Migration from the land of birth to an alien place was a common phenomenon in the twentieth century. People moved towards the prospect of a better life or under severe economic compulsions at home. Desire for knowledge, motivation for better exposure and dream of becoming successful professionals and businessmen can also account as reasons for migration.

The Indian Diaspora is much highlighted in recent literature. Etymologically speaking, the term “Diaspora” is derived from the Greek verb ‘Speiro’ which means ‘to sow’ and the preposition ‘dia’- meaning ‘over’, has been used in a broader context.

The word ‘diaspora’ means the dispersion of the Jews among the Gentiles after the period of their exile. Bill Ashcroft, et al. defines ‘diaspora’ as “the voluntary or forcible movements of people from their homelands into new
regions....” 1 Native land has become the object of the Indian diasporic writers’ imagination. Jasbir Jain throws light on the two aspects of the subject when he says that the diaspora has the “ambiguous status of being both an ambassador and a refugee”.2 Diaspora literature focuses on the dilemma between the two options. It connotes cultural borders and not geographic borders. And it also focuses on the gap between ‘home’- the culture of origin, and the ‘world’ – the culture of adoption.

The Indian diaspora has shown great mobility and adaptability which has the common concern of a guest for an identity of one’s own. Writers of the Indian diaspora are in search of stability or to have a homeland of their own. Bhiku Parekh throws light on the situation with his characteric point of view. The diasporic Indian is,

“...like the banyan tree, the traditional symbol of the Indian way of life, he spreads out his roots in several soils drawing nourishment from one when the rest dry up. Far from being homeless, he has several homes, and that is the only way he has increasingly come to feel at home in the world.” 3
Writers who are dislocated from their own native land live in voluntary exile by losing their identity, totally alienated from their old culture, and are trying to adopt a new one in a foreign land. Uma Parameswaran in her article, ‘Writing the Diaspora’ in The Atlantic Literary Review Vol-I 2000 visualizes the ‘immigrant’ situation in this way:

“There are four phases of immigrant settlement that are true both at the individual and collective level: The first is one of nostalgia for the homeland left behind, mingled with fear in a strange land. The second is a phase in which one is so busy adjusting to the new environment that there is little creative output. The third phase is when immigrants start taking part in the shaping of Diaspora existence by involving themselves in ethnocultural issues. The fourth is when they have ‘arrived’ and start participating in the larger world of politics and national issues.”

Ranu Uniyal, however, opines-

“If on the one hand it is symbolic of indentured labour of the late 19th and 20th century, on the other it is a forced exodus of the millions of Jews under racist forces.
If it implies dislocations, it also signifies renewal. It is laced with the anxiety of belonging and unbecoming.”

Migration opened up opportunities by sending a very large number of Indian males to Europe, North America and the United Kingdom. The immigrants carried their illiterate and poor wives, who arrived there to do what they had done back at home, cook food and conceive kids. Migrations could not be limited to just mobility for them but it meant something more. Russell King, John Connell and Paul White rightly point out that for

“...some groups, migration is not a mere interval between fixed points of departure and arrival, but a mode of being in the world - 'migrancy'.”

The women who went abroad did not have their own identity, and were not prepared to face and survive in the most hostile circumstances in that foreign land.

Men were the pioneers of diaspora literature. After acquiring education, the Indian diaspora women were out of their routine of household, existence, and stepping out to become writers - to give voice to their dreams and to get rid of the two main burdens - hostile circumstances and lost
identity. Now they are not just wives and home makers as were portrayed by the male diaspora writers.

Comparatively Indian diaspora women’s writing is different in its thematic and stylistic concerns. Being an immigrant and a woman, they were carrying the double burden on their shoulder. Their writing has taken up various themes like the quest for an identity, alienation, discrimination, cross-cultural transactions, and displays features of immigrant sensibility, nostalgia, and ethnicity. They also have produced a “constantly evolving and often self-questioning body of literature.” 6

Writing also serves the purpose of a quest for an identity. It is interesting to observe how Indian women have tried to shape their own identity in a new culture through their writing. For most modern short story writers the short story would seem a natural medium to express their feelings in words. They have adopted the short story form to capture the energy of a country, its people and its language. This presupposes, of course, a deep understanding and sympathy on the part of the writer for the destiny of their protagonists, who find themselves trapped between the new country and the one they left behind. Uma Parameswaran uses the
mythical king Trishanku as a symbol of the diasporic predicament-Trishanku who desires to reach heaven in his corporeal form, manages the ascent with the help of sage Vishwamitra. But he is refused admission to heaven, and remains suspended between heaven and earth, an aerial surveyor looking at the two worlds and belonging to neither. To stay back and struggle for a place in the new world often becomes the ethic of diasporic existence.

The short story of the Indian diaspora women writers has given considerable attention to women immigrants who accompanied their husbands overseas. These women are not portrayed as blissful, merry making or having broad smiles but as wearing wry smiles, betraying that their tales are sad; they are tales of loss of hope, broken hearts and marriages, depression and death.

The women who settle in a foreign land as an immigrant finds life out there one of isolation in a new location. They are in a dilemma as to deciding which one is their home: the new land, where they have entered willingly or unwillingly, or the one they left behind?

Uma Parameswaran spells out her own view while analyzing the issue of home/homelessness;
“Home is where our feet are, and we had better place our heart where the feet are.”

The tales are about female protagonists who left their roots and their incapacity to belong to the new culture. The stories also reveal how they undergo many transformations when they attempt an integration with the host culture.

Bharathi Mukherjee comments:

“The new America I know and have been living in for the last seven years is a world by definition of doubles. They have all shed past lives and languages, and have travelled half the world in every direction to come here and begin again. They are bursting with stories, too many to begin telling. They have lived through centuries of history in a single lifetime- Time travel is a reality. I have seen in my own life. Bionic men and women are living among us.”

I illustrate the plight of such a woman referring to the short stories *Darkness* and *The Middleman and other Stories* by Bharati Mukherjee, *Arranged Marriage* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and *Interpreter of Maladies* by Jhumpa Lahiri.
Bharati Mukherjee's is a familiar voice in the Indian literary diaspora. Being a spokesperson of a minority immigrant community in North America she has paid considerable attention to the condition of the Indian women immigrants in North America. In her 1990 'Iowa Review', interview she states that many of her stories are "about psychological transformation, especially among the women immigrants from Asia." 9

Bharati Mukherjee, like many of the protagonists of her short stories, was herself an immigrant in Canada and then in the United States of America. She came from non-white, third world countries, namely India, and experienced herself the dilemmas and the mental conflicts.

She shows herself perfect in bringing out the cross-cultural conflicts of her female protagonists and showing how they write their own destinies.

