjeev also realises that he must learn to assimilate American culture in order to be successful.

Throughout the story Sanjeev remains a true representative of his native land. During the housewarming party, his menu consists of ‘samosas from an Indian restaurant in Hartford, and big trays of rice with chicken and almonds and orange peels which Sanjeev had spent the greater part of the morning and afternoon preparing’ (150). Also he ‘ate a piece of chicken out of the tray on the counter with his fingers because he thought no one was looking’ (153). On the other hand, Twinkle is constantly unmindful of Sanjeev’s expectations, refusing to stay within his comfort zone. She prefers American style of food and her perception of Indian food is different: ‘Indian food, she complained, was a bother; she detested chopping garlic, and peeling ginger, and could not operate a blender’ (144). But both are trying to adjust to living with the hope that things will be under control in the near future. This very optimistic approach to life underlines the essential quality of the Indian attitude to life.

A sense of identity is sought primarily through family, society and culture. For the diasporic people, it is a difficult endeavour. The story, The Third and Final Continent, introduces the positive notion of the first generation immigrant experience in America. Instead of lamenting the lost
origin, a Bengali young man starts his journey from Calcutta to England and then to the United States which he calls his home. A positive assimilation occurs hand in hand with a healthy marriage and the couple overcomes the hurdles by becoming more native than the actual natives. During the assimilation process and after, they retain their cultural identities, values and beliefs.

The protagonist of *The Third and Final Continent*, after sailing for three weeks in the ship, the SS Roma, lands in England where, like many other Indians who live abroad, he shares a room with a few Bengalis, in order to save money. After a few years at the age of 36, he comes back to India and marries the girl of his parents’ choice as it is a convention in India that marriages are arranged by the parents. Again he travels to America for better prospects in life. On seeing the advertisement in the newspaper, he hires his first home in America from Mrs. Croft, a hundred-and-three-year-old lady. His wife, Mala, raised in the tradition that conditioned her to believe that her responsibility in life was to get married and be a good wife, follows him, whom she knows briefly, across the seas to face an unknown life in a strange land. Even after many years of her life in a foreign land, she remains loyal to the customs of her native land because they are a source of stability for her. For them America is breath whereas India is spirit. After years of survival, he realises that the process of acculturation is not an easy thing and looks back that:

I am not the only man to seek his fortune far from home, and certainly I am not the first. Still, there are times I am bewildered by each mile I have traveled, each meal I have eaten, each person I have known, each room in which I have slept. As ordinary as it all appears, there are times when it is beyond my imagination. (TFC 198)

He feels at home in his ‘first home’ in America for which he owes his debt to Mrs. Croft. He observes a mother-son relationship surviving between the two
which makes him mourn her death. Tejinder Kaur (2002) writes about the protagonist as:

Thus through voluntary effort he had intervened in the subject culture, influenced it, and it also transformed the relationship between him and his wife making it mobile and dialogic. (43)

The story closely resembles Lahiri’s father’s journeys and experiences. The frequent recollections of Indian memories are the essential commodity of the commerce graduate, the immigrant protagonist. The thought of his dead mother and mother land lingers in his mind and he recalls: ‘At times I thought of the tiny room on the other side of the wall which belonged to my mother. Now the room was practically empty; the wooden pallet on which she'd once slept was piled with trunks and old bedding’ (181). He, with his family, visits ‘Calcutta every year’. His struggle to come to terms with the adopted country is a penetrating experience. He, very much aware of the problems faced by the second generation who are pulled in two directions, says:

We have a son who attends Harvard University. Mala no longer drapes the end of her sari over her head, or weeps at night for her parents, but occasionally she weeps for our son. So we drive to Cambridge to visit him, or bring him home for a week end, so that he can eat rice with us with hands, and speak in Bengali, things we sometimes worry he will no longer do after we die. (TFC 197)

America, a land where people can build new identities, was conceived in a spirit of openness. It is the land where the rest of the world comes to reinvent itself, leaving behind the limitations and comforts of distant customs. ‘Strike their root into unaccustomed earth’ to make fortunes, suggests Nathaniel Hawthorne in The Custom-House. Like Interpreter of Maladies and The Namesake, Lahiri again brings out the inevitable tension
prevailing in the lives of the immigrant Indians in her second collection of short stories, the third publication, *Unaccustomed Earth*. Set in two parts, the first part, with five stories, tells the tales of the diasporic Indians, their family accomplishments, their unexpected passions, their psychological overtones and the diaspora perceptions. The second part, entitled *Hema and Kaushik*, is divided into three parts forming a triology but telling a single tale, narrating the events that took place in the lives of Hema and Kaushik in America and other countries.

