Chapter - III

Desai, Lahiri and De’s Fictional Nuances of Life
DESAI, LAHIRI AND DE':
FICTIONAL NUANCES OF LIFE

The volume Games at Twilight and other stories shows that Desai’s achievement as a short story writer was equal to and as accomplished as her mastery of the craft of the novel. The short stories each of them a cameo of poetic-prose, containing authentic word pictures of Indian life ranging from the upper middle class children in a metropolis on a hot day to that of a young American couple who escapes the heat of the plains to the cool of the mountains thrown in between the ends of the spectrum are several other vignettes which make the rich and fascinating complex that is called India.

The opening story “Games at Twilight “ is the story of a child who shows sign of growing into, an autistic and a very private individual. Young Ravi has within him the seeds of an adult familiar in the world of Anita Desai, who develops a microcosmos within himself. The child is crushed by the “ignominy” of being forgotten by his playmates. Ravi’s brothers and sisters have finished playing the game of “den” long ago and others games besides, this indifference hurts young Ravi’s self-esteem. He felt his heart go heavy and ache inside him unbearable. He lay down full length on the damp grass, crushing his face into it, no longer crying silenced by a terrible sense of insignificance “exclusion from one’s peer-group is hard to bear and has often far-reaching
psychological consequence in the lives of those who show strong narcissistic tendencies. Ravi is frightened to see very strange things—crawling moths and uncanny insects which are trying to eat one another. The child psychology of Ravi has, thus deftly been drawn along with that of Raghu and other children. The plot is therefore trivial, yet the presentation is wholly surcharged with a psychological delineation of the children, particularly of Ravi and Raghu. Seeing moths and insects, Ravi develops a conspicuous strain of philosophy, and a "terrible sense of his insignificance".

(Anita Desai, Games at Twilight. 10)

Which is both appealing and also in tune with Anita Desai’s general outlook on life and the world.

"Private Tuition" is a psychological Short story, which deals with the Psychology of a school teacher engaged in Private tuitions. Mr. Bose undertakes tuitions to free his family from pecuniary strains. Mrs. Bose is ill-cultured and does not possess sophisticated manners. The place where he imparts instructions is open to the view of all. Pupils know it well as to what Mrs. Bose is doing at present in the kitchen. Radio is also on, and this distracts the attention of his students. Moreover, Mr. Bose’s children are very naughty. There is a lot of clatter of utensils, rolling of other domestic items, and the students laugh in their sleeves. Mr. Bose is upset; his pupils enjoy the situation. Added to all
these is the problem of certain students who need special care. Mr. Bose feels that teaching a Brahmin Priest’s son is easier, but to teach Bengali to upneet makes him very much self conscious.

“Studies in the Park” deals with the genuine problems of a student, named Suno, who is preparing for his I.A. examinations. He does not find a conducive atmosphere for studies at his home, for there is disturbance of all sorts. When he concentrates on his studies his father listens to the news in six languages. His mother clutters in the kitchen, constantly pressing her glass of sugared milk on suno. Not only this, other children make an intolerable noise rendering the whole atmosphere rent up with chattering and loud talking. He is completely enervated, but there is none to commiserate with him. To add to his plight, the water tap remains constantly splashing. His concentration on his studies is certainly impossible in such a disturbed atmosphere. He prefers a corner of a restaurant to his home, where to the proprietor and the waiter are both garrulous, talkative and glib liars. He then selects a park for his studies, but there too he finds a number of students already positioned with grimaced face some mentally dying, some physically constipated, some demented whereas some with wide lines of worries and anxieties writ large on their pale faces.

Suno feels disappointed, but his disappointment is transformed into hope and optimism, when he sees a pale, white suffer-
ing Muslim lady in the lap of an elderly gentleman, who is looking like a benevolent scholar with a long beard and affectionate face. The lady is being tenderly caressed by the gentleman and there is an aura of immortal solace and succour around them. Suno feels that the burden of studies is decidedly useless in the face of love and kindness Suno treats himself as a completely liberated soul at this juncture at the sight of the lady and the old man.

“Surface Textures” stands apart from other short stories forming an independent group for it deals with the problem of wilful negligence of duty and of escapism. “Surface Texture” projects Harish, a person with a different setting. The rocky area and the river again become perfect medium of exquisite experience. “Surface Textures” studies the psychology of a man who suffers from low spirits of evasiveness and pusillanimity, and who is an escapist and a shirker of responsibility. Harish is a clerk in a supply office, earning a meagre salary not perhaps sufficient for his wife and children. He neglected his work, even in his office, and tries to do as little as possible. He is derelict of his duties and his superiors have no confidence in his efficiency and calibre. He considers the life of a Sanyasi much far better than that of a clerk in an office, earning a meagre salary and surrounded by a number of worries and anxieties. He is an escapist and hence even his becoming a saint does not bring happiness to him. His Surface texture of incompetence and indolence, of indifference and antipathy,
Once boredom and tedium to him in office, are now equally impeding his new life of Sadhu. The satiric veins runs throughout the story.

"Pineapple Cake", another memorable short story by Anita Desai, is replete with a pathetic touch in the end. It is based on child psychology which is usually highly sensitive and delicate. Victor is the child who is given assurance a number of times to get a pineapple cake by his mother named Mrs. Fernandez, who is a worldly-wise-lady having an ostrich-like appetite and whose deeds do not tally with her promises. Victor insists on accompanying his mother to the church, and Mrs. Fernandez agrees to it and provides him with the pineapple cake on the condition that Victor should behave properly there. But at the time of wedding a gentleman dies, sending shocks to Victor, who is a child of very sensitive temperament. Instead of enjoying the pineapple cake which is served at the time of wedding, Victor ruminates over the death of the gentleman. To him, the pineapple Cake appears as if 'it were a corpse'. He does not eat the pineapple cake, but his mother eats a lot. She is not at all sorry for the death of the man. Victor finds his mother’s conduct at the party quite inconsistent with her utterances.

"Sale" is a study of an artist whose paintings never sell. He is a painter gifted with unusual talents and calibre, but his misfortune is that nobody has the capacity to appreciate his creation in an unbiased manner. He complains of the degenerating aesthetic taste of the person. Once it happen that three visitors come and make a long perusal of his
paintings. They ask him a number of questions, ranging from professional to private affairs, however, the painter answers them well and he is quite hopeful that the visitors may purchase his paintings being encouraged a little by the interest shown by the visitors in his paintings he tells them various specification of his paintings in detail: "One cannot pinpoint any school, any style - one can only admit oneself in the presence of a continuous and inspired act of creation..." (Anita Desai, *Games at Twilight* Allied Publishers, 1978, 43) but despite all his pleadings and persuasions, the painter fails to prevail upon the visitors, for they do not find anything substantial in his paintings. As a matter of fact, Anita Desai has projected an idea of neglect of artists in society through this short story. She considers the declining aesthetic taste of the people wholly responsible for the plight of the artists.

"The Accompanist" deals with the life of those characters who feel happy to pursue the path of virtue and commitment. Devotion appears to be the keynote of this story and aspiration to be an elevated soul seems to be the underlying idea. Mr. Misra and Ustad Rahim Khan are the two major characters round whom the whole story revolves. Mr. Misra is a devoted fellow. He is a Tanpura player to his master. He admires his master very profoundly. He has unbounded love for his master and does not see any blemish in him (master) as a true and obedient pupil strictly in the traditional sense of the teacher taught relationship.
"A Devoted Son" is the short story of attitudinal clashes between a doctor son and his retired aged father. Rakesh is a doctor who by dint of hard work gets brilliant success in his medical profession. He rises to the rank of director and now runs his own clinic in his father's house. His father is a retired assistant to a Kerosene dealer. Rakesh is very devoted son and obeys his parents more than ordinary sons and daughters. He takes utmost care of his father after the death of his mother. He is keen to see his father healthy and wishes him a long life. He prescribes many medicines, pills and powders to be used regularly by his father. Fried and spicy food, sweets and irregular diets are completely restricted so that his father may keep fit. But the father is impatient to continue his old food habits. He prefers tasty dishes to simple ones. And when this is checked, he complains of his son's callous behaviour to his neighbour, Bhatia. He also complains of his being starved. He prefers death to such a restricted diet. In short, here arises the clash of attitudes. Rakesh is guided by very rational approach of a doctor, whereas his father is a sentimental, aged and retired man, for whom the great pleasure on earth seems to be mere eating, even a young devoted son and a very competent doctor like Rakesh is suspected by his aged father of tyranny and maltreatment.

