Chapter-I

Introduction

Culture, of course, is the way of life of a particular people living together in one place.

-T.S. Eliot

Cross-cultural transaction has received a pronounced impetus since the emergence of the modernist movement in the beginning of the twentieth century. Multiculturalism is now a Universal phenomenon. No country can afford to insulate itself against cultural diffusion. In olden times, the Western culture was practically confined to a certain territory, and likewise, the Eastern culture had also a limited area to flourish with hardly any possibility of mutual exchange between them. The advancement in many areas made men move fast and fly to the far off regions. This coming together meant enhanced interaction and mutual cooperation between nations in the field of industry, technology, information and education.

The history of human evolution and the rise and the fall of various major civilizations of the world bring home the truth that cultural dissemination has been an integral part of human history. In the twentieth century, its pace has gained tremendous increase. George Steiner tells: ‘The modernist movement can be seen as a strategy of permanent exile’ (26). Alvin Tofflar has spoken of the modern man as ‘the new nomad uninterested in putting down roots nowhere’ (74).
Though these statements seem to be an exaggeration, they contain enough grains of truth. And it is more so in the context of a commonwealth country. Cultural dualism is a contingent condition. Every culture has its own peculiarities and predilections which evoke a mixed response in one from a different cultural milieu.

The word ‘culture’ is well known to all. To answer a question ‘What is culture?’ is very difficult since culture is too vast and baffling a term to be precisely defined. The word ‘culture’ is derived from the Latin ‘cultura’ which stems from ‘Colere’ meaning ‘to cultivate’. It generally refers to patterns of human activity and the symbolic structures that give such activity significance and importance. True culture has been defined as the ability to appreciate the other culture. Montague claims, “While this particular ability has many sources, it is generally derived from varied, sympathetic and understanding contacts between people who differ from each other in some respects” (96). Harris makes it clear that like biological changes, cultural contact ‘requires adaptation for survival and development’ (350).

Generally, culture consists of language, ideas, beliefs, customs, codes, institutions, tool, techniques, work of art, rituals, ceremonies and so on. The existence and use of culture depends upon an ability possessed by man alone. The English anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor defines culture aptly:
Culture . . . is that complex whole, which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and other capabilities and habit acquired by man as a member of society. (575)

*Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English* by A.S. Hornby defines culture as ‘advanced development of the human powers, development of the body, mind and spirit by training and experience; all the arts, beliefs, social institutions, . . . characteristics of a community, race, etc., (210).

Several sociologists, anthropologists and men of letters have tried to define culture from time to time. Culture is the learned behaviour of members of a given social group. The following definition from the viewpoint of Hall, the anthropologist, highlights not only what culture is but also what culture does:

Culture is the medium evolved by human to survive.

Nothing is free from cultural influences. It is the keystone in civilization’s arch and is the medium through which all of life’s events must flow. (57)

Critics like Matthew Arnold, Lionel Trilling, F.R. Leavis and Raymond Williams believe that literature is the best medium for preserving and the best vehicle for the transmission of culture from generation to generation, thus forming and perpetuating a tradition in culture. The function of criticism, according to these critics, is to so
interpret literature so that the cultural values inherent in it may not only become evident but also attractive to the mind of man.

However, the most comprehensive interpretation comes from T.S.Eliot, one of the profounders of the modernist movement. Even he seems to be diffident and calls his treatise *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*. In the first paragraph of its ‘Introduction’, Eliot makes his aim clear: ‘My aim is to help to define a word ‘culture’ and its ingredients with a simple proposition – culture may even be described simply as that which makes life worth living’ (27). Thus Eliot sees culture as the way of life as one which affects us and is affected in turn, by our activities. He believes that culture is ideally a whole way of life lived commonly and variously by a whole people.

Nikam, in his attempt to define culture, quotes a translated verse from *Katha Upanised*. In the quest of the imperishable (The good) that one chooses in his culture, according to him, is a quest for the good but it is not good if the quest is not a free choice. The quest and the choice are therefore, the two ingredients of a culture.

