I

INTRODUCTION

Literature being a purposive reflection of the world is the crucial constituent of human activity. It serves as a permanent as well as original medium of expression, through language, of a people, their culture, society, morality, customs and traditions. In literature, something is constructed which is composite of both real and imagined world. The recent 'Indian English Literature' commonly defined as the literature written in the English language by those connected to India whether by birth or inheritance, an international phenomenon is claiming the distinctiveness of what is called 'Indian'. The writers particularly living abroad successfully presented this distinctiveness in English in a unique way. This distinctiveness is in terms of theme, language, style of writing, imagery and source of inspiration.

Indian English Literature designates an entity of works written in English language by those whether writing from India or abroad, about India or directly or indirectly having genesis in India. This entity is in the same relation to Indian literature as literature in other languages such as Hindi, Gujarati, Sanskrit, Marathi, Bengali, etc. for several reasons. One advantage that Indian English literature bears in comparison to literature in other languages is that it has wider audience across the world. It is the concerted endeavour of presenting India at the world level. One of the recent and successful examples of the representation of the commonly shared sensibility is Jhumpa Lahiri with whose works the present thesis is concerned. Before moving to critical assessment of her works with respect to Indianess and multiculturalism, they need to be introduced.

Jhumpa Lahiri’s Life:-

Jhumpa Lahiri was born on July 11, 1967 in London. Amar Lahiri, her father, migrated from Calcutta, West Bengal, India. He worked as a librarian at the London School of Economics. He got a job at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and then moved to the University of Rhode Island in 1970 where he is now a professor-librarian. Her mother, Tapati, was a teacher by profession. She wanted to raise Jhumpa as an Indian and make familiar
with Indian ways of life and Indian culture. Known by her nickname, Jhumpa’s good name is Nilanjana Sudeshna Lahiri. But the pet name ‘Jhumpa’ seemed the most appropriate to her kindergarten teachers as a substitute of her good name. She enthusiastically contributed in the school newspaper. She even tried her hand at ten pages novels during school years. She got the degree of B.A. in English from Bernard Women’s College, New York in 1989. She obtained three master degrees in English, Comparative Writing and Creative Writing from University of Boston and received Ph. D. in Renaissance Studies in 1997. She engaged herself during 1997 and 1998 in Province Town Fellowship at Fine Arts Work Center, a recognized centre for arts that works for encouragement and bringing out hidden talent in new comers in literature and other arts.

In 2001, she got married to Alberto Vourvoulos-Bush, a Guatemalan, American journalist. He was then the Deputy Editor of TIME Latin America and is presently a Senior Editor of Fox News Latino. She worked in a bookshop and was engaged for short time in teaching Creative Writing at University of Boston and Rhode Island School of Design. She also worked for Boston magazine as an intern. She is currently living in Fort Green, Brooklyn, New York with her husband and two children, Octavio born in 2002 and Noor born in 2005. Lahiri has also had a distinguished relationship with The New Yorker magazine in which she has published a number of her short stories. Since 2005, Lahiri has been a Vice President of the PEN American Center, an institute designed for writers to encourage acquaintance and scholarly collaboration. In February 2010, she was selected as a member of the Committee on the Arts and Humanities. She grew up knowing Bengali heritage and visited relatives in Calcutta several times. She has strong ties to her homeland which are obviously perceptible in her works.

**Jhumpa Lahiri’s Literary Career:-**

What strikes us at the first reading of Lahiri’s oeuvre is her plain and smooth language and her autobiographical characters who are often Indian immigrants to America puzzled between the cultural values of their motherland and their adopted home. Lahiri’s works reveal the immigrants’ experiences in positive as well as negative light. The transition to a new life
in a culturally alien country is challenging. “Everything is there” in India is sometimes everything is missing. Marital life is also expressed in complicated terms. Marriage instead of being an occasion of uniting two persons is a home of secrets, silences, mysteries, separation, loneliness and strangeness. Observing old traditions and customs on one hand and on other, acquiring new traditions play a vital part in identity formation for one. This process of assimilation sets the immigrants at the dilemma whether to accept the new one at the expense of forgetting the bonding force. The thesis deals with following fictional works of Jhumpa Lahiri.

1. **Interpreter of Maladies:**

   Early short stories of Lahiri had to confront denial from publishers. After the publication of her debut short story collection, *Interpreter of Maladies* in 1999, she got enormous reputation. *Interpreter of Maladies* sold 600,000 copies. It made her win the prestigious Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2000. It is the collection of nine short stories that established Jhumpa Lahiri as one of the Indian writers in English gaining praise globally. The stories are expressive of profound dilemmas in the lives of Indian immigrants, with themes such as breakdown of communication, marital complications, language barriers, culture clashes and the disconnection between first and second generation United States immigrants. The book is also the winner of O. Henry Award for Short Story, PEN/Hemingway Award and the New Yorker’s Best Debut of the Year and Addison Metcalf award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Some of the stories have appeared in different magazines such as *The New Yorker*. Human relationships, Lahiri weaves, are full of struggles, conflicts and dilemmas.

**A Temporary Matter**

In ‘A Temporary Matter’, the couple, Shukumar and Shoba, is reported that the electricity will be unobtainable at 8:00 p.m. for five days. The electrical outage forces the married couple to confront their unexpressed secrets. They are unaware about each other’s pains because their life in America has led them to estrangement and has largely contributed to increase their emotional distance. Shoba is reminded of her past life in India that her family at the time of outages would share jokes and poems. But in
America, the darkness seems to them to be a safe space for the confession of their secrets. It is Shoba’s suggestion that they tell each other their secrets in the dark. Firstly, she confesses that when they began dating, she looked for her name in his phone book the first time she went to his apartment. During the period of the five days, they can manage to unlock their enigmas. On the third night, they kiss and on the fourth night, they make love as an attempt to eliminate their estrangement. The next day, they receive a notice that the power line has been repaired. Even after the repair, Shoba suggests to light candles and share their secrets. Shukumar tells Shoba that he forgot to tip the waiter on their first date. In the end, Shoba admits she is moving out and Shukumar admits to holding his son after he died. The lack of communication within a marriage is a prevalent theme in the story. To share secrets they seek shelter of darkness. Shukumar has negative thoughts on what Shoba would share.

“He wondered what Shoba would tell him in the dark. The worst possibilities had already run through his head. That she’d had an affair. That she didn’t respect him for being thirty-five and still a student. That she blamed him for being in Baltimore the way her mother did. But he knew those things weren’t true. But he knew those things weren’t true.”

The death of their child carries them even more remote both physically and emotionally. The darkness stands for ignorance.

‘In When Mr. Pirzada Comes to Dine’:-

‘In When Mr. Pirzada Comes to Dine’, a young Indian-American girl Lilia meets a Pakistani man Mr. Pirzada from Dacca, formerly a part of Pakistan. Her family invites Mr. Pirzada to dinner each night. He is very worried about his wife and daughters because he has not heard anything from them for the last six months so he watches the news of the Indo-Pakistan War.

Lilia’s age is 10 years. She is living with her parents near a university, north of Boston. Her parents are originally from India and now miss their homeland and seek out names similar to their own in the university directory. This is how they found Mr. Pirzada whom Lilia calls “the Indian man,” but her father explains that he is no longer Indian; though he is Bengali, he is also a Muslim. In 1947, after gaining independence from England, the country was sliced in two parts. This partition put Hindus in
India and Muslims in Pakistan. Lilia’s father tells her that during Partition, violence broke out between Muslims and Hindus in India and Pakistan. Lilia can’t understand this. Mr. Pirzada speaks the same language as her parents; they tell the same jokes and eat the same food. The Indian war with Pakistan in 1971 endangers Mr. Pirzada’s daughters. Witnessing his love and fears, Lilia gains a new awareness of a world larger than her own. This is reflected in the following words,

“To celebrate the good news my mother prepared a special dinner that evening, and when we sat down to eat at the coffee table we toasted our water glasses, but I did not feel like celebrating. Though I had not seen him for months, it was only then that I felt Mr. Pirzada’s absence. It was only then, raising my water glass in his name, that I knew what it meant to miss someone who was so many miles and hours away, just as he had missed his wife and daughters for so many months.”

