The present chapter explores Indianness and multiculturalism accessible in language and locale or, in other words, is concerned with outlining the role of language and locale in marking Indianness and multiculturalism in a piece of art. This is done through theorizing the basic notion of Indian English, which is different from the Standard English in many respects as well as presenting the words of other languages used in Jhumpa Lahiri’s works. Locale also acquires a special attention in the sense that it is through locale a writer makes the readers realise the reality of fictional world. Locale for both the writer and the characters in a work produces a sense of identity and connectedness. In the present chapter, an attempt has been made to show how certain feelings are connected with language and locale and an attempt has also been made to show that both language and locale are interrelated and are important to theorize each. These feelings would ultimately lead one to mark Indianness and/or multiculturalism.

Ania Lomba talking about Bengali artist writes,

“Despite their schooling in the Western fashion and despite their Anglicisation, Bengali intellectuals also fervently tries to create, through theatre, novels and art, an aesthetic sphere that would be distinctly Indian.”

Indian English is one of the characteristics of Indianness. Indianness of the language embraced in Indian English literature is a debatable subject. There are criticizers who maintain that the use of the English language itself takes away from the Indianness of the writing. It means that only the literature produced in the local or vernacular languages can be considered Indian in its true sense. The view of other critics that there is nothing non-Indian or unfamiliar about the use of English for creative purposes and expression is an adequate one. Once a writer chooses a language of his own intuition, it no longer remains foreign to him. It would be more sensible to assess the extent to which the writer has used it effectively so as to conform to the
theme of his work and to convey the sensibility of the characters and the community in which the work is set.

For the purpose of this work, it is sufficient to define ‘Indian English’ with its distinctiveness that is peculiar to Indians alone and which would not be commonly heard, articulated, seen or written by people in the West. The ability to transfer this special idiomatic flavour into dialogue or narrative style goes a long way in enhancing the quality of Indianness in a work. To do this successfully, convincingly and consistently, writers would need to be part of the environment and people whose style of expression they incorporate into their fiction. Indian English writers live thousands of miles away and yet they produce a language that is spoken in India or is used by Indians only or is comprehensible to Indian. Indian English writer can fully insert authentic Indianness of dialogue into their work when they live among those people about whom they write and whose lives they depict in their fiction. Endeavoring to outline ‘Indian English’, S. Nagarajan writes:

“Indian English is a mode of style which is created by the author himself. It is not ungrammatical or unidiomatic English; it is not broken English or Cantonment English or the English of the railway shunting-yard. You do not get Indian English in all writings by Indians or in all writing about India. The justification of Indian English must be that to the native virtue of the English Language it adds an extra element of beauty and color, strangeness and wonder, and truth. Its test of success is that it recreates Indian life in all its shame and glory, its beauty and rottenness.”

Indian English is picturesque, highly coloured kind of speech which demands on the part of the writer a better sense of Indian sensibility, Indian languages, Indian symbols and place variations. Some of the characteristics of Indian English are presented in following the words of Dr. Bhaskara Shukla,

“There are complexities and perplexities around the difficulty of conceiving how a colonized country can reclaim or reconstitute its identity in a language that is now but was not its own language, and genres which are now but were not the genres of the colonized. One result is that the literature may be written in the style of speech of the inhabitants of a particular colonized people or area, which language use does not like Standard English and in which literature the standard English literary allusions and common metaphors and symbols may be inappropriate and/or may be replaced by allusions and tropes which are alien to British culture and usage.”
In its very productivity, distinctiveness and imagination, Indian English in the hands of Indian writers particularly abroad as well as at home develops as a specific form of English that may reasonably be considered as an important variation of the international language just as British or American English.

Discussion of Indian English without mention of Salman Rushdie is partial. According to Rushdie, language is the most important instrument in the construction of reality. The reason for this is that the English language carries politics of power and consequently it supports imperial dominance over the former British colonies. Rushdie says,

“There those peoples who were once colonized by the language are now rapidly remaking it, domesticating it, becoming more and more relaxed about the way they use it—assisted by the English language’s enormous flexibility and size, they are carving out large territories for themselves within its frontiers.”

Rushdie gives reason why the writers like him uses English for communication:

“One of the changes has to do with attitudes towards the use of English. Many have referred to the argument about the appropriateness of this language to Indian themes. And I hope all of us share the view that we can’t simply use the language in the way the British did; that it needs remaking for our own purposes. Those of us who do use English do so in spite of our ambiguity towards it, or perhaps because of that, perhaps because we can find in that linguistic struggle a reflection of other struggles taking place in the real world, struggles between the cultures within ourselves and the influences at work upon our societies. To conquer English may be to complete the process of making ourselves free.”

So in using English or rather deterritorialized English in the words of Rushdie, he attains a desired aim namely reclaiming to be an Indian. For Rushdie, it is of paramount importance that English is deterritorialized from its margins.

Through an extensive socio-cultural communication with regional contexts English becomes Indianized. Indian English is different in many ways from the standard form of English. In the case of literature of Indian English, loan words from the regional languages of India are put in the English text, as markers pointing out to Indianness and multiculturalism. Lexical borrowing from many regional languages is a trademark of Indian English canon. Bearing in mind Indian English as a variant of standard
World English, Indian English is specific in many ways. Firstly, words from Indian languages are mixed into Indian English as lexical items and understood throughout India - e.g. sari, lakh, crore, veranda, dhoti, bindi and many more. Secondly the words related to a specific language or cultural area are also there in Indian English, e.g. from Bengali language, words like Durga Pujo, mishti, Boudi, etc. It is noticeable that some words have also entered with slight difference in spelling e.g. chapatti and chapati, khaki and khakhi, verandah and veranda, halvah and halwa, etc. Native Indian words that have been immersed beyond India into English-e.g. dharma, karma, swami, sari, etc. native Indian words that have been absorbed through British Raj. e.g. bungalow, verandah, kaththak, chapati, bhangra, biryani.

There are many reasons for using the Hindi or Bengali words in respect of Jhumpa Lahiri. One possible reason for the use is that there is no equivalent in English. Secondly, certain words and terms have been established as familiar among the English speakers in India and Indian people outside India and thirdly the writers endeavour to give a local aroma to their works in order to achieve certain sensibilities and to create a real world. When the characters in a work of art and the audience are multicultural, the writer’s communication achieves a special success in using more than one language and s/he has many privileges. The writer is tempted to use Indian words when the locale is India or use the words of another language when the work or a part of the work is located at the place where the language is spoken.

Indian words or expressions were Anglicized through the long period of British rule such as sari, bungalow, verandah and many other. As mentioned above, it is also of prime importance to remark that the same word occurs with slight changes in spelling which is true in the case of Jhumpa Lahiri. For example, verandah becomes veranda and pooja as pujo in Jhumpa Lahiri. In Interpreter of Maladies, halvah is given, while in The Namesake it is halwa. Again sari appears in many of Lahiri’s pieces as well as Indian English texts. The same is also true with verandah, pajama, dhoti, chapati, biryani, chutney, mishti, samosa, pujo and salwaar kameez.
The words or expressions used in Jhumpa Lahiri belong to many categories. The main categories are religion, art, food, clothing, household articles, relationship words, profession, proverbs, vegetation and customs. The first two categories have an exceptionally large number of words. Both are extremely culture-bound, with hardly any equivalents and difficult to be replaced by English. Included in the former of the two types of the expressions are mostly related to Hinduism which is the dominant religion in India. They include such expressions as *pujo, Kali, Durga, Shiva, Veda, Yoga, Avatar, bindi, Tangail, bharat natyam, hari bol, Atma devanam, bhuvanasya garbho, kathakali, annaprasan, Raga, Vedic*, etc. In the category of art include the titles of literary, musical and artistic works, film actors and the name of their artists, such as *sarod, ghazal, Rabindranath Tagore, Madhabi Mukherjee, Madhuri Dixit, Nazrul, Kishorkumar, Ritwik Ghatak, Satyajit Ray* and many more. It also includes the names of games such as dances and musical instruments, all of which are quite difficult to find an English equivalent for. *Bhangra, ghazal, bharatnatyam, kabadi*, etc. belong to this category.

Then the other two types consist of the most conventional element of the basic human needs, namely food and clothing and housing articles. The great climatic and topographic diversity in India has created a rich variety in food of which the local people are very proud. Eating is not only a matter of individual taste, but has a strong connection with the various aspects of social life, like who can share a meal with whom, who can cook for whom, eating habits, etc., which make people highly conscious of eating. The examples are *bidi, tandoori, sultana, malai, rogan josh, pakora, channa, chanachur, raita, mishit, aloogobi, haleem, salami, papadum sandesh, chorchori, luchis, jelabi, tabouli, pullao, khichuri, moghlai paratha, biryani, chapatti, dal, chutney, halwa, rossogolla, ajowan, payesh, samosa, dal, rossogolla, lassi*, etc.