"The Farewell Party" is a story of emotions, sentiments and human relations. Though artistically a powerful portrayal of human emotions, it is extremely weak in plot. The third person universal
observer pattern of narration which we find in this short story, does not in fact, make it a story complete and perfect in all respects. The slender theme is gradually threaded around human passions and emotion. The Raman family is the centre of discussion by, the neighbours. The guests who arrive profusely congratulate Mr. Raman on his getting promotion in the Indian Mercantile company, which deals in the manufacture of cigarettes. The Raman family is known for its altruistic activities and its commiseration with the suffering people in the neighbourhood has become fairly proverbial. The farewell party is, therefore, arranged by the Ramans, and the guests and the neighbours are sumptuously entertained. All praise the Ramans. One after the other, the whole gathering becomes emotional. Mrs Raman is a lady of extrovert temperament. Her associations with many of her neighbours are quite deep and long lasting. All this leads to a surcharged atmosphere in the farewell party.

"Pigeons at Daybreak" is a story of the veletudinary psychology of Amul Bose, who had been suffering from the ailment of asthma for long. His wife Otima Bose, is a highly devoted and sincere lady. Amul Bose is a type of asthma patient who has many real and imagined problems. Otima has to attend to all these problems of her husband in addition to all her daily domestic duties. A very committed and obedient lady, Otima never harbours any grudge against her husband whether real or imagined. On the receipt of information that there will
be an electric break down the whole night, Amul Bose's problem naturally multiply. Otima does not grudge. She tends him well and when her husband's breathing problem increases she carries him to the roof-top, where Amul Bose is scared of the quarrelsome neighbour. Throughout the night Otima massages Amul's body, and there are some cool breeze also this brings Amul some respite. Pigeons fly at daybreak, and the flight of pigeons also brings a temporary respite for Amul. Infact Otima knows the psychology of her husband well. Even the slightest occasion enhances her husband's problems to the extent that Otima finds it extremely difficult to deal with there weak moments of her husband. This story also tells how a patient's wife like Otima tended her husband well. Pigeons figure in the story as emblems of peace and liberation. At the time of daybreak, the pigeons like other birds flutter in the air feeling free, liberated and happy. Amul usually sleeps at daybreak getting a temporary respite from the nights suffocating air and physical groaning. Anita had raised a very serious question of an honorable existence being buffeted by such a predicament as that of Otimas.

"Scholar and Gypsy" is a short story of temperamental contrasts. It centres round an American couple named David and Pat, who have come to India to explore her mystery. David is certainly a scholar whose interest in sociology entitles him to fame. Pat has an entirely different temperament and attitude from David's, for she is interested only in visiting other countries. In a way she is a globe-trotter. She,
infact, comes of an American farmer family and loves to be free, unfettered and unchained by bonds of any sort. The environs of Delhi and Bombay appears to her as suffocating teasing and nauseating. Tired of life in India, she joins the hippies being sermonised by an Indian preacher who masquerades to cure “these seekers of nirvan and bliss” by administering bhang who often ridicules them more than meditating or discoursing on theology.

In Delhi, Pat meets a number of people. She develops a sense of antipathy towards the people of Delhi: Though educated up to high school, she considers herself far superior to the well educated Indian for some time she associates herself with the social activities of Mrs Sharma. Pat does not find social work congenial to her temperament and, as such, she gives it up in despair. For Pat physical charm is more tempting than the simplicity of her heart. Pat fails to reciprocate the generous feelings of Mr Gidwani, because of her wrong notions of virtue and vice, of moral and immoral.

In disgust, she goes to Manali in Kullu valley to find happiness there. The natural beauty, the flora and fauna of his place makes her happy. Pat and David are now separated from each other, disgusted and broken-hearted, David returns to his country all alone. Precisely, this short story deals with the problems of adjustment where there is a lot of difference between the temperaments of husband and wife.
DIAMOND DUST AND OTHER STORIES

Diamond Dust and other stories published in the year 2001 is Anita Desai's another collection of short stories. Thematically Diamond Dust and Other Stories records a much noticeable growth and appreciative excellence as Desai's forte as a story teller. The stories are a peep into adult psychic conditions although the milieu is the same, but its hues are, undoubtedly, more complex and intricate.

"Royalty" is the introductory story and the action centered around Sarla and Ravi, husband-wife relationship and Raja, who was a guest to their place Ravi and Sarla made an all time companions to each other for at the prime of the age; they had nothing to kill their disinterestedness in life. The arrival of Raja was an unwanted news to Sarla whose heart received a thump when Ravi says "...Raja has come, he is in the South. He wants to visit us next week"

(Anita Desai, Diamond Dust.2)

Ravi watched Sarla moving about restlessly unearthing all objects of requirements which Raja may have asked for and all the while "her face well clenched in tightly contained storm of emotion" (Anita Desai Diamond Dust.3) The arrival of Raja further adds to Sarla's agony that intensified owing to the pandemonium on the railway station. Raja and Ravi had all been contemporaries at Oxford and Sarla envied Raja for.
His Southern ancestry had given Raja an unfair advantage over their northern genes which seemed to produce businessmen and shopkeepers more readily than mathematicians or philosophers. Yet there was about him an air of fragility, of some precious commodity that they had been called upon to cherish” ... (Anita Desai, *Diamond Dust*. 8) Painstakingly, Sarla made arrangements for Raja, she prepared her room carefully and had taken the silver coffee service out of storage in order to amuse Raja, the royal guest. Maya like Raja, Sarla and Ravi had studied abroad in the London School of Economics and, had married Pravin, who pursued his political career much enthusiastically. Maya and Sarla decided to cater to Raja’s pilgrim soul by taking him to the Himalaya’s which Raja Instantaneously rejects and expressed a desire to visit chandni-chowk and buy silver art to take back with him to California where the natives “had never seen such art bestowed upon craft” and then visit cottage industries emporium and buy a pashmina Shawl. Raja’s pilgrim soul soon waved to visit the saint’s tomb in Nizamuddin and had transported him to the peak of sublimity. Raja, Sarla and Ravi decide to throw a party and have a recital given by Illa Dutta Ray. Sarla realized her grave error, she had forgotten to invite Maya.

“Winterscape” is a story with enough drama and explores the ambiance of motherhood. Rakesh is reared and nurtured by his aunt and his mother, and therefore had a blessed childhood by his biological father and his foster-father. He soon finished his school education with
much labours and efforts and his higher studies was now the anxiety of
his foster mother. Asha was childless and she had brought Anu (Asha's
sister) to her house for a few days until Anu revived physically. Soon
Asha and her husband became deeply involved with the baby and
rejoiced in this possession, as if it was their own baby. Anu’s husband
was a man of moderate living and their failure to bear another child added
to his pain caused by Rakesh’s separation. Anu tried a number of times
to fetch back Rakesh to his natural house but failed because Rakesh had
also assimilated the new house, and the caretakers rigidly to his heart.
Every time Anu came back empty handed, it continued to sour their
husband wife relationship. The chances of Rakesh’s return fissled out no
sooner Asha’s husband died during the festive arrangements of Rakesh’s
first birthday. Rakesh was now allowed to stay with Asha because
Rakesh’s presence added enough meaning to her existence. Anu’s house
continued to remain empty and melancholy and shortly, before Rakesh’s
fifth birth day, Anu’s husband passed away. Anu was further tormented
by her in-laws for her husband’s death which she was unable to bear.
She left her house and started for Asha’s house with all her belongings
which she had brought to her house as a bride.

