CHAPTER – V

CONCLUSION

The study of multiculturalism and representation of multicultural in theory and praxis provide enough scope to analyse the multiculturals and their situations in the fictions of Jhumpa Lahiri and Sunetra Gupta. While concluding the thesis it is observed that multiculturalism reflects upon the status of different cultural communities within a polity and advocates a society that extends equitable status to every cultural group, with no one particular culture’s predominance over the other. In the realm of public domain this ‘equality’ becomes the prism through which multiculturalism examines the subject of every person’s identity. Multiculturalism is best understood neither as a political doctrine nor as a philosophical school of thought with a distinct theory of defining and delineating one’s place in the world but as a perspective or as a way of viewing human life as an accommodative philosophy in diaspora life.

Multiculturalism is believed as an accommodative strategy in the sociocultural and political philosophy of a nation state. It gives value and respect to each and every culture that exists in a society. Culture is emotionally and nostalgically associated with an individual’s sense of identity and belonging. Conceptualizing identity is central to cultural studies. Since culture becomes the basis of recognition of an individual’s sense of identity and belonging, the production of one’s culture has been given primary importance in a multicultural society. In such society culture becomes the basis of recognition of a person’s identity. Multiculturalism never dilutes
or destroys any culture rather brings out a fine thread to unite all cultures with a
catalytic touch to each one in the social osmosis. Postcolonial migration due to
Liberalisation, Privatisation, and Globalisation have not only changed the
demographic set up in different nations of the world but also restructured the human
habitation with the understanding of mutuality for a better future. People in a larger
society with diverse cultures want their culture and identity to be socially
acknowledged, publicly endorsed, recognised and respected. The necessity of such
recognition in the public becomes the cause of the beginning of multiculturalism.

The study reveals how ‘difference but equal’ is the hallmark of
multiculturalism. Living with differences is a reality of social existence. People,
around the world cross national borders more frequently to seek cultural exchange,
education, business and thereby they develop different lifestyles. Migration has
contributed to the richness in diversity of cultures in developed nations. In many
western countries multicultural existence is a fact of life. In a multicultural society it
is seen that it is about special rights of every immigrant to assert the identity of
difference. It stresses on equality of all cultures in the domain of public that
distinguishes multiculturalism from pluralism.

Theoretically multiculturalism is found in a plural society and hence it
cherishes cultural plurality. It fosters a common sense of belonging to every citizen.
Thereby, this type of society treat every citizen equally by granting them equal rights
of citizenship, freedom to live healthy life peacefully and opportunity to develop
themselves from all sides. Pluralists like Edward Said embrace this type of society
where culture is hybrid and interactive and travels between groups. Multicultural
nations like the United States and the United Kingdom do not prevent its immigrants
from participating in the mainstream culture. These countries encourage each and
every immigrant to participate with the mainstream culture to determine a space for them which is limited by neither physical nor cultural boundaries or dictated by any particular identity.

The implications of theoretical analysis reveal how cultural and national identity form one’s identity. Nation and culture are inextricably woven together for individual’s identity. Culture is identified as strength to represent oneself in an alien country. In fact it is an important factor in shaping one’s identity. There is a significant role of culture in the formation of the psyche of the immigrant. Cultural identity allows an individual to feel a part of it while living in a multicultural society. It acts as a representation without being contaminated nor contaminating others in a society. Immigrants, when confront with a new culture, explore their perceptions of what culture is, what culture means to them, and how it plays a role in their lives. They try to explore these aspects in others resulting to the beginning of multiculturalism.

When people migrate from one nation or culture to another they carry their cultural and national identity with them. With their cultural confrontation with the other they compromise between the two in the strategies of adoption, adaptation and adeptation. Cultural identity and national identity of immigrants are more resistant to change as they come under the dynamic process of reconstruction and re-evaluation with the influence of different cultures. Cultural and national identities take many forms and can change depending on individual’s choice of living in global society. Immigrants seem to be lost in the nostalgia of their motherland, its custom, language and people. This is not due to their failure to erase their past but for assimilating and acculturating in the adopted society to establish a new identity through representation of their own culture and nation.
Immigrants feel the necessity to adjust and amalgamate their own culture with the host culture in order to fit them into the alien society. They adjust themselves to the various cultures in the adopted society by expressing commitment and respecting to two or more than two cultures. Their experience of a sense of loss, dislocation, alienation and isolation leads them further to the process of acculturation. Immigrants, who experience the absence of their culture for leaving their homeland emotionally struggle enough to bury the past and to bear the burden of a new. Between the past and present the aura of past and present cultures make them struggle for a new essence and new identity.