Lilia’s reaction to Mr. Pirzada is Lahiri’s critique of the clash between the two religions. She is unable to see any real difference between Mr. Pirzada and her parents.

**Interpreter of Maladies:**

Winner of O. Henry Award in 1999, the title story of the collection, ‘Interpreter of Maladies’ is the revelation of the marital relations of the couple, Mr. and Mrs. Das and acknowledgement of secrets of marriage to a third person. They are the residents of America and have come to India to visit the Sun Temple at Konarak with their children Ronny and Bobby. They are dressed like foreigners. Mr. Kapasi, their guide is 46 years old and wears a suit.

They visit different places. Meanwhile Mr. Kapasi observes them. Then Mr. Kapasi talks about his profession as a guide and asserts that he works also in a doctor's office as an interpreter, translating Gujarati language spoken by the patients. Mr. Kapasi gives an example of his work that once the doctor cured on Kapasi’s description a man with pain in his throat. Mr. and Mrs. Das regard the job full of accountability. Mrs. Das considers the job romantic and was impressed by him. A new relation begins to coming into existence between Mrs. Das and Mr. Kapasi from the rear view mirror.

By the time, they arrive at the sun temple. They appreciate the place very much. It is like a pyramid carved in the shape of chariot sitting within a dry river. But Mr. Kapasi is interested in Mrs. Das because she is the first
person taking interest in him. He inquires when they would return to America and consults the days it will take for the arrival of the first letter from Mrs. Das. She thinks that the secondary job of Mr. Kapasi can be beneficial to her to cure her feelings and starts disclosing that Bobby is not son of Mr. Das. She kept the secret for eight years. After the marriage, she happened to be at the home all the time and a visiting friend of Mr. Das was the father of the son. She tells all these to Mr. Kapasi in order to seek diagnosis to the pain she had carried for the long eight years and to be comfortable from her hurting feelings. She says to Mr. Kapasi,

“It means that I'm tired of feeling so terrible all the time. Eight years, Mr. Kapasi, I've been in pain eight years. I was hoping you could help me feel better, say the right thing. Suggest some kind of remedy.”

She does not share the secret to her friends or anybody.

A Real Durwan:-

In ‘A Real Durwan’, the dwellers of an apartment building cast out their old caretaker Boori Ma. Boori Ma, a 64 years old woman, is the doorkeeper to an apartment in Calcutta. She talks of the sufferings she had to endure due to partition of India. Each residents of the building has a different interpretation of her tales. Mrs. Dalal of the third floor cannot comprehend how a landowner ends up sweeping the stairs. She keeps the building spotless and turns away any suspicious person. Mrs. Dalal has soft feelings for Boori Ma. Boori Ma is free to wander in the building and outside and is offered tea and biscuits. Mrs. Dalal installs a basin in her home and another in the lobby for all of her neighbours for use. So the residents of the building are overstocked in bitterness.

Mr. Dalal takes Mrs. Dalal her away for ten days and Mrs. Dalal convinces Boori Ma that she has not forgotten her promise of renewed bedding. While the Dalals are gone, the other wives plan renovation. Boori Ma is unable to sweep so she keeps to her roof, keeping an eye on her dwindling set of newspapers and wondering when she had her last glass of tea. When she grows impatient of the roof, she wanders around the town spending her life’s savings on pleasures. She feels a wrench at the end of her sari and finds her purse and skeleton keys lost. When she returns to the building, she finds that the basin has been torn out of the wall. The residents
denunciate Boori Ma for the theft and she told the robbers about the new basin. On seeking the advice of Mr. Chatterjee, it is asserted that the building needs a real Durwan for the safety and Boori Ma is turned out of the building.

Partition brings suffering to Boori Ma. In the exile of Hindus from Muslim lands and vice versa, millions of people were left homeless. The basin becomes a symbol of both wealth and resentment. The skeleton keys are the symbol and remembrances of her past life and an amulet of her strength. When they are stolen, she is thrown out shortly thereafter.

**Sexy:-**

‘Sexy’ is a story that is centred on gender and race and the confusion they can inspire. ‘Sexy’ pays attention to an affair between aimless young Miranda and a married Indian, Dev. The heroine of the story, Miranda, is working for a public radio station in Boston. Her colleague, Laxmi who is already present there, alerts Miranda to a personal calamity in future. Miranda is absorbed in her phone-call with her married lover Dev. Laxmi’s nephew is a part Bengali. At first, Miranda thought that Bengali was a religion but Dev showed the West Bengal state on the map of India. Dev and Miranda met a week before in a department store. When they first meet, Dev remarks that part of her name is Indian (“Mira”) and she is fascinated by this and it seems exotic to her. As she paused to have fragrance of a card, she watched Dev, a sophisticated man. She came to know that he purchased the things for his wife who is going to India. They are now having space enough to meet at Miranda’s home and to confess about their alienation. For Miranda, Dev is thoughtful and romantic. She says “Hi.” He replies, “You are sexy.” On hearing this she goes to a store to buy clothes a mistress should have. But when his wife returns, he meets her in gym clothes so that she may not be doubtful about the affair. Dev feels more at home with Miranda than with his own wife and asks Miranda about her life. She liked Dev because

> “Unlike the boys she dated in college, who were simply taller, heavier versions of the ones she dated in high school, Dev was the first always to pay for things, and hold doors open, and reach across a table in a restaurant to kiss her hand. He was the first to bring her a bouquet of flowers so immense she’d had to split
it up into all six of her drinking glasses, and the first to whisper her name again and again when they made love.”

When away from Dev, she treads to an Indian restaurant and tries to remember Hindi phrases from the bottom of the menu. She even tries to learn how to write her name in Bengali. She asks him what his wife looks like and he responds that she looks like a Bollywood actress, Madhuri Dixit. Miranda buys a video CD to see how Madhuri Dixit looks like. While she changes, eyes of Rohin, son of Laxmi’s cousin, are open. Rohin tells her that she is looking sexy. Miranda asks him what it means. The boy confesses that it means loving someone whom you do not know. His father had sat down next to someone sexy on a plane and now loves her instead of his mother. Thinking about her own situation, she begins to cry. At last she happens to know that the future she will have with the Indian Dev is similar to that of Rohin’s mother. As Rohin’s father is having an affair with a woman other than his wife, Dev is also courting with a woman who is not his wife. The seven-year-old boy, Rohin acts as a catalyst for Miranda to realize that her relationship with the married Dev is neither appropriate nor beneficial to her. After thinking about the boy’s words, Miranda understands the significance of the loyalty.

Mrs. Sen’s:-

Mrs. Sen’s, the central character of the story, is the home where Eliot spends his afternoons under her care. Mrs. Sen has immigrated to America from Calcutta in recent times and is not adjusting herself very well. She misses everything about her home. Eliot’s mother insists on sending Eliot to Mrs. Sen’s house because she wants an adult for the supervision. Mr. Sen is a mathematics professor. Mrs. Sen assures that she will be able to drive by December. Mrs. Sen replies that she is very slow in learning driving and that she had a chauffeur at home. Eliot’s mother asks if she means India for ‘home’ and the word alone releases emotion in Mrs. Sen. She says, “Everything is there.” Mrs. Sen does not allow Eliot to go to the kitchen. She tells him that there is a knife in every household. Eliot does not like his home. He understands that for Mrs. Sen, ‘home’ means India and not the house they are presently in. He asks her about the vermilion powder used to create a red part in her hair. She replies that it is a wedding ring but the
one that will not get lost in the dishwater. For Indians, marriage is not something that can flow in water and be forgotten but a bond of souls that cannot be easily alienated. Eliot’s mother refuses to take snack offered by Mrs. Sen. So she excuses for that. At home, his mother pours glasses of wine and eats bread and cheese.