Asha and Anu now become inseperable friends and
companions. Asha managed the accounts and exercised all decisions
whereas Anu looked after the mundane household affair. No sooner
Rakesh graduated from the local college, Asha insisted that he should
go abroad for further studies’ with an intent to give him the best education possible. Asha made financial arrangements by selling off her fixed estates. So Rakesh made applications to a number of foreign universities under the watchful gaze of his two mothers who: “... felt tightness in their chests at the prospect of his leaving, them, they also swelled with pride to think he might do so, the first in the family to leave the country for further studies”....

(Anita Desai, *Diamond Dust*, 38)

Rakesh passed his university examination and this brought joy along with the sorrowful knowledge that he would not come back. The two women regularly received letters. “... about his achievements his salary, his promotion, and with it the apartment in the city, then his own office and practice, photographs accompanying each as proof”... (Anita Desai *Diamond Dust*, 39) with the flow of time, the two mothers received another jolt when they found a photograph of a blonde girl along with Rakesh and with his arm around her. The two became speechless when they read about Rakesh’s intention to marry her soon. When Rakesh informed about Beth’s pregnancy and the impending birth, Anu wrote a letter to announce their intention to travel to Canada and see their grandchild for themselves. With obedience Rakesh honoured their wish by sending them tickets on the earliest arrangements. The two mother started their preparation with gusto and the whole neighbourhood bursted with activity and on the other hand, Beth (Rakesh’s wife) and
Doris (Rakesh's mother-in-law) sank back with all kinds of apprehensions. Beth tried to make them comfortable at home and Rakesh was relieved of the burden at the side of her hospitality. The new world fascinated them and -

They would sit together on the sofa and find amusement in the nature travel and cooking programmes...

(Anita Desai, *Diamond Dust*, 43)

Anu and Asha explored this small world of Rakesh in Canada with much curiosity. They were determined to comprehend all those objects that looked strange yet made noticeable existence in the flux of life. The birth of the baby added to their joy but were dismayed at the sight of the rituals of baby care that Beth imposed. Their first reaction was euphoric which changed into nervous dissension and finally dejection. Further, Beth was engaged in baby care, all locked up in her room and two grandmothers had no engagement. Holding her baby Beth thought of the inexplicable relationship between the two, how Anu had borne Rakesh and given him over to Ma, her sister Asha, Beth became all the more determined in the thought that mother child relationship is inseparable and she knew...

She would not give up her baby for anything, anyone, certainly not to her sister Susan who was hardly capable of bringing up her own, and yet these two had
lived their lives ruled by that one impulse, totally un-natural to her.”...

(Anita Desai. *Diamond Dust*, 47)

Repulsed by this separation from the new-born, Asha and Anu made a joint decision of going back home to India. Rakesh made a promise that he would soon bring Beth and their grand child to India as soon as the baby was fit enough to travel.

The final parting was the busiest minutes. Asha and Anu threw, tender, grateful looks upon Rakesh, rolled away on trolley with their boxes and trunks full of gifts for family and neighbours. Rakesh took a deep sigh of relief when their ‘bent white heads’ disappeared. On returning home, Rakesh found that the baby was deep asleep and Beth, had made an elaborate arrangement for their dinner. Rakesh was baffled by this celebration the omniscient narration records his sense of perplexity as-

“He found a small, annoying knot of resentment fastened onto the fork at her evident pleasure at being alone with him and her baby again. He kept the fork suspended to look at her to demand if this were so, and then saw, over her shoulder, the refrigerator with its array of the photographs and memos she liked to tape on its white enamel surface. What caught his eye was the photograph she had newly taped to it with the view of the white window, and the two windows in white, and the
whirling snow.” ...(Anita Desai, *Diamond Dust*, 48) Rakesh stared at the photograph with surprise and Beth requested that the photograph should be allowed to remain on the refrigerator and Rakesh gave in with immense satisfaction “Diamond Dust”, a tragedy is a humorous story marked with a gloomy end. Mr. Das, along with his wife and his pet named Diamond make a family and the humdrum of their life is engineered solely by Diamond. Diamond was named by Mr. Das because of his black, shining eyes. When Mr. Biswas learned about the reason of the naming of the dog, he retorted, …” Ah, coal then call him that my dear fellow, coal, koyla and we would understand”...

(Anita Desai, *Diamond Dust*, 57)

Mr. Das’s fascination for the dog knew no reservation. He kept thinking about the dog, in secret, in private and this not only made him blush but also laugh to himself, a little sheepishly. Often at the sight of the dog, he made a joyful cry, “Diamond, my friend”. Mrs. Das recalled with envy the day when Mr. Das brought the Satan, the Shaitan, a devil “… When she saw him bring the puppy home, cuddling it in his old brown jumper, lowering his voice to a whisper and his step to a tiptoe, as if afraid of alarming the sleeping creature. Get some warm milk—don’t heat it too much just warm it a little and get some cotton wool. She had stared at him ‘not even about our own children, not even your first-born son, or your grand children have you made so mush of as of that dog’, she had told him then” (Anita Desai, *Diamond Dust*, 51).
The annoyance at the sight of Diamond became a regular affair. She frequently travelled while mopping up the puddles from her gleaming floors and had to put up with the reek of the dog at home. She disapproved of Mr. Das's going to the butcher's shop for buffalo meat and had to tolerate the bubbling and frothing of the meat stew on the back burner of her stove. During such an hour she maintained her cool and in reticence, retreated into the veranda to sit on a wicker chair, "fanning herself with melodramatic flair".

The children of the neighbourhood were all scared of Diamond and Diamond loved teasing children as well as biting and scratching them. Diamond often chased them and even nipped their heels as if he managed to catch the scared boys running blindly to save their skins. They would cry reproachfully before Mr. Das and then Mr. Das in return always reproved them severely, saying," that is not how to play with the dog you must not wave a stick at him. You must not pick up a stone. You must not run." (Anita Desai, *Diamond Dust*, 52). Diamond soon grew up into a 'full fledged badmash', the terror of the neighbourhood. Every single person lodged a complaint against Diamond with either Mr. Das or his wife. The postman the officials of the board at electricity, children in the neighbourhood, telephone lines repairmen, garbage collector and each and every passerby were attacked by this violent spirit, surprisingly, Mr. Das took pride in the dog and he praised the dog for his vigilance.
The society took a sigh of relief when the dog disappeared for five long days in chase of a bitch. Mr. Das searched every dusty streets in the livid heat of June, hatless, object, crying, ‘Diamond’! Diamond! ‘Diamond’. It could be heard over garden walls, empty allies, filthy out skirts of the market place and even along the seeking canal. Seeing the abstract misery of Mr. Das at the loss of Diamond, the children forgot their resentment and joined Mr. Das on his search mission. The band of juvenile detectives found Diamond in the alley behind the Ambassador Hotel with his partner enjoying love session. Mr. Das brought stronger chains and collars for Diamond, but nothing could hold him back as air brought him occasions of mischief. Once again he disappeared by using immense strength. Mr. Das lost his tranquility and peace and performed badly in his office for which his superiors chastised him. Mr. Das had to put the dog on vitamin pills and Mrs. Das anticipated an emergence of a new type of badmashi. This is what really happened during the late evenings, Diamond howled for hour’s at a stretch echoing the sleepy Bhartinagar and the neighbours pulled their quilts over their heads, huddled into their pillows, trying to block out the abominable noise. Soon the dog vanished into the thick air knocking down. The gasman who was bringing in the cylinder and Mrs. Das helplessly observed the devilish prank.

