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Spacing Diaspora “identities”: A Comparative Study on *The Shadow Lines, Jasmine and Interpreter of Maladies*

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Spacing Diaspora “identities”: A Comparative Study on *The Shadow Lines*, *Jasmine* and *Interpreter of Maladies*

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Of
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**By
Sabrina Monir Jyoti
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Of
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Declaration

I Sabrina Monir Jyoti, confirm that the work for the following thesis paper with the title,

Spacing Diaspora “identities”: A Comparative Study on The Shadow Lines, Jasmine and Interpreter of Maladies

was solely undertaken by myself and that no help was provided by anyone except the guidance of my supervisor. All sections of the thesis that use quotations and arguments or descriptions by other authors have been acknowledged appropriately and I have maintained all the ethical code and conduct in accordance with academic regulations.

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I certify that this thesis, under the title, *Spacing Diaspora “identities”: A Comparative Study on The Shadow Lines, Jasmine and Interpreter of Maladies*, is supervised by me, Nazua Idris, and I hereby declare that this thesis maintains all the requirements as a dissertation for the fulfillment of the degree of Masters in Arts in English Literature.

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Spacing Diaspora “identities”: A Comparative Study on *The Shadow Lines*, *Jasmine* and *Interpreter of Maladies*

Abstract

Diaspora identity surfaces a number of emotional dispositions: rootlessness, isolation, nostalgia, inner conflict, generation gap, and last but not the least, an expedition for identity. The diaspora writers attempt to reconstruct a link between the motherland and the migrated country by projecting the continuous cultural clash between these territories. Searching for and defining a new identity is the central question for immigrants living in foreign land that leads them to create a balance between their past and present. This paper will offer a comparative study on the portrayal of Indian diaspora in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*, and Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*. These novels share some common contexts, like first generation immigrant's craving for establishing the values of their root to the next generations, second generation's vision of the “imaginary homeland” and their current home and their constant effort to make a balance between them, and the failure of creating a substantial balance leading to trauma and disruption of the personal and communal relationships. The main focus of this study is to trace the identity crisis of the characters in terms of space, geography, history, trauma etc. This paper will offer a literature review of those novels by relating them to the concept of third space and hybridity by Homi Bhaba from his *The Location of Culture* and the idea of cultural relocation and representation by Stuart Hall from the essays “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” and “Question of Identity”.

In the postcolonial era, it has become a nature of people to move from one place to another. Diaspora is more than simply migration. It is an idea which helps to explain the world created by migration. The term diaspora comes from an ancient Greek word meaning “to scatter about”. That’s exactly what the people of a diaspora do — they scatter from their homeland to places across the globe, spreading their culture as they go. The Bible refers to the Diaspora of Jews exiled from Israel by the Babylonians. But the word is now also used more generally to describe any large migration of refugees, language, or culture. From long back, people tend to migrate to better places for social, economic or political reason. After coming to a new country, the immigrants at first try to assimilate, adapt and amalgamate with the host country.

In *The Shadow Lines*, this happens with Thamma as well as Ila; in *Jasmine*, the protagonist struggles a lot to acculturate with the new culture and changes herself accordingly but still she couldn’t be a part of that culture; again in all the short stories of *Interpreter of Maladies*, the characters suffer from cultural clash. But in this process, they try to maintain their original culture and identity too. The marginal diasporic groups try to guard themselves against the dominant host group where they are currently living. The first-generation immigrants are always concerned about keeping the social, cultural baggage of their root which consists of their religion, language, music, art, dress, cuisine, etc. They try to pass these traditions of their root culture to the future generation very consciously so that the second generation do not flow themselves with the new western culture. The immigrants in this situation feel that they stand in a borderline where they belong neither to their motherland nor to their adopted country. In their attempt to assimilate with the new culture while keeping their inheritance intact, they develop a dual identity, and their culture becomes a mixed culture. Both their efforts for assimilation, and failure to do so dishearten them in every step. Travelling across geography denotes shifting

cultural space leading to fragmentation. The idea of “self”, “citizen”, “homeland”, “home” becomes abstract and gets divided between past and present history of the immigrant. The power politics, the history of colonization have created the native British and Americans as majority group, and the Asian, African, Chinese and other immigrants as minority group.

India has the largest Diaspora in the world followed by Mexico, Russia, China etc. and all these Diasporas have their experience, written in form of literature by their very Diaspora writers. Like the other migration histories, the diasporic Indians also could not break their relationship with the ancestral land. The first generation though have migrated but still they try to follow every custom of their root culture, a practice that is criticized most of the time by the second generation of those migration. They experience the sense of loneliness in an alien land as they face non-acceptance by the host society and also experience ethnic discrimination. Diasporic writing unfolds those experiences of settlement problems and dislocation. The diasporic experiences could be investigated in terms of location, dislocation and relocation. The changing designation of home, the nervousness about homelessness, and unfeasibility of going back are recurrent themes in diasporic literature. The expatriate literature deals mostly with the inner conflict in the context of the cultural displacement. The immigrants, away from the families fluctuate between crisis and reconstruction. The longing to regain their lost home often results in creating a different version of home.

Jhumpa Lahiri, as a second-generation immigrant herself, reflects the issue of alienation, displacement, existential rootlessness, nostalgia, quest for identity of Indian diaspora in her novel, and reveals the inconsistency of the concept of identity and cultural difference in diasporic space. Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies* is a collection of short stories mostly concerned with the diasporic postcolonial situation of the lives of Indians and Indian-Americans who live in

an in-between situation of two cultures, to adjust between the two worlds of the two cultures. Amitav Ghosh, another Indian–American author, in his novels explores the idea of cultural, religious, national or other definitions of identity. *The Shadow Lines* is a search for self-knowledge and self-identity. In this novel, he compiles national and cultural identity through different layers of narration and recollection. Bharati Mukherjee’s writings are largely influenced by the multiple dislocations of her personal life. In the novel *Jasmine*, Bharati Mukherjee takes up the theme of search for identity. She writes how the female protagonist tries to tackle the problem of loss of culture and endeavors to assume a new identity in the U.S.

All the aforementioned characters are from Indian origin, so they have represented the views of the Indians settled there. But the situation of these immigrants is like they dwell in a middle space: their first-generation who has migrated to a new land bearing the Indian origin, wish them to be like their mother culture and the second generation who might have born and brought up in the new land, wish to be like the migrated culture but the migrated culture thinks them as hybrid people, thus causing a complex cultural displacement and dislocation. This current study will thus focus on the complexity of cultural clash and the character’s fight for retaining their identity in the context of Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines*, Bharati Mukherjee’s *Jasmine*, and Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Interpreter of Maladies*. As the theoretical framework, this Study will connect with Homi Bhabha’s idea of third space and hybridity and Stuart Hall’s idea of cultural displacement and relocation and representation. This work is divided into several parts where the first part offers a literature review in the field of diaspora, then the detailed description of the theories cited, and followed by the textual correspondence.

I

“I know my father and my mother, but beyond that I cannot go. My ancestry is blurred.” (Naipaul). The diasporic writers are considered to be those who have long been settled in an unknown land. The reason behind this shifting is to know the unknown, to leave the familiar spaces and move out into unknown regions in search of better opportunity. Salman Rushdie asserts about this, “The immigrant, the man without frontiers, is an archetypal figure of our age.” (Rushdie 115). This diasporic writing is not the 20th century trend or its not only the scenario of the Asian countries. There were always immigrations in the writer’s community like T.S Eliot moved to eastward, W.H. Auden moved west; Sylvia Plath, Ezra Pound, Seamus Heaney, all of them relocated themselves even before the term “diaspora” came into use in literature. It is observed from then that the diasporic writers more often remain in a state of troubled consciousness, anxiety about their new environment, and confusion about their state that where they belong, thus questioning their roots. In this living condition, there is a loss of geographical boundaries, and de-territorialization which seems unbearable sometimes. And this de-territorialization also brings change to individual feelings. “Diasporic sensibility” arises from displacement of culture, geography and emotion which projects the dual identity of a diasporic writer: “Sometimes we feel we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools.” (Rushdie 112). There is constant shifting between two worlds, moving back and forth between two locals. In the new land, aggressive forces of the new culture push him or her from all sides but he/she always wants to hang on to his old tradition and custom which he/she has left behind. Suddenly one feels that he/she is trapped in an uncertain land where that individual has to merge anyhow.