There is a difference between civilization and culture. Civilization has reference to an advanced state of society judged on the basis of its culture, science, industry laws, government, wars, transport and communication, architecture and planning of cities. But culture concerns only the intellectual and the human side of all achievement. Civilization pertains to the entire population of a country or nation while the culture is concerned with a chosen few who are enlightened and civilization may sometimes act
against culture. That is why Eliot categorizes culture of a society into two, as higher and lower, depending upon the educational accomplishments of its members.

To quote him,

> Now there are course higher cultures and lower cultures and the higher cultures in general are distinguished by differentiation of function, so that you can speak of the less cultured and the more cultured strata of society, and finally, you can speak of individuals as being exceptionally cultured. (120)

Eliot believes that there is a close relationship between culture and religion. He asserts: ‘No culture has appeared developed except together with religion . . . culture will appear to be the product of religions, or the religions the product of the cultures’ (13). Also, Eliot thinks that religion is indispensable for culture: “Any religion . . . gives an apparent meaning to life, provides the framework for a culture, and protects the mass of humanity from boredom and despair” (34).

Eliot uses the term ‘Culture’ in three senses. It is evident in the very first chapter of *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*. The term culture has different associations according to whether we have in mind the development of individuals of a group or class or of a whole society (21).
Thus, he maintains that there are three ways of regarding culture as the culture of the individual, as the culture of a group or class, or as the culture of a whole society. Envisaging the interdependence among these three orbits of culture, Eliot observes:

The culture of the individual is dependent upon the culture of a group or class, and that the culture of the group or class is dependent upon the culture of the whole society to which that group or class belongs. Therefore, it is the culture of the society that is fundamental. (21)

Eliot dwells on several channels for the transmissions of culture. He says “The most important channel of transmission of culture remains the family: and when family life fails to play its part, we must expect our culture to deteriorate” (43). The family is the vital channel of cultural transmissions. Nobody fully escapes from the kind, or wholly surpasses the degree of culture which he acquired from his early environment.

Eliot also dwells at length on constellation and satellite culture, simply because in England there exists at least a national culture which has some affinity (religious, linguistic, racial and cultural) with the culture of the different class or group of that nation. These things common among the culture of individual group or society open the gate for formation of national culture to which Eliot refers as ‘constellation’ a
product of different satellite cultures. His concept of ‘constellation’ and satellite culture has a broader function to fulfill his dream of unity of European continent.

Trilling, another noted man of letters, opines of culture thus:

…a unitary complex of interacting assumptions, mode of thoughts, habits and styles, which are connected in secret as well as overt ways with the practical arrangement of his society, because they are not brought to consciousness, they are not opposed in their influence over man’s mind. (125)

Raymond Williams, known for his cultural obsessions, finds fault with Eliot’s concept of culture for its ignoring ‘the economic factor’ (236). Such suppressions of the fact have been noted by the eminent critic as a major flaw in his thinking. Yet another perceptive critic Terry Eagleton has intelligently compared the two contestants of culture in a perspicuous way. His comments underline various shreds of culture, they can be profitably reproduced verbatim:

Both Eliot and Williams are concerned to contrast a common with a uniform culture: both stress the unevenness and variety of any lived common experience. But for Eliot the unevenness springs ironically from a quite rigid structure of levels; all will
not experience alike because all will not participate alike. Williams, while agreeing that full participation by one individual in the whole culture will be impassable, locates the essential variety of development in the cultures content, rather than simply in its form; a culture will reveal the unevenness of any process of growth which engages the activity of a great number of men, but it is the variety of what is created, rather than the levels of conscious creation which is seen as primary. (286)