There are two things with which Mrs. Sen is thrilled. They are a letter from her family and fish from the seaside. When a letter arrives, she calls her husband and reads the contents word for word. The letters make her restless and she takes Eliot for a walk around the campus. She laments the birth of her sister’s child as the girl will not see her aunt for at least three. Taking Eliot to the market one day, she gets into a car accident. Though unharmed, Eliot is removed from her home. Both Mrs. Sen and Eliot are narrowed in lives they cannot understand and do not want.

The advancement in the process of integration is very problematic for Mrs. Sen. Mrs. Sen finds it unmanageable to integrate into her new country. Her refusal to learn how to drive is the culmination of her distress. Her frustration is voiced loudly only to Eliot, who is dealing with his own distress. Absence of communication is employed once again in ‘Mrs. Sen’s’ to create a sense of tragedy.

This Blessed House:-

This Blessed House’ is about the home shared by newly wedded couple, Sanjeev and Twinkle. Married after only four months of courtship, their moving is spoiled by growing pains. They find Christian icons everywhere. The first is the porcelain figurine of Christ. Sanjeev tells her to throw away since they are not Christian. Twinkle finds more items and places them on the mantle. Sanjeev does not understand why she is more attracted by the snow globes, statues and 3D postcards. Twinkle’s cheerful fascination with the Christian iconography left behind by previous tenants displeases Sanjeev.

“He studied the items on the mantel. It puzzled him that each was in its own way so silly. Clearly they lacked a sense of sacredness. He was further puzzled that Twinkle, who normally displayed good taste, was so charmed. These objects meant something to Twinkle, but they meant nothing to him. They irritated him.”

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He considers that she is juvenile and gratified in a way that he cannot comprehend. The bread basket is covered with a cloth having Christ’s image on it. Twinkle calms Sanjeev by explaining that the house is blessed. Sanjeev marvels at her behaviour. Nicknamed after a nursery rhyme, she has to give up her childlike flattery.

Sanjeev is left with unresolved doubts of whether or not they love each other. At the housewarming party, Twinkle avoids to remove the objects. While everyone is on the upper floor, Sanjeev imagines removing the ladder and having the house to himself. He thinks of sweeping the figurines of the mantle. Twinkle finds an enormous silver bust of Jesus. She insists on putting it on the mantle for the night but he hates it only for she loves it very much.

‘This Blessed House’ is another investigation into love and marriage and the effects of communication. Both of them fail to understand each other well and to live according to each other’s expectations. Twinkle’s fascination of religious Christian icons shows that she has survived with the new culture magnificently and has readily accepted it.

**The Treatment of Bibi Haldar:**

The Treatment of Bibi Haldar’ is told from the point of view of the women of Bibi’s village. Bibi Haldar is 29 years old. Bibi is obsessed by an inexplicable disorder. Various experiments and treatments have failed to cure her. The spasms that could strike at any moment keep her confined to the home of her indifferent elder cousin and his wife. She is provided only meals and a room. She wonders why she is ordained to this unpleasant fate, alone and envious of the wives and mothers around her in the village. Bibi Haldar is isolated because of her illness. She is unable to communicate her needs to those around her because she is marginalized by society. For the treatment of the strange sickness it is prescribed that marriage is the only remedy. Women come to the conclusion that she requires a man. When she is shown the things of wedding, she imagines how her own wedding will look like. When told about the remedy, she is charmed and begins planning of her marriage physically and mentally. Wearing a sari, she wants to be photographed for the circulation among the bachelors.
When Haldar’s wife is pregnant, Bibi is kept away from her so that the child may not get infection so she is exiled for the safety of the unborn baby. After the birth of a girl child, she is granted permission for the direct contact. Bibi is accused for the illness of the child. Haldar family leaves the village and Bibi to the care of the villagers. In spring Bibi vomits and it is discovered that Bibi is pregnant. Bibi keeps the secret of what happened to her and the women help teach her how to raise a child. Bibi is cured. The child of Haldar results into the exile of Bibi and Bibi’s child becomes the remedy for Bibi.

**The Third and Final Continent:**

"The Third and Final Continent" was selected in 2000 as one of *Best American Short Stories*. It narrates how the narrator balances a new job, a new wife and a new country during the first six weeks of his life in America in 1969. The writer here provides the positive account of the process of assimilation and immigrant experience. The narrator gets job in library at MIT. At the same time, his marriage is organized in Calcutta. After marriage he returns and lives while awaiting his wife's green card in the spare room of a 103-year-old woman Mrs. Croft who is struck by his kindness. This is the first house without Indians he lived in. The narrator familiarizes with his new life, appreciating Cambridge.

The narrator prepares for his wife’s arrival. He receives her at the airport and speaks in Bengali for the first time in America. It takes time for him to get used to having someone there anticipating his needs. They are like strangers. Mala and the narrator go on sightseeing Boston with fellow Bengalis. Mala consoles him when Mrs. Croft has died. She is the first person for whom the narrator mourns in America. The narrator comes to know that he is not the first person to seek prosperity in another country. But he still marvels at the distance traveled.

Here, in spite of being strangers the narrator and his wife, Mala try to cope with the new life in the new country. Mala saddens after marriage when she leaves her home which is only five miles away, but when she is very far from her country in America, she readily accepts the destiny without getting confused and endeavours to be happy.

**2. The Namesake:**
In 2003, Lahiri published *The Namesake*, her first novel. The story spans over thirty years in the life of the Ganguli family whose roots are in Bengal. The Calcutta-born parents immigrated as young adults to the United States, where their children, Gogol and Sonia, grow up experiencing the constant generational and cultural gap with their parents. As the title of the novel suggests, the central figure, Gogol is torn in the triple existences: his name strikes that he is Russian; he is Indian from his family roots and he is American because he and his family are presently in America as the novelist writes,

“Not only does Gogol Ganguli have a pet name turned good name, but a last name turned first name. And so it occurs to him that no one he knows in the world, in Russia or India or America or anywhere, shares his name. Not even the source of his namesake.”

Gogol comforts himself by changing and announcing his name on different occasions as Gogol or Nikhil whichever gives him external relief from internal conflict. He wants to be recognized as Indian whenever his Indian identity provides him contentment. Such is the case with his American and Russian identity. Her treatment of symbolism with Indian food, language, travels and names intensifies what Lahiri wants to convey to the readers. A film adaptation of *The Namesake* was released in March 2007, directed by Mira Nair and starring Kal Penn as Gogol and Bollywood stars Tabbu and Irfan Khan as his parents.

The novel is written in the third person narrative. The novel opens with August 1968 when Ashima and Ashok are residing in an apartment in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Ashima is admitted in hospital to give birth to a child. As Ashima talks to the nurse in hospital, Ashima says that it is not the type of thing Bengali wives do. They do not take their husband’s name. It makes obvious that the lack of communication and sense of alienation are often distressing. The experience she has in foreign land is often troubling for Ashima:

“It’s the consequence: motherhood in a foreign land. For it was one thing to be pregnant, to suffer the queasy mornings in bed, the sleepless nights, the dull throbbing in her back, the countless visits to the bathroom. Throughout the experience, in spite of her growing discomfort, she’d been astonished by her body’s ability to make life, exactly as her mother and grandmother and all her great-grandmothers had done. That it
was happening so far from home, unmonitored and unobserved by those she loved, had made it more miraculous still. But she is terrified to raise a child in a country where she is related to no one, where she knows so little, where life seems so tentative and spare.”

Ashima goes in flashback when she is reminded of how she met Ashoke and happened to be in Massachusetts presently. Now in 1961 while Ashoke was going in train from Calcutta to Jamshedpur to meet his grandfather, he met with an accident. He thought that it was ‘The Overcoat’ a story by Nikolai Gogol, saved him because the rescue workers found Ashoke because of the book page. In the train, a person, named Ghose advised Ashoke to travel the world. Ashoke came out of the train accident and applied for engineering at MIT. From the point of view of plot, the first chapter forms the base of the novel. Language barrier is prevalent in the first chapter.