The next categories which are *relationship words, profession, proverbs, vegetation, customs and clothing and household articles*. They are also strongly culture-bound. Especially the category *kinship terms* is the one for which an English equivalent can be found relatively easily, such as *baba, amma, mama, pishi, maima, jethu, ma, mashi, mesho, chacha, kaka, kaku,*
dida, dadu, didi, jamai, Boudi, nonna, nonni, etc., but the authors chose to express them in native expressions. This shows the high possibility of native kinship terms spontaneously mixed into English context in the everyday life, especially when used as address terms. As it is there in *The Namesake*:

“There are endless names Gogol and Sonia must remember to say, not aunt this and uncle that but terms far more specific: mashi and pishi, mama and maima, kaku and jethu, to signify whether they are related on their mother’s or their father’s side, by marriage or by blood.”

There are also the English equivalents for many words in the category profession, especially domestic workers such as Durwan and paanwallah. The examples of social status include zamindar. Other words from Indian languages include pandal, tatsoi, kokil, attar, henna, almari, bechareh, pajama, paisas, salwar-kameez, ayurvedic, desh, chappal, daknam, bhalonam, bidi, khakis, kathakali, channa, ajowan, chanachur, deshi, topor, nagrai, kilim, flokati, lal, neel, amnio, hosta, Tangail khub bhalo, aacha, asobbho, papasan, kurta, kokil, myna, pandal, Shashthi, Saptami, Ashtami, Navami, Shakal bela, Bikel bela, Ratrir bela, Basanta Kal, Varsha Kal, Marwaris and lungi. Trees or names of spices are climate-bound and written with the original names in most cases of ordinary translation. These words are often related to food and food has special place in Lahiri’s words. They are channa, ajowan, sultana, etc.

Language is an indispensable element in the realization of the verbal act. It is a necessary precondition for communication. Language is culture based. Gayatri Spivak argues that language allows one to make sense of ourselves as language produces identity. Through language, one translates himself/herself. In Lahiri’s works, the protagonists are continuously working to translate their Indian self to their American peers and to translate the American to their Indian families. Language helps one to communicate his/her feelings and thus helps them interpret themselves through translation.

G.J.V. Prasad in ‘Writing translation: The strange case of the Indian English novel’ writes, talking of the objectives served by using English language,

“The act of writing in English is not ‘merely’ one of translation of an Indian text into the English language, but a quest for a space
which is created by translation and assimilation and hence
transformation of all three – the Indian text, context and the
English language.”

Thus, the English that each Indian writer uses is partly the message as well
as the medium and is important in itself. Raja Rao’s example is worth noting.
Raja Rao in his foreword to *Kanthapura* advocates both Indian narrative
strategies and Indianization of the English language in Indian English
literature. He is also aware of the nature of power – he compares English to
Sanskrit and Persian, the two languages that were used for communication
across the sub-continent in earlier times, both having predominated over
other Indian languages. Writing in any of the languages, as in the case of
English, would have been an act of translation into and a transformation of
a more powerful language.

Raja Rao is creating a language as well as creating in it. Many of his
characters in *Kanthapura* including the narrator, would not speak any kind
of English and yet the novelist has to bring out the rhythm of their
expression or speech. Thus, in Meenakshi Mukherjee’s words, there is a
‘double complication’ involved in Indian English fiction, because it is written
in a language that in most cases is not the first language of the writer nor is
it the language of the daily life of the people about whom the novels are
written. The same is true in the case of purely Indian characters and the
‘Treatment of Bibi Haldar’ and ‘A Real Durwan’ though Jhumpa Lahiri’s first
language is English for she is a second generation. She is equally attached
with Bengali language.

Meenakshi Mukherjee says that the Indian English writer in some
cases has to deal with non-English speaking people in non-English-speaking
contexts. ‘Treatment of Bibi Haldar’ and ‘A Real Durwan’ are purely Indian
in contexts. Lahiri chooses a particular locale for a particular theme.
Locating these stories in foreign would not have been as effective as they
are. Again she says that an Indian writer has to overcome the difficulty of
conveying through English the vast range of expressions and observations
whose natural vehicle is an Indian Language or at least Indian words. The
task becomes difficult when the contexts of these Indian English texts are
multilingual and multicultural. This is for the Indian diasporic writers whose
locales often move from one to another country. Both *The Namesake* and
The Lowland have India and America as their locale. The matter is that the continuance of single locale throughout a work would make it easy to provide authenticity in terms of locale, language, food, clothes, etc. The writer has to be careful in maintaining the genuineness of work in multilingual and multicultural setting.

The writer has then to ensure the surety of the spirit of the Indian regions he is depicting in the case one is abroad. One has to maintain the quality of that particular area, the characteristics of its speech, its typical responses and its distinctive spirit. Braj Kachru, in his study of Indian English points out connections which are author-oriented and may be present only in the works of creative Indian English writers who write about typically Indian contexts.

Yamuna Kachru, in a seminar on ‘The Indian Face of English’, says that Indian English writers are fully identifiable and interpretable only in the context of conventions of a community that uses kinship terms as instruments of politeness, has a specific philosophical system of life, has an institution of arranged marriage and minutely divided roles of a husband, wife, son, daughter, mother, father and so on and their patterns of behaviour according to community and religion. A reader unacquainted with these contextual factors will either misapprehend or at least have difficulty in interpreting the examples. To fully understand Lahiri’s works, one must know the meaning the above-mentioned Indian words. Language does half of the writer’s work. In each individual work of art, the Indian English writer has to write English suitable for that individual task at work, only to authenticate conveyance of the particularities of the situation and region portrayed. Each writer is aware of this task and makes a conscious attempt at it through various linguistic experiments as well as the use of locale.

In this chapter the focus is also laid on how linguistic resources, predominantly accent or pronunciation, are used as resources by speakers to project their Indianness or Americanness in the world. American characters can easily be distinguished from Indian characters who have identifiable accent in their speech even in their English. Examples of such characters are Amit, Gogol, Sonia, Ruma, Usha, etc. The second and third
generation children are more at ease with English. Usha in ‘Hell Heaven’ narrates,

“Deborah and I spoke freely in English, a language in which, by that age, I expressed myself more easily than Bengali, which I was required to speak at home.”

Language helps a writer make cultural translation successful. Translation becomes an act of reclaiming, of recentring of the identity. It does not create a new language, but it elevates a dialect to the status of a national and cultural language for the purpose of cultural translation. Annie Brisset in an article in *Translational Studies* edited by Lawrence Venuti writes that the role of writers is to take interest to address a specific collectivity with respect to its language. It means that the writer must regenerate the language rediscover it and reinvent it in order to give it a new significance. Jhumpa Lahiri does the same.

Traditionally translation was seen as transaction between two languages. But it began to be noticed that literary texts were constituted not primarily of language but in fact of culture because language is much a vehicle of the culture. Some expressions were often described as being culture-specific. It means that some words have on equivalents or some have equivalents but do not convey full meaning – for example, *kurta, dhoti, roti, dharma, karma* or *maya*, generally found in most Indian English works all items peculiarly Indian and not really like the Western equivalents shirt, trousers, bread, religion, deed or illusion. But then the realization grew that not only were such particular items culture-specific but indeed the whole language was specific to the particular culture it belonged or came from.

Jhumpa Lahiri’s use of the language is very creative. As it has been mentioned earlier that in her works, aspects of Indianness are representation of Indian society and culture, themes and characters, the use of Indian English forms another aspect of Indianness which is of great importance. Language, to a great extent, makes a writer successful in articulation of Indian sensibility. The use of Bengali words makes a reader realize Indianness at first sight. Her works represent Indian society in India or America with all their sensibilities, thoughts, philosophies, traditions, rituals and superstitions and the language helps Jhumpa Lahiri create this
society with all types of fidelities. Therefore, a list of the words is presented here Jhumpa Lahiri uses and how and why she uses them.

Lahiri uses many words from Bengali such as sari, almari, ghazal, sultana, malai, chutney, bechareh, tandoori, zamindar, durwan, paisa, salwar kameez, ayurvedic, pujo, bidi, veranda, dal, bhajan, ma, khaki, baba, etc. These are the words which at first sight confirm Indianness because these words provide insight into Indian society and culture. The names of the characters are also Indian. From these names, the characters whose names are Indian are ‘Indian’. Considering use of Hindi words, Verghese rightly says:

“What it meant is that English words in so far as they are expressive enough and adequately reproduce the speech and rhythms of the vernacular should be preferred to Indian words, but there can be no objection as such to the use of Indian words when they are more expressive than their English equivalents in the context.”