Once again, Mr. Das began his dog-search expedition, “with a wollen cap pulled down over his ears, and his tight short jacket
buttoned up”, Mr. Das did his rounds in the dark calling “Diamond Diamond” hoarsely till his throat rasped and felt that he was going down with the flu. Mrs. Das awaited her dire fate prepared cough mixture, hot water and girmly counseled, “Give him up before this search kills you.

(Anita Desai, *Diamond Dust*, 63)

Mrs. Das’s foreboding turned out to be true even though she brushed it aside every time as a nightmare. Mr. Das was on the road back from the Khan market when the dog catcher’s Van passed down the road and Mr. Das notice Diamond among the howling, yelping catch of hounds. He instantly shrieked “Diamond, Diamond” and chased the van with a speed unbelievable at his age. Then he sprang at the van and was carried along hanging at the bars for some moments. Soon the van braked, then jerked forward and Mr. Das’s head struck the stone in the street, as he fell backwards. He lay there entirely still and the dog remained behind the bars of the window glittering like a dead coal.

“Underground” is an interesting story, intensely charged with the conjugality of husband-wife relationship. Bob Mc Taggart, is an engineer by profession, travels a lot due to job requirements. This separates the two for quite a length of time. Bob soon realizes that the separation is unbearable for the two. He therefore, gives up his job and decides to start a hotel, so that they could enjoy proximity in relationship.
The idea of buying a hotel struck him when they went out on a picnic spree. Bob Mc Taggart found that this effort towards proximity was not fruitful. The picture of a happy family scene haunted him and he intensively desired for such warmth of togetherness. His image of life coincided with what he saw in the small, dingy room.

... A woman who had slipped of her bodice from one shoulder and was nursing an infant at her breast. Beside her a man squatted with his head thrown back and his teeth bared in laughter as he clapped his hands: a small girl was dancing before them, in red dress too long for her so that its waist hugged her knees and its hems swung at her feet, while her curls tumbled about her face and she struck her bare feet on the earth, swaying her small hips to the rhythm of her father's clapping...

(Anita Desai, *Diamond Dust*, 72)

At a seaside spot he bought a palatial hotel and the two furnished and decorated it artistically. To learn advanced cooking, they enrolled themselves for cookery lessons. When his wife fell ill he stopped permitting Visitors, for Bob had strange fears and Helen would ask him, "Do you think something would happen to me while you were away here?"

Gradually, Helen's condition deteriorated and her body looked their. Her speech was reduced to monosyllables and she only
wanted Bob to hold her hand for hours at a stretch. The illness was fatal and Helen had no chances of revival. Here, Desai does not mention the illness but malignancy is suggested. Through suggestive strokes Desai also indicates that Helen is no more. Later she writes:

“Collecting carrot tops, green scraps, whatever he had, he had gone out in the evening and scattered it out on the grass with abrupt bitter gestures. You might as well have it then, was what he wanted to say. They’d come creeping up, glancing at him nervously, and snatching at the pieces, scurrying off with them. Did they notice that Helen was not there, his mate? He disliked them for not noticing not caring. But the habit remained...

she came close enough to snatch at a bit of crust but, before she did, she too glanced in his direction, so secretively that the look could scarcely be discerned and ‘Hey, Helen,’ he whispered, ‘here, Helen’ ...

(Anita Desai, Diamond Dust. 81)

Later, when Jack and his wife Meg, came to ask for accommodation, Bob refuses. Bob now wants peace and loneliness with the memory of his wife, which he could not have when she was alive. The story attacks the humdrum of materialistic life. The story also portrays the agony which Bob had as an employee and as a devoted husband but crushed under the weight of incessant demands on life.
"The man who saw Himself Drown" is, thematically one that abounds in curiosity and strangeness very uncommon and unique in its plot, one finds this story a memorable construction. Focalized on one character, the story builds up the drama and finally leads to an end, which again contains contour of surprise.

The unnamed character arrives in a taxi and boards in a hotel disgusted with the grime and soot of the city, he washes himself and enters into adjoining veranda to enjoy the sight comfortably seated in his wicker chair. He spent the evening on the veranda drinking the cold beer that was brought to him. When it grew dark he decided to go out. He wanted to escape the company of man, above all, his business associates. He ordered some sandwiches, potato chips and started for a stroll.

The hotel was in the residential district and he enjoyed the movements of a passerby and little traffic that provided him much calm and peace. He soon arrived on the bank of a little river that flowed through the city and the tide was running high. He desired to take up a boat and entered into the river, but soon he admonishes himself of being trapped by a boyish and childish urge. His second impulse was to throw himself into the river and gauge the length of his jump. His body impelled him forward but he pulled himself backward to check the desire of jumping. He looked around to see if anyone had observed him. Finding no one around, he walked quite satisfactorily and rapidly. Soon, he had to halt
because a little further up, a group of people had gathered at the broad steps which led down to the water. He noticed that they were crowding around something which was being dragged out of the water onto the bank. He saw a body lying on the ground sodden and lifeless. He noticed that the body was nearly five feet ten inches tall, had straight black hair that swept off his face which was square and brown that he had a flat nose and a mouth that parted slightly to show his teeth even though he was exhausted and present in his room all day. Reporting his state of mind he says -

"I could not say what it was I feared, but I found myself trembling. When I was exhausted, I slept but never deeply I kept waking each time in panic.

I am not sure how long I stayed in the hotel in this state, whether it was two days or three. It certainly was not longer before the newspaper that was brought to me and that I went through in such a state of panic that I nearly choked, finally revealed the news I had all along expected and feared to find: there was my name printed half way on the column on page 7 in the local news...

(Anita Desai, Diamond Dust, 82)
At first, he smelt a foul play but then the details of the accident confirmed his Public death. He soon engaged himself in his daily activities washed, shaved, ready for work and realized that it was grotesquely comic what was happening to him. Contemplating our his reported death he realized the futility of carrying on that life keeping appointment attending meetings as though nothing has happened. He also pondered over what to do next. Finally, he decided to run away with his belongings left behind, so that his death would remain plausible. Very secretly, he slipped out hurried into an idling taxi and started for nowhere. The very thought of beginning a new life fascinated him and looked forward to a fresh lease of life.

What happiness, we think, to end the dull, wretched, routine-ridden unfulfilling life we lead, and to begin on another filled with all that our heart desires. Yes, but try to do that and you will find you are suddenly faced with hundreds of questions, no answers, doubts & no certainties. There is really no experience so perplexing. A new life but what is to be? And how to begin it...

(Anita Desai, Diamond Dust, 92)

For the next few days, he wondered around and the curiosity to see what would happen after his death stopped him from
embarking on flight. He even wanted to attend his own funeral, stand by
the side of his own body and watched at it being consumed by fire and
reduced to ash.

With a desire to see his family he soon climbed onto a train, without a ticket, owing to his state of beggary and returned to the city
where he had his home once. He was assured that his family would come
out and find him, treat him as having recovered a dear pet, lavish his
attention and care upon him. But when he reached the gate of his house,
he saw that the furniture and the belongings of his house were being put
in lorry. This surprised him and he huddled by the gate to watch his wife
dressed in white as a widow, with her parents on either sides of her.
They were all dressed in the colour of mourning. He wished to run out
and pleaded with them to change into bright colours, the colour of the
rainbows, red, yellows and oranges. His children, his wife and his
parents-in-law climbed into a grey car, which waited down the steps to
the portico. Soon the car started up and he again felt the impulse to
appear in the middle of the road and cry out to them:

Look I am here! I have returned!” Neither the words
nor the gestures came to me: it was as if they had been
strangled inside me. How could I say them when they
no longer rang true?