The success of the evolution of Indian diaspora starts way back in the nineteenth century and it can be divided into three groups. They are Pre-colonial, Colonial and Postcolonial periods. The Pre-colonial period refers to the travelling of the Buddhist Bhikkus to remote corners of Central and Eastern India and the expedition of the South Indian Cholas to trade and commerce with Sri Lanka and South East. In Colonial period Indian diaspora faces a crucial phase because the demand for labor force and the opposition of slavery were highly intensified under the names of indentured labor migration, Kangani and maishy labor emigration and passage or free emigration. The Post-colonial period is a significant phase of Indian diaspora where three distinct patterns can be identified. The emigration of Anglo Indian to Australia and England, the emigration of professional and semiprofessionals to the industrially advanced countries like USA, England and Canada and the emigration of skilled and unskilled laborers to West Asia. The Indian diasporic writing covers every continent and part of the world and has made a substantial contribution to the literary output of their host countries and serves as a powerful network connecting the entire globe.

The writers of Indian diaspora through their literary contributions have greatly enriched English literature. They have been aiming at reinventing India through the rhythms of ancient legends, the cadences of mythology, the complexities of another civilization, cultural assimilation and nostalgia. They dive deep into the realms of imaginations and the ocean of memory to paint something quite different and distinct from that portrayed by fellow novelists. The well-known writers in this area include V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, Bharati Mukherjee, Amitav Ghosh, Jhumpa Lahiri, Anita Desai, Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni, Uma Parameswaran, Kiran Desai, Shauna Singh Baldwin and Anita Rau Badami. They have given more poignancy to the exploration by dealing with not only geographical dislocation but

also socio-cultural sense of displacement. Their concerns thus become global concerns with the exiles' sense of displacement and rootlessness. They clearly bring out the dual feeling of the sense of wonder the immigrants have along with a sense of adventure at the sight of the new land and also their feeling of nostalgia for the world left behind.

One of the most celebrated expatriate writers is V.S. Naipaul whose writing is a protest against the colonial center. He discusses how the minority culture adapts to a cosmopolitan society and the changing value system and its impact on the characters. Though he has a magnificent obsession towards India, his sensibility is British because he grew up in Trinidad. He never cared for the land of his birth and his people and he writes for the English-speaking people. He considered Trinidad as a destitute society without history and without achievement. Though his ancestors belonged to India he didn't care for Indian identity either and hence he remained homeless with a split sensibility guided by his western outlook. Salman Rushdie, an outstanding writer, discusses the issue of migrant identity. All his characters like the author himself are migrants drifting from shore to shore in search of an "imaginary homeland". The recurring themes of all his works are "double identity", "divided selves", and "search for identity".

The sense of alienation and nuclear insanity in modern American Society are well explained in the novels of Vikram Seth. His work has been described as an American novel instead of an Indo English novel. All his characters are isolated and lonely personalities leading a disintegrating family life in America. A new dimension of the Indian English works can be seen in the works of Anita Desai. Her writing focuses on alienation, estrangement, anxiety, anguish and threats to individual identity. She articulates the dwindling of conventional value system, marital discords, collapses of joint family system, ambivalent cultural responses to the impact of

West, social and economic disparities and the quest for identity in a multicultural world. Bharathi Mukherjee, an Indian - American immigrant writer, liberates her women protagonists for a “new world order”. Her portrayal of women is inspired by her experience in India as well as abroad. Her protagonists are sensitive and they lack a stable sense of personal and cultural identity. They are victimized by racism, sexism and other form of social oppression. Bharathi Mukherjee is concerned with characters that strain and struggle for the articulation of their repressed and stunted voice. As a writer, she likes to put much stress on the fact that her characters, whether they are uniquely Indian or superficially western, are basically human. Her women characters vent their feminine sensibility in their frantic desire for an authentic communication with their own selves as well as with the society.

Both the novelists Anita Desai and Bharati Mukherjee discuss the theme of isolation, disintegration of personality and dual cultural shock in their works. The women characters suffer from depression and frustration and take extreme steps of killing their husbands. Apart from nostalgic reminiscences, these writers recreate their past through their writings. They have become folk historians, mythmakers and custodians of the collective history of their people, giving an alarm to the community life, to local or national politics through their experience of being alienated, observed, peripheralized and marginalized. Jhumpa Lahiri belongs to the category of Indian diaspora whose only link with India is her origin. She portrays the loneliness and sense of alienation felt by immigrants where the first generation finds it difficult to be cut off from their roots, while the second generations are ready to get rid of deep selected Indian sentiments navigating between inherited traditions and the baffling new world they encounter every day.

Kiran Desai, daughter of the distinguished Indo English Writer Anita Desai explores with intimacy and insight, the contemporary issues like globalization, multiculturalism, economic inequality, fundamentalism and terrorist violence. Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni's work encapsulates the personal problems of Indian Immigrant community, their transformation and bonds with native land. Her works include *Arranged Marriage* (1966), *Sister of My Heart* (1999), *The View of Desire* (2002), *The Unknown Errors of Our lives* (2002). In her novel *The Mistress of Spices* (1997) the protagonist's ship is wrecked on a remote Island, which carried away only women travelers. Here the protagonist learns magic from a mysterious ugly old woman, who specializes in her power of spices, which are more than of cooking. Divakaruni's second novel *Sister of Heart* describes realistically the complicated relationships in a family in Bengal. Uma Parameswaran's work deals with Canada and recounts stories of the South Asian Canadian immigrant experience. She is an Indian born writer who has successfully portrayed the diasporic consciousness of an immigrant who comes to Canada in search of greener pastures and thus is physically and culturally alienated from his/her native place. Her cultural affinity with India makes her an alien in Canada here she makes repeated attempts to transmute and transform her identity. Exploring the challenges of coping with ambiguous identity, she deals with the issues of assimilation and racism. Her writings comprise different genres which include short stories, plays and poems with common themes which ascertain her Western experience with the Indian realities. As a creative writer, she has used her own experience as first-hand observation to reinforce the intensity of social alienation. Her writings have references to Indian culture because she has always been involved in promoting Indian culture in Canada.

Shauna Singh Baldwin, an Indo-Canadian writer, who belongs to the Sikh community, was born in Montreal and her family returned to India in 1972, when Shauna was ten and grew up in

Delhi. She addresses herself a second-generation diasporic writer, such as Bharati Mukherjee and Chitra Banarjee Divakaruni. Baldwin has initiated her career as an author of *English Lessons and Other Stories* (1996) and co-author of *A Foreign Visitor's Survival Guide to America*. Her debut novel, *What the Body Remembers*, was published in 1999. On April 14th, 2000 she became the recipient of Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best book in the Canada Caribbean region. Her second novel, *The Tiger Claw* (2004) was the finalist for the 2004 Guller Prize. Anita Rau Badami, one of the modern writers in the field of Diasporic literature even with her few literary writings have been able to carve a niche for her in the literary world. Among the Indo-Canadian writers, Badami has earned unique place in the vibrant field with her focus on psychological insights and concerns of her women protagonist. Anita Rau Badami, with each novel explores an updated analysis of the migrated Indian families in India and abroad. Her writings focus on the complexities, the extraordinary range of possibilities, situations present in Indian family life. Her themes, however, remain universal – love, loss, separation, heroism, despair, happiness. Thus, diasporic writings occupy a significant position among cultures and countries and the writers of the Indian diaspora through their literary contribution have greatly enriched English Literature

II

Homi K. Bhabha, a leading figure of contemporary culture, has given the idea of cultural difference in his book *Location of Culture*, that provides the conceptual term of “hybridity” and the “third space”. In the colonial perspective, hybridity is a term of abuse for those who are products of mixed race. Bhabha has developed his concept of hybridity from literary and cultural theory to describe the construction of culture and identity within conditions of “colonial antagonism and inequity”. (Rutherford 218). For Bhabha, hybridity is the process by which the

colonial governing authority undertakes to translate the identity of the colonized (the Other) within a singular universal framework, but then fails producing something familiar but new. In postcolonial discourse, the notion that any culture or identity is pure or essential is disputable. Bhabha himself is aware of the dangers of fixity of identities within binary colonial thinking arguing that “all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity.” (Rutherford 210). This new mutation replaces the established pattern with a “mutual and mutable” (213) representation of cultural difference that is positioned in-between the colonizer and colonized.

