CHAPTER VI
SUMMING UP

Jhumpa Lahiri’s works deal with the internal strife and changing human predicament among identities and cultures. One of the themes Lahiri deals in most prolifically is the search for identity, as defined by the self, by others, by location and by circumstance. In Lahiri’s stories, everything including gender, homeland, geography, occupation and role within the community, can act in determining and qualifying identity. Lahiri brings up interesting questions as to what can and cannot act as agents in the determination of identity and many of her characters struggle against or conform to outside influences that have effects on self definition and outside definition. Immigrants and expatriates experience difficulties is obvious, from the portrayals of expatriate writers.

Expatriate writers’ narratives deal, mostly, with the internal strife in the context of cultural displacements. The immigrants away from the familiar ties oscillate between crisis and reconstruction. Idiosyncrasies and peculiarities offer a subtle and insightful commentary on their lives. In the process of accommodation journey the immigrant’s identity shift is subjected to a complete makeover beyond recognition. They impersonate an assortment of self for the lack of an identity of their own. The dream of better material prospects transforms the life into restlessness. Migration and cross-cultural encounters have always affected the lives of immigrants adversely, the only difference being variations in the intensity.

The author explores the narrative of human heart and psyche in conflict of old ways desperately conserved and new ways of alteration. Dwelling into the cultural and psychological upheavals and the reactions as the result of crossing the borders they
present the pull experienced by the migrants in trying to accommodate their home culture. Since the existence of a diaspora is so intimately connected to cultural memory, diasporic writing articulates a real or imagined past of a community in all its symbolic transformations. It provides a translation of the semiotic behavior of dislocation and resettlement.

Writers of Diasporas often employ linguistics forms of loss or dislocation, such as fragments or elliptical recollections of ancestral languages, cross-lingual idioms, and mixed codes to create a new definitions of community and community memory in exile. For the displaced population parent’s biographies, autobiographies - veiled or revealed - autobiographical fictions, testimonies, and memoirs become the restorative institution of personal and group memory. Here memory is an intersection between personal recollection and historical account, and though self-consciously fragmentary, it intimates the virtual existence of a longer collective narrative of a nation, ethnic group, or class.

The gathering of short stories, Interpreter of Maladies brings to light many of the issues with individuality faced by the Diaspora population. The story contains the stories of first and second-generation Indian immigrants, as well as a few stories involving ideas of otherness among communities in India. The stories revolve around the difficulties of relationships, communication and a loss of identity for those in Diaspora. No matter where the story takes place, the characters move violently with the same feelings of exile. The stories deal with the always - broken up lines flanked by gender, sexuality, and social status within a Diaspora. Whether the character is a dispossessed woman from India or an Indian male student in the United States all the characters exhibit the belongings of displacement in a Diaspora.
Neither here nor there is the quandary of settler in the culture in exile. It reflects on the shattered experience in modernity, the pitfalls of monolingualism, the impact of uprootment, and the interaction between cultures. Subjects in contemporary fiction, not unlike the subject in contemporary criticism, tend to elude fixity, exuding the hyper subjectivity of the “post” whether they are postmodern, postcolonial or post constructionist as pre, the immigrant embodiments.

The expansive writers portray the immigrants as precariously positioned, located relationally between representation and agency, between perception and reality. They are torn between the bond of past traditions and attractions to the practices of a liberated life in an alien country. Though they try to bring new colour to their emotional landscape they hardly succeed. Cultural values at odds with modern “American Values” brand them as dissidents a name that launches them into a nightmare they never dreamt of and imagined.

The relativity of the perspective and the artistic handling and findings to explain the related double consciousness of the novelist sincerity and artistic wonder provide a coherent identity, giving meaning to the works of diasporic writers. The crosscurrents of relation in the society and culture lead to certain negative behaviorisms in the immigrants such as endurance after displacements would be a matter of significance.

The displaced beings away from the familiar ties oscillate between crisis and reconstruction. Relations between displaced immigrants and their ancestral homeland are complex and full of dialectical contradictions. Firstly there is anger, bitterness, and remorse among exiles, whether voluntary or involuntary, and many times even the people back home cannot overcome the grief of dispersion. Secondly there is conflict
when the dominant hosts attempt to justify the subordinate status of the immigrants, and they in turn refuse to accept the status thrust on them. For all battle for changing the world essentially and ultimately begins with the self, the monster first, they cannot look for lesser goblins and horror.