In postcolonial dynamics identities extend to countries beyond borders of nation-states. The identity of a person in a multicultural society is a “fluid and dynamic” (Bhabha 9) process. Immigrants live in between two cultures and two nations live as twins on the margin of two societies. Their identity divides in a split consciousness. Since they are conversant with more than two cultures, ideologies and attitudes of different worlds in their inbetweenness immigrants establish their self-determination. This “in-between” space is a survival strategy that gives birth to their multicultural identity.

Multiculturalism is closely related to postcolonial discourse or theory of migrancy. The colonial discourse of dichotomies between ‘us’ versus ‘them’ persists within multicultural discourse. In the domain of postcolonialism, the term colonialism could be used to the situation of a culture that is dominated by another culture. Hence, the issue of multiculturalism is strongly linked to immigrants and diaspora. Diaspora communities around the world regularly encounter challenges of preserving their identities. But it is a journey towards their self-realization, self-recognition, self-knowledge and self-definition. Writers are the product of a specific culture. They
draw a creative sustenance from it and enrich it with the lived experiences of others. The world of diasporic writing belongs to the in-between space, the cultural no-man’s land and creatively everyone’s land. Diasporic literature presents a microscopic view of social, cultural and psychological dualities haunting the mind and consciousness of immigrants. It presents literature as heterogeneous and plural at the same time.

**Chapter-wise Major Findings:**

Before analysing the fictions of diasporic novelists like Lahiri and Gupta and their multicultural experiences, a theoretical analysis of diaspora life and their acculturation is analysed in the “First Chapter”. The research findings indicate and impress the scholars how the concept of multiculturalism is based on the sociological, psychological, racial, anthropological, ethnic, linguistic and religious differences of people living unitedly in a society. Multiculturalism is more a political and strategic aspect in immigrant status. The postcolonial effects like globalization, industrialization and liberalization have promoted the causes of migration and established diaspora status between the native land and preferred land. In theoretical analysis it is found that history stands as the background of diaspora study. The end of the Second World War resulted migration from the Third World countries to the First World countries where multicultural societies started to grow. Realising their causes of migration, angsts and anxieties, existential plights from among the diaspora communities in the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia and a few other countries Lahiri and Gupta have started to write on diaspora life and their process of assimilation, acculturation, and accommodation in host societies. It indicates that multiculturalism is the product of a process in history and in migrant’s choice of living for some purpose as featured in the writings of different diaspora writers. The postcolonial hypotheses of diaspora community, their multicultural status, quest for identity,
inbetweeness, hybridity, assimilation and suffering form the bulk theme of diaspora writing. It is found that diaspora literature and multiculturalism form the major chunk of World Literature in the late twentieth century.

The findings in the “Second Chapter” reveal the production of multicultural literature as kinds of transnational biographies. In fictional presentations the diaspora writers (un)consciously portray their characters in autotellic manner. In other ways multicultural literature becomes a form of cultural communication through assimilation, hybridization and appropriation. The portrayal of diaspora characters, their movements and emotion presents their split consciousness and identity in melting-pot reality. The select fictions of Lahiri and Gupta reveal subcontinental, multilingual and multicultural assimilation and appropriation in America’s social structure and capitalist transformations. Apart from other diaspora writers from India the research findings of certain key issues are related to the alienation, homesickness and identity question of the Indian diasporas in the writings of Lahiri and Gupta. For diaspora characters of different generations nation, culture and identity become “fluid and dynamic” when they are “haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back” (Rushdie 11) in the realm of their exile, mobility and survival strategies.