The different interpretations of the term culture and its components demonstrate that there is absolutely no possibility of reaching at a uniform tangible pattern in this respect. Diversity of cultural assumptions and complications provides little scope for total assimilation. In cases where cultural dissimilarities are much sharper in terms of ethnic, racial, linguistic and religious determinants, the issue gets irredeemably complex for the immigrant to cope with. One of the major problems faced by many individuals in today’s world is finding oneself displaced from one’s own culture. The sense of dislocation is a process where the individual feels geographically, culturally, linguistically and psychologically estranged. This process is what the researcher defines as cultural clash.
These days, the problem of migration is different from that of prehistoric and early times. Now, people leave their country willingly under certain motives. But in early times it was not migration at all; it was the transportation of third world people as labourers to a slave island. That is why, today, people migrate according to T.S Eliot ‘only with a part of the total culture in which so long as they remained at home, they participated’ (64).

There is so much of cultural mixing in the post-colonial era that it has given birth to ‘hybrid culture’. In every country, the highest class, especially in India, is worse affected by this phenomenon. Ashcroft and his colleagues observe:

Post colonial culture is inevitably a hybrid phenomenon involving a dialectical relationship between the grafted European cultural systems and an indigenous ontology, with its impulse to create or recreate an independent local identity. Such construction or reconstruction occurs as a dynamic interaction between European hegemonic and peripheral subversion of them. (195)

The post modern culture is a capitalistic culture. It is so because of American dominance as Jameson convincingly puts it:

Post modern culture is the internal and super structural
expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world: in this sense, as throughout class history the underside of culture is blood, torture, death and terror. (5)

Migration is as old as human history. The Bible talks about the exodus of Israelites in the Old Testament from Egypt to Canan, the Promised Land. Exodus of a different kind and for a different purpose takes place every day in different parts of the world. The term diaspora, assimilated from Greek into English in the late twentieth century, was initially used for the dispersion of Jews from Israel, but nowadays it carries numerous connotations. ‘Dia’ means ‘across’ and Sperian means ‘to sow’ or ‘scatter seeds’. The term diaspora now refers to displaced communities which have been dislocated from their homeland through migration or immigration or exile. Diaspora is a dislocation from a geographical location of origin and relocation in another territory or country.

Diaspora in the fast changing world refers to the hordes of displaced persons and communities moving across the globe. To be precise, it is used as an umbrella term to refer to all such movements and dislocation from the native country/culture.

Since being diasporic is a matter of personal choice, the journey of life becomes an exploration of an individual’s sense of self and a quest for the liberation of the human spirit. They relate to the country of origin and their immigrant status in different ways. Ultimately, it is creating one’s own cultural space in the adopted homeland that
matters. In other words, diaspora is all about creating new identities, achieving cultural hybridity, acquiring spaces for growth, resolving cultural conflicts and forging a new culture, either composite or plural.

Diasporic writings occupy a significant position around cultures and countries. Diasporic literature addresses issues like identity, culture, hybridity, nationality, home, homelessness mimicry and binarism like self/other, insider/outsider and margin/centre.

Identity is an important issue in literatures of diaspora. Stuart Hall contends that identity is not an accomplished fact but it is incomplete. Hall says:

There are at least two different ways of thinking about cultural identity. The first position defines ‘cultural identity’ in terms of one shared culture, a sort of collective ‘one true self’ hiding inside the many other; more superficial or artificially imposed ‘selves’, which people with shared history and ancestry hold in common… Cultural identity, in this second sense is a matter of becoming as well as of being. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical,
they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous play of history, culture and power. (223-37)

The word ‘hybrid’ has both biological and botanical origins. In Latin, it means the offspring of a tame sow and a wild boar. In the 19th century, ‘hybridity’ was used to refer to physiological phenomenon. In the 20th century cultural meaning has been reactivated. In language, the term ‘hybridity’ delineates the way in which language, even within a single sentence, can be double-voiced, double-accented and double-styled. ‘Hybridity’ describes the condition of the language’s fundamental ability to be simultaneously the same but different.