In the beginning of the second chapter, Ashima and Ashoke are blessed with a son at 5:05 in the morning. In the hospital, they are told that they would not be allowed to leave the hospital without naming the child. Ashima waited for her Grandmother’s letter because there is a tradition among Bengalis that a child is named by a respected elder. This tradition is the mark of Indianness which Indian – Americans try to preserve. The name for Ashoke and Ashima is much more than something used on a birth certificate. They are symbolic of love.

“In Bengali the word for pet name is daknam, meaning, literally, the name by which one is called, by friends, family, and other intimates, at home and in other private, unguarded moments. Pet names are a persistent remnant of childhood, a reminder that life is not always so serious, so formal, so complicated. They are a reminder, too, that one is not all things to all people. They all have pet names. Ashima’s pet name is Monu, Ashoke’s is Mithu, and even as adults, these are the names by which they are known in their respective families, the names by which they are adored and scolded and missed and loved.”

Ashoke gave the name ‘Gogol’ to the child from the Russian author, Nikolai Gogol whose book saved him from the mortal accident. The Russian author, Nikolai Gogol serves as the namesake of Ashoke’s son. They will officially use the name till the letter from India comes. The name ‘Gogol’ plays an important part in the life of the child for formation of his identity as it suggests triple identities at the same time, American, Indian and
Russian. When Gogol is six months old, Ashima and Ashoke held a rice ceremony called *annaprasan* in Bengali. He is offered some dirt, a dollar bill and a ballpoint pen. Whichever item he chooses is meant to indicate his future. But finally he does not choose any one of them. The theme of alienation runs throughout the chapter. Ashima does not want to raise Gogol in a country where she is related to no one, where she knows so little, where life seems so faltering. While giving birth to the child, her husband is not even with her. On receiving the news of the death of Ashima’s father of a heart attack, they make a travel to Calcutta.

The third chapter begins in 1971 when Gangulis move from Harvard Square to a university town outside Boston. Ashoke gets the job as assistant professor of electrical engineering. Gogol is admitted in kindergarten. Ashoke and Ashima want to keep Nikhil as the formal name for school and ‘Gogol’ to be used at home. But the complication regarding names confused Gogol who does not receive his new name ‘Nikhil’ and intends to be called as ‘Gogol’. Here Gogol is struggling with his identity. The time of second pregnancy brings more difficulties in the life of Ashima who spends most of her time in the bedroom. Ashima gives birth to a girl who is named Sonia. Like Gogol, Sonia’s annaprasan ceremony is performed but unlike Gogol, Sonia chooses the money and the dirt. Ashoke and Ashima came to know about their parents’ death through telephone. Gradually, they began to merge with the Americans culturally. They celebrate Christmas along with maintaining Bengali traditions.

“For the sake of Gogol and Sonia they celebrate, with progressively increasing fanfare, the birth of Christ, an event the children look forward to far more than the worship of Durga and Saraswati. During pujos, scheduled for convenience on two Saturdays a year, Gogol and Sonia are dragged off to a high school or a Knights of Columbus hall overtaken by Bengalis, where they are required to throw marigold petals at a cardboard effigy of a goddess and eat bland vegetarian food.”

Ashoke looks like an American while Ashima continues to wear Sari.

The fourth chapter is set in 1982. Gogol celebrates his fourteenth birthday. At the party, thrown by his parents, Gogol meets Moushumi. On the night that day, Ashoke presented Gogol for his birthday *The Short Stories by Nikolai Gogol*. But Gogol does not worry about reading his namesake’s stories. Ashoke explains to Gogol about how the train accident years ago
saved his life and made him appreciate the author Nikolai Gogol. But Gogol finds it boring and confused with his identity.

Gangulis visit Calcutta for eight months. They visit Delhi and the Taj Mahal. Gogol is impressed by the architecture. When Gogol begins in high school, Mr. Lawson, his English teacher, reads the short story 'The Overcoat'. Gogol comes to know that the author, Nikolai Gogol had to lead miserable life and had dreadful death. When Gogol is alone, he goes to a party where he introduces himself as ‘Nikhil’ to a girl named Kim and becomes braver and more courageous to kiss her. Gogol when asked the name to be called in kindergarten was willing to be called as ‘Gogol’ but after knowing about his namesake’s life and death, he feels comfortable to be called as ‘Nikhil’. This makes clear that as he becomes mature, he becomes more conscious about identity formation.

In the fifth chapter, Gogol goes to the Middlesex Probate and Family Court in summer of 1986 and changes his name legally to ‘Nikhil’. His parents’ reaction is also complicated. His father says “In America anything is possible. Do as you wish.” Gogol goes to Yale where he prefers to be called as ‘Nikhil’ and takes care that the official paperwork at the university mirrors his new name. During weekends, he visits his parents. Once, while travelling in train to his parents’ house for Thanksgiving, he meets a girl named Ruth with whom he begins to date after Thanksgiving. While Ruth is in England, Gogol goes to a panel at Yale about Indian novel in English. It makes him think about the fact that he is not able to understand his parents’ language. On the next Thanksgiving Gogol’s train is late. His father comes to the station worrying that there had been a similar accident to that of his. Now the time comes for Ashoke to tell Gogol about the train accident in which he was almost dead and the origin of Gogol’s name. Culture clash is quite obvious in this chapter. In America everything is possible while in India to change a name is not so easy. Ashoke’s statement reveals that his son is American.

The sixth chapter starts with 1994 when Gogol is living in a small apartment in New York working as an architect, after getting graduate degree in architecture. He meets a woman named Maxine Ratcliff at a party. They flirt all night and the next day. She invites him to dinner at her house.
Her parents’ interaction seemed causal to Gogol whose parents’ behaviour is totally opposite. Once when Maxine’s parents are out for New Hampshire, Gogol and Maxine have the house to themselves. As Gogol comes close to Maxine, he goes far from his parents. He never visits them or talks to them through phone. While adopting new cultural system, he loses his contact from his parents’ culture. Once Ashima calls Gogol to meet them before his father leaves for Ohio. Ashoke unknowingly calls Gogol by ‘Gogol’ which seems casual to Maxine and by which Maxine was surprised to hear. Alienation brings discomfort to Gogol.

The seventh chapter starts when Ashima is alone in the house. Ashoke visits her every three weeks from Ohio. Ashima passes her time in addressing Christmas cards. One day Ashoke calls Ashima to say that he is in a hospital for stomach ache and he would call back after being checked off. But he never called. Ashima gets the phone number of the hospital and comes to know by an intern that Ashoke has died. When Ashoke died, no member of the family was with him and even he got admitted in the hospital on his own. Sonia gets the news and comes back to Massachusetts from San Francisco, living there with her friend. Gogol receives the news through a phone call from Sonia. Gogol leaving for Massachusetts refuses the Maxine’s offer to come with her. On his grandfather’s death, his father shaved his head, an Indian tradition. Gogol stays at the house and performs the usual religious ceremonies. For ten days many people come to them to sit with them in the mourning. Maxine, who visits Gogol on the eleventh day of his father’s death, again offers Gogol to come with her at New Hampshire. On Gogol’s refusal, their relationship comes to end. Gogol wants to stay with his family. While going back to New York in train, Gogol is reminded of his father who would come to the railway station to see Gogol off.

In chapter-eight Gogol is studying for his registration as a licensed architect. After ending up his affair with Maxine, Gogol comes into contact with a married woman named Bridget who visits Gogol’s apartment frequently only to have sex with him and not for any emotional bonds. But Gogol is critical of their affair since it is Bridget’s disloyalty and betrayal to her husband. Gogol ends this affair because it makes Gogol feel guilty for Bridget’s disloyalty to her husband. Sonia feeling loneliness, spends her
night awake, watching TV. Ashima suggested Gogol to marry a girl of Indian origin named Moushumi Mazoomdar whose parents used to attend parties at Gogol’s house and whom Gogol remembers vaguely. Ashima still emphasizes on an Indian girl with whom they are familiar as her son’s wife. Moushumi is much bent upon American way of life. She tells Gogol that she had a boyfriend named Graham. Even before marriage Moushumi and Gogol have sex. Moushumi confides in Gogol that she never liked any Indian men who courted her. She felt lonely as if she would never meet anyone to marry. She fell in love with Graham and together lived in Manhattan without letting her parents to know about her relationship with Graham. She views marriage as a physical experience unlike a typical Indian woman for whom marriage a holy institution, an occasion of uniting two souls.