(Anita Desai, Diamond Dust, 96)
The car passed by and no one turned his/her head to glance at him. ‘They did not even look back at the house, they were leaving after so many years of happy living. He wondered - “Did they not feel any pang on departing? Their face were all fixed, staring ahead as if into the future”... (Anita Desai, *Diamond Dust*, 96). He became bitterly disappointed and then a certain sense of relied overpowered him:

It was as though I had at last shed them. My life, my children, my house, they were all gone from me, and curiously, I did not feel bereft so much as lightened of my load...

(Anita Desai, *Diamond Dust*, 96)

He came back to the river that ran around the out skirts of the city. The sight of the rives reminded him of the wide, grand river that he had seen in the city where he had died until evening he stayed on the back, watched the washermen, folded up.

“The Artist’s Life” presents a picture of the paradox of an artist’s life. It shows how an artist has to create beauty inspite of being surrounded by physical and behavioural ugliness. Miss Polly attends a summer school where she is taught by Miss Abigail to paint according to her dreams. Tom is Miss Polly’s brother. They have a tenant called Miss Mabel Dodd who is an artist teaching the delinquents in a school. But Miss Mabel inspite of being an artist has not cleaned the surrounding of her cabin. Miss Polly’s mother is puzzled by Miss Mabel’s negligence and wishes to
remind her of the need of cleaning. She, therefore, leaves a few garbage cans outside her cabin. Miss Mabel perhaps takes a cue from this and brings a black youth and cleans the surrounding every Sunday. But one day Miss Polly and her mother were surprised to see that somebody has written PIG on her car with excrement. They cannot guess as to who must have done the filthy thing. The police is called to investigate the matter. It is suspected that one of Miss Mabel’s delinquent students or the black youth must have done the heinous thing. This is the fate of an artist dealing with morally ugly people.

In “Tepoztlan Tomorrow” Desai highlights the generation gap between the old and the young, one’s nostalgic attachment to one’s native city and the progressive deterioration of the city. Louis, son of Teresa who is the protagonist of this story goes to Tepoztlan and meets Dona Celia. While having his dinner, he inadvertently refers to Pedro and spoils Dona Celia’s mood. It is very unpleasant for Dona Celia to remember Pedro who was her suitor, but whose family she disliked. Dona Celia and her daughter Nadyn complain to Louis about a neighbour who is a professional garbage picker and who disturbs them with the stinking smell and the loud music of radio and TV and by her other dirty habits Tepoztlan Tomorrow, portrays how the attitude of a man account for his uneasiness with a social realm.

“Five Hours to Simla or Faisla”, is one of the successful stories in this collection because of the clarity of motif in it. It is a
humorous story about the adamant attitude of a Sardarji causing a good
deal of tension to the travellers on the way to Simla. There is a traffic jam
for two miles. The Sardarji sits leisurely on the bridge wall without paying
heed to the tension of other travellers. They do not know how to tackle
him because of his irrational demand. During the four or five hours of
tension and waiting, the members in the car compromise with the situation
gradually. Necessity impels them to neglect the idea of hygiene. They are
forced to eat and drink the cheap stuff that is available with the hawkers
and vendors.

"The Rooftop Dwellers" deals with the problem of working
woman in Delhi. Moyna is a young lady, who has passed her M.A. in
English who wants to earn her livelihood in the metropolitan city of Delhi.
She joins as a sub-editor of a literary magazine entitled Books. Moyna
cannot afford to hire an expensive house or apartment. Besides, space is
a big problem in the overcrowded capital city. Moyna, therefore, hires a
rooftop barsati and suffers from minimalism, lack of social life and
insecurity. The owner of the house suspects her character when she brings
male friends to her room. Though simple, the story throws light on the
contemporary Indian society by highlighting the problems of an
unmarried-working woman like the financial, social and emotional ones.

The stories in Diamond Dust are written from an omniscient
point of view. Out of the nine stories, five are set in Canda and England
four in India. They are conspicuous for their remarkable mood and
atmosphere and insight into the subtle working of the human mind.
**Small Betrayals**

Small Betrayals, a collection of some short and beautiful stories, examine the everyday people and their subtle nuances in the character, the pathetic craving of the inner soul of both men and women, wild with uncontrollable longings for sex; obsession with beauty; the protagonists' discovery of themselves, a newly married couple and their so many mutual problems.

“Voice”, the introductory story reflects the mother-daughter relationship. Manik, the younger daughter, was first a doll in her matriarchal house and discovers that people to whom she has surrendered her life take very little notice of her individual desires. Manik never tried to voice her singing talent but submits herself to the will of her mother. She represents a class who relauntly suffers but never grows up. The story also highlights how a familial environment promotes or suppresses the inborn talent of a child. Her presence is marginalised and her self-esteem is crushed by none other than her own mother—the biological creator. Manik’s identity is much recognized in small measures by her own offspring’s. The story ends on her passive resignation to her mother’s dictate “Be a housewife” even though she is ready to make a beginning on the inspirational feed of her children.

The story projects Manik’s indecisive bent of mind. It reveals the ugly aspect of poor parenting. The reaction of Manik taking a back-seat at her mother’s retort reveals how cruel a mother could be unknowingly
and Sumantai is the most admired owing to her beautiful looks the talented singer is therefore the under-privileged.

“Motor Cycle” presents a realistic picture of man woman relationships in the background of a cruel and callous conservative patriarchal family, which creates obstacles in the path of love between Pesi, the Parsee bachelor and Mohini, a Hindu teenage girl. Shobha De’ also presents a modern woman attitude towards her right, she asserts her claim and retorts wherever necessary. Pesi is married to Mohini, yet he is opposed to Hindu rites and customs. The story takes a serious turn when Mohini goes to the temple and Pesi awaits outside, when Mohini comes out of the temple, she offers Pesi some Prasad – a few grains of sugar and a piece of coconut.

Pesi declined hastily. He couldn’t bear to have any not with all those flies buzzing around Monini instead on putting a small piece of the half bitten coconut in his mouth. Pesi reluctantly allowed himself to accept it when Mohini wasn’t looking, he removed it surreptitiously and threw it onto the dusty ground ...

(Shobha De, Small Betrayals, 20)

De’ presents a confrontation between love and religion. But we should not forget that love is more powerful and more sensitive than a religious conservatism.
“The Fair” one is a brief story that describes the protagonist’s obsession with beauty and his cravings to visualize the anatomy of fair sex. Indu was a simple woman married to Godbole. He was a man of medium height and ordinary looks. He was drawn towards a Parsee woman. He developed a habit of watching the woman from his window. He always longed to catch a glimpse of that lady. Shobha De beautifully presents the human nature.

“The Decision” draws the picture of a domestic problem through some fine images and symbols. Manisha is insensitive towards her mother-in-law and her husband because she has been an object of constant neglect by her mother. A mother must be an embodiment of love and affection, nourishment, and creativity. Mohan, the central figure of the story, goes to Washington, but Manisha, being a lady of idiosyncratic attitude, rejects adaptability. There is a great gap between the attitude of both the husband and wife. Manisha made up her mind not to pay a visit to Washington. This shocked her mother and then followed a hot discussion between the daughter and mother. The mother is so furious that she begins to hurl abuse and insult her in a firm and loud voice which sounded unnatural to Manisha’s ears. This makes her so insensitive towards her husband and everything. Right from her birth, she has been an object of constant neglect. Psychologically, the mind of a child is sensitive to sights of events or horror of cruelty or callous treatment of the elders, such happenings can cause aberration. Shobha De, a great observer of men and manners, very aptly observes Mohan’s unsatisfied longingness for sexual urge, owing to Manisha’s split personality.
"The Trip" portrays the character of Ritika with wild and uncontrollable longings. She was sick of self-deception. She loved and served her family whole heartedly. Hiten her husband was a simple, self-satisfied man.