Cultural travels have proved to be powerful tools for improving and strengthening the relationship between the countries. Immigrants after their displacement assume the task of a guardian, mapmakers, and pathfinders – finding the valuable in our pasts, helping to bring the present into clearer focus and pointing towards the future. They in due course have to face challenges of a different variety, of ranging from personal to social – the challenges of equity and redress.

Migration has to serve the broader aspects of a society like a catalyst to bring new appreciation of each other’s cultures, which will be a greater contribution to the development of closer relations, not only between the academic communities and scholars, but also between the nations and countries all around the world. Diasporic religion, in contrast to native, locative religion, was utopian. The self – consciousness of migrant minorities in certain ways overlap with the identity dynamics associated with the condition of Diaspora. The diasporic duality of continuity and change is evident in a number of socio – religious domains. Yet after all these attempts they feel neither peace nor satisfaction. One of the features that run through expatriate writing is the recurrence of failed communication between displaced individuals and surroundings. Traversing from fear and ignorance into attempts at adjustment the displaced immigrants have come a long way.
The displacements positioning not only forces the immigrant to reevaluate his impressions about culture and identity but also helps to recognize them in the new spatial identities and commitments. The milieu of their lives has been the torn – distorted identity and the women in particular have seen the rough and mean side of life and yet found strength in keeping or at – least trying to maintain relations and emotions intact.

Once more conclusion that follows directly from this is that the culturally displaced immigrants as citizens of nations as members of larger, smaller, or dispersed units of agglomeration need to be conceptualized together. In the transnational public sphere, immigrant’s identities as citizens of a nation are multiply reflected by their refracted appropriation of images and ideas formed of them. Many migrants travel within a family unit and many join kinfolk in the social order of settlement. Those they join help and assist the fellow compatriots in confronting the problems of settlement and adjustment. Family relationships have an enduring impact on immigrants. For policies, rules and even norms may change, but commitments among family members are of a long – lasting nature and act as a cushion. However it also has to be noted that in a few cases migrants without kinship maintain higher morale, as they make new social connection and wider exposure, than do migrants who join kinfolk or others.

Immigration and diaspora are new phenomena in India and the literature produced by diasporic Indian writers explores the multi-dimensional anxieties of ‘emigre’ life. Recently, there have been more shifts in perceptions and perspectives of such writer’s notions of individual, and their national and cultural identities. Several kinds of identities jostle with each other and create a crisis of identity in the works of reputed writers like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Gosh and others. The interaction and commingling of various cultures certainly open new routes and modes of thinking about
the individual and group identities of Diasporas and help them to outgrow the stereotyped experiences of uprootedness, displacement and marginalization. For various reasons, the present diaspora tends to alienate the immigrants from their roots in spite of themselves, compelling them to live between two worlds: the imaginary and the real, the past and the present, and the virtual and the material.

Jhumpa Lahiri evokes the layered tensions the experiences of the first and second generation Indian Americans arising out their divided affiliations and predilection towards their original and adopted homelands. Her characters, especially Ashoke, Ahima and Gogol, act as interpreters of both the Indian culture of the United States. As a sensitive American writer, well aware of and closely linked with Indian heritage, Lahiri unfolds her characters fractured double perspectives. They evidence a sticky attachment to their Indian past, to the native people, native culture, native Gods, Goddesses, and rituals like Durga Puja and even native attire, language and literature make him feel at home in a foreign land. Gangulis ‘get together’ with Bengali families in America at the time of naming and ‘anaprasan’ ceremonies, birthdays, marriages and death reveal their wish to preserve the ‘home culture’ there. Thus their adherence to a diasporic community is demonstrated by an acceptance of an inescapable link with their past migration history. It also reveals that migrant Bengalis carry with them their beliefs, traditions, customs, behaviours and values along with their possessions and belonging to new places. At the same time they are assimilated in a new culture and Bengali families in the United States celebrate the festivals of the dominating culture such as Christmas, Thanksgiving and Halloween which evinces their preference, for adjustment and even acculturation rather than an all-out alienation.
Lahiri remains a detached observer of the daily events in the lives of her fictional characters. She is dispassionate chronicler of the lives in a global society, and delineates the mental void and ruptures in human relationships. She believes in existentialism and gives prime importance to the actual being of the individual, and not to ‘essence’. Existence comes before essence. Jhumpa Lahiri characters conceive of existence only by grasping their own immediate experiences. Though most of the stories are of Bengali individuals, they touch on universal themes, making them both specific and broad in their appeal. The conflicts of these individuals are the maladies of the inhabitants of a bicultural universe. Talking about bicultural universe, Jhumpa Lahiri herself admits that it perplexes her. Notwithstanding her skeptical critics, Lahiri is modest enough in acknowledging the fact that winning Pulitzer had actually been the single greatest surprise in her life.