In ninth chapter after passing much time in dating, Gogol and Moushumi get married in New Jersey in Indian tradition. Gogol wears his father’s Punjabi top and Moushumi wears a sari. For the reception Gogol changes into a suit and Moushumi into a red Banarasi gown. The preparation with which Moushumi is presenting herself in the wedding with Gogol was for her wedding with Graham. Moushumi is presenting a paper at a conference in Paris and Gogol accompanies her. Moushumi feels like a home in the city while Gogol is feeling desolate.

Gogol feels displaced at the house of Astrid and Donald, Moushumi’s friends with whom she stayed after breaking up with Graham. The sense of Moushumi takes the advice of Astrid and Donald and wants their own relationship like theirs. Astrid is pregnant and the discussion moves to the naming of child. Gogol feels betrayed so he escapes from the conversation because Moushumi satirizes on Gogol’s name.

Mostly centred on Moushumi, the tenth chapter presents Moushumi who has planned a dinner at a hotel recommended by Astrid and Donald. But she feels unhappy throughout the dinner. Her over-faith on Astrid and Donald proves to be a fake feeling when she finds that restaurant is not satisfactory and overpriced. Two days later Moushumi arrives at the university to discover that the secretary, Alice died of an aneurysm. She, while sorting the mail, which is Alice’s work, comes across the resume of Dimitri Desjardins whom she had met in Washington D.C. and with whom
she had gone on date. Moushumi photocopied Dimitri’s resume to get in touch with him. She calls him and has affair with him on Mondays and Wednesday. Gogol is not suspecting about the affair but Moushumi finds it difficult to sleep with Gogol and passes whole nights awake.

In eleventh chapter Gogol is presented as the protagonist who is unknowing of his wife’s affair with Dimitri. Moushumi is away at a conference and Gogol is waiting for her to come on the weekend. The previous weekend was Thanksgiving and they celebrated with Ashima, Sonia and Sonia’s boyfriend, Ben and Moushumi’s parents and brother. Gogol is feeling uncertain that something is not right in the marriage. Gogol buys tickets to go to Venice, Italy together as a gift to Moushumi.

When the chapter-twelve begins before Christmas of the year 2000, Ashima is arranging for the party. This is the first Christmas party since Ashok’s death. She decides that she will spend six months in Calcutta and six months in United States with her children and friends. On one hand, Sonia and Ben are going to be married in Calcutta and on the other hand, Gogol and Moushumi decide to get divorced. Ashima feeling lonely misses her husband and mourns the void. Loneliness for her is horrible as the writer depicts her plight:

“Ashima feels lonely suddenly, horribly, permanently alone, and briefly, turned away from the mirror, she sobs for her husband. She feels overwhelmed by the thought of the move she is about to make, to the city that was once home and is now in its own way foreign. She feels both impatience and indifference for all the days she still must live, for something tells her she will not go quickly as her husband did. For thirty-three years she missed her life in India.”

While waiting for train at the railway station, Gogol considers it strange to have his mother in Calcutta for six months and in America for six months. Gogol finds no one at the railway station to greet him. When accidently Moushumi mentioned Dimitri’s name and Gogol came to know about her affair, his reaction is something of humiliation and the feeling he felt is comparable related to his naming:

“He felt the chill of her secrecy, numbing him, like a poison spreading quickly through his veins. He’d felt this way on only one other occasion, the night he had sat in the car with his father and learned the reason for his name. That night he’d experienced the same bewilderment, was sickened in the same way. But he felt none of the tenderness that he had felt for his
father, only the anger, the humiliation of having been deceived.”

The chapter mostly is an account of Gogol’s reminiscences. He remembers that as a child he insisted on celebrating Christmas like Americans. Then the Christmas party begins. Gogol goes upstairs to bring the camera but he discovers the book presented by his father of which he had not read a single story. He sees the inscription on the book “The man who gave you his name, from the man who gave you your name.” Without going down with the camera, Gogol sits to read “The Overcoat” the story of his namesake Nikolai Gogol to seek identity in triple cornered existence and find solace.

3. Unaccustomed Earth:-

Lahiri’s second collection of short stories, Unaccustomed Earth, was released on April 1, 2008. Upon its publication, Unaccustomed Earth achieved the exceptional distinction of debuting at number 1 on The New York Times best seller list. In 2008 Frank O’Connor International Short Story Award and in 2009 Asian American Literary Award were conferred for ‘Unaccustomed Earth’. Unaccustomed Earth is divided into two parts. The first part consists of five short stories namely “Unaccustomed Earth”, “Hell-Heaven”, “A Choice of Accommodation”, “Only Goodness” and “Nobody’s Business”. The second part entitled “Hema and Kaushik” consists of three interrelated short stories namely “Once in a Lifetime”, “Year’s End” and “Going Ashore”. The title of the collection is taken from “The Custom House” by Nathaniel Hawthorne. It suggests that transplanting of people into a new land makes them sturdier and more prosperous. A person in a new land can improve his condition if he strikes his roots into unaccustomed earth. The two generations of the Bengali immigrants to America portrayed Jhumpa Lahiri struggle for normalcy and secure lives. But Lahiri’s characters are the victims of unexpected passions. The outcome of transplantation is unpredictable.

‘Unaccustomed Earth’:-

It is the story of Ruma, a Bengali Indian girl living in Seattle, West Washington and married to Adam. They have a son named Akash. The story deals mostly with the reflection of Ruma’s thoughts and emotions towards
her father. The story is centred on father–daughter relationship. After the death of Ruma’s mother, she has the responsibility to converse with her father and take care of him. Ruma’s father got retired from a pharmaceutical company. After Ruma’s mother’s death, her father began travelling Europe, visited France, Holland and most recently Italy. While her father was out, he sent letters to Ruma. In his letters, he avoids mentioning of Adam and Akash. Ruma assumed the duty of speaking to her father asking how his day had gone. Ruma complained her father for certain things which her mother also complained. For example, her father does not converse while eating. Her mother complained his reticence.

Her father does not like American food. Ruma also wants Akash to get used to Indian food, but Akash is adversary to Indian food and thus he turns out to be an American child. Akash is a complete synthesis of Ruma and Adam. Ruma’s parents were against her for her decision of marrying Adam an American. Her mother used to say that he would divorce her and finally get an American girl. For Ruma, America is a strange place, as she finds more daunting to look after a child than caring them on her own. Her own life in America is a warning:

“Growing up, her mother’s example—moving to a foreign place for sake of marriage, carrying exclusively for children and a household—had served as a warning, a path to avoid. Yet this was Ruma’s life now.”

Adam views that her father would be able to help her but Ruma does not show any agreement because it is the work of her mother who would take over the kitchen singing songs to Akash and teaching Bengali nursery rhymes.

**Hell-Heaven:**

‘Hell-Heaven’ is concerned about the struggles of living in the United States with Bengali culture and problems of assimilation. The principal characters, Usha and Pranab Chakraborty make decisions that make them choose one culture over the other. The story strengthens that one’s native roots will always be present. Because they are what make the immigrants what and who they are. Usha describes her mother as Indian in the following way:

“My mother was wearing the red and white bangles unique to Bengali married women, and a common Tangail sari, and had a
thick stem of vermillion powder in the center parting of her hair, and the full round face and large dark eyes that are so typical of Bengali women. He noticed the two or three safety pins she wore fastened to the thin gold bangles that were behind the red and white ones, which she would use to replace a missing hook on a blouse or to draw a string through a petticoat at a moment’s notice, a practice he associated strictly with his mother and sisters and aunts in Calcutta.”