Homi Bhaba considers ‘hybridity’ as the movements in which the discourse of colonial authority loses its univocal grip on meaning and finds itself open to the trace of the language of the other, enabling the critic to trace complex movements of disarming alterity in the colonial text. He defines hybridity as ‘a problematic of colonial representation . . . that reverses the effect of the colonialist disavowal, so that other denied knowledge enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of authority’ (156).

‘Hybridity’ describes a process in which the single voice of colonial authority undermines the operation of colonial power by inscribing the disclosing the trace of the other so that it reveals itself as double-voiced. While ‘hybridity’ denotes a fusion,
it also describes a dialectical articulation. Hybridity works simultaneously in two ways. It creates new spaces, structures and scenes and at the same time interviews as a form of subversion, translation and transformation. In other words, hybridization involves fusion, the creation of a new form. At its simplest, ‘hybridity’ implies a disruption and forcing together of any unlike living things, grafting a vine or a rose onto a different root stock, making the difference into sameness. It converts difference into sameness, and sameness into difference. Hybridity is a key term in the sense it suggests the impossibility of essentialism.

The focus in the diasporic writing is on the themes like nostalgia for home that exists only in memory, failed quests and thwarted dreams, conditions of dislocations and loneliness, the identity crisis, painful quest for the lost ‘self’ marital conflicts, as spouses adapt to the new culture differently, the experience of racism, humiliation and physical torture and on the double consciousness which a sense of having two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strings, two warring ideals, etc.

Diaspora writing is different from immigrant writing or exile or expatriate writing. It diverges from immigrant writing in its pre-occupation with the attachment to the homeland. The immigrant writing without ignoring the homeland focuses on the current experiences in the adopted home. Expatriate writing is immersed in the situation at home and the circumstances that prolong the individual’s exile.

The theme of exile, immigration and alienation is common in the 20th century literary scene. Lost, lonely and drifting characters parade before us and their
mechanical march point to the absence of meaningful relationship in the era of
technological development and global interaction. Political, cultural, social,
economical and geographical dislocations have made each man an exile. Cultural
alienation has become a universal phenomenon. Cultural interaction results in the
anguish of alienation pulled by two cultures, caught between exile and home coming.
Rendered homeless both at home and abroad, they get often doomed to a pallid,
savorless and asocial existence.

This flux of intercultural reality is a recurring theme in post colonial fictional
writings owing to the close intercultural contact imposed on Indian by Great Britain.
The incompatibility of the Indian and the English appears to be a concrete variant of
the themes of cultural encounter.

K.R.S. Iyengar sees the English language as a ‘Suez Canal for intellectual
intercourse between East and West’ (74).

Cross-cultural transaction is an interactive and dialogic; two way process rather
than a simple active-passive one. It is a process involving complex negotiation and
exchange. In the post modern climate, the notion of America as a melting pot for
different cultures and the need for assimilation into what was thought to be the
American culture is passé.

The issues of diaspora, globalization, consumerism, transnationalism, cultural
hybridity, alienation and identity crisis have become the leit – motif of most post
colonial literatures. The self, dislocated in space and time from its roots, has a homing instinct, the desire to discover its ‘inbetweenness’ in a transnational and transcultural space. Almost all important Indian writers carving out novels and short stories in English have transmuted the encounter of cultures in their works. Writers like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Kamala Markandeya, Ruth Prawar Jhabvala, Anita Desai, Gita Hariharan, Namita Gokale, Shoba De, Arundhati Roy, Bharathi Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri deal with themes of clash between tradition and modernity, identity crisis, quest for independence, the East-West conflict and cultural transactions. In these writings the quest for identity is not tagged to the self alone. It goes beyond the self to issues of culture and linguistics. All these factors give rise to emergent trends and tendencies like hybrid cultural forms among the migrants. The contemporary literary stage of Indian English writing is comprised of women writers. Women writers have made significant inroads in world literature. The researcher has got interested in the writers of Bharati Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri as both of them deal with the life style, experience and problems of immigrants in their works. The focus of the research is to find out cultural renderings of Bharati Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri through their fictional writings and their achievement of cultural accommodation in the foreign soil. In the context of globalization, the theme is current and has got social relevance. It is an analogical study. The researcher uses the tool of comparison and analysis of cultural transactions of these writers on psychological and emotional grounds. Social conditions and economic compulsions have particularly made these transactions possible. Bharati mukherjee, an Indian-born
American novelist has received considerable critical attention from almost all the quarters of the globe in a relatively short space of thirty years. She has been widely acknowledged as a ‘voice’ of expatriate immigrant sensibility.

