CHAPTER 4

HUMAN PSYCHE: AN INTROSPECTION

The fascinating aspect of literature is its depiction of human beings and their relationships. A psychological approach to literature can help one to understand the behaviour of the realistically drawn characters in the same way one understands the behaviour of real people. The characters are only imagined human beings without flesh and blood but they have many parallels with real human beings. Barnard J. Paris writes that ‘It is extremely valuable to bring psychology and literature together. The psychologist and the artist often know about the same areas of experience, but they comprehend them and present their knowledge in different ways’ (26). Human psychology is a complex phenomenon which requires so many approaches to understand. Many psychologists have derived so many approaches based on their experiences which are either limited or unlimited. Apart from these approaches, the characters and their psyche can be studied from the perspective of the author, the locale of the characters and also from the reader’s point of view.

Psychology is an ever-developing field which has seen a lot of psychologists who have produced remarkable insights in this field. Ivan Pavlov and John B. Watson based their experiments with animals in order to arrive at a conclusion about human behaviour. While the former is remembered for establishing psychology as a field of study, the latter is the first behaviourist to mention that psychologists can base their theories only on observation. Skinner's staunch behaviourism made him a dominating force in
psychology and his theories and techniques are used extensively in many fields. While thinking of psychology, the first name which comes to everyone’s mind is Sigmund Freud, the founding father of psychoanalysis. His theories of psychoanalysis are extremely influential in this field. Freud proposed that the human psyche could be divided into three parts: id, ego and super-ego. His essay, Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920), elaborates these principles. C.G.Jung is a Swiss psychiatrist and psychotherapist who developed the concepts of human personality theories – extraversion and introversion – archetypes and the collective unconscious. His work has been influential in psychiatry and in the study of religion, philosophy, archeology, anthropology, literature and related fields. Anna Freud, the daughter of Sigmund Freud, is a pioneer in child psychology. She adopted her father’s theories of psychoanalysis to recognise the differences between children and adults. Erik Erikson, one of the pioneers in child psychology, formed theories about the development of identity throughout the lifespan — childhood, adulthood and old age. Jean Piaget (1970), a Swiss philosopher, is one of the first psychologists to acknowledge that children think differently than adults. His theories focus on children’s cognitive abilities. He says: ‘It is with children that we have the best chance of studying the development of logical knowledge, mathematical knowledge, physical knowledge, and so forth’ (14). Abraham Maslow (1954), an American psychologist, stressed the importance of focusing on the positive qualities in people which resulted in Humanistic Psychology. He is known for his theory of Hierarchy of Needs. Carl Rogers, another American psychologist, who became one of the major humanist thinkers, devised a unique approach known as Person-centred Approach to understand personality and human relationships. This approach has a wide application in various domains. Some of the theories have lost their favour while others remain widely-accepted but all have contributed enormously to the understanding of human thought and behaviour.
Humanistic Psychology is a psychological approach which emphasises the study of an individual on the whole. The psychologists dealing with humanistic psychology look at human behaviour not only through the eyes of the observer but also through the eyes of the person whose behaviour is observed. This approach suggests that everyone is responsible for his own happiness and well-being. As human beings, everyone wants to achieve higher objectives and everyone has the freedom to change his life at any point of time. This approach to life is within everyone and this behavioural pattern has nothing in common with the scientific methods which are mostly inappropriate for studying behaviour. An individual has unique self-image and the need for self-esteem is more important than any other attributes of his life. To achieve the highest potentials, self-actualisation is essential. Maslow (1954) states in his *Motivation and Personality* that:

> What a man can be, he must be. This need we may call self-actualization...It refers to the desire for self-fulfillment, namely, to the tendency for him to become actualised in what he is potentially. This tendency might be phrased as the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming. (93)

Bernard J. Paris (1974) tells in his book that ‘Psychology helps us to talk about what the novelist knows, but fiction helps us to know what the psychologist is talking about’ (27). This chapter uses psychology to analyse characters and to explore the consciousness of the author Jhumpa Lahiri and her works. Since Lahiri excels in bringing out her immigrant self through her characters who are mostly immigrants and who are subject to the multi-cultural environment, a psychological study of her characters is a rightful thing. A psychological study of the characters, either Eastern (Ashima, Ashoke, Gogol, Moushumi, Ruma, Shoba, Sanjeev, Aparna, Hema, Kaushik, Subhash, Bela, etc.) or Western (Maxine, Ruth, Graham, Ben, Adam, Megan, Elise, Drew, etc.) throws light on the intricacies of mimetic characterisation.
Paris (1974) says in his Preface that ‘One of the most splendid achievements of realistic literature is its mimetic portrayal of characters…’ (xix). As a writer of realistic fiction, Lahiri stands just above her contemporary writers in portraying both the Eastern and the Western characters without changing the flavour.

Wherever there is a conflict, an in-depth study of the psychological aspects of the conflicting subjects is required in order to identify the factors which lead to conflicts. Many of Lahiri’s characters encounter conflicts which mostly arise out of their twin cultural backgrounds. Therefore, a psychic study of the protagonists, under the light of their varied cultural background, will bring to light the interaction between native conscience and alien inevitability.

Jhumpa Lahiri’s first novel, *The Namesake*, is not only about the journey of the Gangulis to the United States but also about the psychological sufferings, struggles and transformation the immigrant characters encounter in anchoring themselves in the alien soil. Ashima’s longing for home, for Indian food and the frequent recollections of her life at Calcutta have become a part of her life in Cambridge. Immigrant psyche has a very deep effect on Ashima as a wife in America because she cries and feels homesick when she is alone. Manju Kapoor (2008) describes the same with her Protagonist Nina who passes her time in reading books:

> It has been a month, and she was keen to set down roots that would make her feel more at home. In India these relatives had seemed peripheral, more tourist than family. Now her perception has changed. She wanted to be close to them. (132)

She always keeps in mind what her elders in India told her: ‘not to eat beef or wear skirts or cut off her hair or forget her family’ (37). She feels a deep pain in the absence of Ashoke when she is left alone with a new-born
baby. In Cambridge all Americans are perfect strangers to her. M.G.Kadam (2008) writes in his article about the psychological depression of the immigrants and the outcome:

The restlessness of Bengalis in America where they cannot vote is revealed through their discussions about Bengali arts, music, drama, literature and politics. They experience the spatial, cultural and emotional vacuum in their efforts to settle and adjust in an adopted new land during these days of globalisation. (124)

The memories of her parental house keep haunting her when they decide their house in Pemberton Road, where ‘all houses belong to Americans’ (50). She tries to overcome those memories by developing acquaintances with other Bengali immigrants. She becomes friendly with them only for the reason that ‘they all come from Calcutta’ (38). The food that she cooks at home, their names, their accent and their dressing always reflect that they are unchanged but this very fact that they are different from other Americans alienates them from Americans. It is not intentional that they want to be different but it is their psyche that forbids them from forgetting their original identity. Being true to one’s native in one’s native land is not unique but living with native visions in an alien land is something that is unique in nature which is unimaginable in the settled land. The Gangulis make their stay in India for eight months in one of their visits to India. For Ashima and Ashoke it is not a mere trip but it is their happiness, regaining consciousness and life and return to normalcy. They do not stay back in their respective parental houses in India. Instead, they pay a visit to all their relatives living near and far making their schedule busy always. But their children Gogol and Sonia who accompanied them feel as if they had lost their privacy, freedom, individuality and happiness and above all they feel alienated in their own land. They can neither accept India as a homeland nor disown America as a foreign land. When they return unlike their parents,
they feel rejoiced. Their American friends ‘ask them nothing where they’ve been’ (87). Lahiri relates her own life as an immigrant and the negation between her Indian self and American self:

> When I was growing up, India was largely a mystery to Americans as well, not nearly as present in the fabric of American culture as it is today. It wasn’t until I was in college that my American friends expressed curiosity about and interest in my Indian background. As a young child, I somehow felt that the Indian part of me was unacknowledged and somehow negated, by my American environment and vice versa. I felt that I led two very separate lives. (Lahiri 2006b)