For Bhabha it is the indeterminate spaces in-between subject-positions that are lauded as the “locale of the disruption and displacement of hegemonic colonial narratives of cultural structures and practices.” (Rutherford 220) Bhabha posits hybridity as such a form of liminal or in-between space, where the ‘cutting edge of translation and negotiation’ (Rutherford 212) occurs and which he terms the third space. (207). This is a third space intrinsically critical of essentialist positions of identity and a conceptualization of original or origin culture: “For me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the ‘third space’, which enables other positions to emerge.” (Rutherford 211). Thus, the third space is a mode of articulation, a way of describing a productive, and not merely reflective, space that engenders new possibility. It is an ‘interruptive, interrogative, and enunciative’ (Rutherford 210) space of new forms of cultural meaning and production blurring the limitations of existing boundaries and calling into question the established categorizations of culture and identity. According to Bhabha, this hybrid third space is an ambivalent site where cultural meaning and representation have no ‘primordial unity or fixity’. (219)

When people migrates to a new land, he/she carries the original homeland in his/her mind. After being established in a new country, they try to acculturate with the new culture but fails to

do so in every step of their life. So, they create a “third space” in which they belong and where there is a mingling of two culture and also some vacuum which is only felt by these people. Their culture thus becomes a hybrid one which is neither Eastern nor the Western. Bhabha argues in his book about how the location shapes the identity of a person. The “third space” appears as the immigrant’s vision of their “imaginary homeland”.

In the essay of Stuart Hall “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” (1993), he brings the “black subject” of the Afro-Caribbean diasporas in the west, more specifically, their representation in the film and other visual medium. He argues that what we articulate is better be understood in our own language, in our own community rather than spoken by ‘outsider’, who is from other community. His assertion of identity is always in flux, identity can never be fixed but it’s always in a process and never completed. According to him there are two ways of thinking about cultural identity. The traditional model views “identity” as having a shared culture where there is only one true self though there can be many hidden selves inside, many of which are artificial or imposed ones. This oneness or the black experiences of the Caribbean’s or the experience of the black diaspora are the main consideration of Hall. He stresses the fact that Africa, though its a center of cultural heritage, seems to be unrevealed due to its lacking of their(African) own representation.

The second way of cultural identity acknowledges that the critical points of difference constitutes the idea of what we are or from the dawn of the history what we have become. From this point of view, cultural identity is a matter of “being” and at the same time of “becoming”. Identity often belongs equally to the future and to the past. Cultural identity always comes from some history, but it undergoes through constant transformation. It is thought that searching for

the recovery of the past will give a grounded identity to ourselves, but identities are actually the names that we give to different ways we are positioned by.

Hall further argues that knowledge about the people of this region must be taken from the “ways in which black people, black experiences, were positioned and subjected in the dominant regimes of representation” (394), these latter being the “effects of acritical exercise of cultural power and normalization. Not only, in Said’s ‘Orientalist’ sense, were we constructed as different and other within the categories of knowledge of the West by those regimes. They had the power to make us see and experience ourselves as “other” (394). According to Said’s “orientalism”, the west is the self and the east is the other and the other is presented through the medium of the self. But actually, there are no such thing like self or the other, its an imaginary way of marginalizing. Hence, from this perspective, it must be acknowledged that cultural identity is not a fixed essence at all, lying unchanged outside history and culture. It is not some universal and transcendental spirit inside us on which history has made no fundamental mark. It is not once-and-for-all. It is not a fixed origin to which we can make some final and absolute Return. (395) Cultural identities are the “unstable points of identification . . . which are made, within the discourses of history and culture” (394).

In another essay “The Question of Cultural Identity”, Hall says that national identities are not things we are born with, but are formed and transformed within and in relation to representation. In this connection, the term “essentialization” can be brought in. Essentializing means attributing natural, essential characteristics to members of specific culturally defined (gender, age, ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, linguistic...) groups (Wikipedia). When we essentialize others, we assume that individual differences can be explained by inherent, biological, “natural” characteristics shared by members of a group. Essentializing results in thinking, speaking and acting in ways

that promote stereotypical and inaccurate interpretations of individual differences. We only know what it is to be “English” because of the way “Englishness” has come to be represented, as a set of meanings, by English national culture. It follows that a nation is not only a political entity but something which produces meanings - a system of cultural representation. People are not only legal citizens of a nation; they participate in the idea of the nation as represented in its national culture.

Benedict Anderson (1983) has argued that national identity is an “imagined community”. (6) Anderson argues that the differences between nations lie in the different ways in which they are imagined. According to Hall, there are five components by which the narrative of a national culture can be told. Firstly, there is a narrative of the nation, as it is told and retold in national histories, literature, media, and popular culture. Secondly, there is the emphasis on origins, continuity, tradition, and timelessness. Third is the invention of tradition (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1). The fourth is the belonging of a foundational myth, a story which locates the origin of the nation, the people, and their national character so early that they are lost in the mists of not “real”, but “mythic” time. Finally, national identity is also symbolically grounded on the idea of a pure, original people or “folk”. (Hall 400)

Hall claims in the above mentioned essay, a “different way of thinking about cultural identity” by theorizing identity “as constituted, not outside but within representation” (402) and hence of cinema or literature “not as a second-order mirror held up to reflect what already exists, but as that form of representation which is able to constitute us as new kinds of subjects and thereby enable us to discover places from which to speak” (402). By using the idea of “third space” and “hybridity” along with Hall’s “cultural identity” and “representation”, the issues of my present study will be much more clarified as the plot of all the three novels are set in a

different land, away from own country. Their cultural dilemma, shock, their representation etc. are shown thoroughly by bringing these ideas together in this study.

III

National and cultural identity becomes a major theme for Amitav Ghosh and other Indian writers who live in diaspora community. For instance, Salman Rushdie in *Imaginary Homelands*, describes this condition: “our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that is lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indians of the mind.” (Rushdie 10). It will be, he continues, as if the writer was looking at a broken mirror, but “The broken mirror may actually be as valuable as the one which is supposedly unflawed,” (Rushdie 11) simply because it is another vision or angle from which to perceive and reconstruct history and identity. Rushdie claims that as they are living far away from their homeland, so they can only create their homeland in imagination, by writing about it, but cannot go back to it. The country of their origin and the culture stands as a broken mirror where the “root-identity” (cultural identity or their origin) stands in one side and the new identity stand on the other side. Ghosh echoes this emotional sentiment of Rushdie in an essay entitled “The Diaspora in Indian Culture,” when he explains that “the links between India and her diaspora are lived within the imagination, “rather than in language of religion, and for this reason, “the specialists of the imagination - writers - play so important a part within it” (Ghosh 76). They create their own India from their unique perspective expressing mostly the colonial experience; Amitav Ghosh in his novels attempts a “reading of the colonial encounter by focusing on the global amalgam of

cultures and identities consolidated by imperialism” (Gandhi 129). In his stories, the history of the colonization creates a barrier among the characters from India and from the colonizers.

The Shadow Lines deals with the theme of search for identity and belonging. The protagonist of this novel transforms himself in course of time and becomes identified with a person of contemporary consciousness. It also deals with the concerns of the present period, the need for independence from the authoritative power, the difficult relationship with colonial culture, and the legacies of partition in the subcontinent on 1947. The “mirror image” in the first chapter of the novel foregrounds the idea of mutual contractedness not only between the narrators the other characters that surround him but also between the cities of London, Dhaka and Calcutta. As he discovers new meaning and imagines new connection between his and the other characters’ perception and experiences of space, the adult narrator comes to understand that “Muslim Dhaka” and “Hindu Calcutta” are essentially mirror image of each other separated by a “looking Glass border” ... (Ghosh 29), the cause of the riots that killed Tridib in Dhaka also causes the Calcutta riots in which he was trapped as a child.

Narrator’s grandmother, who was born in Dhaka, migrated to Calcutta much before independence, becomes a staunch Indian nationalist and the people with whom she played in her childhood become her enemies. On the other hand, Jethamoshai, grandmother’s uncle does not leave Dhaka even after independence and allows all refugees to occupy his house. He considers his own family members his enemies, put a case in the court against them. Another important character is Ila, the product of a cosmopolitan education and hovering between India and London. Through these characters, Amitav Ghosh tries to show that identities are always in flux and they may not fit into the Indian orthodox values of national and cultural identities.