Bharati Mukherjee, was born on 27th July, 1940, in a Bengali Brahmin family of Calcutta. Her father Sudhir Lal Mukherjee was a pharmaceutical chemist and her mother Bina Banejee Mukherjee was a housewife. She spent her first eight years as a member of a large expanded family. Shortly after India gained Independence, she lived with her parents and two sisters in London for about three years, where she became fluent in English. In 1951, the family returned to Calcutta and Bharati Mukherjee joined the English speaking Loreto Convent School, run by Irish nuns. She lived with her parents in fairly comfortable circumstances. Bharati Mukherjee completed her B.A. (Hons) in English at the University of Calcutta in 1959. Subsequently, she took her M.A. Degree in English from the University of Baroda in 1961. Later, she joined a course on creative writing programme in the United States and obtained an MFA in creative writing in 1963 and a Ph.D. in English and Comparative Literature in 1969. It was during her stint at the University of Iowa that Bharati Mukherjee met Clark Blaise, the Canadian novelist, professor and journalist and married him in North American style in 1963.

In 1966, the couple moved to Canada and lived there as Canadian citizens till 1980, first in Toronto, then in Montreal, a period that Bharati Mukherjee looks back with pain and anger. However, the couple took a bold decision to move to USA in

Her major concern as a writer has been the life of South-Asian expatriates / immigrants in USA and Canada and the problem of ‘Acculturation and Assimilation’. One could clearly visualize the way she distinguishes an expatriate from an immigrant while the main thrust of expatriation is on the native country and traditions left behind, immigration lays all emphasis on the cultural life of the host country. The expatriate dwells on his ‘ex’ status of the past, while the immigrant celebrates his present in the new country.

A good number of Indian writers have dealt with the experience of the exile. The adaptation of the alien culture has been proved very difficult. Many researchers have taken up any two or three writers of same concern for the research and their angle of research has been focused on the identity crisis or mindset of the immigrants and so on. But they have not attempted to study the aspects of cross cultural transactions in
the fictional writings of Bharati Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri exclusively. Hence, the researcher has taken the select fictional writings of these writers, especially women writers, who have Indian origin with the same concern. This idea of highlighting the same concern of these writers motivated the researcher to make an in-depth study and bring about the similarities and dissimilarities in handling the theme of cultural transactions. Jhumpa Lahiri has created a niche for herself among the writers of the Indian diaspora through the deft handling of the problems of immigrants in an alien land as a result of cultural conflict. Jhumpa Lahiri was born on July 11, 1967 in London to Bengali parents. As a child, Jhumpa Lahiri moved with her family to Rhode Island where Jhumpa Lahiri spent her adolescence. Jhumpa Lahiri went on to attend Barnard College, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in English and later attending Boston University where she got Masters Degree in English, Creative Writing and a Ph.D. in Renaissances studies. She taught creative writing at Boston University.