Her short stories have focused much attention on revealing contemporary themes and concerns. The main theme of both the stories, especially the tales of women destinies is the quest for an identity, questions raised to find the identity, a continuous search for the answer to the question "Do I have an identity of my own?" Searching for
selfhood is the motto of these protagonists. Their questions, their being self-styled, self-defined, self-motivated, independent in thinking are the strength of the characters of Mukherjee’s short stories who stand as role models for several immigrant women. Fakrul Alam has the similar opinion to express.

“Once literature begins to serve as a forum illuminating female experience, it can assist in humanizing and equilibrating the culture, value system, which has served predominantly male interests. A literary work is capable of providing role models, instill a positive sense of feminine identity by portraying women who are self actualizing, whose identities are not dependent on men.”10

The point to be made is that the short stories of Mukherjee highlight the experiences of women immigrants who have a positive attitude towards immigration. Even though the dark shadows of immigration are highlighted, they do look at the positive aspects of immigration.

Mukherjee’s “Purely Canadian” 11 stories in *Darkness* hold the mirror up to her inner world and her own experiences of Canada. She felt herself an outsider and
unwanted in that foreign land. She expresses her bitterness in her ‘Introduction to Darkness’ “—I had thought of myself in spite of a white husband and two assimilated sons as an expatriate.”

All the woes, agonies and humiliation experienced by her have taken shape in the form of short stories. She describes them in the guise of the lost dreams, struggles and sufferings of her protagonists.

“In my fiction, and in my Canadian experience, “immigrants” were lost souls, put upon and pathetic. Expatriates, on the other hand, knew all too well who and what they were, and what foul fate had befallen them.”

Mukherjee differentiates the immigrants and the expatriates in these terms: Immigrants are ones who adopt and follow some of the features of the alien cultural environment of the host country, whereas expatriates are against adopting the host ethos and culture and never wished to leave their rooted customs, convictions and cultural habits. In such circumstances the condition of an expatriate can lead to isolation or a feeling like an unwanted guest in the host society or doubting if they would ever belong.
Mukherjee’s short stories hold the mirror up to the plight of the expatriates in Canada and firmly tell that they are not permitted to think themselves as a part of the host ethos. The stories in *Darkness* are well defined as an alteration from the “aloofness of expatriation to the exuberance of immigration.” 14 The female protagonists of the *Darkness* are the wives who go abroad without expressing their willingness. They are not allowed to say no to the decision of their husbands. The women must be obedient and should accept the further consequences in an alien place. Expatriation could also own selfhood. The women suffer by losing their selfhood, by suppressing their voice.

Two such women are the protagonists of the stories *Visitors* and *The Lady from Lucknow*. In *Visitors*, protagonist Vinitha, a beautiful girl from Calcutta, has got married to a highly ambitious man who stays in America. In *Visitors*, women are under the control of traditions, that is, they have to accept the demands made by traditions on the way they live their lives— from the dresses they wear, the places they go to and the time they go there, their study and jobs— everything is strictly observed by their parents and also through parents by the society. Similarly, patriarchy in the
family arranges the marriage for their daughters without thinking it necessary to ask whether they are ready to accept the selection. Vinitha had style, she had charm and everybody genuinely liked her. But she has no chance of making a decision for her own life.

Vinitha agrees to the marriage arranged by her parents without asking any questions. Soon after her wedding she takes an Air India flight to citizenship in the New World. Like other Indian women, she too hardly knows her husband Sailen Kumar, whose temperament differs totally from her own. He is a highly ambitious man who wants to become a true American. His target is to become a millionaire in New York City.

Mukherjee knows the inner feelings of a woman. She tells that Vinitha feels proud of being an Indian hostess and in making authentic India-Style tea. Her house is well equipped with co-ordinated linen for bed and bath, its hall is decorated with a pair of Vishnupuri clay horses, and well furnished with sleek Bloomingdale, gleaming appliances. She remains at home and maintains everything when her husband goes out to work. This is what is expected of the Indian wives and willingly a woman like Vinitha fulfills the
expectations. She plays the roles of a cook, house-maid, obedient wife and hostess with a smiling face for her husband’s friends. Her attitude is an epitome of her attempts to manage the etiquettes of the two worlds without losing balance.

The balance is disturbed by the monotonous life. She never experienced passion in her married life with her insensitive husband. She visualizes a cultural clash between India and America from the soap operas she watches on television. The passionate wives of the television serials and the lack of real open communication between herself and Sailen Kumar disturb the constancy of her mind and result in her taking interest in another young man. She pours out her new experience on a young Indian student, Rajiv Khanna, who comes wearing sneakers and a baseball cap. Vinitha tries to break out of this dilemma by being courageous. This courage is put into her by Mr. Khanna, who said:

“I knew you were special the very first time I saw you at the Indian Republic Day Celebrations at the Khoranas. I told myself, this is it; this is the goddess of my dreams. I couldn’t get you out of my mind.” 15
She worries about how she should respond but about the warmth she felt by the look and talk of Rajiv. He interprets her hospitality in his own manner. She even realizes that she had wrongly assumed him as just another American and also adjudges him as not “the looter of American culture” that she had thought. Her inner-consciousness or the culture which she followed makes her think that her feelings towards Rajiv are perfect and she puts a brake on her feelings.

After her visitor Rajiv departs, she turns back to being dutiful wife, puts on a purple silk sari, prepares dishes for her husband and the friends who are expected any time. She

“...serves the men and manipulates them with her youth and her beauty and her unmaskable charm. She has no idea that she is on the verge of hysteria.”

It is not discussed but nevertheless it can be seen by the reader that Vinitha being a dutiful wife and a perfect hostess has lost her own identity. Symbolically, it is shown by Mukherjee by the fact that Vinita and the other women of the story called themselves by their husband’s name, Mrs. Thapar and so on. It reminds us of Neil Bissoondath’s
protagonist, a Japanese woman who expresses her strange experience.

“... found it strange that they never told me their first names. It was as if they had lost them... I asked Mrs. Harris why she called herself by her husband’s name, “It’s tradition, dear, Christian tradition”. Mrs. Duncan said, “It’s as simple as that, it’s what women have always done.” And what do you do with your own names? Are they no longer of importance?” 17

No doubt Vinitha is the queen of her husband's heart, she is his goddess but it is clear that he has complete power over her. Mukherjee knows human feelings better. She is perfect in bringing them out into words. She tells us that Vinitha is left to imprison herself in the phony schizophrenic American/Indian condominium where her insensitive husband belongs, the impassionate married life and the unexpected visitors who are thoroughly assimilated immigrants and nothing else. Her identity is lost somewhere among them.