The narrator in the story is nameless, perhaps in line with the cross-culture or transcultural theme of the novel. So, though the narrator is situated within a certain context, i.e. he is a member of an immigrant family uprooted by 1947-partition and residing in Calcutta, he is not weighed down by too many particularities of description. The novel's center is the friendship between two families, one Bengali and one British. This relationship takes root in colonial India and later continues against postcolonial backdrops. In this novel which is on a deep level a journey of self-discovery, there is a parallel journey of nations seeking for identity. The narrator comes to realize his own existence in India is profoundly shaped by historical ties in England and Bangladesh. In the midst of a whole group of people, there are three who have a great impact on how the narrator feels and thinks. The three characters offer the narrator ways in which he could see and experience the world. There is his fiercely nationalistic grandmother Tha'mma. Then there is his cousin, Ila, the beautiful cosmopolitan woman and finally his intellectual uncle, Tridib who travels the world through his imagination. From these worldviews, what finally emerges is the myth of the boundary or border line. The border between India and Pakistan becomes a merely shadow line though a huge number of blood was shaded to create this border.

Tha'mma is a wonderfully portrayed character in *The Shadow Lines*. In her youth, she would have given life and limb for the fight for freedom in Dhaka. She subscribes to the idea of nationalism and is stunned when she visits Dhaka after many years and finds no rigid lines to signal the Partition. "But surely there's something – trenches perhaps, or soldiers, or guns...or even just barren strips of land" (Ghosh 148). When her son laughs at her, she insists, "But if there aren't any trenches or anything, how are people to know? I mean, where's the difference then?" (Ghosh 148). Later she tells her grandson: "[The English] know they're a nation because they're drawn their borders with blood" (Ghosh 76). This lady is shocked to realize the irony

behind the creation of national border and the “politics of mapping”. When she is condemned by Ila as being a fascist, the narrator defends his grandmother: “All she wanted was a middle-class life in which, like the middle classes the world over, she would thrive believing in the unity of nationhood and territory, of self-respect and national power...a small thing, that history had denied her in its fulness and for which she could never forgive it” (Ghosh 77). The grandmother, though belonging to an old generation, still possess a consciousness about nationality and identity.

Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines* opens up space for a multicultural world and influences the issue of hybridity of the diasporic community. It illustrates how diasporic displacement is not merely a loss, but a source of creativity as well. The unnamed narrator of *The Shadow Lines* comes in contact with different, often contradictory versions of cultural identity through the main characters in the novel-his grandmother, Tha’mma, his cousin, Ila and his uncles Tridib and Robi. Growing up in an upwardly mobile middle class professional family in Calcutta, the narrator acquires the sensibility of a metropolitan, bi-lingual, English speaking, postcolonial subject; his interaction with his cousin and uncles whose fathers are globe-trotting diplomats, and his own stint in London for research work make his attitude and approach to issues of nation and culture more cosmopolitan. One of the most powerful influences in his life as a child is his grandmother a fiercely independent, militantly nationalist woman.

The narrator of *The Shadow Lines* uncovers a plenty of culture or mingling of cultures. Here, we have Western attitude with Indian manners, Bengali culture in two forms- one takes place in Dhaka and another in Calcutta. In the context of cross culture interactions, the author seems to express his own views through Tridib. He considers the world as a ‘global village’ of men and women where they should be trying to reach towards one another, irrespective of their culture

and race. Like Fielding in E.M. Forester's *A Passage to India*, befriends with India, Tridib also believes that the friendship of two cultures can best be done with goodwill and understanding. He does not revel in the ethnicity of India; instead, he invents the West for himself and for the boys from Calcutta streets through his imagination, and his childhood experience of staying with the Prices in London. His vision overlaps the limitation of time and space.

Amitav Ghosh's vision is not rooted in ethnic India. The novel is more a study of cross-cultural relationship. Amitav Ghosh in *The Shadow Lines* seems to conform to the notion of cross-cultural relationship as his protagonist Tridib, an Indian, falls in love with May; and Ila, an Indian, marries Nick Price, an English man. The narrator and May also develop feeling for each other but their influence of the legacy of colonization stops them to develop a relationship. The interaction among these characters reveals the aspirations and cultural mingling of the colonized people when they try to carve out their place in the world. The action of the novel revolves round these characters who, really belong to the two worlds. In their case the barriers seem to be breaking though there are problems also. The Englishness of the educated Indian like Ila, Tridib, and the narrator points to the fact that independent India is culturally colonized still. Postcolonial trend finds a clear expression in Tridib's and Ila's longing for the west. Even the young boys from Calcutta streets flock to Tridib to know more about the west. On one such occasion, he tells the boys at the street corner that he had been to London to meet his English relatives by marriage. As the boys were listening to him spellbound, the narrator shouts that Tridib was in Calcutta itself and that day he had met him the other day in his room. Similarly, Ila tells the narrator about her sexual exploit in London to impress upon him that the West offers her a lot of freedom.

In Ila, we have a woman who has travelled across the globe with her diplomat family. Exposed to different cultures from a young age, Ila still, unwittingly, ejects borders. For her, the western culture supersedes her own as she believes it allows her freedom. She clings on to Nick Price in an unhappy marriage. Just like her grand-aunt, she categorizes people and places. But while Tha'mma associates borders with the fight for liberty and national identity, Ila's map of difference are fragile. When the narrator talks to her about Cairo, all she can say is "Oh yes, Cairo, the Ladies is way on the other side of the departure lounge" (Ghosh 20). The narrator persuades her that places should capture the mind's eye but Ila's kind of cosmopolitanism is not enlivened with possibilities of newness, of creative difference; it is only colored by a tired familiarity. At the end of the narrative, Ila too is unable to cross the shadow lines of borders of India, England and other continents. The lack of concreteness or materiality in her imagination means that she cannot appreciate differences in cultures and contexts.

The Indian's desire to fit in the colonizer's world is often accompanied by disowning the colonized world. To disown India, Ila shocks her people, particularly the grandmother by her western dresses and subsequently, she shocks Robi and the narrator by her uninhibited behavior in a hotel in Calcutta, where she wanted to dance with a stranger. Indian culture comes with flying color through the idea of Robi who was not ready to allow Ila to behave in a Western manner: "You shouldn't have done what you did. You ought to know that; girls don't behave like that here. (Ghosh 88). To answer Ila's Western arrogance, he reminds her that she stands in India where girls have certain boundaries which should not be crossed in anyway. You can do what you like in England, he said. But here there are certain things you cannot do. That's our culture; that's how we live." (88) In this one to one conversation between Robi and Ila, Ila represents the English culture. She behaves as an English girl who is not ready to act under the

command of others. On Robi's restriction, she cries out: "Do you see now why I've chosen to live in London? Do you see? It's only because I want to be free." (88)

As the only young Indian woman in the novel, Ila bears the burden of representing a post-colonial female perspective. Although she leads an independent life in London, out of reach of the conservative, restrictive, patriarchal society of Calcutta, and makes her own rules, she is inextricably trapped between the two cultures in rejecting one and being rejected by the other in turn. Her marriage to Nick Price, rather than finally incorporating her into the dominant Western culture, only serves to perpetuate her marginalization. When the narrator, commenting on Nick's sleeping with other women after his marriage to Ila, tells her that her sins have finally come home to roost, she replies, "I never did any of those things: I'm about as chaste, in my own way, as any woman you'll even meet." (190) Ila is the only cosmopolitan woman in the novel, and her cosmopolitanism is constructed as suspect because of its not being rooted in any one culture.

Bhabha in his book *The Location of Culture*, observes that Colonialism engenders "the unhomeliness that is the condition of extra territorial and cross-cultural initiation . . ." (940). This unhomeliness is the pernicious fact that haunts the life of both Tha'mma and Ila, since neither of the two has a real home other than the constructed one for the former and the neglected one for the latter. Tha'mma's diasporic dislocation makes her self-contradictory as well. The audience are told by the narrator that she hates nostalgia and preaches to him that nostalgia is a weakness a waste of time that it is everyone's duty to forget the past and look ahead and get on with building the future (Ghosh 208). But, it is she herself who declares "The past is what we talk about" (127). This contradiction is nothing but the by-product of her position as a diasporic person. Ila, of whom we are informed that, 'for Ila the current was the real' (Ghosh 30) and once she herself claims that "I am free" (32) too invents stories. While playing Houses, she makes stories, creates

roles, and urges the narrator to ‘pretend’. The Magda story is the sub-conscious reconstruction of her own experience of racial antagonism at London where Nick didn’t want to be seen with her. Her real location is always in flux. Therefore, she also carries sharply the self-contradictory traits in her personality. Again, after trying to become a western by hook or by crook, Ila is always represented by the west as a people of the third world country and receives only neglect from there. Hall’s cultural identity and representation thus fits here to describe the condition of an immigrant like Ila. Ultimately, Ghosh’s narrative highlights both the strength and frailty of human constructions of space, location, and time, wherein humans create nationalism, national, regional, and personal identities—the shadow lines—to define themselves and their experiences, granting to themselves a story, thereby creating history.