It is very difficult for an immigrant to balance between two cultures and he always lives with a wavering mind between cultures and between countries. Whether to be here or there is an unanswerable question. Though it is impossible for him to think of returning home, since the second generation has begun to enroot in the settled soil, he will have a sense of attachment to his native soil. Only an immigrant can understand his feeling and Jhumpa Lahiri, as an immigrant, is the right person to speak of the diluted immigrant personalities. Satendra Nandan (2000) speaks about the immigrant consciousness in his essay:

> What then is writer's enigma of survival? Initially, it is an outrage of more horrendous fates of people elsewhere. One is dislocated from one world, but is connected to so many others. Suddenly they become closer to one's own. The writer then tries to find new ways of being human, new ways of redefining his humanity, new ways of recognizing his inseparable humanity with others. (57)

The ethnic identity to the first generation immigrants is a protective cloak over the American identity. They take into their minds that the ‘Western culture’ is a degenerated culture and so they carefully cultivate Indian values and culture and transplant them in their children’s minds. The children
acquiring their native culture through their parents and Western culture through their peers become an embodiment of the ‘social psyche of an exilic population’ (Singh 2006:4). They become the subject of the double consciousness where many fail to perceive the right one by deciding the other. Alfredo Morabia (2004) says that ‘the world does not reveal its truth passively. It resists and, therefore, we must act upon it and learn from these actions’. Even a purposeful decision to migrate from the native has its own consequences. Relocating into a new cultural ethos with an existing practice requires a psychological determination. Only people like Ashima and Ashoke have such mental make up. Anita Singh (2006) points out in an article that:

The authentic immigrant sees the nationalistic values inherited from an old country as vital to his survival in a new alien land. These atavistic interpretations of natal culture are then rigorously enforced and in doing so the parents, who consider themselves as guardians or upholders of the natal culture, expect their children to follow their footsteps. (9)

Gogol, the bi-cultural brought up, is unhappy over his name for its peculiarity in the American context. He refuses to look back at his parental culture that a man will have two names; a good name and a pet name. Unfortunately, in his case the pet name becomes his good name. When he becomes old enough, he changes his name officially as ‘Nikhil’ which sounds more sophisticated and more importantly sounds at par with American names like Colin, Jason and Mark. The new name gives him confidence and he marches into the world along with his other American friends. He smokes, drinks, listens to pop music and fills the wall with American heroes in his room in New Haven and more than that ‘it is as Nikhil that he loses his virginity’ (NS 105). His parents are able to notice his changed attitude and Ashima is enraged by his mentioning of his room as ‘home’ and remarks that ‘after twenty years in America, she still cannot bring herself to refer to Pemberton Road as home’ (108). Ashima never gives up her native practice
and even ‘retains a tattered copy of desh magazine and still cannot bring herself to throw away’ (6) but it is highly difficult for Gogol to come to terms with the Indian way of life which his parents insist on. He wants to be completely free from Bengali culture and the tradition that binds him down to the country. All his emotional setbacks come to a halt and self-actualisation takes place in himself and reconciles his mother and sister after his father’s death. He shaves his head to mourn his father’s death. This act is an imitation of his father who did the same when Gogol was a small boy. Abraham Maslow (1999) states in his Towards a Psychology of Being that ‘self-actualising people enjoy life in general and practically all its aspects, while most other people enjoy only stray moments of triumph …’ (37). Gogol’s emotional attachment with his family separates him from Maxine’s relationship. His realisation makes him fear that he does not possess the stamina that his parents had, to make their lives in America by missing so much behind them in India and wonders:

… how his parents had done it, leaving their respective families behind, seeing them so seldom, dwelling unconnected, in a perpetual state of expectation, of longing. All the trips to Calcutta he’d once resented – how could they have been enough? They were not enough. (NS 281)

Self-actualisation has taken place not only with Gogol but also with Ashima and Ashoke. After the birth of Gogol, Ashima wants to raise him in Calcutta but keeping in mind Ashoke, she stays back in America but decides to bring him up in the Bengali way. She puts ‘him to sleep, she sings him the Bengali songs her mother had sung to her’ (35). When Gogol is six months old, they celebrate ‘Gogol’s annaprasan, his rice ceremony’ (38), in the Bengali way. The successive death of their family members in India is a great shock to the couple and by staying in a distant place, they can only grieve. They carry a life-long guilt that they are not present during those deaths.
Their alienated emotions are further aggravated by these deaths. However, they take necessary steps to adjust with the new life in America by assimilation. For them assimilation is actualisation. They understand the differences between cultures and decide to take up the new one gradually as it can play a major role in their lives and the future of their children is also destined in that country. Their desperate effort to cling to their past history and culture seems to fade away and there is enough space to accommodate other things also. They set up Christmas trees every year and celebrate Thanksgivings in addition to all other Hindu religious ceremonies and celebrations. Also they learn to show no excitement over the fact that their children are ‘dating’ with the girls and boys of their age. This psychological transition is meaningful and necessary for every immigrant to thrive in the new environment.

Love between Ashoke and Ashima is an ‘uncelebrated thing’. For them love is an ‘utterly private’ affair. Contrary to the American setting, total strangers are brought together for marriage but the spouses develop an intimacy and understanding in such a way that their marriage never ends in divorce. Ashima never calls Ashoke by his name. Instead ‘she utters the interrogative that has come to replace it, which translates roughly as ‘Are you listening to me?’’ (NS 2). Though she has adopted his surname, she refuses to say his first name because for the Bengali wives, ‘a husband’s name is something intimate and, therefore, unspoken’ (2). But Moushumi, a second generation Indian American, has no such sentiments like Ashima. She calls her husband Gogol by name and she has never thought of ‘changing her last name to Ganguli’. Even she disapproves when she receives letters from relatives in India addressed as ‘Mrs.Moushumi Ganguli’.

Gogol observes distinctive differences between the lives of Indians and Americans especially between his parents and Maxine’s parents. When
Ashoke leaves for Ohio, he installs a ‘security system’ for the sake of Ashima who stays alone in the house. In Maxine’s house, the Ratliffs live a care-free life. Gogol views that: ‘Nothing is locked, not the main house, or the cabin that he and Maxine sleep in. Anyone could walk in’ (NS 155). But Ashima, before going to bed every night, ‘would double-check all the window locks, making sure that they were fastened tightly’. ‘Everyone should learn to live on their own at some point’ is the primary motto of every American ‘but Ashima feels too old to learn such a skill’ (161) and experiences the solitude at the age of forty-eight. Like Ashima, a number of Americans live alone ‘because they are divorced’ (162).

Ashoke’s unfortunate death brings in Gogol a sea change. He does not want to look back at his life with a number of American girls. Instead, he looks back at his own culture which he once rejected. What he hated most became his feast. Despite the influence of pop culture, white girlfriends and a name change, Gogol could not escape from being an Indian with an attitude to life which his parents always expected to have from their children. He listens to his mother’s words and agrees to marry a Bengali childhood friend Moushumi whose upbringing is similar to that of Gogol. He prepares to lead a peaceful family life with his Bengali-American wife but fails in it while Moushumi decides to leave him to live with Dimitri, her first lover whom she met first in the final month of her school days. Nayak (2008) reviews her psyche that: ‘As a research scholar on French feminist theory she has developed an ultra feminist consciousness that goes against her native culture’ (143). After her desertion it took him a year to wear off the shock. His mother’s decision to move back to India, separating her days into two between India and America, creates emptiness in him and this emptiness upsets him. He feels that:
Without people in the world to call him Gogol, no matter how long he himself lives; Gogol Ganguli will once or all, vanish from the lips of loved ones, and so cease to exist. Yet the thought of this demise provides no sense of victory, no solace. It provides no solace at all. (NS 289)

Sujatha Rana (2010), while writing about his assimilation into American culture and his return to Indian way of life, says that his dual identity is the strength of his character. He further analyses that:

Gogol realizes that his identity is embellished by both cultures. He does not have to be one or the other; he does not have to choose. He is made up of both, and instead of weakening his pride, his identity is strengthened by this. Coming out of his turmoil Gogol is able to stand on his feet and is no longer ashamed of himself or the way he has lived life till then. He has assimilated himself in American culture and values, at the same time retaining his parents’ Indian heritage and is now proud of his name Nikhil Gogol Ganguli and all that it means. (183)

Both Maxine and Graham stand at the same point while their psyche is measured. Maxine fails to understand Gogol’s emotional attachment to his family and his sentiments over his cultural roots. Graham seems to accept every aspect of the Indian way of life but later his tolerance becomes desperation and Moushumi understands that he can never comprehend and respect Indians and Indian way of life. Ultimately, Gogol decides to give up his relationship with Maxine and Moushumi decides to give up her relationship with Graham. In inter-continental marriages, understanding the cultural background of the partner is more important than the understanding of the individual. Not all the psyche works together as it works in Ruma and Adam in Unaccustomed Earth.