The experience of living in a foreign country is always a history of a divided self: on the one hand there is a need to keep the links to homeland, tradition and memories and on the other hand there is an urge to come to terms with the host culture, understand the concept of freedom and assimilate, not to be alienated. Ruma, in *Unaccustomed Earth*, a lawyer by profession, marries a white American named Adam and gives birth to a bi-racial child, Akash. She moves to Seattle along with her husband for his work where she knows nobody. She is pregnant again and giving up her job to take care of her son, she feels isolated. She wants to walk out of the door every morning to sense the free air, the American air but her responsibilities as an Indian mother reminds her of the duties of a wife and mother. She wonders how her mother did it and now she finds herself in the same place: ‘Growing up, her mother’s example — moving to a foreign place for the sake of marriage, caring exclusively for children and a household — had served as a warning, a path to avoid. Yet this was Ruma’s life, now’ (UE 11). Being an Indian mother and taking up the household responsibilities are the outcome of the individual independence in which Adam never interferes.

Ruma’s mother insists on her speaking in Bengali when there is a conversation between the two or within the family. Now, Ruma too, taking her mother’s role, teaches her son Bengali but as the son is born in the
American soil, he finds no urge or link for the distant language in a place where everyone uses English. When people distance one another, the relationship diminishes, so also the language when not in use:

By now Akash had forgotten the little Bengali Ruma had taught him when he was little. After he started speaking in full sentences English had taken over, and she lacked the discipline to stick to Bengali. Besides, it was one thing to coo at him in Bengali, to point to this or that and tell him the corresponding words. But it was another to be authoritative; Bengali had never been a language in which she felt like an adult. Her own Bengali was slipping from her. (UE 12)

In *Reflections on Exile*, Edward Said (2000) articulates that though the expatriates voluntarily living in the foreign country suffer from solitude and ‘estrangement of exile’, some of them are benefited by their ‘ambiguous status’ while others, surrounded by the everlasting feeling of homelessness, try to reproduce in the new land the principles that guided their lives in their native land. Ruma, a combination of American modernism and Indian traditionalism, has succeeded in benefiting out of her ambiguous identities. She married an American against her parents’ wish. She prefers wearing pants and skirts but keeps with her a few saris of her mother. In her solitude, she always thinks of the left-behind old connections and the contacts she made all those years. She speaks Bengali over the phone to her relatives, cooks Indian food and at times eats with her fingers. Like Ruma, her father, who has already started living the American life, looks more American than Indian in Western clothes. Akash, as he grows by, overcomes all the ambiguous identities of her mother, hates Indian food though initially he ate Indian food prepared by his mother and grandmother. Ruma’s mother, a traditional Indian mother seen always in sari, lives throughout as a dependant soul with a unique identity of an Indian and with a lamentation that ‘there would be no one to whom to pass on her things’ (UE 17).
An examination of exile and its inevitable sadness of a diasporic woman are inextricably woven in the story *Hell-Heaven*. Usha’s mother, Aparna, a typical Bengali woman, empathises with Pranab Chakrobartthy, a graduate student at MIT. A familial relationship develops between Usha’s family and Pranab since he hails from Calcutta, India. It is a common characteristic among the Bengalis in America to befriend the Bengalis in the neighbourhood. Pranab is a welcome guest and Usha’s mother is happy to feed him. The exiled mother develops a unique kind of love towards him and when he announces his marriage with an American woman, Deborah, she becomes heart-broken. The unacknowledged feelings Aparna had for Pranab almost drags her to end her life. When Usha becomes heart-broken due to her affair with an American, Aparna consoles her by citing her own example. Like Mrs.Sen, Usha’s mother also longs for relationship. Like Mr.Sen, Usha’s father, Shyamal Da, fails to understand the loneliness of his wife and be intimate with her. The former fails due to his profession and responsibilities while for the latter it is his aloofness and the detached behaviour distance him from his wife. But the old age unites Usha’s parents and they ‘had grown fond of each other, out of habit if nothing else’ (HH 81).