Mukherjee’s story *The Lady from Lucknow* mirrors the two different results of the woman’s self-decision making in two different countries. One is of Husseina’s fate who was a
neighbour of the central character – Nafeesa Hafeez. The patriarchy in India controls their women completely. In the eyes of patriarchy the women’s life is not of their own. In such an environment the father of the girl intercepted a love note from the boy and came to know that his daughter had fallen in love with a Hindu. The Father had beaten her with his leather sandals and she had died.

Another one is the story of the lead role Nafeeza who is married to Iqbal at seventeen years of age, the marriage being arranged by her parents. Iqbal works for IBM; along with him she traveled from Islamabad to Lebanon, Brazil, Zambia, and France and eventually to Atlantica, Georgia. She has a decent life with two children, a daughter of seven and a son of four.

Like Vinitha, Nafeeza too is unfortunate in having disharmony in her married life. Her story is an epitome of the death of the traditional, cultural chain and the birth of individuality and freedom. Nafeeza is attracted towards another man – James Beamish, an immunologist with the Center for Disease Control in the same town. It is possible to think that the flatteries of James were responsible for making her feel beautiful, exotic and responsive; that they drive her to crush her traditional values and to adopt the new values.
Moreover she feels no guilt in having an extra-marital affair. It is also noticeable that by having an affair she may be living up to the liberal etiquettes of America and matching its standards.

The story *The Lady from Luknow*, narrates not only Naffeza’s story but also speaks about the passive, easy-going, totally liberated culture of the people of foreign lands. The incident in the house of James stands as a witness to this point.

After having an affair with James, Nafeeza now does not bother about the neighbours, it seems so even to Kate Beamish-wife of James. Because when both Nafeeza and James were in bed together, Kate stood at the door knocking. Naffeza told James to tell her that she is the new cleaning woman and laughed. In this situation Mukherjee shows her as a fearless and carefree woman.

More than this, the reaction given by Kate to her husband’s extra-marital affair is totally indigestible for Indians. When she saw another woman in bed with her husband, she expresses neither shock nor becomes wild. Rather she takes it in an unperturbed way, looking at it as something ridiculous and sordid.
“I might have stabbed you if I could take you seriously. But you are quite ludicrous lounging like a Goya nude in my bed.”

Neither Nafeeza nor Kate is expressing a shameful or fearful attitude. Here one can view the difference between the two cultures, one is Indian which is too traditional, which never accepts Nafeeza’s as well as Kate’s point of view and the other, the culture of America, which has given complete freedom of opportunity and expression and dislocates its immigrants from their old cultural ethos.

Nafeeza, who tries to inject a bit of passion into her life by having an affair is a perfect example of her psychological transformation in a country where she has an opportunity to do so. She realizes too that her affair is not a fulfillment of the real meaning of life, but she speaks:

“I was just another involvement of a white man in a pokey little outpost.”

Mukherjee’s *A Wife’s Story* draws attention to the issue of woman’s submission before patriarchy. She questions the necessity for women to live in such an atmosphere where they face emotional insecurity, and marital and familial relationship becomes the cause of mental and sexual agony.
She speaks about how society distinguishes between a mother and a daughter/wife. It is strange but true that in Indian society the life of a daughter and wife is meaningless and burdensome while the position of the mother is highly respectable. The words of Lewis A. Coser are appropriate enough to be quoted here

"...in systems which are rigidly structured and for whatever reasons, unable to provide alternative to the deprived, then violence is liable to increase."^{20}

The concept of violence is a complex one and is something differently defined by the sociologist, Ram Ahuja, as

"force, whether overt or covert, used to wrest from the individual (woman) something that she does not want to give of her own free will and which causes her either physical injury or emotional trauma or both,"^{21}

The 'wife' in A Wife's Story undergoes a emotional trauma, like the one spoken of above. The story epitomizes of the conflict that arises before a traditional 'wife' like Panna who has no right in selecting her husband. Yet she suffers mental and sexual agony for no fault of hers. Her dialogue
enlists the reader's sympathy for the helplessness and emptiness of her life.

"...Mine was a traditional Hindu marriage. My parents, with the help of a marriage broker, who was my mother's cousin, picked out a groom. All I had to do was get to know his taste in food." 22

Like Vinitha and Nafeesa, Panna's marriage too is arranged in a traditional style. She goes to New York to continue further studies on a scholarship for two years, leaving her husband a mill owner in Ahmedabad and her mother-in-law whom she does not like because of her dominating nature. She realizes that the mental conflict, violence and humiliation she went through while in India are replaced by a new-won sense of liberty, freedom of expression and individuality. Soon she has her first taste of freedom and enjoys the same by having an affair with Imre, her Hungarian friend. Once she goes to see a Mamet play with him and has a thrilling experience of her liberty by hugging him in public. She feels that she is now free to make her own rules, depending on her choice. In this process she has broadened her horizons. She realizes that this would not have been
possible in India. She undergoes a complete transformation and loses interest in going back to India.

She is exposed to the fully Americanized roommate Charity Chin interested in hand modeling, has illegal affairs with her plastic surgeon and Phil, the flutist. Mukherjee shows by this means the influence of the cross-cultural exposure in a new atmosphere.

When her husband calls her from Ahmadabad and tells her of his arrival in New York she feels no excitement. That reminds her of Indian culture, and the tradition meant for a dutiful wife. She quite mechanically puts on a sari, wears her marriage necklace, the Mangalsutra and jewellery and goes to JFK airport to meet her husband. She argues that she is not completely free from the prejudices regarding culture and tradition, that she is trying gradually to adopt an American mind. Her husband forces her to come back to India but she does not intend to return to India, she is left dangling between her Indian past and American present, the demands of the cultural roots of the past and the needs of her individual self in the new climate of freedom. The end of the story is a perfect picture of the immigrants. She is impassive and mechanical towards her husband.
“....In the ten days he had been here he has learned American rites; deodorants, fragrances. Tomorrow morning he'll call Air India; tomorrow evening he'll be on his way back to Bombay. Tonight I should make up to him for my years away, the gutted trucks, the degree I'll never use in India. I want to pretend with him that nothing has changed. In the mirror that hangs on the bathroom door, I watch my naked body turn, the breasts, the thighs glow. The body's beauty amazes. I stand here shameless; in ways he has never seen me. I am free, afloat watching somebody else.”

Panna is caught between her past afflictions and dreams of her own that she cherishes. The total liberal manners of the new place tell her to find her selfhood. It makes her feel that her individuality has been missing somewhere.