‘The Namesake’, a novel of uncommon elegance and poise, Lahiri is good at capturing the world in a language that is chiseled, unadorned, clear as crystal, as if her narrative is documentary of little lives, displaced and dour, floating in an anonymous island, far away from home and her empathy is an transparent as her words” writes India Today. It is her deft narrative technique that helps her to reach at the inner weave of characters with unexpected twists in plot and human situations.

Jhumpa Lahiri is not preoccupied with gender discrimination; on the other hand, as a South Asian diasporic female writer, she writes about ‘human predicament’ and the crisis of identity in the alienated land of America though she has made it her home. Marginality, alienation and nostalgia are the three chief features in her writings. In spite of this, she shares significant resemblances with the native literature enriched by historical connections, spiritual affinities and racial reminiscences. When writes with a
sensibility about her family’s ethnic heritage and the lives of South Asian immigrants in the United States. Though peripheral in the host countries scattered throughout the world from the South Pacific to South America, from the islands of Mauritius and Singapore to the cities and suburbs of London, New York, Johannesburg and Toronto, her literature has been deriving sustenance from the country of her residence. Her cross-cultural experiences have lent a refreshing diversity to her artistic creations negotiating the problems of evolving new tools of critical perspectives. The focal point is not her feminine sensibility but the dilemma of choice and commitment to cultural moorings in family matters.

Jhumpa Lahiri who attained the stature of a conjurer, a literary icon of diasporic writings is a great writer. She is different from other Indian writers writing in English, as most of them are born and brought up in India, and later on settled abroad. Her stories sketched out the lives of various Bengali-Americans suffering through a diversity of stages of loveless deserted life that speaks volumes of their educational uprooting and displacement.

The expatriate subject is recurrent in her works where she paints the bleak and the bizarre realities in the immigrant life. The expatriate theme began as early as in the works of twentieth century writers the theme of displacement, east west encounter. The east – west theme in fiction has been stimulating the creative imagination of the Indo English writers. Her characters suffer on an intimate level the dislocation and disruption brought on by the change of residence. The reasons for their plight may vary from one to another individual, but the consequences are the same disillusionment, unhappiness and a sense of rejection.
Getting uprooted from the native cultural traditions and values, the loss of native language, immigrant’s position as a sheer outcast with inflicted and shattered psyche account for the resultant identity degeneration. Culturally and even linguistically estranged as the individual feels about himself, the whole question of his social, emotional ethnic or cultural identity assumes mythic proportions and thus becomes an attainable ideal. What they aspired for, and ultimately what they are, they are not able to strike a balance between the two worlds; the one left behind and the other they have come to live in. They are obstinately rooted in the home culture and relentlessly refuse to adopt themselves to the alien culture.

India continues to form part of Lahiri’s fictional landscape. As most of her characters have an Indian background, India keeps cropping up as a setting, sometimes literally, sometimes more figuratively, in the memory of the characters. Lahiri feels strong ties to her parents’ homeland as well as the United States and England. Growing up with ties to all three countries created in he a sense of homelessness and an inability to feel accepted. Lahiri explains this as an inheritance of her parent’s ties in India. Her parents considered another place home even after living abroad for 30 years. They were always looking back and never felt at home there as there was no one in this whole country that they were related to. India was different as their extended family offered real connections. Yet her familial ties to India were not enough to make India “home”. Diaspora is a wound that is never healed. That diaspora is like being ejected out of mother’s womb; the people cannot return to the womb. So the people are condemned to a perpetual moving without arrival.

As explained immigrant experience is not a simple and welcoming kind rather it is traumatic and contradictory. Lahiri’s stories portray the experience of cultural
displacement and the consequences. The sense of rootlessness and craving to explore their destination is pervading all through her stories. The characters in her stories subjected to strife not just external but internal. Caught in a whirlpool, they suffer and become fragmented and distorted images. They are in a precarious position not able to modernize themselves at the cost of their inherited cultural ethics. Their plight is unendurable mental agony disturbing their life with the thoughts of insecurity, alienation and an anxiety to return to their homeland. A common threat running throughout is the experience of being in foreign.