Lahiri’s Interpreter of Maladies explores the complexities of culturally-displaced South Asian diaspora families in the United States. These complexities naturally lead to psychological turmoil but the settled
relationship with the outer world and the surrounding environment give them peace and hope. Only Lilia’s parents in *When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine* and the protagonist and his wife, Mala, in *The Third and Final Continent* are good at having a smooth relationship with the society where they decide their livelihood. All others fail to follow their example and struggle to succeed. Shoba and Shukumar in *A Temporary Matter* begin a happy family life but the lack of understanding of their cultural roots and the necessity of the marriage bond separate them. Who is to blame for their separation? Is it their own psyche which fails to instill in them the confidence to overcome their sufferings and rebuild life or the society that gives them independence to decide on their life without the other? They live as a family and the meaning of being a family is to shift their places during a catastrophe; the husband will be a moral support to the wife in her suffering and vice versa but Shoba and Shukumar lose concerns for each other. In this regard Himadri Lahiri (2008a) writes:

Lahiri underplays the subtle violence lurking imperceptivity underneath the veneer, a violence that bleeds their minds. Sharing of meal on the same table, displaying affection, showing occasional concern for each other and even making love appeared to be mere play-acting. (49)

Though the couple hides each other in the other’s presence, the love they once had between them is still fresh and it is obvious when she ‘wept without sound, and whispered his name, and traced his eyebrows with a finger in the dark’ and he reveals to her the hidden fact that their still-born baby is a boy, ‘his skin was more red than brown. He had black hair on his head… His fingers were curled shut, just like yours in the night’ (22). The new revelation shocks Shoba and she ‘turned off the light, and sat down on the table and Shukumar joined her shortly. They wept together for the things they now knew’ (22). They mourn the loss together and Lahiri leaves the fate of the
family life between the two to the readers. Human predicament is unpredictable. Lahiri’s characters always carry a strong will power to carry out the oddities of life. In that sense Shoba and Shukumar will also inherit certain positive responses to life which will unite them ultimately. It is the psychology of human mind to look at the negative aspects of life and in Shoba and Shukumar their marriage is looked upon as a temporary matter. On the other hand, Lahiri’s psyche allows the readers to look at their separation as a temporary matter giving a positive note to their reunion.

Communication functions as a psychic healer between the couple in *A Temporary Matter* and the lack of it generates a malady to Mrs.Das in the title story *Interpreter of Maladies*. Mrs.Das thinks that a psychological union with her husband, Raj, is impossible since she finds no trace of love between them in their marital life. Her guilt of bringing up a son born to another man still distances her from her husband. However, bound to the societal norms taught by her native soil and parents, she continues to live as Mrs.Das. Deeply immersed in the alien culture, Mr.Das never worries about his wife’s psyche. Nor does he suspect that she suffers from some psychological trauma. Her past haunts her like a ghost for almost eight years and she needs it to be exorcised. Her mere physical presence in the family does not give her any happiness. Her psychological depression forbids her from being a part of her family and the society. Her desperate involvement in life is similar to that of Moushumi’s in *The Namesake*. Both find their attachments somewhere and Mrs.Das regrets the guilt whereas Moushumi deserts her husband to move forward towards her lust knowing that what she is doing to Gogol is a sin. Himadri Lahiri (2008a) says about Mrs.Das and her emotions:

> In Mrs.Das’s own life however, the cycle of creation and that of preservation has gone through rather casually, even in a depraving way without love and emotion – and there has been no “achievement of realization”. (54)
Mr. Das’ Punjabi friend is an opportunist who seduces Mrs. Das. His approach is casual, lustful, self-centred and self-satisfied. Like Dev in Sexy, he is intent on his purpose and ‘made love to her swiftly, in silence, with an expertise she had never known’ (PCD 64). It is only she who carries the guilt for ever and not he who later marries a Punjabi girl and exchanges greeting cards with the Das family. Mr. Kapasi, the tour guide finds a similarity between Mrs. Das’ family life and his own family life. Both lead a desperate life and Kapasi’s intention is to win the heart of Mrs. Das. He thinks of having communication with her after she left India but when the address slip handed over to her slips away, he realises that he can preserve only the floating memories of the Das family and nothing more. Robert Gnanamony (2006) writes of Lahiri and her sensibilities in relation to the story that ‘Lahiri, though accustomed to live in the west for most part of her life could not dismiss human values like love, understanding and fidelity in marriage…’ (101).

Mrs. Das lives an ‘unhealthy’ life in the pretext of her guilt which, Mr. Kapasi thinks, can be cured if she confesses to Mr. Das. Mr. Pirzada in When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine lives a detached life in the US. He never tries to learn the habits of Americans due to his concern and attachment with the family he has left behind in Dacca. Lilia’s parents invite Mr. Pirzada to their house by looking at his name in the telephone directory. They cultivated this habit since their settlement in the states. They need to give vent to their psychological thirst for being with Indians. Food they can buy in Indian shops, news about India they can watch on the television but for the company of Indian people, they need to find people out and invite them home. A psychological attachment with the native country keeps one physically active in a foreign country and the survival is less complicated because one does not maintain any emotional relationship with the new country. Mr. Pirzada knows nothing about the country but dares to survive because as soon as his tenure is
over, he will fly back to his native. Lilia’s parents feel for the absence of some of the amenities available in India but they adjust to live here for better prospects of life. Lilia is guaranteed a good school, education and career. They compromise comforts for prosperity. But Mr. Pirzada is not ready to compromise things and makes no attempts to assimilate as he never intends to live a displaced life. He lives in America but he constantly observes what is happening in his homeland. Lilia senses that he is physically present in America but his senses dwell in Dacca. In her vision she presumes that Mr. Pirzada practises things that were done in Dacca: ‘Our meals, our actions, were only a shadow of what had already happened there, a lagging ghost of where Mr. Pirzada really belonged’ (PCD 31). During the twelve-day war in India, Mr. Pirzada is identified neither as an Indian nor as a Pakistani nor as a Bangladeshi. Nor is he a Hindu but they all hail from the same origin, India, and it is the only fact that unites them in America. Reetamoni Narzary (2008) visualises things from Lilia’s perception that:

Lilia learns a little about human relationship and what it means to miss a close one. She gets an idea of what it has meant for Pirzada to be away from his family for so long. And when she realizes that Mr. Pirzada would never come back to visit them she feels the full force of that feeling. (70)

Lilia’s mother hesitates to tell Lilia certain bitter facts about India. They still feel Indian and practise only Indian habits but want to bring up their daughter as American. They teach her American mannerisms and allow her to move with American friends. They feel that it is necessary for Lilia to know about America since she is going to live there. Like Lahiri’s many other assimilated characters, Lilia is also a cultural offspring with a bi-cultural vision. She explores her cultural juxtaposition; her parental culture and the American culture. While working on her school assignment, her thoughts hover over the geographical structure of Asia and in particular she tries to
explore India. Her psyche is not only to explore but also to wish peace for Mr. Pirzada and his family. Her prayer is so powerful that he rejoins his family:

I prayed that Mr. Pirzada's family was safe and sound. I had never prayed before, had never been taught or told to, but I decided, given the circumstances, that it was something I should do. That night when I went to the bathroom I only pretended to brush my teeth, for I feared that I would somehow rinse the prayer out as well. (PCD 32)

Mr. Pirzada's psyche is to return to his roots and never to return to the place where he experienced physical alienation and psychological union. Mrs. Sen’s psyche in Mrs. Sen’s is to somehow adjust to the new environment in the new land. Though she keeps herself busy to forget her glorious past amidst so many members of her family and relatives in India, her inability to learn things and to become accustomed to the new life invokes in her the memories of her past. Her life in India haunts her and her only companion is Eliot, an American boy, who understands her loneliness and her bewilderment in a strange new culture. She takes all possible efforts to recreate India in her American house by playing audio cassettes to listen to the voice of her dear ones living in India. Her love for being sociable, sharing information and chatting with neighbours for everything is a sharp contrast to the Americans’ love for silence and privacy. The home-sick Mrs. Sen feels happy whenever she receives letters from India and gets fresh fish from the sea. She becomes alive in the kitchen while preparing food for her husband. She smells India in the smell of her food. She wants to befriend Eliot’s mother, the only visitor to her house but the lady, unwilling to move with anyone, maintains distance expressing her peculiar American mannerisms. Though the land has a lot of space to accommodate anyone who approaches for survival, Eliot’s mother has no space in her mind to accommodate Mrs. Sen. This attitude intensifies the alienated feeling of the settlers. Mrs. Sen’s settler soul, unable to accept
the reality, suspects the safety of the individual. The following conversation between Eliot and Mrs. Sen brings to light her doubts and anxiety:

“Eliot, if I began to scream right now at the top of my lungs, would someone come?”

“Mrs. Sen, what is wrong?”

“Nothing. I am only asking if someone would come”

Eliot shrugged. “May be”. (MS 116)

Roychoudhury (2008) reviews the reason for Mrs. Sen’s resistance to foreign ways of life. Her cultural re-adjustments force her to think of food as an important alibi to escape the discomforts of an alien culture. She seeks recluse in food because she is affected by the silence which is a part of her present life and the gap in understanding the people around her. He also observes that:

Mrs. Sen’s refusal to learn driving is her personal strategy to resist participation in a culture that has alienated her from the place where she wants desperately to belong to. (93)

Mr. Pirzada’s consciousness is to return to his native for a reunion and Mrs. Sen at least has a hope to visit her relatives she left behind in India in the near future. But Boori Ma in The Real Durwan can only recollect her previous life in the long-left country and has no hope for return and reunion. Lahiri has presented her as a tragic psyche but with a positive attitude to move on further with no hold in future. The pain she undergoes can be understood by her words though she herself is not aware of it:

At our house, we ate goat twice a week. We had a pond on our own property, full of fish…. Yes, there I tasted life. Here I eat my dinner from a rice pot. (TRD 71)
In an attempt to come to terms with the present and to escape from everyday hardship, it is essential for Boori Ma to create a world for herself through imagination. She, though sixty-four, never considers her age as a constraint to construct stories. Nobody knows about her antecedents and every one knows that she is a refugee deported to Calcutta after the partition. Though nobody believes her contradictory stories, she finds solace in travelling back to her past. Her present job as a stair sweeper does not allow the residents to believe that she is the mistress of a rich family. However, they accept her as ‘the victim of changing times’, though they have questions like ‘what kind of landowner ended up sweeping stairs?’ (TRD 72) Strongly understanding the psyche of a refugee and keeping in mind her age, Mr.Chatterjee, an elderly man, treats her kindly and thinks that ‘certain benefits of doubt should be given to her because of her status as a refugee in India and because such a drastic change in circumstances was not impossible’ (Narzary 2008:66).

Jhumpa Lahiri presents a positive second generation hybrid psyche, Twinkle, in the story This Blessed House. Sanjeev’s marriage with an American of Indian descent, Twinkle, may be the first step towards assimilation but it is also an effort to establish his identity as an Indian especially as a Hindu in a country where majority are Christians. His newly-wed is a threat to his identity because of her extraordinary attachment to the Christian symbols. As soon as she finds a statue of Christ, she affirms, ‘we’re good little Hindus’, but also remembers to leave ‘a kiss on top of Christ’s head’ (TBH 149). As she is a second generation Indian, she has no bicultural ambiguity. Her bicultural upbringing has taught her to be unbiased to religious and cultural beliefs. Sanjeev too is not an orthodox Hindu but her over-attachment to Christian symbols induces in him his religious fervour. Moreover, it is an unconscious awakening to preserve his own religion from the dominance of Twinkle’s Christian sentiments. At the same time, she is not
worried about the criticisms and contempt raised about her name. Even for the greatest people like Edward Said, it has taken a long time to adjust with their names. Said (1984) has once said that ‘Thus it took me about fifty years to become accustomed to, or, more exactly, to feel less uncomfortable with “Edward”, a foolishly English name yoked forcibly to the unmistakably Arabic family name Said’ (1). Unlike Gogol, who is much disturbed by his strange name, she takes things in a lighter vein and even faces them with an unusual courage. On hearing her name, one of the guests asks her whether her last name is ‘Little Star’. For those who frown at her name, she replies that ‘there’s an actress named Dimple Khabadia in Bombay. She even has a sister named Simple’, ‘as if to let the absurdity of the names settle in’ (TBH 151). It seems Twinkle has taken enough time and given a lot of exposure to a different culture to form this transformed identity. But Sanjeev, being new to the environment, refuses to accept a new attitude to life which Twinkle has gone through. Though these contradictions create a frequent rift between the two, Twinkle, as usual, takes nothing into her heart but moves steadily with the aim to succeed in life with the attitude she learnt in her bi-cultural upbringing. People like Sanjeev and Mrs.Sen have to come over these hurdles for survival though ‘they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship’ (Safran 1991:84).

Almost all the protagonists of Lahiri are immigrant characters except Miranda in Sexy and Bibi Halder in The Treatment of Bibi Halder. Every immigrant of Lahiri suffers from physical or psychological alienation at some point of time. Miranda is not an immigrant but she experiences a psychological transformation while trying to figure out the sensations of Indians through an Indian, Dev. Her physical involvement with Dev motivates her to learn more about India and the life style of Indians. Also, she is
bewildered by the beauty of his wife. She is both thrilled and threatened. The thrill is due to her exploration of India and Indian culture and the threat is due to the overwhelming beauty of Dev’s wife. She struggles with writing her name in Bengali to get more of Dev in her life. Lahiri captures the various emotions that Miranda goes through during their relationship:

After lunch they made love, on sheets covered with crumbs, and then Dev took a nap for twelve minutes. Miranda had never known an adult who took naps, but Dev said I was something he'd grown up doing in India, where it was so hot that people didn't leave their homes until the sun went down. "Plus it allows us to sleep together," he murmured mischievously, curving his arm like a big bracelet around her body.

Only Miranda never slept. (Sexy 94)

Miranda’s interaction with a small boy, Rohin, Laxmi’s cousin’s son, enlightens in her the true meaning of her relationship with Dev by calling her ‘sexy’ and explaining the meaning in the true Indian context. A seven-year-old boy, Rohin, has such an insight to perceive the meaning of the word ‘sexy’ in an admiring way whereas Lilia, an eleven-year-old girl in When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine is unable to perceive the political differences that her father tries to convey. Cox (2003), who writes about Lahiri’s child, observes that they are ‘untainted by the effects of prolonged enculturation, bring to the narrative fore from those conflicts or core issues-maladies, perhaps that arise between and among native and immigrant groups’ (120).