Findings in the “Third Chapter” reveal that geographical territories and culture are no more believed restricted or confined. In Lahiri’s narration characters like Mr. Pirzada succeeds to erase international borders on maps. The shared Bengali culture of Mr. Pirzada and Lilia’s parents bind them together despite their rigid territorial boundary shown at the international borders. Immigrants who cross borders transport their own culture with them to their homeland. This not only affects their identity but also expands mobility of people who refuse to stick to one culture and
identity. This makes them gradually to become the products of more than two cultures and identities within “a generalised condition of homelessness” (Said 18).

Lahiri’s short stories and novels reveal the plight of three generations of Indian immigrants who come to the United States or born and brought up in American culture. The first generation immigrants like Mrs. Sen, the unnamed narrator, Mala, Ashok, Ashima and Ruma’s parents embody some of the most pressing challenges in an alien society whose values and customs are alien to them at first sight. They want to preserve the Bengali traditions that tenuously link them to their homeland while simultaneously ensuring a successful future for their growing children. Although they preserve Bengali culture in many aspects of their domestic life, their Americanised children forge the identity that negotiates between the demands of both cultures. They “signify most of all a transformed relationship to homeland and another land” (Shukla 215). Lahiri’s first generation characters see their world as two worlds. They are Indian at home and American outside which suggests that transformations will inevitably occur with each coming generations.

Lahiri’s second generation characters like the author herself have a different identity as they are the products of hybridity. Their representation of India through their parents’ link are always filtered through an American prism, nevertheless they constitute an important element of their multicultural identities. Her third generations are the architect of more than two cultures and two identities in the adopted land. Their mixed and contingent identity makes them a multi-sided entity. Regarding their identity in the new geography, “they are neither soft enough to be totally melted in the cultural spot, nor hard enough to be differentiated in all aspects of cultural practices” (Hall 137).
Lahiri’s fictional world is explored with a number of women immigrants. Although they have many years of stayings in the United States after their separation from their motherland, they have the echo of their grandmothers, mothers and their friends’ farewell words in their ears. The Indian dress code sari for woman allows the wearer to express her own cultural ways of representing modesty, dignity and marital status of the female immigrant characters. It signifies a standardised code of culture for an Indian woman to pronounce her culture distinctly.

Like the dress code, food, preparing one’s own traditional recipes and the habit of taking food plays a vital role in displaying one’s culture and identity in a foreign land. In Lahiri’s stories food emerges as a metaphor to induce a sense of belonging not only to the first generation but also to the second generation. All the immigrant societies want their children to marry from their own community. In all their religious and marriage ceremonies they want to have Sanskrit vows in the event, have Indian meals and all want to attend these ceremonies with their cultural attires with its homogeneous features. In The Namesake Moushumi and Gogol’s marriage ceremony union of the two cultures, Indian and American, are seen. When the official ceremony is over and the unofficial one starts the Indian groom changes into a suit and the bride into a gown with her bare shoulder exposed. Countless numbers of people with Indian and American origin gather at the ceremony. They enjoy Indian and Western music, meals and drink from both cultures. The newly-wed couple look intensely Indian at first and later on with significant changes in dressing and make-ups, look more American. From this environment it appears that Lahiri’s first and second generation characters know their roots but at the same time they are aware of their own and the new culture and its codes.
In a kind of geographical and emotional hyphenatedness Lahiri’s characters attempt holistically to merge with the culturally other. For her characters ‘in-between’ space is a productive one and has a positive force to foster a new identity. The identity of each character becomes plural and heterogeneous. Lahiri shows that the Bengali immigrants carry their cultural baggage with them from their homeland to the adopted land i.e. America and assimilate their culture with the American culture. In the process of acculturation they accommodate themselves in new surroundings. They experience both ‘roots’ and ‘routes’ ahead. Their hyphenated identity posits themselves somewhere in the middle of the ‘self’ and ‘other’—somewhere between Indianness and Americanness.

The chapter reveals that culture is the locus of identity of every immigrant. The diaspora characters enrich their own culture by picking up all those valuable in the cultures of other society. The narratives under study present the reality of the Indian diasporas who enjoy a multi-dimensional existence and a multi-cultural experience.