The stories revolve around the difficulties of relationships, communication and a loss of identity for those in diaspora. No matter where the story takes place, the characters thrash about with the same feelings of exile and the struggle between the two worlds by which they are ragged. Her prose encompassed and embraced heart-weary culturally displaced beings and their dilemmas. Some are homesick many are lost in the new world. With the characters poised between the old world of India and the perpetual unnerving newness of America, Jhumpa Lahiri debut story collection displayed a commendable grasp of biculturalism as well as a realistic elegance.

Lahiri was born in London, raised in America is of Indian descent. With such a background she however arrived at an entirely different imaginative enterprise. She surrendered the whitely flourish and scaled her characters to actual human existence. Modest as it was ‘Interpreter of Maladies’ became a world – of – mouth phenomenon and eventually won the Pulitzer Prize.

As in most of Lahiri’s short stories, the characters of her novel, ‘The Namesake’ are members of the expatriate Bengali intelligentsia – scientists, economists and
academicians, in New England: Boston, Cambridge, and other university towns. Lahiri introduces to people who left behind family, friends, and the familiar in pursuance of better life in America.

Lahiri well versed with the life of expatriate Bengalis in the Boston area, their lonely lives with virtual extended families made up of fellow emigrants, presents the real picture of the American dream. ‘The Namesake’ focuses on the cultural displacements of Ganguli’s family from Calcutta. It is a novel about exile and its discontents; a novel that is moving in its exploration of disturbed relation of fathers and sons, parents and children. It is significant in its depiction of gulf between what is aspired and what is acquired, and at what cost.

Lahiri has acknowledged that America is a real presence in the book and the characters struggle and come to terms with what it means to live there, to be brought up there and of belonging and not belonging there. Ashima and Ashoke Ganguli were emigrants to Boston from their homeland, India. In 1968, Ashoke and Ashima newlyweds in an arranged marriage, arrive at Cambridge where Ashoke was a doctoral candidate in electrical engineering at MIT. Ashoke assumes the journey as liberation whereas Ashima considers it as an exile away from family more so because of her pregnancy. It was nightmarish undertaking for her, as thinks it strange that her child will be born in a place most people enter either to suffer or to die. In this novel, Lahiri presents the American immigrant experience following through to the next generation as she tracks the members of the Gangui family spanning 30 – odd years from 1968 – 2000.

In telling the stories of two generations, ‘The Namesake’ bridges the gap between immigrant parents and their American offspring and allows for fuller understanding of
the cultural gulf separating generations. Two dimensions of experience common to most immigrants, whether they have chosen to emigrate, as in the case with the Ganguli’s or external circumstances have forced the choice on them: the loss of contextual continuity and the consequences of being an outsider in the new culture. For many immigrants, dissociated aspects of self – experience symbolize their original culture. Whether these dissociated states are idealized and felt to be unattainable in the new culture or denigrated and warded off in an attempt to make new connections, if they are not made conscious, examined mourned over, and reintegrated, the immigrant will experience, like Ashima, loneliness and disillusion with how her children are so different. Or conversely, Gogol was unable to live up to the parental ideal, specifically his father’s parental idea. At the core of the story, ‘The Namesake’ informs about the experiences of immigrant assimilation and second – generation identity formation.

Jhumpa Lahiri has become in the last decade one of the most outstanding and evocative voices in the American literary panorama. Lahiri has acknowledged in interviews that her fiction is largely based on her own memories, personal anecdotes and life experiences, in part due to her parents’ observation of Indian traditions and persistence to raise their children as Indian. This mingling of two worlds pervades her writing which exhibits an anxiety of accommodating the two sides of herself. In her short story collections and novels to date, Lahiri uses Indian and Bengali names and makes specific references to Indian customs and food, cooking utensils, dress and an extensive imagery which connect her fiction to other Southeast Asian authors. Much of her short fiction deals with the lives and vicissitudes of Southeast Asian Indian protagonists, trapped between two different worlds and two different ways of living. The characters, however, are not transplanted refugees: they are either Indo – Americans
trying to adapt to a new country that provides opportunities, or else their Westernised children. Ties to the Asian subcontinent may be strong or weak, but they are always present.

Jhumpa Lahiri’s handling of names in her stories is thoughtful and masterly. Names for her are closely interlinked to the art of characterization. Jhumpa Lahiri is well equipped in the technique and subtleties of fiction. Her technique is so unobtrusive, subtle and unimposing that at times the readers feels that she is not resorting to any technique at all. Jhumpa Lahiri in this regard becomes a living example of the adage, “still waters run deep”.