IV

Searching for and defining a new identity is a central question for immigrants living in a foreign land. The confusion thus causes and pushes them into an identity crisis. *Jasmine* by Bharati Mukherjee exposes how Jasmine, the female protagonist, as an outsider strives to shape her identity to fit into mainstream American society. Fortunately, Jasmine encounters confirmations of her shifting identity in different stages of her life. Instead of rejecting these identities and names in various phases, she seeks to create a harmonious relationship with those identities. The story follows a non-linear path, beginning with Jasmine retelling a story from her youth about an astrologer who predicted her future as a widow in exile, and then fast-forwarding to her current life in Baden, Iowa. Now known as Jane, she is twenty-four, pregnant, and living with wheelchair-bound banker Bud Ripplemeyer. The two have an adopted son, Du. Although

Bud wants to marry Jane, she refuses, partially due to her attraction to young neighbor Darrel Lutz.

From there, the story flashes back to the city of Hasnapur in Punjab, India. As a girl, the main character goes by her given name Jyoti. She learns English from a kindly teacher named Masterji, who urges her to continue her education. However, soon after her father passes away, Jyoti meets a man named Prakash and they soon marry. Prakash, a poor but hard-working man, tends to call her Jasmine and this two build a life together. They struggle to make ends meet, and plan to move to America when Prakash gets the chance to study under a Professor Vadhera. However, Prakash is tragically killed by a religious extremist in a bombing before they can fulfill their dream. Out of a sense of duty and honor, Jasmine decides to move to Florida alone and carry out Prakash's plans. In her travels, she is sexually assaulted by the ship's captain, Half-Face and she kills him in self-defense. Her journey as an undocumented immigrant in the United States is difficult, first lodging with Lillian Gordon, a seemingly kindly woman who calls her Jazzy and is later arrested for using undocumented Indian women for labor. Gordon does arrange for Jasmine to meet Professor Vadhera, who agrees to get her a green card for three thousand dollars.

After being able to work, Jasmine manages to get a job in child care for Wylie and Taylor Hayes, friends of Lillian's daughter. She helps their adopted daughter Duff through her parents' divorce, and Duff takes to calling her "Jase". She is happy in her position and even finds herself falling for Taylor Hayes. However, a chance encounter with Sukhwinder, the bomber who killed Parkash, leaves Jase in fear of her life and makes her decide to flee the city for Iowa. Back in present-day Iowa, a flashback to the shooting that left Bud wheelchair-bound takes place. More on Jane's life in Iowa is explored, including her friendship with Bud's former wife Karin. Jane

receives a letter from Taylor that he and Duff are on the way to find her. Du begins to figure out that his adopted mother is in love with another man, and she has a major fight with an increasingly unstable Darrel over his inability to understand why she stays with Bud. In the aftermath, Du chooses to leave for California to live with his biological sister rather than see his parents' marriage fall apart. Jane convinces Bud to approve of Darrel's loan application, but it's too late and the depressed Darrel has chosen to hang himself. Although she cares for Bud, Jane realizes she doesn't truly love him. When Taylor and Duff arrive, Taylor attempts to convince her to leave with him. In the end, Jane realizes that she no longer feels like Jane, and that her fate doesn't have to be here. As she leaves for California with Taylor and Duff, she rejects the destiny the astrologer laid out for her as a child and chooses to forge her own path in the future.

Mukherjee sees America as the place for her transformation and new cultural possibilities even at the cost of separating from her original identities. No doubt, Mukherjee is a writer that has lived through the several difficult phases of life as an Asian immigrant similar to her character, Jasmine. Jasmine's life focuses on the search of an immigrant woman for her place of individual identity and sense of homeland. Similarly, Mukherjee speaks of her own quest and awareness of separating from her traditional identity. Mukherjee describes the cultural restraints of women in India as well as her own individual problems. In other words, Jasmine and Mukherjee reject identity as something static fixed by one's own birth, social status and gender. In fact, Mukherjee highlights the craving and longing to establish a new self. Obviously, Jasmine's life is formed by the continuously changing situations and names during her voyage of self-discovery and self-value which eventually initiates her identity from the traditional Jyoti to American Jasmine.

In "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" Stuart Hall points out two views of identity in terms of sameness and difference. The first view is, cultural identity is shared and we all reflect the same

sense of oneness that is we all have something in common. However, the second issue of cultural identity elaborates on how identities often undergo constant transformation, reflected in the way Jasmine changes her name throughout the novel. Clearly, Jasmine shifts identities due to the struggle between her circumstances and actions, voluntary and involuntary, in her daily life. Seen in this light, identity “is a matter of becoming as well as of being.” (Hall 3). In this regard, identity isn’t fixed and unchangeable but, rather, identity is changing and becoming. Ultimately, identity is complex and does not thrive under any sort of confinement: “Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference.” (3) Hall sees “identity as a production, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation.” (3). Hall wishes to argue that fixed and stable notions of identity should be challenged and are open to interpretation. Subsequently, Hall describes how difference “challenges the fixed binaries which stabilize meaning and representation and how meaning is never fixed or completed, but keeps on moving on to encompass other, additional or supplementary meanings.” (3). This explains how identities lie between definitions, and are always fluid and forever unfolding.

The story relates to the journey as well as the metamorphosis of a young immigrant from rural India. In just a few years of time, Jyoti transforms herself from Jyoti to Jasmine, then to Jase, and finally to Jane; merrily impregnated by a middle-aged Iowa banker and becomes an adoptive mother of a Vietnamese refugee too. Jasmine’s metamorphosis illustrates the making of an American living self. The shift in her identity from Jyoti to Jasmine to Jane to Jase is symptomatic of the death of one personality and birth of a new one without any perceived negative implications. The protagonist does not see her “Indian-ness as a fragile identity to be preserved against obliteration, now it is seen as a set of fluid identities to be celebrated” (Mukherjee 5).

Throughout the story in America, Jasmine is unremittingly striving to create a true identity for herself in order to be absorbed by the American culture. This is viewed as a struggle for her as she often reflects of being torn between her old Indian culture and latest American one. As she is getting different names, her “third space” is also shifting. So, she faces ultimate identity crisis but still, she is portrayed as a strong as well as a determined mind. She is never shown to be giving up in fight for her true independence and identity. The author has created a fine line between the characters of Jyoti and Jasmine in India and other identities that emerged from different situations in America. The book becomes an amalgamation of two sub-stories or cultures from two different worlds. It can be said that the Indian part of Jasmine’s life is about Jyoti’s survival under the scrutiny of old-fashioned patriarchy and associated customs or values ranging from tradition to modern, whereas, the American part of her life talks about the cultural dilemmas she faced in an alien western country. She rebels against the blind beliefs and superstitions prevailing in her small village and argues against the fate which is adumbrated by the astrologer. It was in the USA where she felt at loss with her identity more powerfully than anywhere else.

As the plot unfolds, Jyoti acquires many new names and identities, each requiring a newer role and expectations that highlighted the various phases in her transformation towards “Americanization” or, more particularly, cultural assimilation in her case. Notwithstanding the trauma and after effect of rape on her very first day in the white environment of the USA, with the affectionate moral aid of certain well-intentioned people in America, she completely transforms herself from an ignorant, vulnerable migrant to a self-assured confident working woman. She confirms her various identities by observing, “I have had a husband for each of the women I have been. Prakash for Jasmine, Taylor for Jase, Bud for Jane. Half-Face for Kali” (175). This shows

her process of becoming from Jyoti to Jasmine to Jase and from Jase to Jane, one comes across a different woman in her, more adapted to the western world. She is reflected to be a born fighter.

Through the novel, Mukherjee also brings out her anguish against the third world that is the Indian environment, when she highlights that Jasmine needs to shift to America to achieve something significant in her life. According to her, she faced only despair and loss in the third world. *Jasmine* has emerged to be a novel of an immigrant and her process of assimilation on physical and psychological aspects. Jasmine's subsequent days in America transports her to a new lifestyle nevertheless the problems created by a new culture she was now part of. The initial impression she left on the American natives was that of a person, coming from "somewhere in the Eastern part of the world, with blackish skin, speaking a native language" ... "This country has so many ways of humiliating, of disappointing" (29) ... The educated people "assume that I'm different from them but exempted from being one of "them," the knife wielding undocumented hiding in basements webbing furniture. I Baden [Iowa], the farmers are afraid to suggest I'm different. ... To them, alien knowledge means intelligence. they want to make me familiar." ... She adds "I'm from a generic place, 'over there,' which might be Ireland, France, or Italy. ... About which they're ignorant; farmers are famously silent, and not ashamed" (33). In her initial attempts, she found it difficult for herself to share with strangers the finer details about her life and identity which she left back in India.