Like many other diasporic characters of Lahiri, Pranab also settles in America with an American woman. When his choice is informed to his parents in India, they chide Aparna saying: ‘We thought we could trust you, and yet you have betrayed us so deeply… Is this what happens to people in America?’ (72) His marriage with Deborah changes his life. He puts his Bengali roots behind and adopts an all-American culture. He even refuses to have tie ups with Bengalis which once he longed to have. Deborah tells Aparna that ‘she had tried, for years to get Pranab Kaku to reconcile with his parents and that she had also encouraged him to maintain ties with other Bengalis, but he had resisted’ (82). American individuality does not allow the couple to compromise with their marital relationship. Instead, it emboldens
them to decide life on their own. As expected by Usha’s mother, their relationship ends in divorce after twenty-three years. It was he who chooses to live ‘with a married Bengali woman, destroying two families in the process’ (81). Lahiri affirms from Pranab’s personality that a person’s roots will always follow him throughout his life. No matter how sophisticated the adopted culture is, the native roots will be the part of one’s life. Not all marriages, between an American and an Indian, end in discord. There are exceptions. Ruma with Adam, Sonia with Ben, Amit with Megan, Subhash with Elise and Bela with Drew are all successful.

Disenchanted by the European racialism which always favours ‘WHITES ONLY’ (135), the Bengali immigrants, Rahul and Sudha’s parents, in Only Goodness move to the United States with the fond hope of a successful life. Like the protagonist of The Third and Final Continent, they migrate first to England and then to America. Though America is the land of equal opportunities, their encounter with everyday life is difficult since neither of the parents is exposed to American habits and language. Initially, they rely on their children and later they succeed economically. Their self-imposed, alienated experience and the hardships prepare them to give their children, Rahul and Sudha, a dignified and easy life. On the other hand, Rahul is resistant and he never shares or fulfils the expectations of his parents. He drops out his studies and becomes an addict to alcohol. His failure becomes a shame:

Other Bengalis gossiped about him and prayed their own children would not ruin their lives in the same way. And so he became what all parents feared, a bolt, a failure, someone who was not contributing to the grand circle of accomplishments Bengali children were making across the country, as surgeons or attorneys or scientists, or writing articles for the front page of The New York Times. (OG 151)
Rahul becomes a failure as he finds himself in the conflicting position of being in-between, neither fulfilling the American dream nor realising the native vision. His parents

...want him to preserve the Indian way of life, yet take advantage of opportunities that America offers, such as excellent education and job. They still separate the two worlds, India and America, creating a paradoxical situations: on the one hand they want to think their children live an idyllic life in the American Paradise, free from the burden of the Indian past... on the other hand, they resist the idea that their children come in contact with therefore might be influenced by American reality. (Filipczak 2012: 7-8)

As a hybrid, he is unable to be the ‘one’ or the ‘other’; he cannot live either as an American or as an Indian. Eventually, he finds strength to disown his parents and decides to live with an American girlfriend.

Amit, in the story A Choice of Accommodations, is a hybrid like Rahul. Born to Indian parents in a rich family, he spends most of his childhood in Langford high school where he is the only Indian. In his early life, he is tormented by alienation, loneliness and quest for home. His frustrations never allowed him to be familiar with any of the customs required for the Indian way of life. His sense of survival depends on the amount of understanding of the American way of life. Ultimately, like Rahul, Amit decides to live with an American woman, Megan, who is senior to him. Perhaps, this is the American way of celebrating conjugal bliss. He knows for sure that his parents, after all their attachment to Western way of life, will object to his idea: ‘He was aware of what an insult it was to them. For all their liberal Western ways he knew they wanted to marry a Bengali girl, raised and educated as he had been’ (112).
Amit’s loneliness in his early years makes him more eager than Megan to start a family. ‘It was Amit who’d pushed for a second. Megan was content with one, telling him she’d paid the price for being from a large family.’ But Amit persisted and ‘Megan had given in, gotten pregnant again…’ (113). His own experience as a lonely child has taught him the art of good parenting. He is more concerned about his daughters, Maya and Monica, than Megan. Every now and then, he thinks of his children and also the way he felt alienated in the past. Amit travels with his wife Megan to the boarding school where he spent his teen age years to attend the wedding of an old friend, the Headmaster’s daughter. At the wedding, he takes too much of alcohol and passes a remark that most marriages ‘disappear’ after some time, keeping in mind his own misfortunes in his married life. When Lahiri is asked about the alcoholic nature of her characters and here, about Amit, she says that:

... drinking is a Western custom. In the West, most people drink—it’s part of the culture, regardless of class. Alcohol is not a part of life among average lower-middle-class or middle-class people in India. ...whereas I think Amit, naturally there would be a lot to drink at a wedding, and it just made sense to me that he would have one too many. (Bookforum 2008)

* Nobody’s Business is the story of Sangeeta, an unmarried Bengali-American, who prefers to be called Sang. Paul, the protagonist, is an American who falls in love with his housemate, Sang, who cares little for his love and is engaged to a self-obsessed Egyptian. She used to get calls from men, every so often ‘wanting to marry her... But they’d heard that she was pretty and smart and thirty and Bengali and single and so these men, most of whom also happened to be Bengali..., desperately wanted her to be married’ (174). But she rejected everyone ‘because the suitors did not know her, they had not had a chance. “It’s not love,” she used to say (218). Bound by the
American way of life, she dates with the man whom she considers to marry. On knowing his affairs with another woman, the glamorous Sang becomes heart-broken and leaves for London to join her sister. Lahiri still presents a fact that the diasporic individuals have to understand the multiplicity of reality.

The first of the trio in *Hema and Kaushik* is *Once in a Lifetime*. Lahiri brings out the contrasting characteristics of two Bengali families in America. Hema’s family, immersed in Indian ways of life, is a contrast to Kaushik’s family, deeply absorbed by the Western influences. Deeply rooted in the Indian aspects of life, Kaushik’s family ‘had decided to leave Cambridge, not to Atalanta or Arizona, as some other Bengalis had, but to move all the way back to India…’ (HAK 223). Bending to both the good old days of friendship and the Bengali custom of welcoming houseguests, Hema’s parents welcome Kaushik’s family, who after years of life in India, comes back to America. They are shocked to see their old friends who wear American clothing, sneak cigarettes and have an open bottle of Johnnie Walker nearby at all times. They are perplexed by the ways in which Kaushik’s family has changed. Hema tells Kaushik that:

> Bombay had made them more American than Cambridge had, my mother said, something she hadn’t anticipated and didn’t understand. There were remarks concerning your mother’s short hair, her slacks, the Johnnie Walker she and your father continued to drink after the meal was finished… My parents, who had never set foot in a liquor store, wondered whether they should buy another bottle… (HAK 235-36)

In an interview, Lahiri shares her views when asked about Kaushik’s family taking to alcohol:
They’re richer, and their catered lifestyle is both real and also exaggerated through the eyes of Hema’s mother. She makes more of the drinking than it really is, brings to it her feeling of being left out, feeling like her friends left her in the dust somehow. But drinking is simply something Kaushik’s parents have come to enjoy. (Bookforum 2008)

Both the families ‘were leading antipodal lives under the same roof’ (236). As a result, Hema never spoke to anyone about their arrival; she ‘almost never revealed details’ of her ‘home life’ to her ‘American friends.’ She feared: ‘As a child, I had always dreaded my birthdays, when a dozen girls would appear in the house, glimpsing the way’ they lived (237).

The revelation that Kaushik’s mother Parul Mashi is dying of breast cancer and that is why the family has returned to the United States signifies the moral and psychic failures of the immigrants who make the unwise move of self-alienation and total disconnection from their roots. Sule E.Egya (2008) writes about the skilful dramatisation of this story as:

...while the postcolonial man or woman immigrates into the “empire”, he should hold to his cultural folkways – those very things that distinguish him as a human having a homeland somewhere... There is nothing as hospitable as homeland... India chooses to be hospitable to Parul Mashi with her cancer, but she flees because she is not yet done with smoking cigarette and drinking Johnnie Walker. Which is why she is doomed to psychic devaluation and self-destruction. (98)

In Year’s End, the second of the triology, Kaushik narrates the events that took place after his mother’s death. His father, having lived in America for many years and accustomed to Western ways of life, deciding to set up a life for his own, marries a widowed school teacher, a mother of two - she in her thirties and he in his fifties. He defended his actions stating ‘I was
tired Kaushik… Tired of coming home to an empty house every night’ (HAK 255). The house, once made by his mother, is occupied by Chitra and her children. His father is very careful that he has erased every memory of his mother telling that they have been sent to charities in India. Kaushik helps Chitra’s children to accustom to the social life in the new country as they find difficulty in moving with the outer world. He tells Rupa ‘to always start off by saying hello.’ When Piu is afraid of going to school out of fear that other children may laugh at her for her English, he reassures her quoting his example: ‘I came from Bombay when I was sixteen and had to figure things out all over again. I was born here but it was still hard, leaving and then coming back again’ (HAK 274).