The writer's ability to write and use another language is the second factor besides culture that makes diasporic literature so coloured and vibrant. In the hands of diasporic writers, English language has become more powerful tool. They have enriched the language with fresh expression and emotions. The mother tongue works at the level of myth, while the second language deals at the level of physical reality. The diasporic writer coins new words by combining English and Hindi and other Indian languages. They Indianize the English language and Englishize the Indian language. They appropriate the English language for their own situations. They redefine the boundaries of language destroying old forms and fashioning new ones. Lahiri is one of the most creative writers in this context. Her use of language confirms the Indianness in the text. She Indianizes the English language to give proper expression of the Indianness.

Lahiri uses various techniques in using the Hindi or Bengali words. Among others techniques, the most important techniques found in her works, is her use of original Indian vernacular language words in the midst of the English words. Secondly, she forms plural nouns by adding English suffixes. For example, she makes the plural noun of sari as saris, from kurta to kurta, samosas, pakoras, paisas varandas, pajamas, ayurvedics, ghazals, rossogollas, mashis, meshos, etc. Her attempts are original and
that they achieved their objective they helped to situate the action in and characters of Indian community in India and America. Her use of these words is conscious and the objective of introducing such words is to sustain the reliability of representing the Indian sensibility and to invite readers across the world.

In this context, what is even more important is that these words stand as metaphors of Indianness. They show the very Indian spirit. Words like sari, bindi are powerful enough to indicate the whole idea. Such words occur in the texts like refrain. They give sense of being India and Indianness is reflected through these words. These words stand as the epitome of Indianness. They even help the writer suggest the concept of purity and pollution of Indian way of life.

There are other dimensions of using the Indian English by Jhumpa Lahiri in her works. Language is both a function and source of identity. Therefore, it is difficult to see how a community’s culture and language can be separated from its economic, social and religious practices. When a writer creates his work, his language and culture reflect in it. When and where a text is written, the language in which it is inscribed, the traditions and debates within which it intervenes, all come together to create a textual fabric. In this context also the Indianness of the use of words of Indian language cannot be ignored.

The use of these words suggests the process of decolonization. To understand this idea, it is imperative to know what decolonization is. Decolonization is the process of making colonialist power ineffective in all its forms. This includes undoing or reverting the hidden aspects of these institutional and cultural forces that had maintained the colonialist power and that remain even after political independence was achieved. Decolonization suggests that pre-colonial cultures and knowledge systems can be recovered through decolonizing the colonial structures. One of the main features of imperial oppression is control over language. The supporters of imperial oppression introduced many words of their language which was the symbol of imperialism. The imperial education system installed a standard version of English and gave secondary or no importance to other languages and thus other languages were marginalized. Language
becomes the medium through which a years-old structure of power is preserved and the medium through which conceptions of truth, belongingness, culture, history and reality become established for this reason. The discussion of post-colonial writing is largely a discussion of the process by which the language, with its power and the writing, with its signification of authority has been wrested from the dominant European cultures. Taking into consideration the complex ways in which the English language is used in post-colonial societies and indicating their own sense of difference, the “standard” British English inherited from the Empire can be differentiated from English which these societies use. For our purpose of understanding of Indian English, the very sense of difference is carried out through Indianness. It is the Indianness of Indian English that indicates the difference and decolonizes the use of Standard English. Lahiri, decolonizing the use of Standard English, is exalting Indianness. Thus, she shows that Indianness has power to decolonize the English language. Lahiri is doing a precious work by applying Indianness in her works.

Discussions on the linguistic experiments of Indian writers in English are often moving around their success in using the English language to present the Indian experience authentically. If the relationship between signs and their referents is only a question of naming, writing Indian experience in English would be a simple matter of translation of finding English equivalents for Indian words. Using English terms for Indian experience would be equivalent to an act of violence because there are no equivalents for the other in one’s own language.

In short, the question of language for the Indian writer is not separate from the politics of power because for the post-colonial writer to speak or write in the imperial tongues is to call forth a problem of an identity and an accusation of imitation. How to deal with the problem of identity and mimicry? Raja Rao has the answer. He writes in the preface to Kanthapura,

“One has to convey in a language that is not one’s own the spirit that is one’s own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought movement that looks maltreated in an alien language.”

Lahiri is successful in conveying the spirit that is of her own society in a language that is not of her own society. It is done through using such
few words that form the base of Indianness for a diasporic writer. By using these words as the metaphors, she is presenting the originality of Indianness which helps her bring the Indian sensibility.

A great deal of academic curiosity seems to have been aroused by the language and linguistic style adopted by the contemporary Indian English writers who without exception belong to a distinct class of educated, urban elite who think, dream and write in the language they know best—English. These writers - Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Chandra, Upamanyu Chatterji, Amit Chaudhary, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai and others represent an urban ‘English medium educated’ elite. Not only are they Indian in blood and colour but their intellect, tastes, opinions and morals, in spite of having absorbed the best in English have remained quintessentially Indian. Instead of being colonized by the English they have decolonized the English language, using it to define their Indian identity and experience. As a result this generation of writers has evolved for themselves a distinct spoken language or dialect which has been branded as 'Indian English’. Rushdie included this brand of Indian English or ‘Chutneyfied English’ as he calls it in his novel, Midnight’s Children and started a trend, which his contemporaries have enthusiastically followed. Some critics consider that ‘Chutneyfied English’ is not true English and is not proper for literary purpose. But in reality the truth is not so. The very brand 'Indian English' suggests that it has Indianness and a writer in English who wants to represent Indianness uses Indian English. Without using Indian English the writer will not be successful in his/her task; it is not possible for him to represent Indian sensibility and experience and the essence of India with all cares. Jhumpa Lahiri has, to a great extent, accomplished her task. She chutneyfies the language by using words like dhoti, sari, pujo, bidi, veranda, dal, etc. to give flavour of Indian English. His use of language is very creative.

Lahiri shows what the Bengali language means to the Bengali people. Their Indianness is confirmed by their use of Bengali language. They are recognized by their accent in English that they are originally Indian. Amit is recognized by his accent. Gogol’s and Sonia’s accent is different from Ashoke and Ashima. It shows that Gogol and Sonia are more American than Ashoke and Ashima with respect to language also. Usha is also at ease in using
English than Bengali. The parents are more careful to retaining Bengali language and for they believe that after their death Bengali would no longer be used by their children so the parents teach Bengali to their children so that they might not lose their Indianness. Ashima, Ashoke, Ruma, Aparna, all of them are much concerned with teaching their children Bengali. Akash recited his numbers in Bengali from one to ten. Feelings are best expressed in mother tongue and Ruma’s father composed the letter in Bengali. Parents are more attentive to teach the children Bengali words and language. They believe that after their death no one would speak Bengali. Ruma’s mother insisted on Ruma’s speaking Bengali language. So does Ruma to Akash. Ruma teaches Akash Bengali nursery rhymes. This is at length described what Bengali language stands for Ruma who is a second generation,

“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. Her mother had been strict, so much so that Ruma had never spoken to her in English. But her father didn’t mind.”

On the rare occasions Ruma used Bengali. When an aunt or uncle called from Calcutta to wish her a Happy Bijoya or Akash a Happy Birthday, she used Bengali words in jumbled tenses.

Ashima says that ‘there are ten finger and ten toe’ instead of fingers and toes because in Bengali, a finger can also mean fingers and a toe means toes. To put Gogol to sleep Ashima sings him the Bengali songs her mother used to sing to her.

The two Bengali words ‘saris’ and ‘bindi’ in the following lines show to what extent one is able to form one’s identity. Ruma is surprised to know that her father looks more like an American with his gray hair but her mother is easily identifiable as Indian with her sari and bindi.

“She was struck by the degree to which her father resembled an American in his old age. With his gray hair and fair skin he could have been practically from anywhere. It was her mother who would have stuck out in this wet Northern landscape, in her brightly colored saris, her dime-sized maroon bindi, her jewels.”
Lahiri shows that Bengali names are not without meanings. For The Lowland this is also true. Bela who was born in America is the child of Gauri and Udayan. The name has meaning, Lahiri writes,

“Bela’s name, the name of a flower, was itself the word for a span of time, a portion of the day. Shakal bela meant morning; bikel bela, afternoon. Ratrir bela was night.”

At age of four Bela develops a memory and the word yesterday enters her vocabulary. It was the English word she used but in Bengali, the word for yesterday is kal which is also the word for tomorrow. In Bengali one needed an adjective or relied on the tense of a verb.