The existent assimilation for Jasmine begins when she meets Lillian Gordon who teaches Jasmine the shorter ways and means of how to become an American. Lillian starts calling her by "Jazzy", a symptomatic gesture of her entrance into and acceptance of American culture which she gladly receives. Once the ice gets broken, people from the university now want her to help them on their studies about subjects related to India including the traditional food and diet which

they found to be so interesting that “they get disappointed if there’s not something Indian on the table” (7). At the same time, she felt herself to be marginalized when an officer on TV describes the illegal refugees, “The border's like Swiss cheese and all the mice are squirming through the holes” (23). In response to everything she has gone through, her home, her trauma, her struggle, her dreams, she decides to get Americanized in her outlook at the earliest.

Finding herself at the margins of American society, due to her immigrant status, Mukherjee’s Jasmine does her best to insert herself into the flesh and blood of America. The desire and necessity of becoming an American is now so deeply occupied in her that she believes she has to murder herself first in order to go through the process of “rebirth [herself] in the images of dreams” (25). She follows the life of Professor Ji and follows the following lines, “I got the point. He needed to work here, but he didn't have to like it. He had sealed his heart when he’d left home. His real life was in an unlivable land across oceans. He was a ghost, hanging on” (136). As reflected from the very first events of the novel, even though she is shown to have accepted the values and customs of the host culture (western), she upholds certain fundamental traits of Indian culture as well. Not only her roles of a wife, a mother, a friend, her stories shared with Duff or timely commentaries on events stand a confirmation to the assumption. Typically, like an Indian village woman she observes after Wylie had walked out of Taylor's life, “In America, nothing lasts. I can say that now and it doesn't shock me, but I think it was the hardest lesson of all to learn. We arrive so eager to learn, to adjust, to participate only to find the monuments are plastic, agreements are annulled. Nothing is forever, nothing is so terrible or so wonderful, that it won't disintegrate” (181).

Jasmine begins her transformational journey as an Indian girl, leaving her tradition and customs, and experiences happiness as well as sorrow in each of the phase she plunges into

moving towards the final consequence. She is depicted to have fought against not only the male supremacy but the hostility of cultures of both Eastern and Western worlds in her quest towards absolute freedom. Although she is portrayed to have possessed a complete control over herself and her decisions, the deviation, in her quest to be successful, from her original intention is very much decipherable. The novel proclaims the process and need to unite globally and think trans-culturally to become a global citizen by building bridges across conflicted cultures. She admits to that she changed herself because she wanted to and feels that it would have been cowardice otherwise, “Jyoti was now a sati-goddess; she had burned herself in a trash-can-funeral pyre behind a boarded-up motel in Florida.” (156). It can be concluded that in Bharati Mukherjee’s experience of cultural collision, the post-colonial diaspora aspires to be cosmopolitan and to be a citizen of the newer and culturally assimilated world.

V

In the accomplished collection of stories *Interpreter of Maladies*, Jhumpa Lahiri traces the lives of people in two continents -- North America and India -- and in doing so she announces herself as a wonderfully distinctive new voice of the diaspora. Indeed, Ms. Lahiri’s prose is so eloquent and assured that the reader easily forgets that *Interpreter of Maladies* is a young writer’s first book. Stories of *Interpreter of Maladies* try to map the identity crisis of a bunch of Indian immigrants in the US and tell us how cultural negotiation and the hybridity take place in such a location. The book comprises of nine short stories i.e. A Temporary Matter, When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine, Interpreter of Maladies, A Real Durwan, Sexy, Mrs. Sen's, This Blessed House, The Treatment of Bibi Haldar, and The Third and Final Continent. All the mentioned short stories deal with the experience of people living in the diaspora.

Lahiri's first story in her collection *Interpreter of Maladies* is "A Temporary Matter". The temporary matter in the story is the unusual power-cut for an hour in Boston which symbolizes the married life of a couple of Indian origin. Lahiri suggests that for an American couple the first marriage usually fails in a year or two. The Indian immigrant couple in the story, Shukumar and Shoba, has migrated in America long back and by the course of time, they have become almost American in nature and lifestyle. Still at times they behave like Indians. Shoba gives birth to a stillborn baby when her husband was away for a paper presentation and it had become a traumatic moment for Shoba. When she was taken home after delivery, she started avoiding her husband. This is the traditional mentality of women in Asia who want their husband to be by their side when they are delivering a baby and if this does not happen, they get frustrated and start to avoid their husband. Eventually, when the power supply cut-off, Shoba remembers about the frequent power-cuts at her grandmother's house in India, thereby connecting to her Indian past: "I remember during power failures at my grandmother's house, we all had to say something." (Lahiri 12)

Further, this memory underscores an Indian way of keeping a house and relations intact through talks. Lahiri attempts to portray the marital boredom of the western world where the marriage itself turns into a temporary matter. In case of Shoba and Shukumar who are clearly Americanized, the insecurity and uncertainty of a staggering relationship add to the unstable life in exile. This story also throws light upon the clash of two cultures and also the alienation and loneliness that the immigrants face in a host nation. The marriage bond which is still considered sacrosanct in India is gradually slithering down under the pressure of American life style. Shukumar and Shoba regard India as the land of their parents, ancestors and have a faint memory of this country. But it is the power-cut, the temporary matter, which makes them to remember

India and Indian ties strongly. Eventually they come to the awareness that as continental immigrants' identity is subsumed in the clash of cultures and finally they come up with a redeeming cultural hybridity - they decide to put their past and the bitterness that grow for the new culture away, ironically in their new-found intimacy in darkness. The darkness helps them to come closer to each other from where they have been fleeing from long back. The darkness also represents the twilight of two cultures where the remedy of Indian tradition or Indian talking cures the malady of a marriage that is Indian in origin but American in nature.

The issue of "imaginary homeland" and "third space" is interwoven in the story, "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine". The story brings the Indian-American life of a family and of their scholar friend from East Pakistan, Mr. Pirzada. The narrator of the story is a ten-year-old girl, Lilia. As she is born in Boston, she is not aware of historical events that split the Indian subcontinent, like the Partition of 1947, the Civil Wars in East Pakistan starting from 1952 to 1971, the fleeing refugees between India and Pakistan, and the frequent communal clashes between Hindu and Muslim. Mr. Pirzada, a Botany lecturer from Dacca has come to study the new foliage of New England in America. He is always anxious for the safety of his wife and seven daughters in Dacca during the War of Liberation in Bangladesh in 1971. In order to gather news of his native land from TV, he makes frequent visits to the narrator's house. According to Lilia, her parents used to "trail their fingers, at the start of each new semester, through the columns of the university directory, circling surnames familiar to their part of the world". (Lahiri 24). This situation is very common to the diaspora community as people always like to be live in the same community they belong and in this case, Pirzada came closer to the narrator's family for this matter. They also get along well as Mr. Pirzada's Muslimness has not even once clashed with the Hinduness of the narrator's family. She remembers how they come together in the US

fashioning a new cultural affinity: “the three of them (her father, her mother and Mr. Pirzada) were operating during that time as if they were a single person, sharing a single meal, a single body, a single silence, and a single fear” (Lahiri 41). As they share the same historical background, so their feelings are quite same.

The narrator, Lilia does not find any difference between her parents and Mr. Pirzada. She thinks that Mr. Pirzada is an Indian like her parents; it is her father who corrects her by saying that Mr. Pirzada is a Pakistani and not an Indian. She cannot understand how Mr. Pirzada could be different from her parents. She shares her bewilderment with the readers and it amplifies the cultural and ethnic uncertainties of a second-generation migrant subject: “It made no sense to me. Mr. Pirzada and my parents spoke the same language; laughed at the same jokes, looked more or less the same. They ate pickled mangoes with their meals, ate rice every night for supper with their hands. Like my parents Mr. Pirzada took off his shoes before entering a room, chewed fennel seeds after meals as a digestive, drank no alcohol, for dessert dipped austere biscuits into successive cups of tea. Nevertheless, my father insisted that I understand the difference...” Lilia’s innocent mind cannot understand how a single geographical space can be divided into two countries. She articulates a doubt that resists division and exclusion. She was surprised to understand the politics of mapping where, from 1947 there were two continents India and Pakistan and in 1971, there emerged a new nation from there, Bangladesh. This politics of mapping is totally out of imagination to Lilia.