Kaushik has already set one foot out of the house. His father’s remarriage makes his holiday home trips disastrous. Straddled between two countries and cultures, he is already nowhere. Owing to his interest in photography, he starts travelling the world, photographing war, famine and devastation of all kinds. Afterwards, his father tells him that he is selling the house, ‘that he and Chitra and the girls were moving to a more traditional one in a less isolated suburb of Boston. There were other Bengalis nearby and an Indian grocery in the town…’ (HAK 292), and he is firm not to follow his father to that new house.

*Going Ashore*, the last of the trio, brings both Hema and Kaushik together in Rome. The story gives an insight into the idea that finding a home in this universe is always set against the reality. In Rome, the two seem to represent an independence from the diasporic and cultural forces that have shaped their lives. For Hema, it is short-lived. Her choice of setting life with Julian miserably fails. Ultimately, she is unable to set aside the expectations imposed by her parents. She does not want the sort of life her parents wanted but eventually she surrenders to what she describes as a normal, secure life –
the inevitable, arranged marriage. Her perception of love is torn with Julian and she refuses to mend it and move on. Instead, she feels liberated by being chained down by a marriage to a man she hardly knows. Kaushik finds that Hema is the only woman who has any understanding of his past and he wants a life with her but his unspoken words and the mindset to avoid commitments take him away from her.

Lahiri writes always about Indians negotiating America. Her second novel, the latest publication, *The Lowland*, is a psychological journey between India and America, primarily between Tollygunge and Rhode Island. Displacement, alienation and loneliness are the primary concerns of the diasporic people. Here, in *The Lowland*, most of the characters suffer these issues not in the outer world but within. Subhash, the elder, and Udayan, the younger, are inseparable brothers, born with the difference of just fifteen months. They are innocent, bold, extremely intelligent and identical in appearance but diametrically opposite in nature.

Comprehending the complexities of relationship is the theme of the novel. Failed relationship leads to loss of happiness. Udayan, the passionate, idealistic and rebellious young man, stays homeland to join the Naxalite movement and Subhash, the obedient and cautious, leaves for Rhode Island, following his interest in pursuing a Ph.D., in Marine Chemistry. Subhash, on landing in the US, fascinated by the life style of the citizens there, decides to make his livelihood in the US. As a triumphant diasporic individual, he compares his status in America with that of India in the later years:

Until he left Calcutta, Subhash’s life was hardly capable of leaving a trace. He could have put everything belonging to him into a single grocery bag… Until he went to America he had not had his own room. He had belonged to his parents and to Udayan, and they to him. That was all.
Here he had been quietly successful, educating himself, finding engaging work, sending Bela to college. It had been enough, materially speaking. (LL 251)

Subhash’s relationship with an American woman, Holly, the mother of a nine-year-old son, leads to the loss of his virginity. In Holly’s house he behaves hesitantly since a part of him was still clinging to the Indian values and ethical aspects of life. However, it is Holly, who seduces him in her chamber, thereby leading him into the American way of life. When she rejoins her husband, she offers her friendship for ever but he refuses to continue friendship due to the sense of humiliation. It is the Western way of life that enables both the husband and wife to behave friendly even after a mutual divorce between the two. But for Subhash, it is an insult which makes him tell ‘her not to call him’ and he too is very cautious that he never takes turn to the places they loitered.

The assimilation of Subhash in American culture takes place gradually. His association with Holly may be considered from the Indian perspective as cultural demoralisation. But he regains his native consciousness by withholding the Indian values when he decides to leave Holly. Though he tells everyone that he would make life in India after the completion of his studies, his real intention is to stay back and assimilate himself in the land of equal opportunities, America: ‘He told her [Holly] he would, but felt unreal, in her company, that he would ever be back in Tollygunge, with his family’ (71). In later years when Holly and Richard, his friend and roommate in Rhode Island, see him still in America, they are surprised. Udayan, in one of the letters to Subhash, mentions that: ‘No doubt the flora and fauna of the world’s greatest capitalist power captivate you. But if you can bear to tear away try to make yourself useful’ (42).