(Valamiki Ramayan)

Indian woman should be devoted to her husband by Mansa, Vaccha and Karma but Ritika has hours of fascination for strange desires to leave her family, and elope in an unknown world, but the trip to Dubai makes her realize her mistake and she regrets for her behaviour. The trip to Dubai leads to self-realization; a journey back 'home' where the long neglected duty is again assimilated with sincerity, commitment and conscientiousness.

"The Transfer" reads like a conventional story, a Bengali family transferred to Bombay from Calcutta faces a number of problems. Piyali the central character fails to adjust in Bombay. Being conservative she believes that men are superior and showers extra care and concern towards her son. Her patriarchal adoration is the focus of the story. This short story presents a real picture of the agony and inconveniences of the people when they are transferred.

"The Bar Man" is a reminiscence of the protagonist Santosh. He happens to visit Bombay after a gap of the fifteen years and fails to
recognizes the same city. He was the captain of the football team, a
gymnast, a basketball player and also a good actor. The story begins
with a flash/back technique. Santosh tries to remember his youthful days
when he was the captain of rugby team at the Bombay Gymkhana. His
eyes haunt for Chetan who is described by De as ‘divinely Chiselled, the
most outstanding & sculpted human being”. He again pays a visit to
Bombay Gymkhana but missed the earlier warmth and cosines.

“Lines” - Shobha De again employs the flashback technique
for describing the life of Simran, the major character. She is a widow, a
mother of three grown up sons, and has dedicated her time only in
adorning her beauty, for Simran, “beauty was commitment” – “A
life-long commitment”. Twice a year Simran travelled to England and
Europe to buy creams, the latest anti-ageing, anti-wrinkle, collagen-rich,
Lanolin-enriched gooey concoctions, by international cosmetic houses.
The three sons frequently speculated amongst themselves about their
mother’s love life. After the death of her husband a number of suitors
proposed her remarriage but she rejected. Her life, which was controlled
by her husband’s whims, being wealthy, beautiful and celebrity, with a
pour of innumerable proposals. Simran was drawn to Satya whom she
surrenders to realise the earlier sexual sensibility. Her second trial, also
fail her, experience with Satya further intensifies her disappointment. Now
she longed for concern, care, worship and passion from her lover but
Satya failed. On her way to London she happened to meet Amitava. Once
again mesmerized by the looks she surrenders to retaste and again the same disappointment. This is a much bitter taste, Simran renounced carnal sex forever. To appendage new meaning to life Simran engages herself to adorning herself with all sorts of beauty aids.

"Repeat Performance" This story describes the life of Ashish who was a successful actor but was a failure in real life. He was not good at studies his parents wanted him to be a businessman but he was not interested. Ashish's talent was recognized by his dramatics teacher. It became a part of his morning ritual to stand before the bathroom mirror and repeat, "I am actor, I'm an actor".

(Shobha De, Small Betrayals, 127)

After the great deal of struggle in the film-world he became an established actor. His first wife left him as she failed to make adjustments with him. The daily repetition made him believe that it was his magic formula and that always help him in his performance. Ashish married a second time. Ashish was busy and his secretary found hard to give producers any date for two years. His parents retired to a life of seclusion on the hills as his father suffered a third heart attack. Ashish was also disturbed by the death of his sister Soni in a car accident. He was busy in film-world and Ambika with her interior business, having no time or spaces for one another.

Ambika was always insecure as far as his marriage was concerned she pretended to be happily married but her disappointment
further multiplied as knowing about homosexual relation of her husband.

Her husbands regularly return late in the night, and had no communication with Ambika but loved to have drinks. This created void in her life. Once Ashish returned late in the night quite perplexed and sweating. He wanted his wife's concern, love and affection but she in turn could not forget her suffering and tensions caused by his negligence.

He was suffering with cancer but this did not shock Ambika. The shrill laughter of his wife echoed in his ears and he locked himself in the room and enacted the real climax by putting end to his life. Thus the performance in real life has no retakes. The emotional life of husband and wife is explored by De which lacked love, understanding care and concern. Ashish death is a rejection of a life gone disarrayed.

"Fern lady" depicts the life of modern human beings. Who have lost its values. Dheeraj, the protagonist worked with an ad agency. He lived a frivolous life given to parties. Dheeraj was the most haunted man by the ladies. He married twice but still he was drawn towards other woman: Shobha De' tries to paint the complex nature of modern human beings. He even went to the extend of putting his life in danger, inorder to enjoy close proximity with Sheweta. Thus Dheeraj has no moral nature and he takes a wrong course of life.

"The Bindi" deals with a traumatic experience of the protagonist, Sushma, who defied the wishes of her parents by marrying Asif, a Muslim boy. It also presents more than other things a harrowing and terrible experience of a newly married couple in horrendous night
during the Hindu-Muslims riots in Bombay. Sushma, a Hindu girl, a teacher in a public school had to face so many unbearable taunts, insults and abuse of her Hindu friends and colleagues, her neighbours, her servants and even her own parents, suffering from the disease of biogotism and fundamentalism when Sushma puts before her parents his proposal for her marriage with Asif, a Muslim boy who loves her dearly, her parents become wild with anger.

If you are thinking of that man, forget it we will never accept this marriage. Think of the family sometimes. These sorts of marriages never really work... you'll be miserable. Besides, nobody will marry your sister. People from our community will shun us. Don't be so utterly foolish.

(Shobha De', Small Betrayals. 195)

Mushtaq return to his duties after twenty days looking sheepish unable to meet the eyes of his colleagues. Though he is very devoted to his work, yet people begin to suspect him only because of his Muslim identity Mushtaq who had been deputed to the sports field to keep an eye on the young athletes. But the bomb-blast' in Bombay has made the mind of the people a store house of suspicion and contempt against the Muslim community in general and Mushtaq in particular. All the prominent characters like Sushma, Mushtaq and Asif have to undergo not only the physical torture but also the mental torture.
“Diwali” depicts the much-awaited Diwali of rebellion in the life of the protagonist Kalindi. The problem of career women is described and the constant humiliation by man at home. Suresh always accused Kalindi for being callous and negligent.

Kalindi was a role model for others, with a gorgeous husband, a perfect family and attractive career. She never failed in her duties, but Suresh hated her wife’s self-sufficiency. With tears in her eyes she would find refuge in her children’s comics or in their bedroom, but never argued. Like a typical Indian woman she performed her duties very efficiently, but never received words of appreciation or love from her husband. She wanted to analyze her husband’s bitter articulation. Suresh questioned her; “what’s the problem? Are you unhappy? Suffering I don’t like unpleasant faces around me a come home tired after working all day... he expects a smile. Relaxation. Not his nonsense..."

(Shobha De, Small Betrayals, 145)

Kalindi revealed “I’m sick of your bulging, sick of your rudeness, sick of your threats, sick of your accusations”.

(Shobha De, Small Betrayals, 145)
Suresh failed to understand his wife instead asked her to go where she can experience happiness Diwali brought a ray of hope and Kalindi made preparation for the festival and bought gifts for Suresh and children but Suresh remained indifferent. She waited for her husband’s return to her children and to herself but her efforts were futile. She missed her husband’s nagging as she was habituated to all these things. But she regained her strength and wanted to be strong and self-sufficient not pathetic and defeated. Kalandi is therefore an attempt to recount once life and motivation.

“Flowers” Vandana is the major character, deceived by her husband Vasant and is left to her fate in the hospital. Her birth proved inauspicious for her father as he suffered a heavy loss at the stock exchange. Vandana’s stars were cursed for her father’s death. Her elopement with Vasant further adds to their sufferings. He was a philanderer and was in the habit of going on mysterious business trips without leaving contact numbers.