Mukherjee redefines and relocates the anxiety of immigrant Indians. In her essay Immigrant Writing: Give Us Your Maximalists, she says:

“All around me I see the face of America changing but where in fiction do you read of it? Who, in other words, speaks for us the new Americans from non traditional immigrant countries?”
She asks in the same essay who will tell the stories of new Asian immigrants in the United States?

Most of her protagonists seem to be subaltern; it could mean that they are heterogeneous and socially marginalized. The stories tell the transformation of the characters’ subalternity to assimilation into a foreign land, Mukherjee summarizes the American Attitude to immigrants thus:

“It is the tyranny of the American dream that scares me. First you don’t exist. Then you are invisible, then you are funny. Then you are disgusting. Insult, my American friends will tell me, is a kind of acceptance. No instant dignity here.” 24

The immigrants live in a new land by losing their identity and search for a new identity, and it seems as if their search is a never-ending one.

With this discussion in mind, the characters of Mukherjee’s short stories can be divided into two main categories, the conformists or assimilationists and the non-conformists or non-assimilationists. The former makes an attempt to be accepted by the alien culture and the latter attempts to be detached towards the alien culture.
Maya Sanyal of the story *The Tenant*, Jasmine of the Story *Jasmine* and Shaila of the story *Management of Grief* are liberated women characters of Mukherjee. Maya, a Ph.D. in comparative literature, on a teaching assignment at the University of Iowa, is described by the writer as,

"...A very lost, sad character who really went out ... but at the same time there is desire for a wholeness, nostalgia that India and Indian traditions promised." 25

Maya came from Calcutta, had married an American, John, who divorced her after two years. She stays with Fran after her divorce but hid the divorce matter from him. The feelings of shame and guilt have been replaced by shamelessness and a certain pride. She is proud to feel that she has slept with married men, with nameless men, but never with an Indian man. Alam rightly states that she has

"...a history of promiscuous relationships with numerous white Americans." 26

She is now in search of an Indian man and is prepared to marry Ashok Mehta, an Indian physician working in Hartford, Connecticut. It is strange but true that her past free life-style and her sleeping with unmarried men do not make him reject her. Mukherjee raises the issue of total
dissolution as a result of the impact of the assimilation and
the impossibility of “refueling” the remnants of old culture.

“It is the fate of women like her and men like him. Their
Karmic duty to be lived. It is expected not judged”. 27

The illegal affairs do not disturb Mehta’s decision and he
has no dual mind in entering into a marital relationship with
her. Maya hopes to marry Mehta but it is indigestible for the
reader to see her in a frame of mind to have an affair with her
latest landlord Fred, a handless man, already married after a
blind date. The twists and turns of Maya’s affairs are enough
to qualify her for being considered as thoroughly assimilated.
She is still in a dilemma as to whether to leave Indian
traditional ways or to sink in the new land completely. She
knows that life in America is radically different from that in
India. She makes up her mind to swallow everything which
comes her way.

In spite of being in Fred’s company she waits for
Dr. Mehta’s call. Months later he rings her up again. She
prepares her mind to ‘unhouse’ herself in search of a better
house, emotional transition is to get satisfaction. Though cut
adrift, she looks for a secure berth, for firm moorings.
There is a close relationship between herself and the title of the story. She lived the role of a ‘tenant’ in the lives of the men she met. This could mean that she has no permanent place to stay anywhere. Her name Maya (illusion) has been metaphorically used as a searching for selfhood.

Mukherjee tries to show that assimilation is the only way for survival in the human ocean of the new land. The immigrants try to assimilate into the alien land by discarding their inherited cultural rites and age-old roots. Jasmine, the protagonist of the story Jasmine is no different from Maya Sanyal. She is an ambitious girl, she is the daughter of Indian parents based in the Caribbean. She comes from the Port of Spain, Trinidad and via Canada she enters into America illegally. She struggles to survive by taking up various jobs like book-keeping and cleaning. She also works as an au pair girl in Bill Moffit’s house when his wife is away. In the mean while she decides to go for higher studies in this town - a course at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. For that she is driven to seek help from her employer Bill.

The way she has chosen to fulfill her ambition is a clear picture of her assimilation into the mainstream of America.
She undergoes a complete transformation by submitting herself to her white employer Bill. Like Maya, she too is fully Americanised.

The story *The Management of Grief* is of a women's voice that included Shaila's psychic churnings, her rejection of her own roots and her desire to merge into an energized and liberated third space. She is unfortunate to lose her husband Vikram and her two sons, Vinod and Mithun, who perished along with several co-passengers in an Air India disaster in a bay in Ireland. The story focuses not just on the tragic deaths but mainly on the tragedy of an unlucky widow, as Shaila refers to herself.

Literature has given quite a lot of attention to the problems of married and unmarried women, their sufferings and silences but the plight of single, physically or mentally disabled women and widows have not attracted enough attention. In this context it is heartening to see Bharati Mukherjee's concern for the life of Indian widows.

She has portrayed the life of Indian widows in the character of Shaila. The story narrates that Shaila soon controls her tears and decides to stay in Canada and not to go back to India as she has lost all desire to return to her
homeland. The immigrant Shaila too has, like Bharati Mukherjee herself, joined forces with an anonymous, dump-driven under-class of “semi-assimilated Indians with sentimental attachments to a distant homeland but no real desire for permanent return.”

Shaila’s desire to belong and become a part of Canada is based on a hard fact of both her native land and foreign land. She knows the destinies of widows in her family.

“My grandmother, the spoiled daughter of a rich zamindar, shaved her head with rusty razor blades when she was widowed at sixteen. My grandfather died of childhood diabetes when he was nineteen and she saw herself as the harbinger of bad luck.”

Grandmother happens to have been given a hut behind the main estate to stay and take her food with the servants.

On the contrary, life is made easier and never a tragic one for Indian men who have lost their wives. The partisan attitude of patriarchy hardens the decision of Shaila. The inequality is clearly visible as the widowers, we are told,

“...cannot resist the call of custom, the authority of their parents and older brothers. They must marry. It is the duty of a man to look after a wife. The new wives will be
young widows with children - destitute, but of good family. They will make loving wives but the men will shun them." 30

Shaila's decision to stick to Canada brings her immense relief.

"I am comparatively lucky. No one here thinks of arranging a husband for an unlucky widow." 31

She has heard her husband saying that she must finish alone what they both started together. Accordingly she stays on in Toronto,

"I have tried to assess my situation, how best to live my life; to complete what we began so many years ago." 32

In the context of a gender perspective the wife of the story raises a voice which represents every Indian widow, specially an immigrant who at least is left with another option.