The female narrator, Usha makes the reader know how the relation between her mother, Aparna and Pranab Kaku develops. Aparna falls in love with Pranab. Both have many commonalities in terms of politics, music, films and poetry. But Pranab begins to feel affection for an American girl, Deborah and marries her in a totally American way. The marriage is American from the point of view of the guest size, the attire, the location and the food. Aparna and her family were the only Bengalis invited to the wedding. After marriage, the cultural remoteness of Pranab is increasing. He is going to be detached from the Bengalis living nearby. Pranab’s daughters only speak English and Pranab and his family are in little contact with Usha and Boudi. Usha and her mother rarely see them at puja. But the unexpected outcome of the story is that Pranab leaves Deborah for a Bengali woman. The internal ailment of Usha is the same as her mother. She follows her mother’s example. Once her mother attempted suicide for the sake of her love for Pranab. Usha has also the negative thoughts regarding love.

**A Choice of Accommodations:**

‘A Choice of Accommodations’ demonstrates a contradictory relationship between a Bengali-American husband and his workaholic Anglo wife when they are away from their children at the wedding of the husband’s pre-school friend during a weekend. Amit Sarkar met Megan in the medical school. Amit quits the course to become a medical journalist. Megan completed the course. They had two children. Amit had a crush on another girl named Pam during his school days. But he did not disclose it to Megan. This caused a guilty complex in him. Amit Sarkar and Megan go back to Langford Academy where he went to school to see his old friend, Pam gets married. Amit Sarkar attempts to turn an old friend’s wedding into a romantic gateway weekend with his wife, Megan. Opposed to the expectation, the flight happens to take a dark revelation as the party explores deep into the night. While they are getting dressed for the wedding,
Megan realizes that she has a burn on the dress. They plan to attend the party anyway. Amit stands near Megan to keep people from seeing the burn. As they tread through the grounds, Amit notices what has changed about Langford and what has not and remembers his time there. After the ceremony while they are mingling with other people, Megan flirts with one of the Amit’s former classmates with frustration of the married life and he ends up drinking too much. He looks for a pay phone to call their girls. After Pam’s marriage, he discloses the truth to Megan. He says,

“It was nothing, Meg. We were friends and for a while, I had a crush on her. But nothing happened. Is that so terrible?”

Then the stress is removed and their marriage life becomes pleasing.

**Only Goodness:-**

‘In Goodness’, a sister named Sudha is eager to give her younger brother the perfect and sound childhood. But she is overwhelmed by guilt and anger when his alcoholism threatens her family. Remorseful Sudha considers herself blamable that she has turned her younger brother alcoholic by introducing it to him in the young age.

The first generation immigrants, Rahul and Sudha’s parents, are Bengali immigrants, who first migrate to London in pursuit of prosperous life. From there, disappointed, they move to the U.S., which draws them with the ideals of equality. They wish to escape racial scorn of London of the 60s. However, their experience of the new land also carries the strangeness which they felt in London. The town in which they settle down is shocking. Their sense of foreignness becomes more intense.

“Suddenly they were stuck, her parents aware that they faced a life sentence of being foreign.”

They are privileged in the form of the equality of opportunities. They are not differentiated due to their race. They are not prepared to take advantage of this situation culturally. The mother does not get a job. Neither she nor her husband is familiar with American habits and they both have difficulties with language. Despite these initial problems, they achieve economic success. Still, remembering their hardships, they transfer the wish for successful, rich and easy life on their children, with greater expectations laid in son Rahul than daughter Sudha.
The expectation of Rahul's future results into a gradual downfall of a young man. Sudha graduates from Penn University, having degrees in economics and mathematics and later decides to study in Europe, in London School of Economics. Yet it is Rahul's career that is the centre of his parents' interests. Rahul suddenly becomes unaffected to his parents’ dreams. Sudha, an obedient student, devotedly accomplishes their parents’ expectations. When he eventually drops out of a prestigious university, alcohol becomes a resolution to his problems. With meager income, Rahul’s failure becomes his parents’ shame. Other Bengalis gossiped about him and prayed their own children would not ruin their lives in the same way. He wishes to live like an American, while his parents want him to preserve the Indian way of life. The Indian way of life pressed upon him by his parents stifles his American spirit of individualism, desire for freedom and self-fulfillment.

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. He cannot live as an American or an Indian. He will not succeed until he agrees to his middle position. He feels something like dual in his emotional state.

**Nobody’s Business:-**

In 2002 ‘Nobody's Business’ was selected as one of *Best American Short Stories*. It talks about an American man who has soft affection with a gorgeous Bengali woman, Sang but finally gets frustrated in love. The narration is for the first time in the collection in the hands of a non-Bengali. Paul, her housemate, is in dilemma whether the truth that Sang’s lover, Farouk, is disloyal should be notified to Sang. Paul is a shy graduate student.

Her full name is Sangita Biswas. She is now 30 years. She studied philosophy and graduated from New York University. She was getting her Ph.D. at Harvard University. But she dropped out after a semester and was working part time at a book store. Paul secretly loves her. Sang introduced to Paul and Heather her boyfriend, Farouk who in turn is in love with
another girl. The fact of the disloyalty of Farouk towards Sang came to be known by Paul. But she is deeply in love with Farouk. She used to read through proofs of the articles he had written, checking errors and correcting them. After Sang left to London to see her sister and her baby, Paul knows about Deirdre. When she came back, she accused Paul for making stories about Deirdre. At a given time, Deirdre called Paul whose conversation was also being heard by Sang. She told that she made Paul into a liar because it was Freddy’s idea. She said that Paul should tell everything about Freddy to Sang because she has the right to know that she is not the only girl in Freddy’s life. The fact was known to Sang. She could not bear the emotional disappointment from Freddy and left for London forever rejecting her suitors. Emotional torment tracks throughout the confusions and the more humdrum quarrels of Sang’s life. Love seems to have moments of joy, peace and gratification but it is also painful, difficult and often unresolved. Her Bengali heritage is irrelevant, but like the other victims of circumstance in this collection, is left crushed at the story’s tragic denouement.

**Hema and Kaushik**

Part two of the collection is called *Hema and Kaushik* and has three consistent stories ‘Once in a Lifetime’, which is told from the perspective of Hema, ‘Year’s End’, in which narrator is Kaushik and ‘Going Ashore’ in third person narration. It is a novella giving the insights into the lives of Hema and Kaushik with their loves, sorrows, feelings, dilemmas, remembrances and complications. The first story focuses on their meeting as children; the second follows Kaushik when his father remarries and the third accounts for their reunion as adults.

‘Once in a Life Time’ is about a young girl telling her perspective of two cultures of two families which had been close but had been separated by a new culture, a culture which one of the families had developed while living in Bombay and which is regarded more American than the culture of those living in America. In ‘Once in a Life Time’ Kaushik and his family are introduced in the first story through the eyes of Hema who remembers Kaushik as a nine year old when she was six. Talking to Kaushik, she reports how seven years later, they meet again as he returns to the US with his parents and lives with her family until they find their own house. Seven
years ago, his departure for India with his parents occasioned a farewell party of apparent food and fun that seem typical of Lahiri. The mothers were raised in Calcutta but met in Cambridge, Massachusetts. They had now become very close and were distressed by separation. When the Choudharis return to Massachusetts, Hema’s parents are bewildered to find that Bombay had made them more American than Cambridge. The cultural separation leads to the creation of emotional detachment between Hema and Kaushik. She is uninterested in him. She considers him to be Indian-like. But the fact was beyond her assumptions. He was more Americanized than she was. This was shocking to her orthodox family of Hema. Hema’s family had a feeling of relief when the Choudharis bought a new house. Kaushik shared confidential information to Hema that they moved to India in order to seek treatment of his mother’s breast cancer. Hema assured to keep the revelation secret and grieved for the woman she had come to admire and love.