Her short fiction focusing primarily on the racialised subjectivity as result of Indian food ways, ethical responsibility and memory, American inner spaces, cultural identity, immigration experience or considering ‘Interpreter of Maladies’ as a short story cycle. None the less, the importance of marriage in the Indian imaginary as a means of preserving both culture and customs seems to have been quite often overlooked. Lahiri portrays the traditional order of Indian marital culture in several stories dealing with either first generation immigrants in America or stories set in India. In male oriented societies, as in Eastern tradition cultures, women are responsible for cooking and doing household duties. Childbirth, is considered a period during which her personal freedom diminishes. Men are, according to such guidelines, responsible for working and providing their families with monetary income.

The old tradition of marriages arranged between families also affects those first immigrants arriving in the Western world during the fifties or sixties, as many of them were either rapidly married before travelling to the United States, or committed to do so
within the process of settlement in the new country. In her stories, Lahiri shows that men suffered from these imposed rules of marriage too as they were obliged to find a wife and have children as a means to perpetuate castes and family ties.

Stories of Indian immigrants in the United states usually deal with highly qualifies husbands attending American universities as opposed to wives deeply attached to Eastern traditions, devoting their time to household chores and child bearing. Those men adjusted themselves to the American way of life and their new jobs, grasping every chance to succeed in the land of opportunities. Their wives, on the other hand, got stuck between the Eastern tradition ruling their homes and the Western life from outside. Their physical appearance and behavior make them look different and out of place: colourful saris and red dots on their foreheads account for their roots. The children of such couples are torn between two worlds as well: their birthplace and their parents. Though with Indian roots and family ties, these characters behave, talk and live as genuine Americans. In “Interpreter of Maladies” the description of the Das family, born and raised in the United States and travelling to the land of their ancestors, highlights his contrast in a single sentence: “The family looked Indian but dressed as foreigners did” (IM 42-43).

Though the first immigrants in America sought to raised their children as Indian, obeying main Eastern rules, the second generation is born and raised in a Western country characterized by an apparent freedom in terms of personal and marital relationships. It is noteworthy that most of them, though free to act, would choose someone from their same ethnic group to marry, probably as a guarantee of successful matrimony. In Lahiri’s fiction, there is a tendency of young Eastern couples meeting for the first time due to their parents’ right judgement and effort. Sometimes without
realizing it, Indo-Americans are lead not just to know each other, but to fall in love and marry afterwards.

Several stories in Lahiri’s fiction deal with relationships between Indian–American and westerners. Lahiri dwells on the effects of mixed marriages in the lives of Indian–American as they bespeak the inability of spouses to accommodate two different ethnic and social backgrounds. Thus “Hell - Heaven” the representation of a mixed relationship is explored through the comments of Aparna and her daughter and narrator, Usha. Aparna, married off to Shyamal Da, criticizes Pranab Chakroborty for going out with Deborah, an American girl whose parents were professors at Boston college, Aparna’s infatuation of Pranab evolve into a complexity of feelings in which adherence to tradition mingles with the fact of her having been scorned. For her that relationship is bound to founder as she believes that “in a few weeks, the fun will be over and she’ll leave him”(HH 68). None the less, once the relationship settles and wedding plans are made, she will stick to the idea that Deborah “will leave him” and that Pranab is throwing his life away.

In this Indo - American world, there is a set of unwritten rules to be respected and mixed marriages undermine its stability. In this sense, the foreign element is the one to be blamed as the only feasible explanation accounting for the community member’s misbehavior. This is what must be inferred from Aparna’s words,

…and it was universally agreed that she had stropped Pranab Kaku not only of his origins but of his independence. She was the enemy, he was her prey, and their example was invoked as a
warning, and as vindication, that mixed marriages were doomed enterprise (HH 75).

Alien or non-Indian spouses are often regarded as a threat to community tradition as western values and beliefs brought by them may jeopardize the marital status. An opposing view is held by Usha. Her acceptance of Deborah should be interpreted as the narrator’s willingness to break away from the constraining influence of her Indian cultural background so as to seize the opportunity delivered by Deborah, an open window to the American way of life.