Mukherjee also shows one more option for the immigrant to choose in certain conditions through the character Kusum. Kusum's agony is also no different from that of Shaila, who lost her husband Satish and younger daughter in the air crash. She has taken the path of divinity.
to overcome her grief. With this sub-story Mukherjee describes the attraction of America specially to the teenagers.

"She is the daughter who's always in trouble. She dates Canadian boys and hangs out in the mall shopping for tight sweaters." 33

The younger daughter was going to spend July and August with grandparents because Pam, Kusum's daughter, was not ready to go. She says if there is to be a choice between Bombay and Wonderland she would rather choose Wonderland.

Unlike Kusum and her daughter Pam, Shaila is caught up in a dilemma. She makes up her mind not to take refuge in her roots, unlike Pam, she can absorb herself completely into the new waves of the new land.

Dilemmas of the immigrant are crisply summed up by Parameshwaran through her description of the connotations of the immigrant card. "The passport to life long luxury.... The devil's bail to life long exile....." 34

And Jasmine in Mukherjee's novel *Jasmine* describes the condition of immigrants as follows:
"...we are refuges and mercenaries and guest workers..."35

As said above the protagonists move always with questions in their mind. "What are they?" Indians or foreigners? Because in America and Canada still they wear their own costume, they follow their own food habits. They are far from their cultural roots yet they do not leave its etiquettes behind. They are very close to the foreign land all right, but standing aside at the edge of the new culture. Jasmine in the novel *Jasmine* rightly puts forth her impassive experiences of the facets of American life.

“In America, nothing lasts. I can say that now and it does not shock me, but I think it was the hardest lesson of all for me to learn. We arrive so eager to learn, to adjust, to participate only to find the movements are plastic agreements are annulled nothing is forever, nothing is so terrible or so wonderful that it won’t disintegrate.” 36

Mukherjee’s Indian women protagonists, who are married and single, speak about the diasporic experience that includes cultural alienation, loss of identity and finding a
new identity and also remaking of oneself as an American. Mukherjee portrays her female immigrants as fortunate/conquering, along with their tragic destinies. They dream of a better life and of course narrate the complexity of their worlds both within and without. They expose their perceptions of the past and experiences of the present. They represent the twentieth century woman. One who suffers from a feeling of alienation and insecurity is always in search of someone to give considerable attention. The suffering is in the form of detachment, emotional insecurity, impassive attitude. The dialogue of Renata’s lover Vic in *Orbiting* goes to prove this point. Renata narrates,

“One Sunday morning in March he kissed me awake as usual. He brought in the ‘Times’ from the porch and was reading it. He said “I am leaving, babe. New jersey doesn’t do it for me anymore” I said, “Okay, so where are we going?” ...Vic said “I didn’t say we, babe” so I asked “You mean it’s over? Just like that?” And he said, “Is not that the best way? No fuss, no hang-ups.” 

Her characters do not suggest to other immigrants that they mean to settle down in America nor do they dishearten
the new arrivals to the foreign land like themselves. Because Mukherjee does not describe the matter whether her immigrants reached their targets. Even though they are enjoying their new life which is full of liberation, they are in fact less confident, confused between two worlds.

Being a diaspora woman writer, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, poet, turned fiction writer, examines the lives of immigrant Asian women.

Her short story collection *Arranged Marriage* is a collection of eleven stories which give an insider’s account of the various pressures and conflicts of Indian American women in the San Francisco Bay Area. Of them Sen Bagchi states: these stories are “predictable stories written in a smart but pared-down style.” 38 and they also show women as victims of male domination.

Banerjee is mainly preoccupied with the social, psychological and emotional aspects of women’s lives, while narrating the stories. She raises questions concerning wife-battering and highlights woman’s dilemmas but ends without offering any specific solution; indeed it confirms that there is no permanent solution which can be acceptable to woman. There are alternatives more than solutions.
The stories centre round the theme of arranged marriage, emblazoning the eponymous title on the cover, the word “ARRANGED” being arranged differently, so that the second “R” is reversed, as if it is a symbol of something wrong. Her women characters are more truly speaking ‘trapped’. Along with this, there is another aspect to her characters, which is that they come out with a desire for self-fulfillment.

Banerjee has also taken up the story of a widow, Sumita, in the story Clothes, who has chosen to lead the rest of her life in California and not in India after becoming a widow. Sumita loses her husband Somesh Sen, an Indian who owns a convenience store in California. He is killed in his store by burglars. He always dreamt of better days but meets with a tragic end. Her destiny leaves two choices before her: either to return to India to lead a widow’s life, or to restart her late husband’s business in California.

“That’s when I knew I cannot go back. I don’t know yet how I’ll manage, here in this new, dangerous land. I only know I must. Because all over India, at this very moment, widows in white saris are bowing their veiled
heads, serving tea to in-laws. Doves with cut-off wings."

Like Shaila of *The Management of Grief*, she chooses to lead her life in the foreign land.

Being immigrants both Sumita and Somesh Sen have become victims of the brutality of a foreign land.

Banerjee's stories have a connection between the Indian cultural ethos on the one hand and the advanced and liberated etiquettes of a foreign land, on the other. The women immigrants are caught between two ways and have to choose one. Her story *The Word Love* holds this point. The protagonist, a Ph.D student from India, living with her boyfriend Rex, is caught between those two above said ways: one is, she cannot get the support of her parents for her decision to marry Rex because her mother is against this step. Secondly, she does not want to leave her boy friend.

Banerjee shows the dilemma of her women immigrants who cannot leave their roots and cannot hang on to the new life either. Being an Indian, the protagonist leaves her dream of marrying her boyfriend; being an immigrant she always hopes for a better life.
The mother's attitude towards her daughter in the story *Doors* seems to cut the very bottom from under the daughter's liberated lifestyle. The protagonist Preeti has been living in the United State of America since she was twelve. Her mother opposed the daughter's decision of living and marrying Deepak.

"It will never work, I tell you"

"Here you are, living in the U. S. since you were twelve. And Deepak - he's straight out of India. Just because you liked how he talks does not mean that you can live with him."\(^4^0\)

The tale tells how their roots restrict the protagonists in the form of the mother's attitude to take a decision of their own. They are caught between the Indian cultural norms and those of the librated U.S.

The short story *Doors* narrates not just the dilemma of Preeti's marriage time but also the aftermath of the marriage when Raja, Deepak's old friend is to live with them in California. Raj's presence at their home disturbs the happy, harmonious married life of Preeti and Deepak. Preeti finds Raj's presence too intrusive in the married couple's privacy. Deepak starts spending more time with Raj. Eating and
watching movies with him, recollecting all those old memories and singing their favourite Hindi movie songs. As it is, the thrust of the women writers is towards exposing the emotional exploitation of women by men, Banerjee is also no different. Deepak completely ignores Preeti’s irritation with Raj’s presence. Preeti is a stranger to the Indian atmosphere, so she feels alienated from them.