Locale in a literary work is of the great importance since it provides a sense of people’s language, customs, social veracity, religious rituals, etc. India is a large country. States in India are language based. Lahiri’s locale is mostly Calcutta, Bengal. So it is natural that the readers of Jhumpa Lahiri’s works are acquainted with language, rituals, etc. of Bengali people wherever the locale is America, the characters describes are white and non-white. Their social interactions are different from those of Indian locale. America is multicultural locale. It also happens for the diasporic writers whose locale is mainly multicultural America, are sometimes lacking in the faithful depiction of Indian locale. The diasporic writers are more efficient in American setting than Indian setting because they find it more difficult to convey this authenticity of locale. They are far removed from the country in term of distance and often are absent for long periods. There is no doubt that Jhumpa Lahiri’s multicultural locale is authentic but at the same time her Indian locale is also praiseworthy. Though she belongs to second generation, she is at first hand acquainted with the Indian customs, Bengali language and Bengali locale. She herself admits that many of her stories or the two novels are influenced by her repeated visits to India and derive material from her own experiences.

It is a challenge to a diasporic writer, particularly for the second and third generation to attain authenticity in Indian locale. Their works are mainly located in the West to describe true Indian diasporic emotions. When a work is located in India, the writers try to describe an Indian everywhere by putting symbols of typical Indian people, their festivals and rituals. This also happens in Jhumpa Lahiri. There is the reference of a typical Indian
peasant in ‘Interpreter of Maladies’ when the Das family is on visit to Konark Sun Temple. A particular emphasis is laid by Lahiri as she shows that Mr. Das takes the photograph of the Indian man. Again when Mr. Kapasi notices the strangeness of the Das family’s attire, it also refers to the locale. Their attire is taken into account because they are in India. If Mr. Kapasi had been in America, he would not have perhaps marked this thing.

Locale provides a sense of identity and familiarity. Locale plays an important role in deciding whether a person is Indian, American or multicultural. ‘The Treatment of Bibi Haldar’ and A Real Durwan’ are wholly located in India so there is no doubt of the characters’ Indianness. Moving from one location from another creates a necessity of representation and recognition. Ashima, Ruma, Aparna, Ashoke all are always representing their Indian self by performing various rituals and speaking Bengali language.

According to Jhumpa Lahiri, India has greatly influenced and nourished her creativity as an author through her repeated visits and her experiences in India. Some of her works have India as their location. There is a constant presence of India in her works. In an interview of Arun Aguiar with her, she says that ‘A Real Durwan’ is built on her observation of the people in Calcutta. She says that it is easy to set a story anywhere if there is a good guidebook to get some basic street names and some descriptions, but she is indebted to her travels to India for several of the stories.

Theorizing Indian writing in English Dirk Wiemann writes in Genres of Modernity: Contemporary Indian Novels in English,

“The conspicuous preoccupation with ‘time’ and ‘home’ helps to situate these texts in a discursive environment that has, at least in the context of India, produced some of the most influential theoretical propositions concerning postcoloniality.”

What is eye-catching in the above quoted lines is that Dirk Wiemann notes crucial engagement of Indianness in the formation of Indian writing in English. For Dirk Wiemann Indian writers’ preoccupation of home, that is India or in the sense of locale, helps his/her to accomplish the distinctiveness which Indian literature in English possesses. Though Indian English literature might primarily not be located in India, India becomes a wide-ranging context in the form of Indian home in America and in the
imagination of Indian characters. Though the writer is abroad, his/her connection with the homeland is established through locating a work in the homeland or by presenting Indian characters. Priyamvada Gopal writes supporting this,

“The idea of India in the literary imagination was ... usually tied to a specific geographical locale, inhering powerfully in cities such as Bombay that appeared to encapsulate its most fundamental cultural and political realities. It was often explored in its contradictions and tensions, particularly as these emerged through the juxtaposition of small stories with the larger epic of nation, or private narratives of everyday life with the great sweep of public History.”\textsuperscript{15}

Calcutta is always present in her works even where the locale is America. The question of Indianness is apparent in the Indian English novels. However, it is never a simple one, particularly when posed by writers of second, third and later generations of migrant communities whose passports, location, sense of belonging and cultural affiliations are not always similar. It is unsurprising that Indianness has become a compelling topic for imaginative explorations of the linguistic, cultural and historical aspects of identity for diasporic writers. On the links between India and its diaspora, Amitav Ghosh writes:

“It is precisely because this relationship is so much a relationship of the imagination that the specialists of the imagination—writers—play such an important role in it.”\textsuperscript{16}

The writers link India in imagination. Jhumpa Lahiri does the same.

Locale is available in two ways: one is the physical locale where a work of art is set and secondly locale exists in the imagination of characters of a work of art. The characters’ imagination of India or Indian home plays as much important as the place they are at presently. So the two types of locale, physical and imaginary are explained in the chapter. The concept of home is also important, as home, both in the sense of the house and homeland, exists in in reality as well as in imagination of the characters.

Lahiri’s observation has been drawn so vividly and minutely that she can create an imaginary locale that has an acute reality weaving the hopes, aspirations, desires and frailties of the displaced persons. The stories in \textit{Interpreter of Maladies} are set in India or America. The people around whom the stories revolve are Indian or American Indian living in America or visiting
India. Out of the nine stories of the collection, the two ‘The Treatment of Bibi Haldar’ and ‘A Real Durwan’ are set in traditional India where the purely Indian characters are the victims of the changing times. Their experiences and characteristics are peculiar to Indian society. ‘Interpreter of Maladies’ is set in India but the characters are Indian in their look but American in their dress. The rest of the stories are set in America.

Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines locale as ‘a place where something happens’. For diasporic writers and diasporic characters, the place where something is happening is the result of what has happened at the former place. Former home is accessible in the present home in form of various physical things, such as photos, books, religious things, etc. Something also happens in imagination. Lilia in ‘When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine’ speaks

“Our meals, our actions, were only a shadow of what had already happened there.”

Movement imparts importance to a particular act. Performance of rice ceremonies by Ashima and Ashoke in America has special importance in the sense that these performances mean a lot for them in America. Home as both a house and homeland for Indians is the witness of many important things in one’s life. As just mentioned above, locale means a place where something happens so home is the central place for diasporic people where everything happens. These actions include educating children, respecting elders, performing ceremonies, teaching language, thinking for and worrying the family and so on. Home as a place of action also exist in imagination. It is not necessary that locale is always physical but it can be imaginative. Both material or physical and imaginative locales are relational in the sense that the physical locale leads one to create a place in imagination for many reasons. One of them is that something might be lacking in the present place. Secondly, there is something present there which may remind something else. Power cut off reminds Shoba India. She says,

“Sometimes the current disappears for hours at a stretch. I once had to attend an entire rice ceremony in the dark. The baby just cried and cried. It must have been so hot.”

To pass the time of power cut off at her grandmother’s house, Shoba had to say a little poem, a joke or a fact about the world. Blade reminds Mrs. Sen
of India and her neighbours in India. In *The Namesake*, naming custom in India is also preserved in America. Gogol and Sonia have pet names. The imaginative locale help the narrator intensify the longing for home.

Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling in *Home* define,

“What does home mean to you? Where, when and why do you feel at home? To what extent does your sense of home travel across different times, places and scales? ... Some may speak of the physical structure of their house or dwelling; others may refer to relationships or connections over space and time. You might have positive or negative feelings about home, or a mixture of the two. Your sense of home might be closely shaped by your memories of childhood, alongside your present experiences and your dreams for the future.”

For them, home as a sense of belonging or attachment is also visible in one of the key characteristics of the contemporary world: the historically unprecedented number of people migrating across countries, as for instance, refugees and temporary or permanent workers. Notions of home are central in these migrations. Movement from one place to another place may necessitate a sense of home, as people leave or in some cases flee one home for another. These international movements are also processes of establishing home, as senses of belonging and identity move over space and are created in new places. Considering this, Jhumpa Lahiri’s characters are international personalities, twice or thrice moved from their homeland, particularly the characters in *Unaccustomed Earth*.