Diasporans develop individuality in the settled land since it is inevitable for their survival. Subhash, not depending on others, cooks his own
food in Rhode Island. In India men make money and women make home. Gouri could feel the down-to-earth difference between the two: Udayan, in Tollygunge and Subhash in Rhode Island. Udayan never sets foot into the kitchen whereas Subhash prepares everything for himself. Gauri in Rhode Island is pleased to see Subhash in the kitchen:

She was thankful for his independence, and at the same time she was bewildered. Udayan had wanted a revolution, but at home he’d expected to be served; his only contribution to his meals was to sit and wait for Gauri or her mother-in-law to put a plate before him. (LL 126)

May be the soil Subhash set foot has given him such lessons. During his visit to Narasimhan, an Economics Professor from Madras, Subhash tells him: ‘I preferred a place with a kitchen. I wanted to make my own meal’ (37).

Individuality and liberated attitude are shown in every walk of life in the life of immigrants. Marriages take place not only between two unmarried people but also between two married or widowed people who live either with or without children. A few days after his stay in Rhode Island, Subhash is surprised to see a scene:

He glimpsed a couple in middle age, newly married. A gray-haired groom with a carnation in his lapel, a woman in a pale blue jacket and skirt... Looking like they should have been parents of the bride and groom, closer to his parents’ generation than to his own. He guessed that it was a second marriage. Two people trading one spouse for another, dividing in two, their connections at once severed and doubled, like cells. Or perhaps it was a case of couple who had both lost their spouses in midlife. A widow and widower with grown children, remarrying and moving on. (LL 39)

It so happens in the short stories of Interpreter of Maladies. Rahul in Only Goodness prefers to live with a woman who is already a mother to a child.
Kaushik’s father in *Year’s End* marries a widowed school teacher, a mother of two daughters. So also, Pranab, in *Hell-Heaven*, prefers to live with a woman who already has a husband and children. It is the host land which has given Subhash the courage to marry the widowed wife of his dead brother, Udayan. If Subhash had been in India, things would have been different; he would not have been allowed to marry a widow, especially the widow of his brother as the girl Gouri was not liked by either of his parents.

In all other previous works, Lahiri’s first generation diasporans are true to their home country and their root, they feel, is always in India. At the same time, they compromise certain aspects only for their children who find it difficult to be assimilated culturally in the host country. Usha’s parents, in *Hell-Heaven*, teach her the Indian attitude to life but she, on the other hand, inspired by the fellow American friends, is motivated only to the American way of life. Her mother, understanding the reality which she cannot change, welcomes home Usha’s boyfriends with a smiling face and allows her to stay with them. Hema, in *Going Ashore*, gets similar kind of experience but decides, at the end, to enter into a life expected by her parents, in a way, an Indian family life. Gogol in *The Namesake* dates with many American girls and his parents, unable to make him understand the Indian visions, agree with him. Largely, only the second generation expatriate community shows distinctive difference with the first generation expatriates. But, in *The Lowland*, the first generation diasporic individuals also show their distinction similar to the second generation diasporans. Subhash and Gouri are only the first generation immigrants almost equal in age with Ashima and Ashoke (*The Namesake*). Ashima and Ashoke are leading an undiluted life and their only difficulty is to bring up their children as expected by every Indian Immigrant. Subhash and Gouri, though they have complex relationship with each other,
look homogeneous in always recollecting the memories of Udayan but fail to fulfil the coded ethics expected from the first generation Indian Immigrants. Gauri, haunted by the memories of Udayan, the first wed, who lost his life for the Movement he was associated with, was unable to accept Subhash, her second wed, the rescuer of life, and her daughter Bela, born to Udayan, leaves the house for certain selfish compromises. Though she has lived 23 years of life in Calcutta and another few years in Rhode Island (though in isolation), she is a modern woman somehow influenced by the Western independence and individuality who decides to sever all her ties with Subhash and Bela which is cruel to the core and no mother will dare to do it. Her initial transformation begins in her attitude towards dressing. After a short talk with an American student in the university campus, ‘She began to want to look like the other women she noticed on the campus, like a woman Udayan had never seen’ (134). One day it happens all of a sudden:

Her hair hung bluntly along her jawbone, dramatically altering her face. She was wearing slacks and a gray sweater. The clothes covered her skin, but they accentuated the contours of her breasts, the firm swell of her stomach. The shape of her thighs. He drew his eyes away from her, though already a vision had entered, of her breasts, exposed. (LL 141)