Banerjee systematically, but very sensitively, raises the issue of emotional imbalance of the Indian immigrants, who cannot be called Indians; nor can they be called Americans by others. The title *Doors* is a symbol for privacy. Preeti pleads for her privacy by closing the door of the room she uses. She does not tolerate the interference of Raj into her privacy, so she quarrels with her husband. The husband gives no consideration to her objection to Raj’s presence as well as his Indian attitude. He leaves her and “the door finally clicked shut. She did not know whether it was in the guest room or deep inside her own being.”

The emotional exploitation of women by men does not end with these few examples but extends into a never ending process. Her short story *Affair* affords another such example.
Abha the protagonist feels frustrated and betrayed whenever her husband Ashok irritates her and enjoys irritating her.

“He recrossed his legs in one liquid motion, aimed at the remote and flipped through shows until he found MTV, a channel I particularly dislike. I retreated to the kitchen with its shiny rows of canisters, its racks of spices all carefully labeled, its gleaming tiles and faucets that usually made me feel the same and in control. But I could not escape the TV, where a very young, very blond, woman in a shimmery skintight outfit was sultrily singing about how ‘you’ make me feel each night....I resented American TV for invading my home with them.” 42

Banerjee masterfully manages to show the domineering acts of Abha’s husband as well as the new trends of America which is spoiling the soft relationship between her husband and herself. When Ashok knows the extra-marital affair of Abha’s friend Meena, again he mocks at her.

“I bet you are dying to know who he is.

I will tell you if you ask me nicely.” 43

The dialogues of Ashok reveal his intention to annoy Abha and to make her angry. The enjoyment on the part of a
husband of the wife's frustration is not a sign of a harmonious relationship. And there is no loving relationship between Abha and Ashok. Ashok's manners make her angry.

"...Angrily dumped a couple of extra teaspoons of red pepper powder into the chicken curry. Hot food gives Ashok the most terrible heart-burn. Usually I would not have stooped to such an obvious revenge, but right now I was too agitated to be subtle." 44

Abha's revenge does not stop only with causing him heartburn but she takes Meena's affair as an ideal and changes her perspective:

"Had I ever really been myself? I did not think so. All my energy had been taken up in being a good daughter, A good friend and of course a good wife." 45

The liberated manners of America and her friend Meena's affair with an American and Ashok's approbation of American new trends—all these are enough for Abha to transform into new shape. The immigrants change for one or the other reason and soon make a fresh start living in a foreign land. Abha also wants to make herself happy, desires to be free from a suffocating married life. She decides to leave her husband, though she is bothered for a while on
account of her mother’s disappointment with her decision. But being a wife she feels she has lost her selfhood. Her asking herself “Had I ever really been myself” is the key question which proves the point that she is in search of a new identity.

Abha's decision makes the readers feel less bitter towards her step.

“I feel your resentment growing around me, thick and red and suffocating. Like mine is suffocating you. I will take one of the dusty suit cases from under the bed. Half the money from the savings account. My wedding jewellery. My car that would keep me for a few months. There were cheap motels in the little towns on the Peninsula, Red wood City, San Mateos. Rooming houses. And even in the city, in the not so-good areas, some of them run by Indians. I did see them on a news show a while back, maybe some one would let me stay for a lower rate if I did some work.”

The concept that marriage can secure the future of women is shown to meet with failure in this story.

Banerjee highlights the hard facts of life of South Asian characters who struggle to face the troubles in a world which
demands self-motivation. The story *Disappearance* narrates the inner turmoil of a well-bred Indian girl who lives with her husband in America. The soft-spoken nature of the husband can very well be noticed in the story. But the dominating nature going with the soft words can also be noticed. Banerjee has caught in a few words the nature of the husband who never left his wife free to follow the fashionable trends of America.

"When she wanted to get a job or go back to school or buy American clothes, her husband always softened his no's with a remark like, what for am I here except to take care of you or you to look so much prettier in your Indian clothes, so much more feminine." 47

The unnamed female character seems to be highly sensitive, brought up as she is in an imaginary world of her own, and so fails to adjust with the husband who suppresses her all the time. Her individuality is totally monopolized by him because she is dependent on him. Hence she leaves his restricted castle i.e. her own home to search for her individuality and freedom.

Similarly, Asha in the short story *Meeting Mrinal* also experiences similar, bitter realities of social life. Banerjee
also highlights one more manner of male domination. Her immigrants, both Asha and Mrinalini, suffer on account of different problems in America. She expresses, in her own style, the agony of the immigrants and the impact of America on her protagonists.

Asha, a woman divorced from her husband Mahesh, is living in San Francisco with her son Dinesh. Mahesh now lives with Jessica, his red-haired ex-secretary, leaving Asha to live a life of frustration and loneliness. He has not even cared for his son. Asha, a thirty-eight-year-old describes her life after her separation from her husband in these words:

"...At first I tried attending a few affairs, dinners and pujas and graduation parties for children going on to Stanford or Harvard but I’ll be the only woman in the room without a husband and the other wives, even those too well bred to whisper, would look at me with pity as though at something maimed, an animal with a limb chopped off. Behind the pity would be a flicker of gratitude that it had not happened to them, or a gleam of suspicion because now I was unattached and therefore dangerous." 48
There are worse miseries in the life of Asha than mere meeting people who whisper or look at her but she could not avoid meeting Mrinal, her old friend. The unmarried Mrinal is earning well in a computer firm in Bombay and to attend a technology transfer conference she intends to come to San Francisco where she can meet Asha also. Asha hides her divorce matter and tells Mrinal that she is happy with her family. After some time Mrinal expresses before Asha that she is envious of her loving family. Similarly Asha is also envious by seeing Mrinal’s luxurious and happy life. Both Mrinal, a single woman, and Asha, a divorced woman, realize how sad and empty their lives are and accept the hard truth of their lives that still they are travelers on the same road in search of happiness. Both are searching for their happiness within wedlock. This comes out as the theme of the story.

It is a unique method of narration of Banerjee’s that along with showing up the plight of women, she also lays the blame partly on the impact of American life. The liberated American environment has given an opportunity to Mahesh to flee with an American lover. Even though the problem of domestic life is lightened in the story, the immigrant sensibility is more focused on.
Like Asha, Arundhati, the protagonist of the story *The Ultrasound*, faces male-domination but in a different way. The problem arises in the life of Runu, when the amino tests prove that it is a girl in her womb. Both her husband and mother-in-law force her to abort the child because Runu's mother-in-law insists that the eldest child of the Bhattacharjee household should be a male. Runu struggles a lot to uproot the tradition of hundreds of years from the minds of the members of her family. But she fails in her efforts. This shows up the force of patriarchal norms and its dominating nature. That discrimination between boy and girl starts before the birth of a child is the theme of the story.