The little girl, Lilia prays for the safety of Mr. Pirzada’s family when she hears that Dacca has been invaded, torched by the Pakistani army, teachers are dragged onto the streets and shot, and women are dragged into the barracks and raped. She thinks that in all probability Mr. Pirzada’s family members would have been wiped out. From that time onwards, she gets obsessed with the

history of India, Pakistan and Partition like asking from her parents, reading history books etc. This obsession with the past is her mental strategy to keep her cultural roots alive, though she knows that this culture is not free of violence. Lilia is caught red-handed by her teacher when she browses through the pages of Asian History instead of writing an assignment on American history in the school library. Her act of reading Asian history in an American history class is another silent gesture of her longing for cultural hybridity and her gradual change from an Americanized second-generation migrant to an Indo-American subject who cannot avoid her going back to the roots and arises in her a consciousness of her nationality and her belonging. India becomes for her an “imaginary homeland” which she has never seen but creates the homeland in her imagination.

When Mr. Pirzada flies home after completing his project, there is no news from him for a couple of months. Later, he sends a letter to the narrator’s family describing how he has reunited with his family members. He also thanks the narrator’s family for their hospitality. Mr. Pirzada and the narrator realize that had they been located in the respective geographical spaces of India and Pakistan, they may have considered the other as an enemy. But when they are thrown together in a “third space”, there is absolutely no enmity, only love, concern and prayer for the other. In this space, they belong neither to their original place nor to the new place, but in-between the two spaces. This story brings out cultural hybridity that is born out of necessity, despite of apparent difference of religions and breeding. In the third space of both the narrator’s family and Pirzada, both have same sort of feelings. Though their root, their religion clashes from history back, but in the third space of their life, they were able to get away from their differences.

The children of the immigrants read the history and geography of America in schools and have assimilated both the root and the new culture. But still, these children carry with them the

past history of 'origin' of their parents and grandparents. They are always being taunted for their color as in the Halloween, Lilia has to hear from the natives that they have never before seen an Indian witch. Lilia who is able to recognize a similarity between Mr. Pirzada and her parents, feel alienated when Mr. Pirzada returns to his homeland. She broods, "I knew what it meant to miss someone who was so many miles and hours away, just as he had missed his wife and daughter for so many months" (Lahiri 42). She also cites how Pirzada used to put his watch that showed him the Dhaka time, in front of him while eating, to imagine as if he is eating at his home.

Jhumpa Lahiri's "Interpreter of Maladies" is another story exploring the theme of expatriation, cultural hybridity, and awakening of Indian morality. Jhumpa aims at showing the trauma of loss of identities due to clash of cultures. The influence of two different worlds and their cultures on the American born Indian couple can be seen in Mr. and Mrs. Das. The family has come to India on a holiday to find their traditional 'grandeur' in Orissa. The narrator's nostalgia for traditions and for the native language can be seen through the use of Indian words and phrases like 'Astachala' which means 'setting sun', 'Hanuman - a monkey', and so on. Mr. Kapasi is a tradition-bound tourist guide who takes them to Konatak Temple in Orissa. The Das family looks like Indians but is dressed as Americans. The parents of Mr. and Mrs. Das live in Assansol in India. Like Americans, Mr. Das refers to his wife by her first name while speaking to the little girl. On the way to Konatak, when the children see some monkeys, they shout "monkeys", but Mr. Kapasi corrects them immediately, "We call them hanuman" (Lahiri 47). Such instances focus upon the cultural gap between the visiting Indian-Americans and the native Indians. Cultural ambiguity can also be seen when Bobby asks his father, observing Mr. Kapasi

sitting on the right side of the car and steers it, “Daddy, why is the driver sitting on the wrong side in this car, too?” (Lahiri 48)

Having known that Mr. Kapasi is an interpreter to a Gujarati Doctor practicing in that part of Orissa, Mrs. Das looks for some private moments to unburden a guilt that has been nagging her for the past eight years. Mrs. Das confesses to Mr. Kapasi that her isolation and boredom, have made her fall prey to the lust of her husband’s friend, giving birth to Ronny. She indicates that it is her American part of identity that urges her to take an extramarital affair lightly. But her Indian consciousness keeps her haunting, reminding her of the sanctity of marriage which makes her sick in exile. Its ironical that when she was in America, her infidelity never haunted her but after coming to India, her Indian consciousness awakens. Her dilemma and psychological trauma are the results of her confused bicultural entity. She is also well aware of the fact that social norms in India are different from those in America. The role of geographical space plays a vital role in the consciousness of the individual.

Central themes of all of Lahiri’s work included are the difficulties that Indians have in relating to Americans and the ways in which Indian Americans are caught in the middle of two very different cultures. Though Mr. Kapasi and the Dases do share an Indian heritage, their marriages reveal the extent of how different their cultures really are. Mr. Kapasi believes that he can relate to Mrs. Das’s unhappy marriage because he himself is in an unhappy marriage. He seeks this common ground as a way to find friendship and connection. However, the connection fails because the marriages are so vastly different. Mr. Kapasi’s parents arranged his marriage, and he and Mrs. Kapasi have nothing in common. In contrast, Mrs. Das fell in love with Mr. Das at a young age, and although their union was encouraged by their parents, her marriage was not arranged. Mrs. Das’s comments about her and Mr. Das’s sexual behaviors during their courtship

shock Mr. Kapasi, who has never seen his wife naked. Furthermore, Mr. Kapasi is offended by the concept of infidelity in Mrs. Das's marriage. This lack of understanding reflects a differing understanding of duty and family bonding. The two marriages may both be unhappy, but the causes, remedies, mistakes, and results of that unhappiness have no overlap whatsoever. Mr. Kapasi's fantasy of forging a friendship with Mrs. Das is shattered even before he sees his address slip away in the wind. The cultural divide between him and Mrs. Das is, from his view, simply too vast. In the diasporic situation, people most of the time take wrong steps due to their traumatic experience there.

The issues of infidelity that is a crucial but secret matter in many lives living in diaspora, continue in Lahiri's story "Sexy" too. Devajit Mitra (Dev) a young Bengali is lost in the glamour of the USA and robbed of his character in exile. Miranda, an American woman and Dev are representatives of Western social life, which has become almost sex-centered. Miranda is a lonely woman who seeks sexual pleasure to avoid isolation and boredom. Dev, already married to an Indian girl, comes to Miranda like an animal without speaking a word. Miranda realizes her mistake and decides not to ruin the marital happiness of an Indian woman. She finally ends with Dev's extra-marital relationship, and "finally returns to her traditional values symbolized by the church" (Lahiri 110). The story validates the need traditional values in keeping the institution of marriage alive. Miranda's belief in the church and the Indian concept of marriage bring together a practical cultural hybridity that finally saves Dev's marriage. "Sexy" is the story that shows the falling marital relationship among young emigrant Indians. Actually, the same issue of infidelity is repeated two times in this collection of Lahiri to show that this is very common to fall while living in an unknown environment, surrounding by lots of pressures. People easily forgets their limitation, values and commits sin. It's a common feature of diasporic community.

In “Mrs. Sen”, Jhumpa Lahiri tells the readers about the psychological upheavals and reactions that an immigrant has to face in an alien land with constant collisions caused by cultural transplantation which ultimately lead to cultural alienation and later on, cultural hybridity. Mrs. Sen, a Bengali housewife looks skeptically at her new homeland, as an outsider, with a feeling of something being lost. She is a Hindu woman who struggles to become an American but at the same time she is not ready to leave her inherited Indianness. For Mrs. Sen, India is the home. Eliot, for whom she acts as a baby sitter, is surprised to note that when Mrs. Sen says “home” she means India: “When Mrs. Sen said home, she meant India not the apartment where she sat to chop the vegetables” (Lahiri 116). Her urge to go back to her homeland can be seen in the following lines, “Could I drive all the way to Calcutta? How long would that take, Eliot?” (Lahiri 119). Mrs. Sen and Eliot are poised against each other in the story to draw out the pathetic loneliness each suffers from. Eliot, an American child seeks hospitality and warmth. That has to be provided by an Indian woman, Mrs. Sen who embodies concern, love, and care - which are lacking in Eliot’s mother, who is caught in the Western lifestyle. Mrs. Sen is homesick and always remembers and talks about her country and culture. While referring to weddings in India she says: “Whenever there is a wedding in the family... or a large celebration of any kind, my mother sends out word in the evening for all the neighborhood women to bring blades just like this one, and then they sit in an enormous circle on the roof of our building, laughing and gossiping and slicing fifty kilos of vegetables through the night.” (Lahiri 118). By recalling the experiences of an Indian wedding Mrs. Sen tries to reclaim her cultural past in an alien land. She uses memory and fantasy as agencies to find cultural linkage with her homeland.