In the fourth chapter it is found that being a diasporic writer Gupta never longs for her hyphenated identity for her characters in an alien society. Her characters have been equally adapted in both the cultures—Calcutta and Oxford unlike her. Her characters Moni, Niharika, and Debendranath never feel as insiders and outsiders in between two cultures and continents. They freely come to England as if they do domestic travelling, stay there on their own way. They never feel the anxiety of displacement unlike other postcolonial diasporas. They have fully assimilated and acculturated with the culture of the host society. The locales of her narratives are London, Calcutta, Paris, Princeton, New Jersey, Ghana, Italy, Australia and New York but none of these cities can be considered as the true home town for any of these
characters. Gupta’s characters though born in one of these cities, they wander through them. Her characters are transnational and therefore, the geographies in her novels fluid.

Gupta’s characters have their original houses at Calcutta which symbolise as the past—the original space—from where their diasporic journey takes off. The second is the house of the present to build up their interpersonal confrontation where the characters usually prefer to go. The “in-between” space is the transition between the past and the future in which the diasporic experience is perceived. This theme of transition—the “in-between” space is the *locus* of personal struggle to construct self-identity. It is seen that her narratives are in the multicultural process through which the characters’ identities are constructed.

It is seen that Gupta’s characters often marry Westerners without any agony. Moni marries an English gentleman; Niharika falls in love with an English gentleman and Debendranath marries an English lady. They very easily and freely assimilate and acculturate with the multicultural situations of the host country. Gupta, a first generation immigrant, never projects her characters on the binaries of India vs. Britain. In all her novels the immigrant scenario is seen as one of the vital characteristics of a multicultural society. Through her novels, she projects a new type of Indian diaspora whose emotional root is not planted in India rather it is in the transplanted culture without direct reference to India. They acculturate and assimilate with the host culture without being ‘unconverted’.

**Comparative study of the two Novelists:**

Realizing the experiences of immigrants, both Jhumpa Lahiri and Sunetra Gupta focus the experiences of their diaspora characters. While translating their
experiences in America’s social space and mindscape they remind the course of research visibly through “From Sugar to Masala: Writing by the Indian Diaspora” that analyses the distinction between the first generation (Sugar) and the second generation (Masala) diaspora movements and their inner experiences, “on the threshold zone of intercutting subjectivities that define the experience of migrancy” (Mishra 287). Both the novelists differentiate the old diaspora and the new diaspora in the following manner:

The new migrants invoke different sort of picture than the old immigrants. Contemporary immigrants both create and transform social networks, circuits of capital and commodities, and cultural practices and rituals that exist in the country of their settlement and the home society. These immigrants travel back and forth between dual societies, inhabit multiple homes, roles, identities, and language (qtd in Sahoo and Maharaj 619).

Lahiri and Gupta have celebrated the idea of multiculturalism and hybridity from their own experiences and observations. Their works engage in negotiating ways between identity and culture and while doing so they define a whole new identity for themselves and their characters. Many young second generation writers like Lahiri and Gupta try to get off the diasporic tag, and proclaim themselves as either American or British writers. They have come up with new ways of looking at the Indian diaspora that stand for assimilation and acculturation.

Lahiri and Gupta, although belong to two different generations they retain their links with India, especially with their hometown Kolkatta and its Bengali culture which has been profusely narrated in their works. All their pages are peopled by characters from India and abroad. In their writings deep root of Bengali culture and its
connection to Kolkata is an overt and invariably a covert presence which makes manifestations in their fictive worlds, whether based in the United States of America or in England. In their writings two worlds are visible—India and America and India and England. Their protagonists go abroad, negotiate within the borders of a foreign society in various ways and seek to establish their identity on alien shores. Their characters are multicultural migrants travelling from their homes in India to the United States or to England. Their movement across the continents and cultures make Lahiri and Gupta to represent the multicultural in their fictional worlds. It appears “Each of these writers employs and deploys strategies of home and homeliness to sketch her own literary odyssey which can be entangled or disentangled from the notion of Indianness...” (Ponzanesi 23). Their writings make the processes of adaptation and construction—adaptation to changes, dislocations and transformations and construction of new forms of identity and ways of seeing world from other perspectives. They write much about the experiences that immigrants face in their new country, and overcome the problems and culture shocks that come up, as well as how they define their identity by assimilating and acculturating with the host culture.