Banerjee shows the helplessness of a woman within her own family. She has no right to choose anything concerned with her life. It is again losing her identity. In despair Runu makes a call to her friend Anjali, a married woman living in California with her husband Sunil, and tells her of her decision.

"I have three hundred rupees. I took it out of Ramesh's desk drawer and all my jewellery that was in the house just in case..." Anjali's reflex is: Just in case what? I
want her to say it. I need to hear her say it. "Just in case I decided not to go back." 49

Runu's voice is stronger now.

Runu wants to start a new life in the new world. It is already noticed in other stories that Banerjee resolves the dilemma of her women immigrants in her own style. Here, in this story also, the anxious questioning of Anjali mirrors the immigrant sensibility of women.

"...Does Sunil Love me, or only the mother-to-be of his son? Would he have cared for me as much if we had been in India and the baby had turned out to be a girl? What if I had not been able to have a baby at all? Would he be asking his parents to look for another wife for him?" 50

The doubts of Anjali represent every Indian woman's unspoken fears and inhibitions. Anjali's words haunt and create a terrible voice in every Indian woman's mind. Though Anjali is living in America, in a country where there is an unbridgeable cultural gap with India, she cannot leave her roots behind completely. Her Indian traditional roots are still haunting her. Banerjee shows that even immigrants cannot escape from this.
The story *The Maid Servant’s Story* is about Manisha, an English teacher living in the United States, who wants to marry a Bengali professor of psychology named Bijoy at the University of California. Being an immigrant, she is neither American nor truly Indian. Sometimes her views are too liberal to resist. She always argues with her Deepa *Mashi*, who has been taking care of Manisha since her childhood.

“Times have changed, *Mashi,*” *Mashi* waves away the intervening decades with a beringed, dimpled hand. “Oh! you Americanized girls. The really important things never change.”

Ranjini Singh comments on Manisha’s Americanized attitude as follows:

“This story reflects all the inner turmoil felt by a woman who has chosen to be free from traditional restrictions and whose values are undergoing a drastic change when she is placed in a new locale where the values are far different from those of her own past life.”

It’s not just the insecure feeling or alienation that haunts the immigrants. Banerjee knows it only too well how the ambience of flexible manners and complete freedom in America fascinate them. Manisha also could not help being
attracted. Bijoy promises to love her but isn't ready to be tied down by marriage to her. She is insulted and so she decides to end the relationship. But later she realizes a kind of fascination in such a relationship, which is

"...liberated relationship, no strings attached. A sailing into uncharted and amazing areas of experience that someone like my mother couldn't even imagine." 53

But the tragic story of her mother told by Deepa Mashi changed her drastically. She learns how her father tried to force the maid servant while her mother had gone to give birth to their son. One more face of male-domination. Her mother swallows silently all her pains and insults for her daughter's sake. She herself suppresses her voice; otherwise, she thinks, her daughter would, "..... Lose all chances of a good marriage if the scandal of a broken home stained her life."

Manisha is now enabled to recognize the real face of life given to her by a man through a story narrated to her.

"...a preview of my own life which I thought I had fashioned so cleverly, so differently from my mother's but which is only a repetition, in a different raga, of her tragic song. Perhaps it is like this for all daughters,
doomed to choose for ourselves, over and over, to men who have destroyed our mothers.”54 Ronny Noor observes Banerjee’s protagonists as follows:

“Divakaruni turns everyday events into masterful stories that evoke Chekhovian subtlety in the depiction of social and cultural realities of India and America. Her stories are sad, crying out in protest against traditional arranged marriages. We see the faces of Tolstoy’s Anna, Flaubert’s Emma, and Ibsen’s Nora in her characters, all desiring to break traditions and traditional values.”55

If the ‘cross-cultural crisis’ is the theme of Bharati Mukherjee’s short stories, the ‘fate of exiles’ is the theme of Jhumpa Lahiri’s short story collection *Interpreter of Maladies* - stories of Bengal, Boston and beyond. Being “an Indian by ancestry, British by birth, American by immigration.”56 Jhumpa Lahiri, says Amy Tan,

“...is a dazzling story teller with a distinctive voice, an eye for nuance, an ear for irony. She is one of the finest short story writers I have read.”57

*Interpreter of Maladies* is a collection of nine stories acquainting us with various faces of mankind – love and marriage, broken marriages, nostalgia, extra-marital affairs,
psychological traumas, poverty, death and new birth. Set in Bengal and Boston the stories concern Indians settled abroad who are caught between two cultures, giving voice to their quiet griefs, hopes and longings. The immigrant sensibility is expressed with fine characterization, and powerful narration.

By recognizing her stories as a record of the experiences of both first and second generation Indian immigrants, S. Rajagopalan observes that they explore the theme of “immigrant experience and the clash of cultures in the U.S.”

The very first story in the collection entitled *A Temporary Matter* raises the question whether materialism has become the interpreter and destroys the melody of human feelings. In the story Shoba gives birth to a still-born baby and this is the reason of the discord. The death of the child spoils the melody in the marriage.

“The more Shoba stayed out, the more she began putting an extra hours at work and taking on additional projects, the more he wanted to stay in, not even leaving to get the mail, or to buy fruit or wine at the stores by the trolley stop.”
Both Shoba and her husband Shukumar, a thirty-five-year-old Indian graduate student, remain untouched by each other's wishes and engage themselves in different assignments.

"Instead he thought of how he and Shoba had become experts at avoiding each other in their three bedroom house, spending as much time on separate floors as possible." 60

Lahiri lavishes minute detail on the changing aspects of the relationship of her characters. After losing the child Shukumar and Shoba see all manner of changes in their life. The loving and emotional moments of their life are replaced by dispassionate and detached temperaments of their own. The charms of shouldering familial responsibilities and duties together are wiped out by carelessness and avoidance. Lahiri pinpoints some details: Shoba is attentive and concerned about her duties as an employee and as a wife. She used to do her works in a proper way, for example putting the coat on a hanger, her sneakers in the closet, paying bills as soon as they came, But now she treats the house as if it is a hotel.

Shukumar is also no different. Like Shoba he also avoids his responsibilities when he stops working at his
carrel in the library, he set up his desk there deliberately, partly because the room soothes him, and partly because it is a place Shoba avoids.