Moreover, in their book they develop a geographical perspective on home that uniquely identifies its two key elements. Home is a place, a site in which one lives. However, more than this, home is also an idea and an imaginary that is imbued with feelings. Avatar Brah also in *Cartographies of Diaspora* is of the view that ‘home’ is a mythic place of desire or feelings in the diasporic imagination. These may be feelings of belonging, desire and intimacy. That is why there is the phrase ‘feeling at home’ not feeling at house. According to them, these feelings, ideas and imaginaries related with particular places are intrinsically spatial. For them, home is thus a ‘spatial imaginary’, to use their words: a set of intersecting and variable ideas and feelings, which are related to context and which construct places, extend across spaces and scales and connect places.
For a diasporic writer or a diasporic character in a work, home is a place or site with which a set of feelings and cultural meanings are associated and the relations between the two take place. Home attributes a series of feelings and attachments with the time, culture, language and places. It becomes connected to a physical structure that provides shelter. That is why one can live in a house and yet not feel ‘at home’. The same house may be a source of support and comfort for one and the same house may be oppressive and alienating for the other. The very term ‘diaspora’ carries a sense of multiple locations. Their identity and recognition are always carried out through place to which once they belonged and to which they belong. Therefore, locale in a diasporic work is of great importance. Two of Jhumpa Lahiri’s works namely *Unaccustomed Earth* and *The Lowland* out of four are primarily concerned with locale as it is clear from their titles. *Unaccustomed Earth*, as the quotation from Hawthorne shows, is about striking roots to a new place. Striking roots to a new place may not always be advantageous and may consequence into a problematic situation. Ruma is always thoughtful about how her mother had behaved in a particular situation in India and how her mother would have cared her father. The title of Lahiri’s second collection of short stories *Unaccustomed Earth* immediately directs the reader’s attention to the problems of transplantation, travel and erecting a new home. It signifies a new, strange land, a place that has been reached only after some journey. People move from accustomed earth to unaccustomed with the possibility that the unaccustomed earth can become accustomed in future. There may come a time when one will build a home and grow roots.

The title story is very important as far as locale is concerned. The characters are transnational and carry nations with them among them one is India. Lahiri writes,

“After her mother’s death, Ruma’s father retired from the pharmaceutical company where he had worked for many decades and began traveling in Europe, a continent he’d never seen. In the past year he had visited France, Holland, and most recently Italy. They were package tours, traveling in the company of strangers, riding by bus through the countryside, each meal and museum and hotel prearranged.”

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The story opens with the third person omniscient narrator explaining the different geographical locations of Ruma and her father, who are in Seattle and throughout Europe respectively. Ruma’s father, though not very articulate in his letters, sends her photographs of places that he visits. Romi, Ruma’s brother immigrates to New Zealand. These dislocations of people take place after the death of Ruma’s mother. Her father sells their large house. For Ruma, selling of the house becomes symbolic of rubbing out her mother’s presence though she herself shifts to another location after marrying Adam, a white American. Ruma’s father always recollects his time their trips to India. However, in reality he is getting away not only physically but also emotionally from both India and family.

Unlike her father, Ruma is still in the United States. She feels trapped in her domestic life. Once she gets pregnant and then, after giving birth to the child, she feels more like the first generation migrant woman. She has to give up her job in order to take care of her child. Ruma’s father makes a garden for her and in a way though far from India teaches life of India to Akash, Ruma’s father decides to go away from Seattle. When Ruma asks for the reason, he reminds her that he is not at home in her house as he remarks to her: “It is a good place, Ruma. But this is your home not mine.” This statement underlines yet again the message of the story that relationships make home and that Ruma has made her home in her undiluted love for Adam and Akash, while her father is still lonely and hence, homeless in Seattle.

Garden is also important in the story. The more careful one is to maintain a garden, the faster the plants grow. In the same way the more involved one is in the new country’s affairs, the faster one adapts new identity and puts roots.

*The Lowland* moves around the lives of two brothers whose childhood passes by the lowland and shows how they gradually grow apart in their views of life. After Udayan’s death, the action moves to America. Gauri formerly Udayan’s wife steps in Boston as Subhash’s wife. Thoroughly Indian and an activist in the Naxalite Movement she changes herself into an American wife and mother. Gauri, performing death rites for her husband
creates no doubt in reader’s mind of her becoming a daring individual American woman leading American life and making decisions on her own.

Critics focus on the meaning and concept of home and the ways in which home is a meaningful place – how people relate to and experience their dwelling as well as how people create a sense of home in terms of comfort and identity. Home is not always simply a bodily construction or an earthly location but an emotional space. The material culture of the home is expressive of the social relationships and connectedness of and among its inhabitants. A home may involve the complexities, conflicts and compromises. The home is an important site and subject of many of literary works as it is an evidence of memories and experiences of place and displacement, since novels were first written and read. Therefore, home is the fusion of a feeling at home, a sense of comfort, belonging with a particular place. Material and imaginative geographies of home are relational. Thus, the material form of home is dependent on what home is imagined to be and imagination of home is influenced by the physical forms of dwelling. Home is a location, a place which enables and promotes various and ever-changing perceptions, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference. Locale moves with one when s/he moves to another place. The former locale exists in abstract and influences the characters whose behavioural patterns are formed with respects to the former locale. Though Ashoke and Ashima are not in India, they perform the rice ceremonies for their children. Movement of locale results into multiculturalism as both a person living in a specific locale presently and abstract locale meet.

Alison Blunt’s *Domicile and Diaspora* considers the politics of home in relation to imperialism, nationalism, decolonization and multiculturalism and seeks to extend feminist and postcolonial ideas about mobile and located homes and identities in relation to critical ‘mixed race’ studies. He attempts to explore material and imaginative homes as key locations for theorizing identity.

“Ideas of home invoke a sense of place and displacement, belonging and alienation, inclusion and exclusion, that is not only intimately tied to a sense of self but also reflects the importance of intimacy.” 21
It is in the following lines of Alison Blunt that one comes across the importance of home in a diasporic work,

“As a space of belonging and alienation, intimacy and violence, desire and fear, the home is charged with meanings, emotions, experiences and relationships that lie at the heart of human life.”

According to him, home is a space of lived experience and imagination. Its studies range from a focus on everyday life and social relations to domestic form and design and material, visual and literary cultures of home. For example, Shoba says that during power failures, they used to share a joke or a poem in India. This characterizes locale. In a way, it means that sharing of joke is locale-specific. Moreover, performing of rice ceremonies for Gogol and Sonia, Ashoke and Ashima are creating imaginative locale of India. Alison Blunt writes,

“In metaphorical terms, images of home form part of a wider spatial lexicon that has become important in theorizing identity, and are often closely tied to ideas about the politics of location and an attempt to situate both knowledge and identity.”

The very sense of diaspora relates to locale. When it is said that a work is diasporic, it means that it carries multiple locations. Geography clearly lies at the heart of diaspora both as a concept and as lived experience.

Personal and collective memory of places is an important constituent of diasporic literature. Alison Blunt writes,

“Whereas the sites and landscapes of memory inform spatial narratives of the past and present, a nostalgic desire for home has come to represent a wider ‘desire for desire’. As an imagined point of origin and return, home becomes a temporal signifier that implies a longing for an imagined and unattainable past.”

Ashima’s nostalgic desire for home represents desire for desire and it seems unattainable as she knows that her present is not the past and the past is not going to her present.

In ‘A Temporary Matter’ the couple lives their married life apart from each other. This is due to their separated family in America against joint Indian family. They treat their house as a hotel. Shoba remains outside of the house and Shukumar does not leave the house.

Mr. Pirzada’s identity is place-specific according to Lilia’s father. Since Bangladesh is not the part of India, Mr. Pirzada is no longer considered to be Indian. For Lilia also, Mr. Pirzada identity is established when she
observes that he and her father spoke the same language, laughed at the same jokes, looked more or less the same, took off his shoes before entering a room, chewed fennel seeds after meals as a digestive, drank no alcohol and for dessert dipped austere biscuits into successive cups of tea. So Lilia who does not differentiate between India and Bangladesh, identifies these things common in both Mr. Pirzada and her father. ‘When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine’ is set in America which assured Lilia ‘a safe life and easy life, a fine education, every opportunity’. If she were in India, she imagined, she had to eat rationed food, obey curfews, watch riots from her rooftop or hide neighbours in water tanks to prevent them from being shot. Her mother says,

“Imagine having to place her in a decent school. Imagine her having to read during power failures by the light of kerosene lamps. Imagine the pressures, the tutors, the constant exams.”

Mr. Pirzada comes to dine at Lilia’s place because he would have food prepared in Indian ways. Lilia 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 lagging ghost of where Mr. Pirzada really belonged.”

So this is clear that what they believe, what they eat, what they do all show their Indianness though they are miles away.

‘Interpreter of Maladies’ is set in India but at the outset it is mentioned that the family looked Indian but dressed as foreigners did. The children were in stiff, brightly coloured clothing and caps with glowing visors. It means that the family is American. Mr. Kapasi observes Americanness in Mr. Das’ behaviour. When he introduced himself, Mr. Kapasi had pressed his palms together in greeting, but Mrs. Das squeezed hands like an American. To impart authenticity to her locale, Jhumpa Lahiri writes,

“Mr. Das took a picture of a barefoot man, his head wrapped in a dirty turban, seated on top of a cart of grain sacks pulled by a pair of bullocks. Both the man and the bullocks were emaciated.”

‘A Real Durwan’ is wholly set in Calcutta, India. So there are many references of Indian typical locale as the following,
“On the rooftop Boori Ma hung her quilts over the clothesline. The wire, strung diagonally from one corner of the parapet to the other, stretched across her view of television antennas, billboards, and the distant arches of Howrah Bridge. Boori Ma consulted the horizon on all four sides.”