The backdrop adds to the charm. India, America, Boston, and Dacca are the changing landscape but the tumultuous happening within the human and social worlds creates a universal story of love and unhappiness. The greatness of a book lies in the style, structure and accuracy in making the tale of human idiosyncrasies thought-provoking and soul-searching. Jhumpa Lahiri does not explicitly point out the remedy. She has presented people as they are, but it teaches the lesson of humility, equality and motivates the people to retain the good of past in the face of the challenges of life with the head held high. Almost all stories end on a positive note, with the hope of a ‘tomorrow’ which suggests that with little efforts the readers can discard their shallow pretensions and move towards a society where the traditional and the modern world meet in their inherent goodness, asserting the worth of a human life.

The rise of a new sensibility accompanied by the growth of a peripheral mind is interpreted as loss of moral perception, eroding thought of nobility. On the contrary, the growth of the ideal now exemplifies the Indian mind transferred by knowledge, not of good and evil, but of a world that has for the first time photographed, measured,
explored, analyzed and counted to relate a consciousness incredibly widened and deepened and justified for man’s view of the world. The body of literature to which this writer had devoted to give permanent from remains history of the present age and provide means, for the next age, to transcend the nightmarish crisis in human values to the idyllic past in the present. Hence modern Indian English Literature is profoundly moral. Its real aim is to redeem reality through art without being preachy or pious.

It is a well – documented fact among social scientists and migration studies scholars that second – generation immigrants develop a number of ties with the host society that make their experience of their identity utterly different from that of their parents’. Beginning with a more proficient use of the language, but covering almost all aspects of cultural, structural, and civic adaptation, these sons and daughters of migrants are seen to adopt many of the behavioural patterns, values and ideals of the mainstream group. It would be inaccurate and unfair, though, to affirm that all of them are equally intent on discarding those elements of their parents’ cultural heritage that may make their incorporation into the receiving society more difficult, this process habitually involves a constant negotiation of the ties they want to strengthen with the host country, the pieces of their ethnic cultural background that they wish to preserve, and even those others that they feel need to be modified or fully re-invented. This identity formation process proves especially challenging and often tortuous for second generation immigrants because, while they can rarely achieve a complete assimilation into the host society, they cannot easily identify fully with their ethnic roots or seek the support of their co-ethnics, as their progenitors did. In short, the second generation exists in a liminal space of cultural borderlands between the United States and their family’s country or origin.
Cross – cultural currents have affected people across the globe, as the world has shrunk in terms of communication and ideologies, and in the process it has become substantially homogenized. Multiculturalism has penetrated the lives of individuals living in different corners of the world. America is still a place where the rest of the world comes to reinvent itself – accepting with excitement and anxiety the necessity of leaving behind the constrictions and comforts of distant customs. This is thunder lying theme of Jhumpa Lahiri’s sensitive new collection of short stories, ‘Unaccustomed Earth’. Cross – cultural issues have metamorphosed human lives and transformed the lives of Indians living abroad, causing serious maladjustments, faltering relations, strenuous anxieties, losing identities and tottering individuals. How multiculturalism has failed to enrich the lives of a large number of Indians living abroad and contrarily brought in feelings of homelessness and rootlessness have been immaculately brought out by Lahiri in ‘Unaccustomed Earth’. There are eight stories of which all the rich detailed, painting portraits of the complexity of these families lives loves and identities in the wake of radical disruptions. Through ‘Unaccustomed Earth’, Lahiri explores the cultural dissonances experienced by the immigrants caught between the culture of India and the unfamiliar ways of their adopted home. The second and third generation Indians are confronted with a conflict between their traditional Indian parents and American cultured peers.

The commingling of cultures has created cross – border relationships which are constantly under threats of generational differences, shifting roles, new demands and transformed diaspora identities. The confluence of cross – border marriages has been predominant in the diasporas lives. Lahiri presents the three generations of mainly
Indian Bengalis expatriates to America, who came to America to escape political or economic difficulties of their native land, or to study, or as professionals.

The exposure to Americanism poses a threat to the Indian cultural and traditional scenario. The impact of American culture shows itself through various manifestations impinged on the subconscious of the Indian diasporas, as a result of which the immigrants have undergone transformation in beliefs, values, customs, eating habits, etc. Through the eight thought – provoking stories of myriad human relationships Lahiri skillfully handles a wonderful literary journey keeping herself within the entrails of cross – cultural differences and cross – border relationships of Bengali – Americans.