Both the writers represent the world of Bengali immigrants who while maintaining the customs of their homeland struggle to assimilate into mainstream American culture. In their works there are pictures of Indian roots and American life, the city of Calcutta on the one hand and Cambridge and New York on the other. This provides different paradigms of life among people representing distinct cultures and worldviews. They project culture beyond its borders in their writings through their international characters who consciously want to obliterate boundaries. By crossing borders of several kinds, as the two writers themselves did in their lives, their characters break the “barriers of thought and experience” (Said 185) which opens up
new ways of cooperating different cultures. The ‘unity in diversity’ of India and the ‘melting-pot’ culture in the United States and ‘new salad-sauce’ of the United Kingdom coexist in their fictional worlds.

Lahiri and Gupta stress on the fact that for diasporic people ‘home’ is the very centre and fluid concept which changes its meaning along with the prevailing mindset of the person. Through their fictional works they seek to create identities that ‘defy the borders of modern construct of the western nation state’. As diasporic themselves these two authors grew up in more than two worlds simultaneously inheriting the feeling that there was no single place to which they fully belonged. Their construction of home for their characters therefore, is influenced by their struggle, their flexibility of being changed under the influence of foreign culture. Lahiri and Gupta emphasize the need of accommodative attitude and tolerance toward a multicultural reality in America’s modern multicultural world.

Lahiri and Gupta have celebrated the idea of multiculturalism and hybridity in their fictional presentations. Lahiri as a second generation Indian diaspora has accepted herself as much American as she is an Indian. She is in ease with her hyphenated identity and claims herself a hyphenated and hybrid identity. Her works engage in negotiating between cultures and nations, and defining a whole new identity for herself and her characters. Gupta is a first generation Indian immigrant for whom ‘home’ is ‘anywhere, everywhere and nowhere’. In their fictional contours, both create the privileged space ‘in-between’ more than two cultures and two continents. They are multinational persons with multinational existences. They bear the stamp of multicultural, transnational, cosmopolitan consciousness and experiences. This ability makes them revealing a true representation of multicultural identity in their contemporary world. Whether they identify themselves as Indian, postcolonial, native,
migrant or not, their negotiation of cultural pluralism or multiculturalism between India, the United States, the United Kingdom and the vast expanse of Europe are the research aspects.

Suggestions:

Jhumpa Lahiri and Sunetra Gupta have given a universal appeal to all Indian diasporas through their fictional characters from Bengali community by portraying the dynamics of culture and representing multicultural sensibilities. They faithfully portray the assimilation and acculturation strategies adopted by dislocated individuals in a multicultural society. Through their fictional works they convincingly suggest how to come to terms with life to live with others in peace in a multicultural society. In social reality it is true that every type of immigrants must have undergone radical transformations whereby they acquire transnational multicultural identity. In Lahiri’s and Gupta’s fictional characters there is no exception. In their assimilation and acculturation process with the cultures of the host society, their characters exhibit some tendencies to preserve the heritage and ethnic identity. But culture like a river flourishes in varieties, not in uniformity. Through their characters, they make us comprehend the variety of cultures that a multicultural society exhibits. Lahiri’s story “When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine” is a message to the world that presents how irrespective of nation and religion of Lilia’s parents and Mr. Pirzada, they live harmoniously despite belonging to two different countries. They live peacefully as ‘same boat brother’ due to their affinity in their culture in a multicultural society like the US. Like Lahiri’s characters, Gupta’s characters Moni, Niharika and Debendranath live happily overseas without a single feeling of insecurity.
The writings of Lahiri and Gupta are neither on a line of diasporic experiences like the old diasporas nor as the works of social documentations. They have adopted a comparatively new approach to diaspora although they belong to two different generations. Unlike the old diasporas, their works are not confined to home and homesickness, alienation, nostalgia, aloofness, or dislocation. Their works are based on relocation. In this age of Liberalisation, Globalisation and Privatisation, for relocation one moves towards ‘third space’, ‘in-between space’ to reflect faithfully the sensibility.