In ‘A Real Durwan’ the locale is typical India. A victim of time depicts her past glorious days. She takes every opportunity to speak of those days as following,

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

But presently Boori Ma sweeps the staircase of a flat building. It was a very old building, as Lahiri describes, the kind with bathwater still had to be stored in drums, windows without glass and privy scaffolds made of bricks. Though she was deported to Calcutta after partition, she maintained the turmoil that had separated her from a husband, four daughters, a two-story brick house, a rosewood almari and a number of coffer boxes whose skeleton keys she still wore.

In ‘Sexy’ Laxmi told Miranda how life in America had made her cousin’s married life hell. Laxmi was always on the phone with her cousin who was still in bed, whose husband was still in London and whose son still was not going to school. Husband of Laxmi’s cousin was in love with another woman whom he met on plane. It is in the same way that a new relationship between Dev and Miranda is developing. Miranda looked forward to Sundays. In the mornings she went to deli and bought a baguette and little containers of things Dev liked to eat, like pickled herring and potato salad and tortes of pests and mascarpone cheese.

‘Mrs. Sen’s’ shows how a home owned by Indian is hospitable for babysitting. Mrs. Sen introduces herself with the words,

“Professor’s wife, responsible and kind, I will care for your child in my home.”

The persons living in the house are Indian though the house physically looks American as Lahiri gives the description,

“It was a university apartment located on the fringes of the campus. The lobby was tiled in unattractive squares of tan, with a row of mailboxes marked with masking tape or white labels. Inside, intersecting shadows left by a vacuum cleaner were frozen on the surface of a plush pear-colored carpet.
Mismatched remnants of other carpets were positioned in front of the sofa and chairs, like individual welcome mats anticipating where a person’s feet would contact the floor. White drum-shaped lampshades flanking the sofa were still wrapped in the manufacturer’s plastic. The TV and the telephone were covered by pieces of yellow fabric with scalloped edges. There was tea in a tall gray pot, along with mugs, and butter biscuits on a tray.  

Eliot whose mother works fifty miles away and father two thousand miles away, is put under care of Mrs. Sen. Mrs. Sen discloses her Indianness to Eliot. While talking to Eliot’s mother, Mrs. Sen hears the word ‘India’, she speaks out that everything is there. There are many things in the American house which remind her of India and she feels excitement to talk about them to Eliot. She takes a great joy cutting cauliflower, cabbage, butternut squash, potato with a blade brought from India. Mrs. Sen meant ‘home’ for India. She says,  

“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.”  

Besides the blade, a jam jar, halvah, vermilion power, letters for India have special place in her home. Mrs. Sen desires to drive to Calcutta. The story ‘This Blessed House’ describes the home in some detail. The house contained many Christian items left by the previous owner. Sanjeev gets in trouble by his wife’s obsession at finding the Christian things. A white porcelain effigy of Christ, 3-D postcard of Saint Francis, biblical stickers, decal of the virgin and a tile trivet of Jesus show that the house belonged to Christians. The house is wholly built in American way.  

“He was impressed by the elegant curved staircase with its wrought-iron banister, and the dark wooden wainscoting, and the solarium overlooking rhododendron bushes, and the solid brass 22, which also happened to be the date of his birth, nailed impressively to the vaguely Tudor facade. There were two working fireplaces, a two-car garage, and an attic suitable for converting into extra bedrooms.”  

But the American house creates a problem for Sanjeev. Twinkle is more bent to Christian items and Sanjeev has to remind her repeatedly that they are not Christians and the Christian items mean nothing to them. The American locale is multicultural where one finds meeting of diverse cultures. Joel Kuortti and Jopi Nyman write in *Reconstructing Hybridity*
“Many collections of Indian women’s short stories in the nineteen-nineties confront a collision of cultures, and this is a preoccupation, increasingly with the collision of cultures of India and the United States. It is in such a context of collision of cultures that the stories in Lahiri’s collection take place. In various ways, they engage in the translation of hybrid diasporic identity.”

Sanjeev and Twinkle find their house as a meeting place of American and Indian culture. They discovered the first one’ in a cupboard suggest a chain of findings in coming time.

The narrator of the ‘The Third and Final Continent’ had never lived in the home of a person who was not Indian. It was his third continent. He takes pride that he has successfully adjusted in the three continents. He frequently visits India in imagination. He imagines,

“I was taught multiplication tables as a child, repeating after the master, sitting cross-legged, without shoes or pencils, on the floor of my one-room Tollygunge school. It also reminded me of my wedding, when I had repeated endless Sanskrit verses after the priest, verses I barely understood, which joined me to my wife.”

The present happiness and satisfaction always take him to remind the unhappy past. His father a clerk at the General Post Office, died when the narrator was just sixteen. The widowhood made his mother insane. His mother sank into a world of darkness. His brother has to leave his schooling and start working.

As far as the multicultural locale is concerned, Unaccustomed Earth is very significant. The title of Unaccustomed Earth is linked with location. Many of the characters depicted in the collection are transplanted twice or more. Ruma, Ruma’s father, Amit, Aparna, Usha’s father, Pranab, Hema, Kaushik, Sudha, Parul are transplanted personalities. Transplantation of people and changes in setting reveal the sense of uprootedness. Hawthorne’s quotation which is noteworthy in comprehending the book accurately, also refers to setting. The concept of home is undoubtedly central in Unaccustomed Earth. This is particularly true for Hema and Kaushik. But generally speaking this can also be applied to all the stories. The effort of searching a place to settle in and establishing a home lies at the heart of the human existence and migrants. Settling on the East Coast of American suburban signifies a life that is remote from life in India. For the second
generation of Indian Americans the contrast between America and India becomes further intricate by the fact that they do not really know what their parents left behind in India and what does it mean to be an Indian. Being born to Indian parents in America or any other place excluding India means that it is difficult to feel the same rootedness to India as well as to the current place of residence. Thus, the characters that make up the second and third generation and transplanted twice and thrice in *Unaccustomed Earth* all share a feeling of being foreign and rootless at the place which is their home. Their parents may equally feel more displaced and ambiguous about their new adopted country. The way that they cure this rootlessness, is by making their homes fertile place for producing and maintaining their Indian, American and multicultural identities. Thus, the homes that are presented in these stories are all significant and creative spaces for conveying Indian American identities.

In Jhumpa Lahiri’s ‘Heaven-Hell’ the locale functions as a way to locate the characters. ‘Heaven-Hell’ begins in Central Square of Harvard Yard area, Boston. It is told that Usha’s mother, Aparna, still communicates in Bengali to her daughter and wears the typical Bengali clothing, despite being in America and her daughter’s desire for an American comic book. This immediately helps to characterize ‘Boudi’ (a word used by Pranab for Aparna to address elder brother’s wife) as someone not yet willing to let go of her heritage. Aparna sets aside the teacup for Pranab Kaku. This shows her excitement at having not only another Bengali to connect with but also someone who is slowly becoming her best friend and falling in love with. Aparna is allowing Pranab Kaku to know that he is welcome in their home at any time treating him as her own member of family. Despite growing envious and disappointed at his selecting of an American girl, she assures to Pranab’s parents supporting the engagement, telling his mother that Deborah was a good-mannered girl from a decent family.

Jhumpa Lahiri is of the view about the setting in *The Namesake* that she has set her fiction deliberately in Calcutta which is a city she perfectly knows. She acknowledges that it is through her repeated visits to the city that shaped her perception of the world and the people. It reveals her affection and relatedness and the distance with the city.
“As most of my characters have an Indian background, India keeps cropping up as a setting, sometimes in the memory of the characters.”

The Gangulis change their house thrice. Their houses show their progress in America. Gogol’s first home’s description shows that it is typically American. The word ‘first’ in the following quotation shows that the home of Gogol is likely to be changed and he would grow in more than one home.

“Gogol’s first home is a fully furnished apartment ten minutes by foot to Harvard, twenty to MIT. The apartment is on the first floor of a three-story house, covered with salmon-colored shingles, surrounded by a waist-high chain-link fence. The gray of the roof, the gray of cigarette ashes, matches the pavement of the sidewalk and the street. A row of cars parked at meters perpetually lines one side of the curb. At the corner of the block there is a small used bookstore, which one enters by going down three steps from the sidewalk, and across from it a musty shop that sells the newspaper and cigarettes and eggs, and where, to Ashima’s mild disgust, a furry black cat is permitted to sit as it pleases on the shelves. Other than these small businesses, there are more shingled houses, the same shape and size and in the same state of mild decrepitude, painted mint, or lilac, or powder blue.”