Vandana was the youngest child of Mr. and Mrs. Gokhale she was the apple of Mrs. Gokhale’s eyes. Vandana’s hospitalization was a great shock to the family. Vasant was of no help to her dying wife. He proved to be a wrong choice. “Marriage was such a complicated business countless veils screened its ugly realities and protected the partners by making them accomplices”.

(Shobha De, Small Betrayals, 159)
Vandana like a true devoted Indian wife wanted her mother to have no hatred towards her husband. “He is loving and kind...and...funny...He makes me laugh. He tells me jokes. Do you know he even, he even washes my hair sometime?

(Shobha De, Small Betrayals, 160)

Mrs. Gokhale wanted her daughter to have peaceful death, clinging on to her illusions, loving the man who had brought her nothing but sorrow. It was her anniversary Vandana wanted her mother to bring flowers, and selected sari with orange motifs. She wanted her hair to be decked with flowers but there was hardly any hair left on her head. Vandana was asleep but her mother was worried seeing her daughter asleep for more than two hours. The nurse was called and Vandana was declared dead, Vasant remained unperturbed by this personal loss.

Shobha De’ beautifully presents the suffering and mental turmoil of Vandana caused by the indifferent attitude of her husband. Flower represents Vandana who is crushed down by her husband. Her devotion is explained and she continues to love and worship her husband even though she is treated no better than a door-mat. The emotional sufferings of Mrs. Gokhale is also picturized by De with much compassion.

“Late Arrival” The story describes Madhuri’s longing for a male child, which led her to be the mother of eight children. Suresh, her husband was a school teacher with a meagre salary to feed his eight...
children was quite difficult. All efforts of Suresh were futile, as he was destitute for want of money. Madhuri was given to all sorts of superstition and firmly believed that “She would be the proud mother of two handsome rich, strapping sons”

(Shobha De, Small Betrayals. 172)

Amla was born, but she was not heartily received by her mother. Amla was only her father’s darling. The whole family except her father treated her with irritation and indifference. Amla, the unattractive infant was left to her own fate. She was an intelligent girl. She failed to grow like a normal girl as physically being very weak, her marriage delayed whereas her sisters were married due to their good looks. She was considered abshakuni or inauspicious. Her life had been a series of denials. She was forced to study in the bathroom. Suresh’s death was a great shock to the family. Hiten the only son moved to live with his in-laws. Amla started earning and went on attending her ailing mother. She wanted to continue her higher studies and aimed at scholarship.

Amla was drawn towards Srinivasan her teacher. She took extra care in dressing herself and Madhuri was angry with such transformation. She was tired hearing her mother’s ugly comments and her sister’s indifferent attitude made her quite lonely. To sift matters out she wanted to Srinivasan’s house, she happened to meet Mrs. Srinivasan’s jolt that turned her love world topsy-turvy.
On her way back she happens to meet her teacher and sobbingly explains the matter but Srinivasan took her to the secluded dark place and thus seduced her. This molestation leaves a deep scar on the heart of the tender frail little girl.
Interpreter of Maladies

*Interpreter of Maladies* is a collection of nine stories that deal with the characters from Bengal, Boston, Calcutta, and other locales of U.S. This collection of short stories deals with the modern and material world. Jhumpa Lahiri treats human relationship in her fictional world with a rare distinctiveness. The stories are rich in details of Indian life and of cultural values and customs. All the stories in the collection offer a wonderful variety of experiences gathered largely from the cultural clashes rippling directions. The stories chronicle the trauma and sufferings of the Indian settled abroad, who fail to find their identity in a world where they cannot have sense of belongingness. She portrays faithfully the trauma of cultural dislocation, disorientation and displacement suffered by the millions of "exiled Indians", and they try desperately to balance themselves between "home and abroad" Lahiri has done her best to interpret the maladies of their major issues.

The opening story "A Temporary Matter" portrays an ontological condition dealing with the conjugal crisis of a young couple, Shobha and Shukumar. The decline of their mutual attachment in Boston prepares the readers for the problems of self-exile. Memories of Indian come in their intimate conversation.

"It's like India", Shobha said, watching him tend his make shift candelabra. "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...

(Interpreter of Maladies, 11)

This story is an in-depth study of human psychology. The Americanized Bengali couple exhibits the trends of typical postcolonial diaspora where the characters carry different socio-geographical identities with them. Shukumar and Shobha trying to avoid each other, as after the death of their premature child they are facing an inner crisis and are not in a situation to communicate their feelings to each other to the Indian Psyche Marriage is not primarily a sexual partnership; it is as, Bertrand Russell puts it, an “under taking to cooperate in the procreation and rearing of children”. A child cements the bond of marriage without a child marriage, is considered banal and incomplete.

“Temporary Matter” records the process of restoration of faith after a long dividing doldrum, a threat to the otherwise gloomy conjugality of unwanted interdependency between Shukumar and Shobha. Shukumar with his elusive nature and Shobha with her professional specificity create discord that prevails for a moderate length of time finally devours all unhappiness, leaving fertile bond to revive the long lost hope and re-assemble conjugal bliss. Consequently all mental doubts and apprehensions that cloud their life’s guide- posts are unwedded and the aesthetics of good compensates for the temporary loss of happiness.
“When Mr. Pirzada came to Dine” epitomizes universal oneness vishwabandhutva, the elixir of peaceful and perfect living. Here moralistic orientation forms the basis of constructive living, along with secular rationality and social solidarity. These human values infuse ‘Positivism’ in a wretched father of seven daughters left all to their fate along with their mother, in Dacca. The elements of Paramartha surfaces on every page vibrating a reader with the throbs of a heart in destitute.

The title story “Interpreter of Maladies” in an in-depth study of socio human relationship. The story is suggestive of the need to communicate to others, the pain of abnormal loneliness and imprisoned emotions. The thematic denouement is also clear in order to overcome the maladies, one has to interpret them and seek refuge within one’s own self. Mr. and Mrs. Das along with their children Tina, Ronny and Bobby are on their visit to the sun Temple at Konark. Being the natives of America, Mr. Kapasi an escort to the sun temple finds them quaint in their dress and interpersonal relationship against the shade of an excellent imagery the story reads hurriedly as the curiosity mounts with the advancement of narration by the omniscient narrator. The long tedious journey is made pleasant by the experiences of the interpreter and by his recollections of his past marital life, against his observation of the cordiality between Mr. and Mrs. Das. Here Lahiri pinpoints the large heartedness of Indians in encompassing even foreigners within their socio cultural realm of interactions further under the effect of ‘Universal
Energy’ Mrs. Das confides in Mr. Kapasi that bobby is not Mr. Das son but of his friend to whom she surrendered in a serial of passion when her husband was out on his daily work. The loom of ‘Pativratadharma’ nags her and she longs for ‘Atmasamarpana’. She says: “About my secret and about how terrible it makes me feel. I feel terrible looking at my children and at Raj always terrible.”...

(Interpreter of Maladies, 65)

And further she adds: “It means that I’m tired of feeling so terrible all the time. Eight years. Mr. Kapasi, I’ve been in pain.”...

(Interpreter of Maladies, 65). Her eight years of suffering from guilt and waiting for purgation comes to finality with a spiritual catalysis after her visit to Konark and Khandagiri.

“A Real Durwan” is a beautiful synthesis of thought and character. A note of despair prevails all through the length of the story to be resolved at the end by a marked optimism.

The story begins with the physical details as a conventional story does. Exhaustive physical details structure her as a visual entity. “She was Sixty-four years old, with hair in knot no larger than a walnut and she looked almost as narrow from the front as she did from the side.”

In fact, the only thing that appeared three-dimensional about Boori Ma was her voice brittle with sorrows, as tart as curds, and shrill enough to grate meat from a
coconut, twice a days as she swept the stair well the
details of her plight and losses suffered her deportation
to Calcutta after partition...