Rohin’s revelation makes Miranda understand the meaninglessness of their relationship and she decides to leave Dev unwilling to create a rift in his smooth family life. Sah (2008) observes that their ‘sexual encounter’ is ‘devoid of any emotional attachment’:
They represent the chasm between the East and the West; both appear to be different and mysterious to each other, and, yet, equally attracted. The differences between the East and the West is not only cultural, but also physical and colour-related, i.e., Dark (East) and Fair (West); these two opposites feel magnetic enticement between them for their strangeness and otherness leading to their physical union as exemplified by Dev and Miranda, but due to the cultural alienation we witness hindrance in the attainment of a total sexual assimilation. (79)

Dev is under the influence of the liberal sexuality of the West but at the same time unlike Laxmi’s cousin’s husband, he is not ready to disown his family for the sake of sex. As an opportunist, he uses Miranda for his sexual gratification. His psyche is to pretend loyalty to his marital life and at the same time commit adultery by indulging in extramarital affairs.

Miranda, Lahiri’s Western protagonist, got her sensibility transformed by a rude awakening in the United States from Rohin, an Indian boy. In *The Treatment of Bibi Halder*, Bibi Halder, an Indian protagonist, left to be orphaned in the streets of Calcutta, is brought to her senses by benevolent neighbours. For immigrants, threats are from the society outside the home but for the native Bibi, threat is within her home. Her incurable unknown sickness does not fetch her any bridegroom though she longs for wedlock and a family of her own. Her male cousin’s lack of interest in bringing a suitable boy drives the neighbours to bring one but in vain. By reading her character, she is assumed to be childish, lacking mannerisms and less knowledgeable. Her cousin’s wife used to say: ‘The girl knows nothing about anything, speaks backward, is practically thirty, can’t light a coal stove, can’t boil rice, can’t tell the difference between fennel and a cumin seed’ (TTH 163). In fact it is the wife of her cousin who does not have worldly knowledge. She does not know to treat her dependent. She fails to win the favour of her neighbours. She fails in her responsibility to cure Bibi’s malady and bring in a suitor to Bibi. But Bibi is open to all, hurts none and is
capable of winning over the hearts of everyone nearby. Moreover, she expresses an extraordinary courage while she is sent out of the house with the accusation that she has infected her cousin’s baby. While all others pity her, she says, ‘The world begins at the bottom of the stairs. Now I am free to discover life as I please’ (TTH 170). She does not hesitate or pretend to express her desire that she wants a man. When her cousin’s family moves away, she stays back in the same ‘unpainted four-storied building’ (159) and continues to survive by being fed by her neighbours. After her unknown pregnancy followed by child birth, she becomes perfectly normal. She runs the shop again which was once owned by her cousin. Bibi is living in a land which Mrs.Sen longed to live in America:

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

Lahiri has attained the height in presenting a distinctive destitute woman, alienated in her own house for no fault of hers. Her success is doubled while Bibi draws sympathy both from her neighbours and readers and attains success in her life giving a psychological strength to the readers by strengthening her own psyche. The narrator of The Third and Final Continent is an ordinary man encountering life in three different continents. Both Bibi and the narrator encounter entirely different circumstances but succeed at the end. The narrator leaves home and homeland and searches his identity across continents but Bibi searches her identity within the four walls of her apartment and gets her identity somehow. He remains Indian wherever he goes. He accepts all the identities given to him, first as Indian, second as English and finally as American. He changes his residence from continent to continent but not his beliefs. In America, he prefers eating cornflakes instead of ‘hamburgers or hot dogs’ (TFC 175). He is officially given an identity in
the country of his final settlement but he is constantly pulled backwards towards his original identity. It takes a long time for him to assimilate. Nina, the protagonist in *The Immigrant* (Kapoor 2008), rightly perceives the immigrant psyche in the settled land. She thinks that Indians become immigrants slowly because they are not among those who have fled persecution, destitution, famine, slavery and death threats. She further explains:

> These immigrants are always in two minds. Outwardly they adjust well. Educated and English speaking, they allow misleading assumptions about a heart that is divided. In the new country they work lengthy hours to gain entrance into the system, into society, into establishing a healthy bank account. (123)

The protagonist in *The Third and Final Continent* is inspired by the hundred-and-three-year-old lady, Mrs.Croft, who describes his wife Mala as a ‘perfect lady’. Mala, like her husband, never changes her identity and is used to wearing only saris. They succeed in retaining their original identities. They raise their status in the society and own a house in the suburbs. The narrator compares the life of the strong-willed Mrs.Croft to his own. If she can withstand generations, he can also be successful in three continents. He is conscious of making America his home. He says that they ‘have decided to grow old here’ (TFC 197). He remains an example for his son. He says, ‘In my son’s eyes I see the ambition that had first hurled me across the world. In a few years he will graduate and pave his way, alone and unprotected’ (197).

Art is a generalised self-expression and the artist's identity is obtained through his works of art. Harold Osborne (1968) observes that the work of art sometimes seems to express directly the artist's character and at other times it gives vent to his submerged personality traits which normally do not find expression in his non-artistic life. Jhumpa Lahiri, as an artist, excels in portraying her identity both as an Indian and as an American either
directly or, at times, through her submerged personality traits. Lahiri’s own psyche takes its form as characters. Her characters are Indians and Indian Americans who are caught between native and acquired cultures. Like the stories in *The Interpreter of Maladies*, the stories in *Unaccustomed Earth* also ruminate over the estranged psyche of the immigrant characters who explore the secrets at the heart of family life. Lahiri has elaborately brought out an intricate working between the heart and mind in the world of fathers and mothers, parents and children, sisters and brothers and friends and lovers. She puts it in her own words:

I was aware of certain common elements: the creation and dissolution of families, the fault lines between parents and children, the confluence of life and death. And though these are not autobiographical stories, they reflect a certain transformative phase of my life, during which I became a mother and experienced, albeit as a daughter-in-law, the loss of parents. (Mullen 2013)

Melanie Haupt (2008) reviews the book in *The Austin Chronicle* as:

The tales in *Unaccustomed Earth*, the title of which comes from Nathaniel Hawthorne’s "The Custom-House," seep into the psyche quietly, unassumingly stealthy in their power to affect deeply. Each of the first five stories follows a family in some sort of crisis, even though they may not be conscious of it.

The title story, *Unaccustomed Earth*, ponders over the disturbed psyche of a young mother who is anxious about the visit of her widowed father. Ruma feels uneasy to have her father in her house. In all his previous visits he accompanied her mother and for the first time he visits Ruma alone after his wife’s death. Ruma is worried about the responsibility bestowed on her in the absence of her mother. She was never close to her father and her mother was always between the two. Now the sudden closeness is felt strange but inevitable. Her father, who brought up his children in the American soil,
agrees that ‘Ruma hadn’t been raised with that sense of duty’ (UE 29). All her assumed responsibilities are only disillusionment as he is very much attached to Ruma and even more to Akash, her little son. His affection is something strange to Ruma and she has not expected it from him. When he is about to part, he longs for his stay in Seattle but he resists because he ‘knew that it was not for his sake that his daughter was asking him to live here. It was for hers’ (53). However, his association with Akash, as a grandfather, makes him feel restless while taking leave: ‘He was suddenly desperate to leave, the remaining twenty-four hours feeling unbearable’ (53).

At every end Ruma seems to be an imitation of her mother though she leads ‘her own life, has ‘made her own decisions’ and ‘married an American boy’ (29). Adam encourages her ‘to hire a babysitter’ but she volunteers to take care of her son because she ‘couldn’t justify paying for something she now had the freedom to do’ (5). Her first concern is her children and she tells her father that she ‘will be taking care of two children, just like Ma did’ (36). Her mother, who ‘hadn’t been built to live on her own’, (29) flew with her father. Like her mother, she moves to Seattle from Brooklyn for Adam’s job.