Lahiri’s and Gupta’s fictional world offers a glimpse of the representation of multicultural identity and belonging that constitute the new diaspora. Both of them have provided a platform for the transparency of nations and national culture that liquidate the concept of identity in a multicultural society. They are worth considering for their suggestion to political work that questions the idea of the nation and culture as representation of multicultural identity and belonging. They suggest for an accommodative philosophy in order to tolerate and incorporate diverse cultures from different communities to live happily a peaceful and healthy life without dominating and interfering in others.

**Limitations and Directions for Future Research:**

The study is confined to the investigation of the representation of multicultural in the works of Jhumpa Lahiri and Sunetra Gupta. Within this limitation, the study covers two diasporic writers who represent, negotiate and assimilate their own culture with the host cultures. In order to incorporate themselves with the host society, they assimilate and acculturate their own culture with other cultures. They accept the other cultures’ values and norms as their own. Simultaneously in this
process other people also follow their culture. Culture is also represented through
religion. Keeping apart religion from the life and practice of the characters the study
analysed culture in an irreligious and apolitical way. Apart from the findings, Lahiri’s
and Gupta’s works have dealt with various aspects of human relationships like parent-
child, and husband-wife relationships. This aspect can be explored in future research.
Within diaspora study, the recent emergence of regional sub-groups needs to be
studied as they offer uniqueness to Indian diasporic literature. Lahiri’s and Gupta’s
female characters enjoy a sense of alienation. It is more so with the female characters
of Gupta who are deserted by their lover-cum-husband. This aspect of alienation
although needs psychoanalysis it can be explored in future study by comparing the
female characters of these two novelists. Lahiri’s female characters like Ashima,
Ruma, Sudha, Moushumi and Gupta’s female characters like Moni, Niharika, Jennifer
have shown their diasporic journey for assimilation and acculturation. In this process
of assimilation and acculturation the women have a different sensibility of feeling
cultural alienation and assimilate through their tough struggle in comparison to their
male counterparts. These diasporic female characters can also be studied from the
feminist point of view. In Marxist point of view economy plays an important role in
one’s living status and place of living. Therefore, the multicultural contexts of both
the novelists can be studied from the Marxist view point.

**Implications of the Study:**

Today’s world is a world of Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation
for which diaspora is widespread across the world. The new phase of Indian diasporas
have tremendous contributions to trade, commerce, education, diplomatic relations,
industry and transformation of technology. They have earned a prominent status
abroad for their values, dedication to work, honesty and adaptability. Diaspora has its
manifestations in literature also. New diasporic writers have contributed and enriched
the diasporic literature through their poems, dramas, short stories and fictions. Literature is a medium through which the concept, feelings and mindset of Indian diaspora can be comprehended. The undertaken study examines the literary works of contemporary and internationally recognised writers, Jhumpa Lahiri and Sunetra Gupta in an attempt to understand the diverse fields of diasporic writers.

Lahiri and Gupta’s fictional writings are concentrated on the assimilation and accommodation of cultures. Through the stream of consciousness technique they explore the psychology of the characters. All their writings record their journey across the continents and across the sea, miseries and missions on the foreign lands. Their “in-between” position is productive and creative. Diasporic status gives the opportunity to form new identity in their adopted country. ‘Fluidity’ is at the heart of American and British landscape. America’s ‘melting-pot’ ideology and Britain’s ‘salad-sauce bowl’ practice are the causes of their ‘exuberance of immigration’. These strategies have the power to dismantle the concepts of the old world to transform alienation and victimization into productive ambivalences.

Lahiri and Gupta are aware of their duality, double consciousness and fluid identity as well as their immigrant characters. They try to expand the peripheries of their experiences across the cultures, nations and nostalgia of the migrants. They look forward and relocate their identity proudly in the new country and new culture, and build their ‘home’ at the places of their choice. They accept their host country as their new homeland in the process of integrating, assimilating and accommodating in the new world and new cultures. Their bridging the inherited culture with the new ones form their new identity for them. Lahiri and Gupta melt into their adopted culture like
their characters yet not convert and transplant their own in the new soil before becoming multicultural.