Jhumpa Lahiri has travelled extensively in India and has experienced the effect of colonialism there as well as experienced the issues of diaspora, as it exists. Jhumpa Lahiri’s debut short story collection, *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), won the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for fiction followed by her first novel *The Namesake* in September, 2003. Her second collection of short stories, ‘Unaccustomed Earth’ was released on April 1, 2008. Apart from being a writer, she has been appointed by US President Barack Obama as a member of the President’s Committee on Arts and Humanities. In
2001, she married Alberto Vourvoulias Bush, a journalist who was then Deputy Editor of *TIME* Latin America. She lives in Brooklyn, New York with her husband and their two children.

Many reviewers have pointed out the contributions and achievements of these writers (Bharati Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri) individually. But a clear cut assessment of the works of these writers from the viewpoint of cross cultural transactions is not perceived.

Bharati Mukherjee identifies herself as an American not because she is ashamed of her past or Indian origin but because her whole adult life has been lived in the US. Her artistic agenda is to write about immigrants who are going through the process of making a home in the US. She writes in the tradition of the immigrant experience rather than the nostalgia of expatriation.

Bharati Mukherjee has published a number of articles, besides eight novels, two volumes of collection of short stories and non-fictional work. The significant ones are *Political Culture and Leadership, Regionalism in Indian Perspective and Immigrant Writing: ‘Give us your maximalist and Beyond multiculturalism: Surviving the nineties’*.

So many full length books have been published on Bharati Mukherjee besides a number of articles, personal interviews and a video presentation produced by Bile Moyers. The first book is Emmanuel S.Nelson’s *Bharati Mukherjee: Critical
Perspective. Twelve essays in the collection interpret Mukherjee’s writings from a variety of critical positions ranging from biographical to post structuralism and from cultural analysis to deconstructive reading.

The second book entitled Bharati Mukherjee is by Fakrul Alam published by Twayne Publishers in 1996. He places Bharati Mukherjee in the context of Indian women immigrant writers. The book is highly resourceful for a scholar on Bharati Mukherjee. The latest book is The Fiction of Bharati Mukherjee: A Cultural Perspective by Nagendra Kumar published by Atlantic Publishers in 2001. The introductory chapter of this book analyses major concept of culture as propounded by eminent writers. Mukherjee’s fiction has been analyzed in three distinct phases, the phase of expatriation, the phase of transition and the phase of immigration. In addition to these books on Bharati Mukherjee, a number of articles have been published in national and international journals. Bhavani Shakuntala in the article “Jasmine: An Immigrant experience” traces the immigrant experience of Jasmine the protagonist. Dhawan R.K’s Introduction: The Fiction of Bharati Mukherjee considers Bharati Mukherjee as one of the best examples of those who depicted the cross cultural crisis. F.A. Inamdar in his article “Man-woman relationship in The Tiger’s Daughter’ and ‘Wife’” describes how the novels reflect the problems faced by immigrants in adapting themselves to American society and their rootlessness as a consequence of their migration.
Itishree Devi, in her article “Negotiating the Gap: Cross-cultural Tension in Bharati Mukherjee’s Short Fiction” examines some of the short stories of Bharati Mukherjee to show the immigrant protagonists’ attempt to assimilate the alien culture and the tensions arising from a process of appropriation and abrogation of trails of other two cultures.

M.L. Pandit in his article “The Indian Middle Women in America: Cross cultural concerns in Bharati Mukherjee’s *The Tigers Daughter* and *Wife*” finds the novels an imaginative rendering of Bharati Mukherjee’s personal experience in going west and the after effects of the cultural shock felt by her personally. C.Sengupta analyses four stories in *The Middle Man and Other Stories* to show how foreign culture works as a catalyst in coming to terms with oneself and how an alienated self finds itself estranged anywhere in the world in his article ‘Asian protagonists in Bharati Mukherjee’s *The Middleman and Other Stories*. Another popular writer Shobha Shinde discusses the dual cultural shock that the two protagonists – Jasmine and Tara are subjected to an account of their shattering dreams (American dream of Jasmine, Indian dream of Tara) and the consequent identity crisis and the final reconciliation to the choice in the article ‘Cross-cultural crisis in *Jasmine and The Tiger’s Daughter*’. S.K.Tikoo in his article “The American Dream: Immigration and Transformation Theme in *The Middle Man and Other Stories*” finds the theme of immigration and transformation at the core of all stories, the immigrants’ trails negating earlier modes of superficial relationship by realizing the American dream.
Jhumpa Lahiri, the youngest of diasporic hierarchy stands prominent as an artist who was considered as one of the 20 best writers under the age of 45. A brief review of select critiques will point to the pattern in the critical exercise.