For Ruma’s father, ‘work is important’. He ‘cannot stay unoccupied’ (38) and finds some work after his retirement which he ‘could do from his computer at home’ (29). He even insists on Ruma resuming her career and tells her that ‘self-reliance is important… Life is full of surprises. Today you can depend on Adam, on Adam’s job. Tomorrow, who knows’ (38). He is always concerned about his duties both as a father to his children and as a son to his parents. But he succeeds as a father and fails as a son. After his father’s death he can neither move his family back to India nor move his eighty-year-old widowed mother to Pennsylvania. She is left under the care of his siblings until death. He had been a workaholic father and husband
throughout his life. Unlike his wife, who always complained about the isolated life in the American suburbs, ‘he enjoyed solitude’ (29). In his solitude, he finds a companion after his wife’s death to share the rest of his life. Leaving Ruma and Akash in Seattle, he heads back to Prague with Mrs. Bagchi, sleeping next to her at night’ (53). Ironically enough, it is Ruma’s father who has been transformed physically, emotionally and even psychologically and not Ruma who still holds fast certain values acquired from her mother.

Lahiri stands out of the ordinary by creating equal stock of immigrant men and women characters. Also she is remarkable for leveling both the characters in the often-represented ‘distant culture’ background. Unlike Bharathi Mukherjee, who finds solace in presenting women as central characters under the multicultural backdrop, she takes to the air both the immigrant characters to fly freely so as to let the readers comprehend their psyche. Bharathi Mukherjee herself says in an interview that she produces more number of Indian immigrant women than their male counterparts. She further explains that women undergo a more psychological transformation than men because men aim at making money and return to their native but women follow men without any aim but are bound to the norms of the society. Lahiri’s Aparna is such a woman who follows her husband to the US and is left to live alone at home only to experience bitterness and despair. Another immigrant, Pranab, a male counterpart, who is helped by Aparna to overcome his unfriendly atmosphere, makes his life in the very American way in a very short period of time.

An immigrant mother’s psyche is presented in Hell-Heaven by her Americanised daughter Usha. Usha’s mother, Aparna, closes the blinds to be away from American culture and from the people around her out of fear for change. Like most other immigrants she wants to preserve her cultural aspects
to be taken to her future generations. As an immigrant she is reluctant to integrate into the American culture. She is distanced from her own daughter for her continuous insistence on strict adherence to parental culture. Her confrontation angers Usha and she, like her father, rejects her mother and irreconcilable differences arise between the two. Her unbecoming of an American and her husband’s unenthusiastic nature force her to be in isolation.

Manju Kapoor (2008) strongly feels for the plight of immigrant wives:

The immigrant who comes as a wife has a more difficult time. If work exists for her, it is in the future, and after much finding of feet. At present all she is, is a wife, and a wife is alone, for many, many hours. There will come a day when even books are powerless to distract. When the house and its conveniences can no longer completely charm or compensate. Then she realizes she is an immigrant for life. (124)

Pranab’s arrival helps Aparna let go off her isolated feeling. His frequent visits make her forget her secluded life in the US. Usha discovers that ‘he brought to my mother the first, and, I suspect, the only pure happiness she ever felt’ and he ‘transported my mother back to the world she’d left behind in order to marry my father’ (HH 65). She falls secretly in love with him which is an unbecoming act of an Indian wife in America. She is unable to resist her feelings as she finds him the only solace in the alien land. Very soon she becomes heart-broken and lets Pranab go off when he declares his marriage with Deborah, an American woman.

Usha is not allowed to move with Deborah but she ‘fell in love with Deborah, the way young girls often fall in love with women who are not their mothers’ (69). She is becoming more of an American and to her mother’s dismay she is leaving her Bengali culture and traditions. Aparna resents Deborah for taking Pranab away from them. Her resentment is also due to the fear that she may be an inspiration for Usha to marry an American. Years
after Deborah confesses to 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) and Aparna feels sorry for the ill-feeling she had on her. Every heart takes its turn in a point and the turn paves the way for reconciliations. Usha recollects that ‘as my parents approached their old age, she and my father had grown fond of each other, out of habit if nothing else’ and ‘my mother and I had also made peace’ (81). But Pranab, who once turned his back to his parents, now deserts Deborah too for a married Bengali woman. His psyche is to come back to the same point of origin where he started his life by ‘destroying two families in the process’ (81).

Like Pranab, in *Hell-Heaven*, Amit, in *A Choice of Accommodations*, gets into inter-continental marriage. Pranab is punished by his parents for his marriage with an American woman by showing their back to him and Amit punishes his parents by marrying an American woman, Megan, against their wish. Amit’s parents leave him in a boarding school at Langford at such a young age and return to India. He cannot figure out how his own parents could leave him and this feeling generates animosity with them. However, ‘he learned to live without his mother and father, as everyone else did, shedding his daily dependence on them even though he was still a boy, and even to enjoy it. Still, he refused to forgive them’ (ACA 97). But he can never imagine parting with his own children. The more he cares, the more he is worried about their safety. In the marriage party, he misses his children. On seeing the other kids playing happily, he thinks of his children and tells Megan that ‘the girls would have enjoyed this’ (101). His sense of love as well as his insecure feeling does not allow him to enjoy the blessings but his wife enjoys her time unmindful of her kids.
Only Goodness is about the addictive psyche of the brother for whose alcoholism his own sister is responsible. Sudha seems to be perfect in the eyes of her English husband and her immigrant parents who have travelled from India to London and finally to Massachusetts. As an elder child she took care of her brother Rahul and was more concerned about giving him an American beginning. Her strange experience in her grade school in the UK made her determine ‘that her little brother should leave his mark as a child in America. She sought all the right toys for him… asked her parents to buy him the books she’d been read by her first teachers… and read them to Rahul herself’ (OG 136). While visiting her university, she introduces him the first sip of beer as a way of amalgamation into American culture. And years later, Sudha becomes mature enough and, on understanding her parents’ psychology, waits for them to let her go off independently. On the other hand, Rahul nourishes his drinking habit and ‘eventually it was no longer a game for him but a way of life’ (171) becomes addicted to it in his adulthood. Crossroads (2012), a report on the immigrant psychology in the new century, says that:

For immigrant children, it can be difficult to live with the expectations and demands of one culture in the home and another at school. Children may not turn to their parents with problems and concerns, believing their parents do not know the culture and its institutions well enough to provide them with good advice or assistance. In addition, they may see their parents as burdened with the multiple stresses of resettlement and therefore psychologically unavailable. (29)

Immigrant parents encounter psychological alienation apart from geographical confrontation and cultural dislocation. The first generation immigrant parents rely on their children to understand the outer world. It is only Sudha who teaches her parents American habits. She mediates between cultures and later between her brother and parents. Though their
consciousness centres round their children for their well-being, Rahul becomes a failure by bringing shame on his family. Sudha suffers from the guilt of introducing him to alcohol. Rahul’s defeat increases her sense of responsibility and her parents continue to rely on her to mend his ways. Her mother asks her to talk to him to ‘find out what went wrong’ (140). Filipczak (2012) observes his psychological in-betweenness thus:

Rahul is a dislocated subject. He does not want to identify with his Indian family and Indian way of life. However, when he eventually finds strength in himself to abandon his parents in order to live his own way, the American way with an American girlfriend, he fails. His failure should be read symbolically — as a hybrid, he cannot be the One, or the Other, he cannot live as an American or an Indian. He will not succeed until he agrees to his middle position, his in-betweenness. Only from this position he can start building anew. (8)

Sudha, like Jhumpa Lahiri, having been born in London to Indian parents and brought up in America, knew her limitations. She went to college in Philadelphia, studied diligently ‘but on weekends she learned to let loose, going to parties and allowing boys into her bed. She began drinking, something her parents did not do’ (OG 129). She loved Roger, ‘the first man she’d dated’. ‘Like Sudha, he was moderate with alcohol’ (147). Her parents accepted him for the fact that ‘he’d been born in India, that he was English not American’ (152). At the same time Rahul began dating a woman named Elena who was eight years senior to him. When he announced that they were engaged, everyone was shocked. His father told him that he was only a boy, had ‘no career, no goal, no path in life’ and that woman was ‘practically old enough’ (155) to be his mother. These revelations and resistance irritated him and he called his father ‘a snob’ and ‘nothing but a pathetic old snob’ (155). He left home after Sudha’s marriage and ‘she never told Roger about the old game of hiding beer cans, a fact that now tortured her’ (157). Though she longed for reunion, his return to see her son Neel shattered her family into
pieces by throwing her relationship with her husband as well as her infant son’s safety into peril.