The apartment consists of three rooms in a row without a corridor. The living room is at the front with a three-sided window overlooking the street, a pass-through bedroom to kitchen is in the middle. The kitchen is last. Ashima did not discover this arrangements to be suitable for her. She does not feel at home in the house. As she passes through the kitchen, it irritates her that there are dirty dishes and the bed has not been made in the bedroom. She accepts that there is no one to sweep the floor, do the dishes, wash clothes, shop for groceries or prepare a meal on the days she is tired or homesick. She accepts that the very lack of such amenities is the American way. Before the family moved to Pemberton Road house, they had shifted to a university town outside Boston. This migration for Ashima feels more drastic and more distressing than the move from Calcutta to Cambridge. The family’s third house is at Pemberton Road. The walls of the Pemberton Road house are painted and the driveway is sealed with pitch. Ashoke takes photographs of every room to send to relatives in India. Photographs are of Gogol opening up the refrigerator and pretending to talk on the phone. The house helps them assimilate in the American society. The neighbours are the Johnsons, the Mertons, the Aspris and the Hills. The house is equipped with American
appliances. Jhumpa Lahiri writes of what America would stand for Ashima after Ashoke’s death,

“She will miss her job at the library, the women with whom she’s worked. She will miss throwing parties. She will miss living with her daughter, the surprising companionship they have formed, going into Cambridge together to see old movies at the Brattle, teaching her to cook the food Sonia had complained of eating as a child. She will miss the opportunity to drive, as she sometimes does on her way home from the library, to the university, past the engineering building where her husband once worked. She will miss the country in which she had grown to know and love her husband. Though his ashes have been scattered into the Ganges, it is here, in this house and in this town, that he will continue to dwell in her mind.”

When Ashima first stepped in America, she missed India very much just as she now remembered America when she shifted to India as she passed her life as a wife and a mother of two children. Memories of life spent in America stand in same relation to her as memories of India stood for her when she came from India. For Ashima both Indian and American homes turn out foreign to her. During her life in America for thirty three years, she missed her life in India and when she moves again to India, she misses her life in Pemberton Road for the following reason.

“Though she still does not feel fully at home within these walls on Pemberton Road she knows that this is home nevertheless—the world for which she is responsible, which she has created, which is everywhere around her, needing to be packed up, given away, thrown out bit by bit.”

Ashima regrets that they cannot arrange the trip to Calcutta four months later to attend the Durga Pujo. Once the family arranged the trip to Calcutta for eight months. Ashoke told Gogol to take the visit to Calcutta as a long vacation. But Gogol does not show such attachment to India as Ashoke and Ashima show. He knows it well that eight months is no vacation and dreads at the thought of eight months without his personal room, without his records and his stereo and without his friends. He feels moving to Calcutta what Ashoke and Ashima had felt while moving from Calcutta. What discomforts Gogol and Sonia is fully comfortable to Ashoke and Ashima though they were a single family. This is Ashoke’s and Ashima’s Indianness and Gogol’s and Sonia’s Americanness. There is an option as suggested by Gogol’s guidance counselor that he can stay with a relative. Ashima informs that they have no relative in America and have chosen to go
to India to meet relatives in the first place. At Calcutta, Gogol and Sonia do not feel so close to their parents’ brothers and other relatives though they know them. Ashima is Monu and Ashoke is Mithu in India. They feel more confident in India than in America, as noticed by Gogol and Sonia.

In June, Gerald and Lydia, Maxine’s parents, leave for house in New Hampshire. When Gogol visits them, he notices a series of canvas tote bags, cardboard boxes full of liquor, shopping bags full of food and cases of wine, accumulated in the hallway. Their departure reminds Gogol of his family’s preparations for Calcutta every few years, when the living room would be crowded with suitcases that his parents packed and repacked fitting in as many gifts as possible for their relatives. There is difference in moving to another place. Gerald’s and Lydia’s shift is not for meeting relatives or any other social purpose but for enjoyment while in spite of his parents’ excitement, there was always a solemnity to confront the deaths of relatives since the last time they were in America.

The Gangulis, in Lahiri’s The Namesake, also have many "used" American items in their Pemberton Road house.

“A watercolor by Ashima’s father, of a caravan of camels in a desert in Rajasthan, is framed at the local print shop and hung on the living room wall. Gogol has a room of his own, a bed with a built-in drawer in its base, metal shelves that hold Tinkertoys, Lincoln Logs, a View-Master, an EtchA-Sketch. Most of Gogol’s toys come from yard sales, as does most of the furniture, and the curtains, and the toaster, and a set of pots and pans. 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.”

From this passage, it is clear that the yard sale objects have a history that is significant to Ashima. The yard sale toys and furniture previously belonged to American children or American families. They represented American tastes, American hobbies and American traditions. Purchasing these items represents an acquisition of an American way of life, something that Ashima is cautious to acquire. Yet Ashoke persuades her that there is nothing wrong if they buy Americans things at yard sales. Ashoke sees no harm in acquiring the American way. By purchasing the yard sale items,
they are acting like typical Americans. This sets the Ganguli family apart from their family and friends in India. They are now living in an American house and they are now acquiring an American lifestyle as well. However, Ashima’s discomfort with purchasing the yard sale items indicates her unwillingness to wholly integrating into America and her desire to preserve her Indian identity. This painting has been displaced from its original context in India and is now standing out in the living room amidst American furniture. Removed from its origin and creator in India, the painting was framed at a local Massachusetts print shop and is now hanging on the wall of an American house. The painting’s construction is a mix of both nations: the genuine Indian art with an American frame symbolizes multicultural locale. While this painting indicates the Gangulis’ conservation of Indian identity and heritage, it also serves as an object that hinders their assimilation into American society. With their strong tie to family and their Indian past, Ashoke and Ashima will never entirely assimilate and will invariably remain multicultural like the painting as well as, more specifically, the house.

Moushumi who is a second-generation child born to Bengali parents and is now living in New York, tells Gogol how her family felt when they moved from the UK to the US:

“She speaks with nostalgia of the years her family had spent in England, living at first in London, which she barely remembers, and then in a brick semidetached house in Croydon. She describes the narrow house, the gas fireplaces, the dank odour of the bathrooms […] she tells him that she had hated moving to America, that she had held on to her British accent for as long as she could. For some reason, her parents feared America, much more than England, perhaps because of its vastness, or perhaps because in their minds it had less of a link to India.”

Many of the characters of *Unaccustomed Earth* are transnational personalities. Ruma’s father has traveled many parts of the world after her mother’s death. He finally visits Ruma’s new bought house. This visit creates certain feelings in the heart of Ruma and her father. Ruma becomes more attentive to take care of her father. During her father’s travelling, he meets a Bengali, Mrs. Meenakshi. Both were so alike in terms of language, colour and place of origin that they were mistaken as husband and wife. When Ruma’s father mentioned their old house, tears sprang from her eyes.

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In “Hell Heave” Usha who is a second generation diaspora, discovers similarities between her father and Pranab Kaku because of the following reason,

“They were from the same neighborhood in North Calcutta, their family homes within walking distance, the facades familiar to them once the exact locations were described. They knew the same shops, the same bus and tram routes, the same holes-in-the-wall for the best jelabis and moghlai parathas.”

Their identity is place-specific. They have similarity because they both belonged to North Calcutta.

‘A Choice of Accommodations’ is a story in which space is central. Switching of hotels and rooms shows how the migrants, Amit and Megan Sarkar, negotiate their identities. They take a long drive from New York to attend a wedding at Langford Academy where Amit had studied. They feel that they are ‘in the middle of nowhere’. They have two girls, Maya and Monika whom they leave with Megan’s parents in Long Island. This is their first trip without the girls in three years which makes them feel relieved and romantic. That is why they choose to stay in a hotel instead of sleeping at one of the Langford dorms. But Chadwick Inn where they stayed proves to be ‘a place without character’ and the room is dark. The two do not like the room, but decide it is not worth changing it for a couple of nights. This is obviously American way of life. Amit was raised in Winchester, Massachusetts. When he was in the ninth grade, his parents moved back to India and he was sent to Langford for schooling alone. The decision to go back to India comes as a shock to Amit since his parents were not homesick about their homeland. In fact, they are quite Westernized and happily translated in the United States:

“His parents, unlike most other Bengalis in Massachusetts, had always been dismissive, even critical of India, never homesick or sentimental. His mother had short hair and wore trousers, putting on saris only for special occasions. His father kept a liquor cabinet and liked a gin and tonic before his meals. They both came from wealthy families, had both summered in hill stations and attended boarding schools in India themselves. The relative affluence of America never impressed them; in many ways they had lived more privileged lives in India, but they left the country and had not looked back.”