Mrs. Sen is emotionally alienated. Even then, her job as a baby-sitter, adjusting with her husband and learning to drive a car shows her braving the new world. Thus, she tries in her own way to create a cultural hybridity by combining the values of care-giving with those of modern America. "Mrs. Sen" is a story which explores the life of an emigrant Indian through the European point of view. It is an archetypal story of the cultural outsider, but even her plight is offset by the loneliness of little Eliot, her faithful ward for a few hours every day. The story presents the real difficulties faced by Indian wives in an alien culture, without friends and family, struggling to cope with the new surroundings which they cannot call their home. Bharati Mukherjee rightly claims about the above situation in *Massachusetts Review*, "When an Asian man comes to America for economic transformation, and brings a wife who winds up being psychologically changed" (47). Mrs. Sen's mannerisms, cooked-dishes which she serves to Eliot's mother as a mark of Indian hospitality are despised by Eliot's mother. Mrs. Sen feels bad and insulted many a time by her remarks and always feels restless and uneasy, though she knows her relatives in India, "think I live the life of a queen..." (Lahiri 125). Mrs. Sen's consciousness is always preoccupied with the thoughts of her home for everything, is there, in India, shows that diasporas construct imaginary homelands from the fragmentary odds and ends of memory. Mrs. Sen's thoughts and attempts to resist the continuing agency of power of Eliot's mother end in tears and silence during her driving when "She was so startled by the horn that she lost control of the wheel and hit a telephone pole on the opposite corner" (Lahiri 134).

"This Blessed House" depicts the insecurity in the relationship of an Indian couple living in diaspora. Sanjeev and Twinkle, the young couple in diaspora have their links in India. Sanjeev has his parents in India whereas Twinkle has her parents in America. Unlike Sanjeev, Christian values are deeply embedded in Twinkle's mind. This Americanized couple encounters problems

when their new house proves to be a treasure trove of Christian objects. Though Sanjeev is educated in America, he is always in search of Indian food, Indian people, mainly the Indianness. The description of Indian food, paintings, traditions, cultural heritage and lifestyle gives a native fragrance to the story. Sanjeev being a recent immigrant is deeply in touch with his roots and culture unlike his wife Twinkle who is a second-generation immigrant.

Sanjeev always dreams for an ideal Indian wife and feels that if Twinkle was an Indian woman, then his family would have been better. Though he studied in America, still his mind is like a typical Indian boy. He is very much frustrated with his wife's obsession about Christian symbols and always in a fear that what others will think of them, which is another typicality of Indian people. When Sanjeev comes to America, he tries to assimilate quickly with the new culture and for this reason he has married Twinkle so that he can be accepted to the new community soon. Though Sanjeev shows his interest to join in the group of the new culture, still he waits for any invitation from the Indian community, prefers curry and other Indian food items rather than the tinned foods preferred by his wife. Again, Though Twinkle's family have long been settled in America and Twinkle was also brought up in America, still her parents look for an Indian boy to give their daughter's marriage. Though they have quietly assimilated with the American culture, but still they arrange the marriage in India and according to Indian style. The story arrests our attention as it records the emotional and cultural clash between a Hindu husband and his dislike for his wife's fascination for Christmas artefacts. But in reality, it is not about the religious divide, but the subtlety of human feelings that makes up everything. After Sanjeev discovers his malady of possessive love, he "pressed the massive silver face to his ribs, careful not to let the feather slip, and followed her" (Lahiri 157).

“Third and the Final Continent” is presented as a biographical sketch of a person who travels through three continents in his struggle for existence. The title of the story indicates the rootlessness of the individual who is moving from one place to another and searching for his own continent. The story talks about an Indian immigrant and his memories of Bengal. The narrator is trying to adjust himself with the West where he lives now. He finds life in America different from England, “The pace of life in North America is different from Britain ...”. “Third and the Final Continent” presents the struggle of a Bengali graduate, who has moved from Calcutta to London and then to Boston. He is an outsider in the beginning but slowly adjusts with American culture. However, the protagonist's continental tours do not make him quit his native self. His conversation with Mala in Bengali makes him break the shell of the acquired self. The story ends decades later long after his finding a job in Boston, getting married in Calcutta, and finally becoming a father. He feels that he has lived a happy superficial life. Their son establishes an identity of his own to live as a naturalized citizen of the USA. The story ends with his understanding which comes through his life-long voyage to different countries.

“The Third and Final Continent” shows the hegemonic control still exercised by the European people over the third world people. Lahiri in this story makes it clear how the first-generation migrants do stop brooding over their past, and try to fix their roots in an alien land. In this story, the narrator recounts his tale of leaving India in 1964 with a commerce certificate and the equivalent of ten dollars in his pocket. He sails on a cargo ship for three weeks across the Arabian, Red and Mediterranean seas to England. He lives in London with twelve or more penniless Bengali bachelors like himself. They live three or four in a room, and share the meals they cook together. He attends LSE and works at the university library. They have few responsibilities beyond their jobs. They lounge around on weekends and meet more Bengalis

who join for dinners. Occasionally one of them moves out to live with a woman with whom his family in Calcutta arranged for him to marry. When he is thirty-six years old, the narrator's family arranges a marriage in Calcutta and after that he settles down in America. The bond between the landlady Mrs. Croft and the narrator is beyond explanation. Mrs. Croft liked him and called his wife Mala "a perfect lady". When he reads of Mrs. Croft's obituary, he says, "I was stricken... Mrs. Croft's was the first death I mourned in America for hers was the first life I admired; she had left this world at least, ancient and alone, never to return" (Lahiri 196). With a growing son, the couple attain contentment and happiness in this 'third continent' which is also final continent for them.

One can indeed argue that Jhumpa Lahiri succeeds in presenting the problems and maladies of immigrants i.e. loneliness, boredom, loss of geography which shape their behavior, their identity according to their new culture, their education, their falling, and above all their sticking to their own root in her stories. Her characters as the representatives of two worlds work out the postcolonial ethnicity at its best. They are also connected with the multiple worlds and multiple cultures, bringing images, metaphors and experiences of cultural hybridity. The stories included in *Interpreter of Maladies* attempt to show the life and struggle of exiled Indians who are torn within and who lack viable means of articulation of their alienation and loneliness. Cultural hybridity becomes in these stories, a personal and psychological strategy to overcome these boundaries of exile.

VI

These situations are not only the scenario of the Asian diaspora in the western world, same marginalization is seen around the world like the Rohingya in Myanmar, Syrians etc. After Donald Trump became the USA president, migrants living in there were afraid as one of the election motto of Trump was to cast away the immigrants. If this would happen, many will be in serious trouble. Though this has not happened yet, but the immigrants there are always in a fear that they might be cast away. The second generation of immigrants are born and brought up in America, still if the above-mentioned law would come to action, then they will have to leave US though they have the residence of USA and they are American by their mind. Then what will happen to these people, where they will go; they are far distant from their root culture and the culture which they think they belong, distances them for being their root in Asia or other continents. Moreover, the scholars who go there as for scholarly works, face another kind of bindings. For being Asian, they do not get their deserved position though they are more capable than any natives there. They can't work anywhere freely, the body-color plays a very vital role in every stage of the lives of diasporas.

To draw a conclusion to this study, it can be said that the authors Amitav Ghosh, Bharati Mukherjee, and Jhumpa Lahiri have touched different aspects while living in the diaspora. But their findings are quite same with each other. People always tend to migrate in search of a better life, they struggle much to survive there. But what they actually go through are totally unknown to the people who haven't been in that situation. Some people gets mentally sick, some commits sin, some gets commercial, some flows away with the wave of change; but whatever they transform into, is because of the trauma which they face after coming to a new land, specifically the cultural shock. So, this paper is an attempt to reach to the audience about the continuous

cultural clash, cultural barrier, struggle to retain own identity and finally the birth of a traumatized self in the life of the immigrants.

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