In the beginning, Gauri, like all mothers, plays the role of a mother, always fearing for the safety of the child Bela. Either her thirst for knowledge and the desire to pursue courses in philosophy or her observation of people and their perception of life in Rhode Island or her unwilling compromise to accept both Subhash and Bela as part of her family has made her to be lost in a distant place. For Gauri, alienation and loneliness are not new. She lives an alienated life right from her birth due to her mother’s illness. Only her marriage brings peace and happiness. After the death of Udayan she is alienated again in her own house by her in-laws as well as by the norms of the
society. She agrees to the second marriage with Subhash with the hope that she may bring an end to her alienated life in an alien land. Later, she understands that nothing can bring her peace except Udayan. Her love for Udayan and the psychological loneliness cause irrevocable damage to the lives of her daughter Bela and Subhash.

As a diasporic individual, Subhash does not imitate the other first generation immigrants of Lahiri. Though he maintains a short-lived affair with Holly, his visit to Tollygunge on the death of Udayan brings out the responsibility, dedication and sacrifice from him. His concern for Gauri is great:

Their treatment of Gauri was deliberate, intended to drive her out. He thought of her becoming a mother, only to lose control of the child. He thought of the child being raised in a joyless house... And the only way to take her away was to marry her. To take his brother’s place, to raise his child, to come to love Gauri as Udayan had. (LL 115)

Bela’s birth, once again, proves that Subhash is caring, noble and unchanging. Bound to the symbolic marriage bonds and destined to the spiritual emptiness, he lives a physically single life, hiding the corroding fact to Bela that Udayan is her father. His immeasurable love for Bela prohibits him from revealing the secret to her as it means breaking her heart. Also his ideal of bringing up Bela and giving her good life and comfort does not allow him to think of getting married after Gauri’s desertion. But the once-longed and later-hidden sensibilities of becoming a part of the American way of life dominates in him during his sixties. By now Bela has started designing her own life. He marries Elise, a widow, who is visiting her sons and daughter now and then. He plans his honeymoon in Ireland: ‘The trip is a honeymoon, the man’s first, though he was married once before’ (330). His open-mindedness and the American vision of life enable him to accept Elise’s children and grand children as his own: ‘The man has gained two sons, a
second daughter in addition to his own. There are seven grandchildren. Flung far apart, occasionally thrust together, they will know each other in a limited way. Still, it is a point of origin, a looking forward late in life’ (330). The couple knows that they are at the verge. A funeral procession, on the way, recalls their age but they feel that ‘there is no sense of its boundaries, where it begins or ends, whom it grieves. Then they pass respectfully, out of shadow’ (330).

Even though the immigrant makes his life busy and makes money to live a refined and affluent life, loneliness is inevitable and nothing can be an alternative to compromise his feeling. Subhash is very often trapped by his loneliness which is caused out of his want of homeland. He feels that ‘there was no one there for him in Rhode island. He was tired of being alone’ (115). ‘Once or twice he had called these women, or they would call him, inviting him to attend a classical music concert in providence, or a play. Though he had little interest in such entertainments, he’d gone; on a handful of occasions, craving for company...’ (223).

Human beings are sentimental fools, says T.S.Eliot. Subhash has a sense for his sentiments. His sense and sensations are purely Indian. He admires the settled land where he makes his life: ‘Among its people, its trees, its particular geography he had studied and grown to love, he was still a visitor. Perhaps the worst form of visitor: one who had refused to leave.’ He thinks that ‘the house in Rhode Island in which Gauri left him, which he imagined would be his last’ (253). He thinks of the house in Tollygunge, the only relationship he has in India:

He would never go back to live there, and yet he could not bring himself to sell it; that small plot of land, and the prosaic house that stood on it, still bore family’s name, as his parents had hoped it would. (LL 254)
Lahiri’s ‘search for identity is difficult and that is why she makes a multi-cultural commitment. Her characters’ search for self-recognition has a kind of autobiographical element…’ (Nayak 2002: 213). She is remarkable for her characters which are drawn from all over the world, primarily from India, America, the UK and other commonwealth countries in their own situations. These immigrant characters have mostly distorted perceptions and they suffer from alienation, rootlessness, exile, loneliness, displacement, discrimination, fragmentation, marginalisation and identity crisis in the multi-cultural milieu of the American society. In the fast-changing social, political, economic and cultural global scenario, Jhumpa Lahiri has incarcerated various experiences of the life of the diasporic individual and their manifestations, suggesting them new possibilities, new routes and new modes of thinking and existence in the bread-winning country.