Accordingly, the Sarkars are different from the Indians who immigrate in order to improve their economic condition. They are ever travelling
characters, feeling at home everywhere. They are constantly on the move and exemplify the global transnationalism. After four years’ stay at Delhi, Amit’s parents return to America and settle in Houston for five years. Again they move to Lausanne, Switzerland. They live in Saudi Arabia at the time of the narration because Amit’s father perfected a laser technique to correct astigmatism and he received a good offer. He is an ophthalmologist with a great reputation.

‘Once in a Lifetime’ initiates with a flashback of the year 1974 when Hema is a six-year old girl and Kaushik is a boy of nine years. The first memory she has of his presence in her life takes the readers back to that year when her parents planned a farewell party for his parents

“had decided to leave Cambridge, not for Atlanta or Arizona, as some other Bengalis had, but to move all the way back to India, abandoning the struggle that my parents and their friends had embarked upon.”

This shows how place-specific their struggle is for identity. Indian class differences in America are not so relevant as compared to India. Kaushik’s mother and Hema’s mother come from extremely different backgrounds. Kaushik’s mother left behind a beautiful home in Jodhpur Park, with hibiscus and rosebushes blooming on the rooftop, whereas Hema’s mother’s lived in a modest three-room flat in Maniktala, above a grimy Punjabi restaurant, with seven other people. But in America, they buy groceries and cook together. ‘Year’s End’, narrated by Kaushik, brings forth the characters of Chitra, his step mother and her daughters, Rupa and Piu from her former husband. Coming of Chitra and her daughters to the family marks the coming of India which Kaushik minutely observes. Chitra gradually takes over the American house with the smell of food which Kaushik’s sophisticated mother had failed. A few weeks before Kaushik’s graduation, his father calls to tell him he is going to sell the house and shift with his new family to a commonplace residence in a less secluded suburb of Boston. In addition, there are other Bengalis living nearby and an Indian grocery, the things that are more significant to Chitra than the closeness of the sea and the Modernist architecture Kaushik’s mother had liked.

‘Going Ashore’ is set in Rome. In the autumn of 2004, Hema gets a grant which enables her to travel to Rome and stay in a colleague’s
apartment for two months before she goes to Calcutta in December. She notices

“Certain elements of Rome reminded her of Calcutta: the grand weathered buildings, the palm trees, the impossibility of crossing the main streets. Like Calcutta ... Rome was a city she knew on the one hand intimately and on the other hand not at all—a place that fully absorbed her and also kept her at bay.”

She is going to get married to Navin whose parents are Hindu-Punjabis living in Calcutta. He came to America for his PhD. He now teaches physics at Michigan State and will shortly move to MIT to start with Hema in Massachusetts after the marriage. Kaushik is a transnational fellow who does not wish to set up a permanent household at a single place. He does not care about the houses he lives in, does not feel about the houses and is reluctant to be emotionally attached to a geographical place.

The Lowland moves around the two locales, the lowland and Rhode Island. During its setting in the lowland, Lahiri brings the simple, majestic, polite, typical social middle-class family life to the front. The lowland is the place where the two brothers learn to live and know life. Lahiri gradually creates for readers an atmosphere which binds them to read further and further and moves from simple to complex circumstances taking place in which Udayan Mitra gets involved in the Naxalite Movement uprising at that moment and is killed by police. This creates a dilemma for newly wed Gauri who is pregnant at the time of Udayan’s death. Gauri is regarded blameful for Udayan’s death by his parents which makes it difficult for her to pass rest of life in such difficult situation. Subhash understanding his responsibility to his brother and seeing Gauri’s miserable plight, takes her to America. Then the locale moves to America and the readers have typical Lahirian diasporic characters. The novel starts and ends in India. Tollygunge is a poor neighbourhood with lower middle class Indian families in small houses as contrasted to the exclusive Tolly Club. The Club has also a swimming pool, a tennis court, stables as well as a billiard bridge rooms. The club is restricted only to wealthy British-educated Indians and visiting foreigners. Udayan and Subhash often jump the walls of the Tolly Club to explore the inside place. The flora and fauna of the two pondsattached to
the lowland interest Subhash to study them while the Naxalite Movement charms Udayan.

As its title suggests the lowland is very important. The very opening words of the novel describes the area around the lowland where the lives of the two brothers take their form and move the journey ahead.

“East of the Tolly Club, after Deshapran Sashmal Road splits in two, there is a small mosque. A turn leads to a quiet enclave. A warren of narrow lanes and modest middle-class homes. Once, within this enclave, there were two ponds, oblong, side by side. Behind them was a lowland spanning a few acres.”

The two brothers, Subhash and Udayan are comparable to the two ponds. The two ponds are not divisible in monsoon. They are inseparable for a certain span of time of a year. Thus, the two brothers are inseparable in certain respects from each another. This indivisibility is observed by Gauri who married Udayan but after his death, passes rest of her life with Subhash. It seems reading first chapters that Jhumpa Lahiri has diverted from her themes in her earlier works. Because the first few chapters are dedicated to the two brothers’ childhood, the rise of the Naxalite Movement in India, Udayan’s active engagement in it and Udayan’s death. Set in Calcutta, these chapters deliver different religious rites, beliefs, social customs, etc. Then one has the typical diasporic characters. Subhash, Gauri and Bela face various diasporic experiences. The house they reside is American,

“The main doors were almost always left open, held in place by large rocks. The locks on the apartment doors were flimsy, little buttons on knobs instead of padlocks and bolts. But she was in a place where no one was afraid to walk about, where drunken students stumbled laughing down a hill, back to their dormitories at all hours of the night. At the top of the hill was the campus police station. But there were no curfews or lockdowns. Students came and went and did as they pleased.”

Jhumpa Lahiri intends to compare and contrast situation in India and America in giving the description of their home in Boston and surround area.

Lahiri imparts authenticity of locale by mingling the historical events in her works. ‘When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine’ is woven around the India-Pakistan war and formation of Bangladesh. There is the mention of America’s scientific achievement of first stepping on moon. The most
important is the novel *The Lowland* in this regard. The Naxalite Movement forms the future of Mitra family. Half of the novel is woven around it.

Locale of Lahiri’s works frequently move to India, America, France and Italy. Particularly *The Namesake* and *The Lowland* though basically set in America, witness the frequent physical and imaginative visits to India. Gogol and Moushami make a visit to France to take part in a conference. The third part of ‘Hema and Kaushik’ is set in Rome.

Language and locale are interrelated. Nation is a specific locale and narration of nation is done through language. Bhabha restates this thought to emphasize the connection between nation and narration. According to Homi K. Bhabha, nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind’s eye. For the authentic narration of a nation, language is essential. Second important thing is that nations get themselves narrated also in imagination through myths, legends, customs, festivals, etc. Just as Subramani, an Indo-Fijian writer in his *After Narrative* views that reality is not recreation of reality and fiction is not recreation of fiction wholly, any narrative piece, though primarily called reality or fiction, contains both reality and fiction in it. In the same way, it is also important to remember that the fiction of imagined things is not wholly imaginary or unreal. Therefore, an imagined community is simultaneously real as well as imaginary. What makes it possible for one to feel an imagined community as real is through language.

Charles Taylor gives the concept of ‘Politics of Recognition’. Language and place are used for recognition. They both function for recognition as culture does. To give a specific locale, a specific language is needed. The linguistic skills of the writer are used to locate the novel: location is carried out in the language itself. The historical and cultural milieu in which the text is thus positioned to make the reader to be able to interpret the text completely, as in any translation. In ‘Choice of Accommodations’ Amit’s identity was recognized by his accent and place of origin:

“At Langford, Amit was the only Indian student, and people always assumed that he’d been born and raised in that country and not in Massachusetts. They complimented him on his accent, always telling him how good his English was.”

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And in ‘A Real Durwan’ people are convinced through Boori Ma’s accent that she is one of the refugees from Bangladesh.

In short, what Sandhya Shukla talks of, is of prime importance. In the introductory chapter of *India Abroad* she discusses of a photograph printed on the cover page of *National Geographic* of August, 1999 issue. The photograph was titled ‘Global Culture’. She writes that though the woman in the photograph were apparently ‘Indian’, the picture’s significance was described by the magazine’s editors in more global terms: ‘Goods move. People move. Ideas move. And cultures change.’ The movement is not just an ordinary fact of life but it is very crucial in the history of cultures. When one moves from one place to another, the movement is not just physical but ideas move and when ideas move, cultures change. This gives birth to multiculturalism. The past place is always present in the present. Sandhya Shukla writes,

“The term diaspora also conveys an affective experience in a world of nations, through its proposition of global belonging as a means of self and group representation. Yet neither globality nor diaspora should be interpreted to mean the absence of location.”

Therefore, discussion of Indianness and multiculturalism is partial if it is done without mentioning location. Language is also of similar importance.
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