Jhumpa Lahiri is undoubtedly the first emigrant writer who is concerned with their maladies and tries to be an interpreter. The stories reveal the skill Jhumpa Lahiri has achieved in her maiden venture. There is no chronological or sequential development of stories. She has evolved her own style by changing the mode of narration from past to the present and again reversing it without being nostalgic. Her style is almost cinematic and with the help of montage one gets a glimpse into the meaning of the story. One reading is not enough to understand any of her stories. Lahiri’s stories do document the characters’ trauma of displacement and the feeling of cultural nostalgia. But there is no ill will and malice against the host country and no clash between Indianness and Americanness unlike her fellow litterateurs. This is not to deny her stories are also documentation of exiled souls chained in muted boundaries of space and time.

To conclude, it can be said that till her first novel is released, the people can go on basking in Lahiri’s glory and feel proud that apart from the beauty queens who put
Indian on the world map. The people have appropriated literary figure, which though born in England, brought up in Connecticut and now living in New York, can be claimed as a desi writer too, though her own idea of India is of the mind only. In the definition and re-definition of the diaspora, for the time being at least, Jhumpa Lahiri is a writer who can hold her own in any grouping among Indian writers in English, among short story specialists, and among American literary stars.

Her stories offer a wonderful variety of experiences gathered from the cultural clashes rippling outward in many directions. The trauma of dislocation, an acute sense of loneliness and the pangs of estrangement suffered by the millions of exiled Indians who try unsuccessfully to balance themselves between home and abroad are the major maladies Lahiri attempts to interpret.

When second generation immigrants are termed as ABCDs that is American Born Confused Desis, one must look at the confusion with the perspective of a second – generation women writer. All immigrant writers write of the nostalgia and the identity crisis. Jhumpa Lahiri has presumably gone through both but has proved to be surprisingly resilient. Her portrayal of the immigrant trauma is without the tinge of hopelessness. She seems to suggest an antidote for the warped personality that results due to the cultural discrepancies. She finds her identity through her protagonists who do look back but pick and choose the best of both the cultures, that of their home land and of their host country. Hence the fictional consciousness produced by Jhumpa Lahiri is fully life – like and open to interpretation. It is from this point of view that doubling is necessary adjunct to the short stories and gives grasp of the intricacies of human understanding with meaningful communication.
Lahiri’s protagonists are the continental immigrants but they suffer from their cultural introspection. They have their conflict of consciousness between two selves – the native and the acquired, the real self and the community to which they belong. She has unraveled modern man’s facts to crises and despair in the labyrinths of life, existence and reality. They have their circular journey toward home and identity, being recognized as an unsettling race through alienation, cultural dismemberment, sex, modernity, urbanism and muted boundaries between time and space, life and death, identity and authenticity. In their strong cultural obsessions at home, they face difficulty in their actual living and comprehend their survival to adopt to the dominant Euro – American societies. Alienation leads them to emancipation, but emancipation from one world enslaves them to another world.

The native self is tormented in the acquired self and with an obsession for the native land it appears to them as the land of some secrets, some mystery. But as the product of a mixed race and a mixed culture Lahiri tries to get the complete approval of her self precisely because Indian is her home. Thus, her stories are the real social documents on tormented souls not with the usual sound and fury but rather through imaginative reconstruction.

Jhumpa Lahiri has the rare gift of being able to convey human emotions of tenderness and loneliness without extravagance. Her subject matter is often rooted in the ordinary, everyday existence of people in different walks of life. Like the best humanist artists, she has th gift of erasing boundaries. She is able to translate the thoughts and words of characters immersed in specific cultures and situations into themes that universally resonate.
Lahiri’s writing is ultimately transcultural that traces the need for cultural citizenry, that acknowledges the impossibility of confining migrant writing within the straitjacket of national or regional labels. Hence the need to reach the beyond, to the moon perhaps, crossing all sorts of boundaries. As the postcolonial literature are breaking up in diverse fragments, discussing the diversities of place, race, ethnicity, religion, politics et al, her book, placed in an international ambience and shared multicultural experiences, attempts to bridge the gaps through friendship, generosity and tolerance aiming for a new cultural synthesis that promotes cultural plurality through understanding.

Jhumpa Lahiri stories are rightly celebrated, for they have a variety of fragrances, subtle nuances of their own. They are deceptively simple on the surface like the calm waters of a deep river. She describes in detail the ripples, only giving to careful reader their forceful significance only when west made to dive, usually at the end. Jhumpa Lahiri’s narrative art is perhaps best revealed in her subtle exposure of the deep structure of her meaning through uncomplicated plots, characters and style and the extraordinariness of experience evoked by the ordinariness of expression.