(Interpreter of Maladies, 70)

Boori Ma in “A Real Durwan” is not so fortunate as Bibi.
Her compromise from affluency to rags and alms is of a greater degree
and unprotesting, yet she is turned out from the building the people
living in which she served. It was her helplessness and the resident’s
selfishness that kept the compromise working. ‘A Real Durwan’ puts two
phases of life seeped in apparent hostility at opposite poles. Old age
emblematic of immense reciprocity, undemanding volunteer and a patient
sacrifice stands in opposition to the adulthood which rejects all threats
to ego and is self interested in its motive. But these two phases give a
complete whole to life which undergoes changes as one passes form on
period to another.

“Boori Ma” is an instance of the forlorn and ill
accommodated self who is stifled by the psychic atrocities of her own
countrymen. Her fate in the form of social-evil adds to her detioriation
along with physical decline, which finally culminates in a disaster. The
insensitive neighbourhood drives her out of the little room she had, and
this violence comes as a cultural shock to her. Her wait for the Dalals is
her vision, a dream and a vision.
Her mornings were long, her afternoons longer. She could not remember her last glass of tea. Thinking neither of her hardships nor of earlier times. She wondered when the Dalals would return from her new bedding...

*(Interpreter of Maladies, 81)*

"Boori Ma" is a nameless character and symbolically it represents the ancient Indian culture, which had its root in 'Vishwasbandhutava'.

In "Sexy", Miranda wakes out of her cross cultural adultary when that relationship, hanging on the word 'Sexy' is seen in a different light when a child defines the word as "loving someone for don’t know." Miranda’s compromise is an implied one with the option of a serious bond kept open; till then, the psychological and emotional, bond is just in the seed from where as the carnal bond is much flourished. The possibility of the compromise teaching a mature stage crashes prematurely.

Dev and Miranda are animal passion against social norms but because human have learnt the trick of deception; Miranda knows it but so enamoured by Dev that at the crux of lust does not realize the futility of being involved with a married man. A sense, drown upon her, she stays for a day with Laxmi’s cousin whom she baby-sits for they have gone for a film show. Dev’s allurement loses its magic and Miranda is guilty of being a home-wrecker. She avoids Dev intentionally and purposefully takes up fresh engagements to fill the void which being new
is poignantly painful. Dev's wife as a contrast to Miranda is ceremonial love sanctified by religion and society. She stands for well lessened domestically and Dev is her belief in honest participation in conjugality. She is suggested as perfect feminine India beauty, an image of purity, sacrifice and sanctity in marriage. Perversity and adultery are nowhere existing words. Laxmi and Laxmi's cousin represent the marriage structure a fruitful conjugal bliss or broken family and estranged or separated spouses. Miranda represents the attack that reduces conjugality to rubbles. Miranda mending her way is suggestive of the ways marriage may survive after a short turmoil. She can be imaged as a temporary illness affecting the health of domesticity.

"The Blessed House" shows the impact of the blessedness of religion to a proper recipient. Conservative attitude is not rigid adherence and practice of religion. "Blessed House" which dwells on the same difficult situation of husband wife tense relationship Lahiri has presented a couple which tries to cope up with a new world they have just entered. They are Sanjeev and Twinkle. Their arranged marriage had not given them sufficient time to understand each other. Sanjeev fails in tactfully dealing with Twinkle's obsession with the religious objects. Twinkle's bubbling enthusiasm changes the fact of finding certain objects in a new house into a journey of anticipating pleasure, which she successfully communicates to her guests, who join her to exploring the attic. Sanjeev's acquiescence gives us the message that one has to make adjustments in order to have a happy marriage.
The story contains tender emotions, which are dramatized, and here lies the beauty of art which can “enrich and diversify” our emotional life. Laurence Perrine speaks about the fiction of durable insights as:

.... Represent something more than mere intellectual comprehension; otherwise the story does noting that cannot be done as well or better by psychology history or philosophy. Fiction derives its unique value from its power to give ‘felt’ insights. Its truth take a deeper hold on our minds because they are conveyed through our feelings...

(Perriene Laurence, story and structure, 186)

“In the Treatment of Bibi Haldar”, Bibi, suffering from a mysterious ailment is not totally reconciled to her fate. She suffers struggles alone and ultimately, with the birth of a son whose father’s name she would not tell she gets cured and has her business running well. Though the limitations and hindrances are many, Bibi does not succumb but retains her individuality which is evident in sexual as well as in professional desires. It is her grit that makes the compromise a happier one. Lahiri’s magical realism turns optimistic in this story, showing that a determined person can turn compromises to his or her benefit.

Bibi Haldar represents the misery of marriageable girls who are denied the bliss of marriage if the family members shirk from the
responsibility of fixing alliance. She communicate her emotional pain with those in the neighbourhood. The narrator describes her desolation reciprocated by the external world as:

Apart from keeping her company, apart from soothing her woes, apart from keeping an occasional eye on her, there was little we could do to improve the situation. None of us were capable of understanding such desolation. Some days, after siesta, we combed out her hair, remembering now and then to change the part in her scalp so that it would not grow too broad. At her request we powdered the down over her lips and throat, pencilled definition into her brows, and walled her to the banks of the fish pond where our children played cricket in the afternoon. She was still determined to lure a man...

(Interpreter of Maladies, 166-67)

Bibi Haldar delivers a baby without being knotted in wedlock and the child fills her vacuum with thrill engagements and structures her mode of living.

... She raised the boy and ran a business in the storage room and we did what we could to help. For years afterward we wondered who in our town had disgraced her. A few of our servants were questioned, and in tea
stalls and bus stands, possible suspects were debated and dismissed. But there was no point carrying our investigation. She was to the best of our knowledge cured...

(Interpreter of Maladies, 172)

The story has a rare beauty and is an affirmation of fellow feelings. The unceremonious blessedness that destiny award to Bibi Haldar speaks large of the strange ways through which one becomes amiable with despotic life. The quirk of circumstances converts the no good individual. Here happiness or unhappiness ceases to matter and soul-searing music closes the story by the torrential flow of transcendental experience. Here Lahiri is superbly impressive captivating and compulsively absorbing.

In "The Third and Final Continent" there are incomplete signals and unexpressed feelings between the husband and wife. There are no misunderstandings, only reservations and inhibitions. But the facades are broken in the presence of a greater, decisive power, the warm radiance of Mrs. Croft’s goodness which makes cultural differences between her and the spouses vanish and the ice is thawed out with her succinct statement for the wife, Mala: She is a perfect lady! This creates in the narrator an empathy for his bride. Bhaswati Chakravorty is very correct when she says, “In Lahiri’s narratives, difference is stimulating.
Its role is perhaps best symbolised in The Third and Final Continent, in which the presence of a friendship between a newly married, emotionally uncommitted Indian husband and wife."

I know that my achievement is quite ordinary. I am not the only man to seek his fortune far from home, and certainly I am not the first. Still there are times I am bewildered by each mile I have traveled, each meal I have eaten, each person I have known, each room in which I have slept...

(Interpreter of Maladies, 198)

Nevertheless, the sophistication of cultural breeding and the subtlety of human thoughts make a well-adjusted living.

Lahiri's "Mrs. Sen's presents a young Indian woman who emigrates to America after marriage. Hers is a poignant story of physical estrangement from her homeland. Having nothing to do, she grows lonely and decides to make compromise. In Mrs. Sen's there are two emotional and psychological compromises. One by the boy, Eliot, with the indifference of his parents and the other of Mrs. Sen with her loneliness and her husband's apathy to her emotional needs.

We find in Jhumpa Lahiri a writer of high calibre. She has made use of settings, environment, points of views, plots and characteristics not only to interpret the maladies of cultural and human relationships but also to fill in the gaps in them.
Works Cited