‘Year’s End’ is voiced by Kaushik. The reader comes to know about Kaushik’s mother’s death when he tells that he did not attend his father’s wedding. It is the revelation that heightens the profundity of grief in him. His father astonished him with the news that he was marrying Chitra, a school teacher nearly twenty years younger than him who had lost her spouse two years ago and had two daughters. Kaushik meets his step mother and her two daughters. Their old fashioned Indianness was somewhat disgusting to him. He says,

“They were overdressed in our comfortably heated house, in thick sweaters and socks, incongruous Indian things that would soon be rejected, I knew, in favor of clothes from the mall.”16

He prefers photography as his profession. He travels the world, taking pictures of war, famine and all kinds of destruction. After his mother’s death, Kaushik experiences homelessness, tremendous sense of loss and loneliness. What draws our attention in the story is that the centre of the first story, Hema is out of the reference. Kaushik does not mention her name in the story.

In ‘Going Ashore’ the narration moves to the third person. It brings the hero and heroine of the novella together in Rome where Hema is a visiting lecturer and Kaushik is on the vacation after the hard work for his
award-winning photography. They are now independent from the cultural forces. Hema’s parents are preparing for her marriage with Navin in Calcutta whom she did not love. The story discloses the desolation and agony when Kaushik leads life as a photojournalist. He faced with death and ruin detailing appalling and frightening human conflicts from Gaza and West Bank to Guatemala and El Salvador. Preparing for his move to Hong Kong as a desk editor in Rome, he meets Hema. Kaushik had called her a coward when she refused his invitation to go with him. She had seen him before she took her bangle off, her grandmother’s gift that Kaushik had remembered she wore as a child. She goes to Calcutta to marry Navin. The tale returns to first person narration by Hema who is still feeling soft affection for Kaushik and is overcome by a sense of frustration. The move from the third person narrative to the first person by Hema in the same story touches to the extremity of the profound awareness of loss in the mind of the heroine and the reader is left with awe when Hema mourns:

“Those cold dark days I spent in bed, unable to speak, burning with new life but mourning your death, went unquestioned by Navin, who had already begun to take a quiet pride in my condition. …. It might have been your child but this was not the case. We had been careful, and you had left nothing behind.”

The consequence that flows from the separation leaves Hema tormented deeply.

4. The Lowland:

The Lowland is Lahiri’s fourth book. It was shortlisted for the National Book Award in 2013, the Man Booker Prize 2013 and the Bailey’s Women’s Prize for Fiction 2014. It seems that Lahiri diverts in the novel considering the content in the sense that in the initial pages, more emphasis is laid on the Naxalite movement and its consequences than the diasporic lives of Subhash and Gauri. Jhumpa Lahiri piles an extraordinary tale of brotherly love, familial responsibilities and marital compromises as well as the impact of history on personages.

The Lowland is a story of two Bengali brothers growing to youth. They look and sound identical. One was perfectly confused with the other so that when either name was called both were accustomed to answer and sometimes it was difficult to know who had answered, given that their voices
were nearly indistinguishable. But they are very dissimilar from each other. When the novel initiates, Subhash is thirteen, older by fifteen months to Udayan. But he had no sense of himself without Udayan. Udayan is always present in Subhash’s actions and memory. They were taught to honour their parents and observe the same old customs. They follow very different paths for themselves as they grow up in Calcutta during the 1950s and 60s. They finish school years successfully. Then, they are admitted to two of the city’s best colleges. Udayan prefers to Presidency to study Physics and Subhash goes for chemical engineering to Jadavpur. Subhash asks for a marble chess set as a gift and Udayan wanted a shortwave radio. Their unique preferences in such matters show their distinguished qualities. The initial pages of the novel are concerned with their childhood.

Udayan hears in 1967 on All India Radio about the Naxalite Movement arising from Naxalbari, one of the villages in the Darjeeling District. Most of the villagers belong to tribal peasants who work on tea plantations. For generations the feudal system had made them victims. They were manipulated by wealthy land owners and money lenders. The movement started when in Naxalbari, a peasant tried to plough the land from which he had been unlawfully dispossessed, his landlord sent villains to harm him by looting his belongings. After this, groups of peasants gathered with arms, carrying red flags and shouting ‘Long Live Mao Tse-tung’. They burned the documents with which they cheated the peasants. Udayan who is an idealist and thoughtless by nature, cannot help himself of being pushed by social conscience into the Naxalite movement. As an anxious person for the country, Udayan is convinced that he should partake in the movement for the better living conditions of India’s poor.

He is refreshed with the new ideology and vision of life. He is dragged to the Naxalite movement. If, at any time, he happened to pass through the Tolly Club, he thought of it with ideology that

"People still filled slums all over the city; children were born and raised on the streets. Why were a hundred acres walled off for the enjoyment of a few?"18

He said that Tolly Club was a proof that India was still a semi-colonial country, seeming as if the British had never left the place.
After finishing study, Udayan turns to radical politics actively. Udayan’s participation leads Subhash apart from his brother. Subhash applies for a few Ph.D. programmes in the United States. Though persuaded by Udayan, Subhash is thoughtful to whom Udayan’s thoughts seem irrelevant. Instead he realizes him his responsibility that he should think of their parents.

On Lenin’s birthday, April 22, 1969, the Communist Party of India was founded in Calcutta with Charu Majumdar to be the general secretary and Kanu Sanyal as the party chairman. The members were named as Naxalites representing what had occurred at Naxalbari. The party was founded with objective as Sanyal announced in his speech during the party’s first public meeting:

"We will certainly be able to make a new sun and a new moon shine in the sky of our great motherland."  

Udayan attended the rally without Subhash.

Subhash’s application for Ph.D. is successfully accepted in America and he steps there. Life in Rhode Island was completely diverse as witnessed by him. He lived at the top of a house and shared a kitchen and bathroom with another Ph.D. student named Richard Grifalconi, a student of sociology. He learns to live in the absence of his family. He feels in a way honored to have come to America alone to study oceanography. Subhash soon gets a letter from Udayan. Once again their attachment is witnessed:

“The days are dull without you. And although I refuse to forgive you for not supporting a movement that will only improve the lives of millions of people, I hope you can forgive me for giving you a hard time. Will you hurry up with whatever you are doing? An embrace from your brother.”

In India at this time, Udayan befriends a Naxalite named Manash and falls in love with his sister, Gauri. She is a student of philosophy and is an idealistic much the same as Udayan. He marries her secretly. Even his parents are ignorant of the affair and are not informed of the marriage. Gauri is also an activist in Naxalism who helps her husband for planning the assassination of a police officer. She is engaged in observing the policeman’s routine affairs. Udayan and his Naxalite mates kill the officer on his way to his son’s school. Udayan is also killed in an encounter by police near the lowland. Gauri is left pregnant. She grieves for her husband deeply. The time
in the city is for Durga pujo. The whole city celebrates while inside the house, the atmosphere is full of mourning.

In America, Subhash’s relation with Holly starts flourishing. He dates with Holly. She is an American woman who is older than Subhash by ten years. She lives separate from her husband. She has a son who is with her husband. Subhash and Holly settle in Rhode Island. Thus, he neglects his parents’ expectations by not marrying an Indian girl. The news of Udayan’s death is sent to Subhash by his parents. Subhash happens to come to Calcutta after a time of three years. The American resident, Subhash is reminded of his childhood in which his brother Udayan is always present. They used to cross Howrah Bridge. The markets would open. The sidewalks were lined with baskets, showing vegetables. They travelled through the broad heart of the city toward Dalhousie. A city seems to be ‘with nothing, with everything’. By the time they would approach Tollygunge, crossing Prince Anwar Shah Road. He is also reminded that:

“The streets were as he remembered. Crowded with cycle rickshaws, the squawking of their horns sounding to his ears like a flock of agitated geese. The congestion was of a different order, that of a small town as opposed to a city. The buildings lower, spaced farther apart.”