M. Dolores Herrero discusses the different cultural theories by Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy and Emerson and the implications of globalization in his article ‘Jhumpa Lahiri, the Interpreter and Healer of the maladies of globalization’. In ‘Diasporan Divided Souls and Identity constituting in Jhumpa Lahiri’s The Namesake’ S. Robert Gnanamony has highlighted some of the crises of the immigrant Indians’ experience in the US.

Jeyalakshmi Rao discusses the different themes and narrative style of Lahiri in Interpreter of Maladies in her essay, “Jhumpa Lahiri: A Perceptive Interpreter of Maladies” in poetcrit. John McDermott compares Lahiri’s ‘I’ with Shakespeare’s The Tempest in the article ‘Miranda in Boston: Jhumpa Lahiri’s Sexy and Shakespeare’s The Tempest’. McDermott discusses that Lahiri’s story is that of a new Miranda, a contemporary young woman who has to learn what men can be like and how to find her own way in a ‘brave new world’ without an accompanying Prospero, Ferdinand, Caliban or Ariel.

In ‘Local and Global conflict in Jhumpa Lahiri’s ‘Interpreter of Maladies,’ Dr. Kapil Chaudaha traces the causes and effects of this local/global conflicts and concludes that the discordant elements in different cultures are a major block in achieving world harmony. He says that it is too impractical to think that the core
values of each culture could be fused to fashion a new culture acceptable to all. Francoise Kral analyses the way Brick Lane and The Namesake envisage the consequences of the new world geography on the psyche of migrants in the essay, Shaky Ground and New Territorialities in Bricklane by Monica Ali and The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri. In ‘Interpreting people and places’, Mininanda discusses the stories of Unaccustomed Earth by detailing of people and places, their mood and ambience.

Jessica Olin in her article ‘Out of Sorts’ makes a thematic analysis of Jhumpa Lahiri’s The Namesake and Interpreter of Maladies. A.K. Mukherjee has attempted to study the nine stories of Jhumpa Lahiri, both in its content and form in his essay titled “Jhumpa Lahiri’s ‘Interpreter of Maladies’ A Study”. Rayson K.Alex has explored the concept of ecological niche and discussed displacement from the fundamental niches of land and original homes and also from the realized niches created by diasporic personae in foreign lands in the essay ‘Niche in select short stories of Jhumpa Lahiri’. Ashutosh Dubey discusses in his essay ‘Immigrant Experience in Jhumpa Lahiri’s Interpreter of Maladies’, the diasporic element embedded in it.

In his article ‘Portrayal of Diaspora Experiences in Jhumpa Lahiri’s Interpreter of Maladies’ Tejinder Kaur, has analysed the experiences and maladies of the diaspora presented in short stories of Jhumpa Lahiri’s Interpreter of Maladies. He has also dealt with a few theories on diaspora experiences and identities. Arti Nirmal reflects
upon various issues with reference to Jhumpa Lahiri’s novel *The Namesake*, in which Bengali Indian foods have been shown to have a therapeutic impact on the people of Indian diaspora. The title of the article is ‘Food and Diaspora: A Study of Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Namesake*’. Dr.N.Ramakrishnan and V.Ranjni have jointly presented a paper on the title ‘Immigrant Experience in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Interpreter of Maladies* and *The Namesake*’. They discuss in detail the act of migration, the difference between the first generation immigrants and the second generation immigrants in the writings of Jhumpa Lahiri’s novel as well as in her short stories.