Some of her stories deal either with the revelation of the essential features of the personalities of their characters or their evolution. The most significant of them present a sudden transformation springing from their roots, the silent control of their genetic cultural construct. The primary message that seems to permeate the stories is like out of cultivating the best of modernity by a mutually advantageous inter – mingling of the best in the East and the West, both purified of the accretions of evils and distortions which have disfigured their essence. Her stories thus have global relevance, though they convey their meeting so unobtrusively. Here is the art of silences suggestive of a stream
of conscience, both Indian and universal at the same time, that peculiarity novelistic continuum, inner – and – outer dialects of the novel, event by event, under the aspect of an ethical faint.

From her stories Jhumpa Lahiri makes a masterly attempt to delineate and define various moods, subtle vicissitudes in human relationships and the world view of the work itself, through a skillful and imaginative employment of optic images which in their turn, gradually assume a symbolic tone, thus rendering the vision of the work existential and universal. The characters live, cut off from their solid base called culture and faith. Jhumpa Lahiri has proved her uncommon merit picturing these much human relationships. All her stories mainly give primacy to the yet untapped possibilities of the cross-cultural communication of the Indians and the Americans. Ostensibly focusing on the encounters between these two seemingly diverse cultures, what Lahiri actually attempts to do is to look earnestly from some kind of cultural synthesis, that would go beyond the linear periphery of so-called history, geography and socio-economic politics of the mapped world.

An expatriate sensibility or an exiled self is not easily the keynote in Jhumpa Lahiri’s work as in the case of other modern writers living in other countries. The writer of Indian milieu in fact, assumes an ambivalent posture to issues like self and society and prefers to focus on more profound, intense and subtle intricacies of the people’s existence. Her stories are from the common run of writers. She seems to be a faithful portrayer of life.

Jhumpa Lahiri is neither fully Indian nor fully American. She does not belong to a single place. Yet she tries to interpret maladies of Indians to her Western readers and
of maladies of Western people to Indians. Her stories are veritable feast for those who know neither the Eastern culture nor the Western culture. Lahiri is vendeuse, wears a telegenic appearace and sells her ‘Interpreter of Maladies’ to the readers as if it were an example of her developed serendipity of India and the United States. Though she was brought up in the United States of America, her stories are imbued with Indian culture and sensibilities. Lahiri herself could not fully integrate with the United States of America culture, therefore, it is not wrong to consider her stories semi-autobiographical.

This thesis examines how the author explores the narrative of human heart and psyche in conflict with old ways desperately conserved and new ways of alteration. Dwelling into the cultural and psychological upheavals and the reactions as the result of crossing the borders, they present the pull experienced by the migrants in trying to accommodate their home culture and tradition.

As this Globe becomes increasingly shrunken as a result of incessant travelling and immigration, the visitors’ culture is always on a collision course wherever the visitor tries to settle down either for employment or for trade or for the purpose of permanent immigration. This gives rise to a new thrust in the field of research of immigrant identity and cultural identity. Lahiri explores several dimensions and multiple shades of every human relation in a cross-border situation. She studies the various conflicts and acquisitions, demands and dilemmas and the confusions and contradictions of every relation.

Hence it shows a general tendency to consider her as a writer of diasporic literature, brings to light many of the issues with identity faced by the diaspora community, depicts about the difficulties of relationships, communication and loss of
identity. Jhumpa Lahiri evokes the layered tensions, the experiences of the first and second generations Indian Americans arising out of their divided affiliations.

This study concludes that her stories revolve around the difficulties of relationships, communication and a loss of identity for those in diaspora. No matter where the story takes place, the fonts scuffle with the same feelings of exile and the brawl between the two ecospheres by which they are torn. Her prose incorporated and comprised heart-weary culturally displaced beings and their quandaries. The layers always deal with the unstable appearances between masculinity, sexuality and public status within a diaspora. The character is a homeless woman from India or Indian male students in the United States of America, all the characters display the effect of displacement in a diaspora, some are homesick and many are lost in the new world. With the characters poised between the old world of India and the perpetual unnerving newness of America.

Jhumpa Lahiri’s diasporic characters struggle hard to occupy the transnational space they find in the land of their choice and also their identity crises. Most of her stories in the text in references stress “the dichotomy of growing up in two cultures” (Suman Bala 25). Jhumpa Lahiri’s debut story collection displayed a commendable grasp of biculturalism as well as realistic elegance. Noticeably, the study contends that sensibility blends seamlessly with various prominent features of diasporic writings of Jhumpa Lahiri.