Subhash wanders the market in Calcutta. He buys for Gauri a shawl of a colour which is not suitable for a widow. After the death rites finish, Subhash prepares for America and wants Gauri to take with him performing more than one responsibilities. He decides this for the sake of his brother whom he loves infinitely. It is now his responsibility as a brother to care his dead brother’s family. He decides this for the sake of Gauri whose husband is no more in the world and whose mother-in-law and father-in-law behave rudely considering her blameable for Udayan’s death. He decides this for the sake of the child in Gauri’s womb. Though Subhash’s sacrifice is great, Gauri’s devotedness to Udayan does not lessen. The relationship between Subhash and Gauri is ‘a shared awareness of the person they’d both loved’. They are connected by the past that is Udayan and project a future together that is Bela.

Gauri in America turns out to be a different personality. Rhode Island provides her the opportunity which foretells of unpredictable events to be
happened in the future. However she is changed in America, she cannot free herself of Udayan’s remembrances:

“She felt as if she contained a ghost, as Udayan was. The child was a version of him, in that it was both present and absent. Both within her and remote.”

Gauri happens to love privacy and freedom as other Americans do. Subhash allows her privacy and independence. Gauri begins to wander the campus, goes to the library and appears in philosophy lectures twice a week. She continues to wear saris. She intends to look like the other American girls on the campus. Her independence reaches at the final point when she cuts her hair short, tears all her saris and starts to wear slacks and sweaters. Gauri fiercely goes beyond Indian norms of decency of femininity.

The pain of pregnancy starts in the library and Gauri is taken by Subhash to hospital. Baby girl is born and Gauri feels relieved:

“It was a girl, as she was certain it would be. She was relieved that her hope had been fulfilled, and that a young version of Udayan had not come back to her. And in a way it was better to give the child a name Subhash had thought of, to grant him that claim.”

The baby was named Bela by Subhash. Though Bela is born to Gauri, Gauri does not feel like a mother and Subhash who is not her real father feels likes a father. Gauri becomes a transnational citizen. She succeeds professionally in the United States and attends various conferences across the world. She successfully strikes roots in America. But on a personal level she fails. She frequently escapes from her family.

In America, Gauri starts studying philosophy. She learns the concepts of time and space. Her timeline which escapes the present, consists of only past and future. For her the past is her birth and the future is her death, the finish point of her timeline. She starts research of Hindu philosophy. According to it, God assumes three tenses past, present and future simultaneously.

Bela grows to four. She comes to know meaning of the word ‘yesterday’. In Bengali the word Kal means both yesterday and tomorrow. Gauri’s philosophy is nearer to Bela in this sense. The study of philosophy takes her away from the family. The attachment between Bela and Subhash strengthens as Gauri does not pay much attention to Bela. Bela is in fact
unknown of the fact that Subhash is her uncle. For Gauri, motherhood is an obstacle. She hardly plays with Bela or smiles at her. She is changed down to earth. When her daughter is just twelve, Gauri moves to California and involves herself in teaching and research. Gauri who usually witnesses Udayan in Subhash, looks at him with anger.

“She no longer searched for signs of him. The fleeting awareness that he might be in a room, looking over her shoulder as she worked at her desk, was no longer a comfort. Certain days it was possible not to think of him, to remember him. No aspect of him had traveled to America.”

Gauri is changed in and devoted to her study. She registers for German philosophy class and many of the time remains away from home and family leaving the little baby to the care of Subhash. She is the only woman in the class and consequently and gradually relationship develops with her professor, Otto Weiss for a reason that both have passed from similar kinds of incidents. When the professor was a boy, he was put into a concentration camp and his family perished there and he lost his family. Similarly Gauri lost her husband and came to America leaving her relatives miles away. Prof. Otto Weiss approves her for a doctoral program in Boston. Her proposal was accepted. She starts working on her dissertation. Gauri is devotedly committed to writing the thesis and therefore neglects her duties to her Subhash and Bela. In fact, the duty which should be assigned to them is transferred to study.

The more Gauri dedicates herself to her study, the more dedicated Bela grows to Subhash. Bela reaches at the age of twelve. Subhash leaves for Calcutta with Bela and without Gauri. Subhash witnesses change taking place in Tollygunge. New houses are being built. In contrast to this, even after the long course many years of Udayan’s death it appears to Subhash that Udayan has just passed away, watching Udayan’s mother still taking flowers to his stone every day. Subhash also sees his mother’s attachment to the house which was built to be accommodated by Subhash and Udayan in the future. She is reluctant to sell the house. But tragically the house remains empty for a son died and second one left for America. Subhash delivers several lectures at the University of Calcutta. Bela is left at home under the care of her grandmother and Deepa, a servant. In Tollygunge, Bela is not permitted to leave the house alone which is common in America. In
America, Gauri had granted permission her for that since third grade and Subhash frequently took her out for shopping, to visit the Zoo and to eat at Chinese restaurants. When they were in Tollygunge, Subhash lies to Bela that Udayan had died of an infection.

Subhash and Bela return to Rhode Island after staying for six weeks in India. Upon reaching there they found in the letter left on the table that Gauri had left for California to teach at a college. She goes on moving around freely from place to place. She accepts various jobs in Heidelberg, Santa Cruz and San Francisco and finally settles college town in Southern California.

Subhash receives news from Deepa that Bijoli suffered a stroke and is on critical condition. So again Subhash flies back to Tollygunge this time without Bela in Rhode Island. Bijoli had passed before Subhash reached.

Once, Subhash went to visit a small island in the middle of the wetland where the local Narragansett tribe built a fort. While wandering, he lost his way and did not know where he stood. He saw Richard, his old apartment mate on a bike. They promised to meet at Subhash’s house the next time. But after a few days, he got news from Claire, Richard’s wife that Richard died of blood clot. Richard’s death made Subhash think to tell Bela the truth that he was only her uncle and Udayan was her real father and to tell Udayan’s story. Subhash thinks of it as his duty without which his life is unfinished. Meanwhile Bela reveals that she is pregnant for more than four months. She wanted to keep the child and become a mother. Subhash is reminded of Gauri whom he had brought her years ago. Subhash finally tells her plainly that he is only her uncle and her real father is Udayan. At the outset she cannot stomach the information. She left the house to stay with a friend in Truro without informing Subhash. But she did call a few days later and thanked him for telling her about Udayan. There her daughter, Magna was born. After she became a mother, she confesses to Subhash his incredible sacrifice which she would not let go and love her daughter whole heartedly. Magna now grows enough to be alone without her mother. Bela once again carries on the work on farms where she happens to meet a person named Drew, already divorced. Drew proposes her to be Magna’s father.
When Subhash is reaching at the age of seventy, life being unpredictable at this age, Subhash plans to sell the house in Tollygunge and to transfer the ownership of the house in Rhode Island to Bela. He sends a letter to Gauri with papers of divorce to be signed by her. To personally deliver the papers, Gauri reaches to the house in Rhode Island. Bela opened the door and Subhash being absent then. Bela was too overcome by mixed emotions that she was not ready to answer the questions Gauri asked her. Gauri gathers information from Magna about Subhash, Elise, Magna's age and her father. Gauri submits the papers to Bela. Gauri’s visit creates fierce emotions in Bela which she had not felt ever. Subhash marries to Elise Silva at a church in Rhode Island. On the other hand Udayan once again comes in the narration of the novel though he had died so long ago and the novels ends with tragic feelings.

Jhumpa Lahiri’s works focus on how the characters struggle for the self-identity because of a different cultural foundation. Their struggle is intense and emotionally powerful because they have multicultural surroundings. They belong to the multicultural society and are a part of it. Multiculturalism brings instability in their lives while affirming many cultures at the same time.

Jhumpa Lahiri came up with a new and unique kind of thinking and talked out life in foreign land as the main element. Her works are embodiment of diverse experiences that the Indian immigrants pass by during their hyphenated lives because the society in which they are inhabiting is characterized by multiplicity of religion, culture, surrounding, history, philosophy and ways of living. Jhumpa Lahiri’s works have the influence of Indian culture, history, social rituals and religious ceremonies on the Indian characters in the surroundings and internal state which are marked by plurality and opposing systems of identification and belongingness. The research work will be concerned about how Indianness brings them home and make them cling to India.
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