The present research on the select fictional writings of Bharati Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri is an addition to the existing fund of knowledge on these writers. It is attempted to give a comparative study of these two popularly known women writers of India.

The first chapter *Introduction* deals with the aspects of cultural transaction in the recent Indo-Anglican and diasporic fiction. The term culture has been explained and different definitions of great thinkers and critics are given. Critics like T.S.Eliot, Matthew Arnold, Lionel Trilling, F.R.Leavis, Raymond Williams and Homi K.Bhabha’s notion of culture and how literature becomes the best medium for preserving culture are also highlighted. Migration is inevitable in the life of any being. Of course diaspora refers to displacement. It has become a personal choice in the journey of life. Terms like Identity and Hybridity are discussed at length with substantial ideas of recent literary theoreticians. The latter part of 20th century has a
number of novels with diasporic themes. The researcher also presents the aim of the study. A very short biography of Bharati Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri, along with their works, has been dealt with. Articles and books on these writers by learned scholars and critics have been brought out.

In chapter II entitled *Place and Displacement* the three select novels of Bharati Mukherjee namely *The Tiger’s Daughter, Jasmine* and *Desirable Daughters* have been taken up. This chapter traces the migration and the experiences of the immigrants. In *The Tiger’s Daughter* she has adopted the technique of documentation to bring out the contrast between two words and two attitudes. Tara, the protagonist of the novel being away from home idealises her home country and cherishes nostalgic memories of it. Bharati Mukherjee’s another novel, *Jasmine* deals with the assimilated immigrant Jasmine who is Mukherjee’s fictional model. Jasmine casts aside the worlds of a widow and sets out on a journey of liberation and fulfillment. It is Mukherjee’s oeuvre. Cultural identities of the immigrants are not subsumed in the dominant culture but they speak and gain independent voices. It is true with Jasmine. She survives in America and guarantees her upward mobility not through purely playing by the rules but also by making strategic use of her difference as Asian in order to acquire maximum visibility and privileges. In *Desirable Daughters*, Mukherjee focuses on cultural hybridity, simultaneity and the third space of enunciation. Mukherjee acknowledges the alternate ways to belong.
In Chapter III, *East-West Encounter*, an analysis of Bharati Mukherjee’s short story collection *The Middle man and other stories* is made. It depicts the problems of the people emigrating to America and the dream of new life which tempts them to go there. The theme of all eleven stories is immigration and the reciprocal effect of the immigrants.

Chapter IV entitled *Sense of Inbetweenness and Unbelonging* explores the theme of immigrants experience and the clash of cultures in the U.S. The novel *The Namesake* (2006) is a narrative about the assimilation of an Indian Bengali family. The immigrants are caught in a mix of two worlds, cultures and experiences. The first short story collection, *Interpreter of Maladies* deals with the pangs of loneliness and a sense of being an outsider felt by the second generation immigrants of Bengal in the alien land. The latest work of Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Unaccustomed Earth* contains eight stories. They trace the lives of Bengalis who have moved to the United States. The second and third generations become increasingly assimilated into American culture and are comfortable in constructing perspectives outside their country of origin.

Chapter V, entitled *Conflicts, Confrontations and Alliances*, makes a comparative study delineating the similarities and dissimilarities in the select fictional writings of Bharati Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri. They deal with the cultural transactions that occur in the lives of the immigrants. The quality of cultural transaction in all its multiplicity forms the crux of the accomplishments of these writers.
Chapter VI is the last chapter entitled *Summation*. This part summarises the entire views starting with introduction where we find different theories of culture given by various critics. Other four core chapters deal with the main objective of the research. Cultural transactions from the select fictional writings of Bharati Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri and the findings of the research have been summed up convincingly. A few avenues for further research in this area of study are identified for prospective research scholars.