Lahiri describes how the dull marital relationship of Shoba and Shukumar turns to a state of emptiness. It seems they both visualize the emptiness of their married life as a mere temporary matter. The power failure in Boston enables them to start communicating with each other and it has come as a means of retrospecting their past lives. Due to repair work, electricity is cut off over several evenings in their city. The load shedding reminds her that she belongs to a new place and culture and through an outsider to that culture.

"I remember during power failures at my grandmother's house we all had to say something" and again;

"It's like India...... 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." 61

Shoba's sweet memories of her grandmother's house in India sweeten the bitterness of her life over here in America. She suggests to Shukumar that he continued the same process of telling something during power failures like she
does in India. The new idea strengthens the process of communication between these two. The change from routine helps them start beginning a new malady in their married life. On the last of such evenings, when Shukumar has realized that they are caring for each other, Shoba shocks him by her decision to walk out on him and lead her own life without him.

Lahiri’s stories *Mrs. Sen’s, When Mr. Pirzada came to Dine* and *The Third and Final Continent* deal directly with the experience of Indian immigrants. The story of Mrs. Sen is seen through the eyes of an American boy, eleven year-old Eliot. Mrs. Sen, a thirty year old wife of a mathematics professor, says her coming to America was not her wish. She has become the after-school caretaker for Eliot, who develops a liking for her due to a feeling of affection.

Eliot observes Mrs. Sen’s being homesick and being filled with grief because most of the time she remains lost in memories of her ‘home’. Eliot understands that.

“When Mrs. Sen said home, she meant India.”

because many times Mrs. Sen expresses to him how much she misses her family in India. She needs her home because she is fascinated by the Indian language, food, ceremonies, and culture.
Mrs. Sen compares the manners of Indians with those of Americans. For example, she is not sure whether the neighbours would come to help if she were to scream at her loudest voice. She then explains to Eliot that

"At home that is all you have to do. Not everybody has a telephone. But just raise your voice a bit, or express grief or joy of any kind, and one whole neighbourhood and half of another has come to share the news, to help with arrangements." 63

She expresses the closeness and emotional attachment she has to her native place, which can be felt only by an immigrant. She also expresses her sense of alienation and the unfriendly attitude shown by the Americans. Mrs. Sen's experiences in a foreign land remind Ashima, the protagonist of the novel *The Namesake*, that

"being a foreigner....is a sort of life long pregnancy –a perpetual wait, a constant burden, a continuous feeling out of sorts. It is an ongoing responsibility, a parenthesis in what had once been ordinary life, only to discover that the previous life has vanished, replaced by something more complicated and demanding." 64

It is not just Ashima and Mrs. Sen's existential trauma of being culturally displaced, but their being an outsider too
which leads to a sense of bewilderment. The narrator of The Third and Final Continent explains it better;

"I am not the only man to seek his fortune far from home and certainly I am not the first. Still, there are times when 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. As ordinary as it all appears, there are times when it is beyond my imagination." 65

Both Ashima and the narrator have gone through the immigrant's existential angst. If Ashima finds a similarity between a pregnant woman and a foreigner, the narrator is still in a state of confusion over his own culture and being culturally displaced in a new world. The narrator of the story The Third and Final continent, a 36-year-old, has come from Bengal to America. The story tells of the sense of alienation and detachment he receives in America. The dilemma of the narrator is sketched in by Lahiri intellectually. The narrator himself tries to belong to the new world by learning the ways of American life. He develops a forced liking for the American Cornflakes. But it is clear that he is in a state of confusion when he notices his University-going son. He cannot choose the American cultural values for his son.
The narrator says,

“We have a son who attends Harvard University. Mala no longer drapes the end of her sari over her head, or weeps at night for her parents, but occasionally she weeps for our son. So we drive to Cambridge to visit him, or bring him home for a week end, so that he can eat rice with us with his hands, and speak in Bengali, things we sometimes worry he will no longer do after we die.”

Another short story of Lahiri’s, *Sexy*, deals with the sensibility of Laxmi, an Indian woman immigrant, and Miranda, a Midwestern and Boston woman immigrant. Laxmi is the wife of Dev and Miranda, his friend and co-worker who also plays the role of a wife’s worst nightmare, that is ‘the other woman’ in Dev’s life. Miranda has grown up and gone to college in Michigan but has now moved over to Boston. But she is not happy about her migration, because she is alone. Her burden of loneliness is once noticed by Dev, who tells her that the painstaking struggle of a lonely person is understandable. That movement makes her feel that Dev understands her agony of being alone in an alien place. Because in Boston she has spent some nights on the Tube, after seeing a movie on her own, or going to a bookstore to read magazines, or having drinks with Laxmi. This shows

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that women immigrants desire to make friends with someone who can be familiar among strangers. In such a state of trauma Miranda fails to see the fact that in her and Dev's relationship Dev's interest is primarily physical. He manipulates her in a patriarchal way. He has no heartfelt feelings for her. He merely takes control over her body.

On the contrary, Miranda loves him truly and feels envious at seeing the photos of Dev and Laxmi's together before the Taj mahal in India. Laxmi describes the attractions of India—"visions of elephants and floating pavilions and also Taj Mahal as the most romantic spot on earth - an everlasting monument to love," 67 Like Laxmi, Miranda also recalls her native land Michigan when she meets Dev in Filenes's department store, and buys very few things for her but she

"... Likes walking through the cramped, confined maze, which was familiar to her in a way the rest of Boston still were not." 68

Laxmi, a married woman, and Miranda, an unmarried one, have gone through nostalgia of their own brands. Miranda wants to know her and wants Dev to know her. Lahiri draws a close analogue between the title 'sexy' and Miranda, who is complimented with the word 'sexy' by two men. It is only when Dev calls her sexy that the meaning of
the word comes across to her. When the word 'sexy' is defined by Rohin, whom she baby-sits-, she is puzzled. Rohin says;

"It means loving someone you don't know." Miranda always believes in a long-term relationship and she thinks if Dev doesn’t know her then she does not want such a relationship. She also knows that being the 'other woman' in the life of Dev she will never get the identity of a wife. So she decides to end such a relationship.

One finds an echo of such thoughts viz., alienation, detachment in Zohrah T. Sullivan as follows, It is now only a passing wave of nausea, this response to the speed of transformation, the fluidity of the American character and the American landscape. Similarly life in America often seems like a whirlpool to Jasmine in Mukherjee’s novel *Jasmine*. The psychology of the immigrants can be read somewhat as follows, Jasmine says, she feels at times like a stone hurtling through diaphanous mist, unable to grab hold, unable to slow herself, yet unwilling to abandon the ride she is on. Down and down she goes, until she would stop.
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