Psychic development and self-invention are necessary for an immigrant to be successful in America. Psychological development implies ‘a progressive process of change and growth which leads from a very simple, almost unstructured primary configuration to a very complex, highly individualised, and highly structured end-condition that we equate with the idea of maturity’ (Lichtenstein 1964:55). Jhumpa Lahiri has made her immigrant characters realise their self and given them the strength to develop their psyche. In contrast to the first generation immigrants, the second generation immigrants, Hema and Kaushik, in the story *Hema and Kaushik*, travel almost half the world in search of their place, like two astronomical bodies which fall out of their crystal constellation. At last, Hema finds that she has no other go except to accept the place created by her parents and Kaushik finds that he belongs to nowhere. They become maximalists and are unable to compromise with the expectations of their parents. Their life is an example of what Mukherjee terms ‘maximalist character’: They have ‘shed past lives and languages, and have travelled half the world in every direction to come here and begin again... They've lived through centuries of history in a single lifetime - village-born, colonized, traditionally raised, and educated’ (Mukherjee 1998:2).

Like Mukherjee’s Jasmine, Lahiri’s Kaushik reinvents himself in every stage of his life and in every continent of his travel. His formative years of stay in India do not help him identify himself as an Indian. His return to the US does not create an impression to Hema that he is an American except that of his accent. His socio-psychological journey into distant countries and cultures refuses to give him a unique identity but he is always identified as an Indian by others for his colour and ethnicity. He experiences a significant
sense of loss due to his mother’s impending death and a sense of loneliness after his mother’s death and his father’s remarriage. His conscience does not allow him to return to the house where his father’s second wife and her daughters are living now. His terrific loss drives him away to far-off lands.

In the first story, *Once in a Lifetime*, Kaushik’s family decides to return to India, the country of their origin. It is a decision no immigrant dared to do. Their decision confirms the affirmative sense the family possesses for their home country. During their return to India, the family is appreciated by many of the Indians for their decision to return home and Hema’s family remarks that it is ‘a form of self-liberation from alienation’ (Egya 2008:94). Kaushik’s mother Parul Mashi also insists that it is ‘too good to turn down’. Their return again to the US, after seven years of stay in India, is viewed as an outcome of the moral and psychic failure of the immigrants. Lahiri is capable of projecting the psychic devaluation undergone by the immigrant characters through Kaushik’s family. Through their resettlement, the family presents a striking difference with other Indian immigrant families. Hema’s mother observes that they fly in the first class compartment, speak ‘in English, in a pleasant, unhurried way’ (HAK 232) and Parul does not cook, even though she keeps her company in the kitchen. Sule E Egya (2008) speaks of Parul’s psychic status:

... a woman living with cancer, now dying of cancer because of the ways of life of the Western people she has chosen, but yet fleeing the hospitality of her homeland. Parul Mashi returns to the US to die because the cancer she is dying of is product of the US, it is a mark of her psychic and self-devaluation in postcolonial immigration. Lahiri’s juxtaposition of the two families offers us an alternative discourse to the psychic-devaluing one that goes with postcoloniality. (96)

Only the Kaushiks live a different life among the immigrants. They have the privilege to live a Westernised life even in Bombay. After a few
years of life in America, their return again to Bombay has made them more American than Indian. Kaushik is brought up both in India and in America only as an American but Hema is brought up in America as an Indian. For Hema’s parents certain American practices seem cruel and alien. What seems to be normal to the immigrant parents is abnormal to their children. Hema’s mother considers ‘the idea of a child sleeping alone a cruel American practice’ and, therefore, she does not encourage it. Hema’s mother recalls that she ‘slept in the same bed as her parents until the day she was married and that this was perfectly normal’ (HAK 229). Hema knows perfectly well that ‘it was not normal’ in the American context. She knows that her friends will ridicule her if they know and insists on sleeping alone before she starts middle school.

Kaushik’s memories of his dead mother torment him in the second story of the triology Year’s End. His father tries to erase the memories of his wife completely by getting rid of the things she ‘touched, known, or otherwise occupied’. ‘He had wasted no time giving away her clothes her handbags, her boxes of cosmetics and colognes’ (HAK 256). Kaushik is unable to see another woman standing in his mother’s kitchen and living in the house. Slowly complications arise in his relationship with his recently-remarried father and his new wife, Chitra, and her two daughters. Ultimately, these situations influence Kaushik to lead the life of a wanderer.

Going Ashore, the last of the triology, once again connects the lives of the two, Hema and Kaushik, who have now taken different turns and decided to enter a completely different phase of their lives in a few days. Their chance meeting in Rome after two decades helps them discover the strong connections they have with each other. Their wandering in Rome characterises their independence and freedom from the cultural bonds which have helped them shape their lives. But for Hema, this freedom is short-lived
because she has decided to allow her parents to arrange a marriage after her disastrous affair with a married American.

Excepting the inabilities to cope with the society in the day-to-day social life, the first-generation immigrants show a remarkable interest while entering the US schools. They possess higher levels of optimism, aspirations, dedication to duty and positive attitude along with the ethical qualities they bring from their native. Also their academic outcome is stronger than the expected. Lahiri’s second novel, The Lowland, presents such hard-working personalities who excel in their field of study but stand at two different ends. The psychological journey of Subhash and Gauri starts from the lowland of Calcutta to the two different destinations in the United States, Rhode Island and California. Initially, Subhash undertakes this journey for academic advancements and material prosperity but later he gives a meaning by promising Gauri a free and independent life by way of losing his own life. Though both stand at different poles, they live with a guilty conscience throughout their life. Gauri carries the guilt of having married her husband’s brother and deserting her child Bela whom she is unable to love. Subhash suffers the guilt of pretending to be Bela’s father and deserting his own parents in Tollygunge.

Gauri’s psychological union with Udayan never allows her to accept Subhash in his place. She is grateful to Subhash for releasing her from her in-laws and for setting her free in Rhode Island to find her own path. She marries Subhash with the hope that ‘she could come one day to love him, out of gratitude if nothing else’ (L.L. 127). But Subhash’s mother, though in an attempt to dissuade him, warns him saying ‘she’s Udayan’s wife, she’ll never love you’ (160). She proves her mother-in-law’s statement true. She neither accepts Subhash nor loves her daughter Bela:
Nor was her love for Udayan recognizable or intact. Anger was always mounted to it... Anger at him for dying when he might have lived. For bringing her happiness, and then taking it away. For trusting her, only to betray her. For believing in sacrifice, only to be so selfish in the end. (LL 164)

In childhood she was alienated from her family but then her mother did not stop loving her. She had no memory of spending her time either with her mother or with her father. She always lived under the shadow of somebody. She was afraid she could not cast a shadow of her own and it was Udayan who brought her out to her own senses and gave her the confidence that she could play her role. Now he is gone. It is the regret and the guilt which make her life not worth living. Until she loses herself in California, she lives with the guilt of marrying Subhash and wrongly establishing him as Bela’s father. Afterwards she regrets deserting Subhash and Bela and ‘she was the sole accuser, the sole guardian of her guilt... Sentenced in the very act of being forgotten, punished by means of her release’ (320). She considers her lonely life as a self-imposed punishment for her crime. In her new environment, she always retires to her room without anyone’s companionship. For her ungratefulness to Subhash and Bela, ‘it felt wrong to seek the companionship of anyone else. Isolation offered its own form of companionship’ (237). The narrator says:

She understood now what it meant to walk away from her child. It had been her own act of killing. A connection she had severed, resulting in a death that applied only to the two of them. It was a crime worse than anything Udayan had committed. (LL 242)

Gauri is unconventional in every act. She finds a possible atmosphere in the United States to reinvent herself again and again. Her first act of rebellion is to bring in a changed attitude in dressing. She never cares for Subhash’s opinion. She feels like setting into the American costume and
without any second thought throws away petticoats and saris. When she is asked, she simply says, she ‘was tired of those’ (141). Manju Kapoor’s *The Immigrant* (2008) narrates the immigrant psyche in terms of dress:

As immigrants fly across oceans, they shed their old clothing, because clothes maketh the man, and new one help ease the tradition. Men’s clothing has less international variation; the change is not so drastic. But those women who are not used to wearing western clothes find themselves in a dilemma. If they focus on integration, conversion, and conformity they have to sacrifice habit, style and self-perception. The choice is hard…. (152)

Gauri is away from such dilemmas which Manju Kapoor’s Nina is facing. She plays changing roles from time to time. She changes her role from a college-going girl to a wife, ‘from wife to widow, from sister-in-law to wife, from mother to childless woman’ (L.L. 240). She takes many forms like Bharathi Mukherjee’s Jasmine who adapts to different styles of life from a small ghetto in India to a sophisticated metropolitan in America with different names and identities. She has generated alternative versions of herself by marrying Subhash and abandoning Bela and in all these conversions she has ‘insisted at brutal cost’ (240). She feels that Subhash and Bela are physical barriers to her psychological journey and discards them from her life. Though she is emotionally detached from Subhash, she makes love to him. For her mind and body are two different entities. She can never part with Udayan and his death cannot separate them. She lives with him recollecting him in her thoughts. He dies in the lowland amid the hyacinth but emerges from death to live with her because she never lets him die. A psychic union has no death. She regrets leaving Bela and Subhash but prepares to die for Udayan. She visits the lowland after forty years to see the stone laid in memory of Udayan but it is of no use. The landscape is changed. Unable to find him, she feels ‘a new solidarity with him. The bond of not existing’ (320). Now, he is not
alone. She stands in front of him. She has found a new way of uniting with him.

By way of healing the emotional scars of his brother’s wife, Subhash decides to take Gauri to Rhode Island. He promises her an autonomous life and tells her that he will bring up her child as his own. Though she is a brilliant academic, she has no emotional attachment with Subhash. Her focus is more on her studies than on her daughter. She cannot hide the fact that Bela is born to Udayan and Subhash is afraid to reveal the fact to Bela that he is not her real father. He moves away from Tollygunge for his own benefits but he deprives his parents for Gauri and her child and never returns to Tollygunge for twelve years. Bijoli, his mother, ‘feels the deepest shame a mother can feel, of not only surviving one child but losing another, still living’ (186). As an immigrant, his intrinsic memories are still attached to the place of his birth where his parents live. But he cannot accommodate two places in his mind. At the same time he feels extremely difficult to ignore the aged parents in Tollygunge. He can neither bring them here nor live with them there. He regrets the comforts he enjoys in one part of the world and the condemned life led by his parents in another part of the world. He is only an immigrant and cannot have the psychological attachment with the country as other Americans have. He says: ‘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’ (253). Victor Ramraj (1996) writes about the immigrant psyche:

Yet though diasporans may not want actually to return home, wherever the dispersal has left them they retain a conscious or subconscious attachment to traditions, customs, values, religions, and languages of the ancestral home. (215)
Subhash, though conventional in nature, dates an American woman for sometime. In this regard Manju Kapoor’s Ananda is a contrast to Subhash. Like Subhash, Ananda is quick to adopt the local food, clothes and customs and feels every bit a Canadian but he is a failure to sleep effectively with a white woman. Ananda recalls: ‘As he tried to figure out his feelings in the dark watches of the night, he wondered whether his inability to love a white woman meant he had never really left India’ (Kapoor 2008:45). Unlike Ananda, Subhash moves freely with the American woman but he cannot possibly think of marrying her as she is practically senior to him and has a son born to her from her previous affair. During his sixties, he falls in love with an American woman, Elise Silva, who is the mother of three and has grand children. Bela approves of his affection with the hope that his life may encounter some peace at least now. Bela observes ‘a tranquility in their faces’ and ‘saw how, shyly, in contrast to her mother and father, they were already united’ (LL 258).

After his brother Udayan’s marriage, Subhash gives promises to his parents that he will let them look for a girl for him. He neither fulfils his promises nor obeys their words. His marriage with Gauri disappoints them and he waits for them to come to terms with him. Finally, his parents long to meet their grand daughter and anticipate a reunion with their son. At a certain point his father suggested selling the house and moving to another part of India ‘or perhaps applying for visas, and going to America to stay with Subhash and Gauri’ and his mother also thinks of ‘making amends with Subhash, accepting Gauri, getting to know Udayan’s child’ (181). Subhash, owing to the affection he showered on Bela, refuses to bring her to Tollygunge unwilling to let the truth be known to her through his parents. During the last years of his mother’s life, he consecutively visits Calcutta every winter to take care of her who has now become wild and needs to be
attended to. Also, he is unwilling to sell the house even after her death as it is the only link between him and Calcutta.

Subhash, as an affectionate father, takes care of Bela during her mother’s abandonment. He seeks remedy for her psychic deterioration. He helps her to rebuild both her mind and body. He feels that it is his utmost responsibility to secure his ‘daughter’s future by pairing it with another person’s.’ If they live in Calcutta, he thinks, it is ‘reasonable for him to bring up the subject of marriage’ (265).

Bela, the offspring of American soil, grows much like her real father Udayan. Unlike Udayan, she is not blind to facts. Brought up by Subhash in Rhode Island, she is capable of perceiving the meaning of family life and marital bonds. She has no place for marriage in her life. The most basic awareness of her life is ‘the unhappiness between her parents’ (258). Her parents ‘were a family of solitaries. They had collided and dispersed’ (262). She hates to live the life her parents lived. But she wants to become a mother and tells her father one day that she is pregnant. She has no special friends and never invites anyone to the house. Now, she tells her father the person responsible for her pregnancy. Her mother’s desertion, when she is only twelve years old, baffles her. Though she recovers from the shock, she withdraws herself from her father too. When her mother comes to see her after long years, she becomes violent and is unwilling to share with her ‘the facts and choices of her life’ (309). She tells her, ‘you are as dead as he [Udayan] is. The only difference is that you left me by choice’ (313).

Lahiri has skilfully contributed to the subject of psychic tension faced by the immigrants in their settled lands. In all her works, she prominently presents the psychic condition of both the first generation immigrants and their half-rooted children. As an immigrant writer she has proved her talents by exhibiting the inner conflicts of an expatriate Indian in
the American continent. Living a life with scorching conflicts, around as well as within, in a foreign country is not simply an experience but a penance. Every immigrant is a subject to it. Bharathi Mukherjee (1998) sorts out her feelings as an expatriate:

I was a psychological expatriate, though a naturalized Canadian, for fifteen years, simply because Canada is country officially hostile to the concepts of assimilation (It proclaims the virtue of its multicultural policy). Perceiving myself to be in a comfortable but unwelcoming environment, I struggled to maintain various emblems of my difference. (29)

To overcome those conflicts is a struggle even to people like Jhumpa Lahiri and Bharathi Mukherjee who have enrooted themselves in the alien land a generation ago. When such is the case, ordinary mortals like Ashima, Ashoke, Gogol, Moushumi, Mr.Pirzada, Ruma, Usha, Aparna, Hema, Kaushik, Subhash and Bela have to necessarily encounter the psychological conflicts arising out of their oscillating status.