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LITERARY VOICE

A Bi-Annual Peer-Reviewed Journal

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Editorial Note

It is an undeniable fact of history that during the British rule the Government of India had sent Indians to save their colony of Natal and the White men's legations from massacres at Peking or fight the Mad Mullah in Somaliland or defend any of the extreme out posts or coaling stations in Aden, Mauritius, Singapore, Hong Kong or building railways to Uganda, or tap the resources of central Africa and Siam. These demanding situations allude to the presence of Indian diaspora in different parts of the British Empire as well as elsewhere. While a large number of indentured labourers sought salvation from penury and privation in the far flung lands and islands of the British Empire, others went to the countries within the empire as well as outside it, out of their own free will. The Indian diaspora continued and still goes on unabated including skilled workers, businessmen, professionals, scientists, and men and women of letters. Presently, the Indian diaspora accounts globally for an annual income of around 300 billion US Dollars. The story of Indian diaspora is one of sweat and toil often washed with tears; of achievements despite impediments; of educational advancement and economic progress; of political success at times crushed by the cruel coups, as in Uganda and Fiji. The descendants of Indian diaspora have also produced works of literature illustrative of their history and heritage, of their own existential dilemmas. They have also probed and explored their own Indianness in its uniqueness; its new geo-political and social context; they have also sought to recognize how they differ and diverge from many of the practices and prejudices that still characterize Indian society.

Diaspora literature produced by diasporic writers of such diversity as V.S. Naipaul, Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Salman Rushdie, Bharati Mukherjee, Rohinton Mistry, M.G. Vassanji, Anita Rau Badami, Gita Mehta, Chitra Divakaruni, Shauna Singh Baldwin, Meena Alexander, Jhumpa Lahiri, Indu

Sundaresan and many others, explores problems and possibilities engendered by the experience of migrancy and diaspora life. In the process of engaging and negotiating notions of history, identity, gender, cultural and racial purity, the works of these writers graphically portray their ethnic, cultural and religious situatedness. The basic question that all diasporic literary voices explore, is the concept of home. The first generation diasporic voices are nostalgic, marked by feelings of guilt and anguish, and their problematic attempts at assimilation into the new land and its culture. The second generation immigrants who have not experienced post-migration pangs, are uniquely situated vis-à-vis their parents. However, their concept of home and identity in the wake of 9/11 terrorists' strike on the World Trade Centre, is rudely overturned, and they find themselves in a no man's land where their safety and security is threatened. This becomes an emerging pattern in the diasporic literary texts as Chitra Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams*, Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, Iqbal Ramoowalia's *The Midair Frown* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland*.

The present number of *Literary Voice* comprises essays which interrogate multiple meanings of 'exile,' variables of ethnicity, race, gender and class, notions about 'home' and 'homeland' and post structuralist notions of identity as embedded in the literary texts of prominent and emerging Indian diaspora writers.

T. S. Anand
Editor

“Foreign Travel among the Faithful”: Re-vision of Naipaul's Intimations of Muslim Converts

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It is unfortunate and painful in the contemporary times that Islam has become a synonym for terrorism. Perhaps, due to social exploitation and the political interference some violent groups sprouted in the name of Islam. It is ironical that “Islam” which means peace is changed into violence by some specific groups. A good example is the Indian film, *My Name is Khan* (2010) in which Rizwa Khan, repeatedly says “My Name is Khan but I am not a terrorist.” Despite his Asperger's syndrome, Rizwa Khan travels alone to inform the President of United States and thereby to the world that every Muslim is not a terrorist. The theme of the film is about humanity. In this paper I wish to reflect on Islam and politics and Islam and people based on Naipaul's *Beyond Belief*. To be more specific, how Islam is interpreted and misinterpreted by people and the state.

V.S. Naipaul, the winner of Nobel Prize for Literature in 2001 is well known for his travelogues, besides fiction. Though he decided to live in England and also married an English Lady, yet he could not reconcile it as a place for his creative sustenance. Being an expatriate writer, perhaps, his travels to distant lands contribute to his creative rejuvenation. He considers *The Middle Passage* (1962) as his beginning for his travel writings. “... Naipaul's travel writings are voluminous and he is equally well known as a travel writer. Naipaul is, thus, a comprehensive writer with many facets to his writing” (Bhat 106).

Naipaul himself said that “All I would like to say is that I consider my non-fiction an integral part of my work” (Joshi, 39). In the prologue, he said that “... It is less of a travel book; the writer is less present, less of an inquirer. He is in the background, trusting to his instinct, a discoverer of people, a finder-out of stories” (2).

Naipaul begins the prologue of *Beyond Belief* that “this is a book about the people. It is not a book of opinion” (1), by which Naipaul assures that facts presented by people will not be amended by his opinion. The writer's forte lies in dexterous handling of the Muslim converts in four non-Arab Muslim Countries in which the novelist travelled for five months in 1995. This is his second visit as he has already travelled in these four countries – Indonesia, Iran, Pakistan and Malaysia earlier in 1979 and the result is his *Among the Believers* published in 1981. *Beyond Belief* is a sequel to *Among the Believers* and it is not just an Islamic journey but the outcome of the novelist's conversations with the converted people. Naipaul's comprehension of Islam is enhanced in his second travel and in each country he discerns Islam from a different perspective. He himself states that: “When I started on that journey in 1979 I knew nothing about Islam . . . The theme of conversion was always there; but I didn't see it as clearly as I saw it on this second journey” (1). In these countries Naipaul mostly meet highly educated people who could balance life and belief. For Naipaul people whom he met in his travel are more important. Hence “... the essential focus of the book is on the search for the resurgent Islam as revealed in individual members of the society” (Ray XV).

Naipaul begins his tour with Indonesia and he introduces Imaduddin an electrical engineer in the Bandung Technology Institute, as a “dedicated man of the faith” (7). Imaduddin did not show any sympathy for Subandrio during Naipaul's visit in 1979. “...all that was humane and attractive about socialism was also in Islam” (13) and hence being a staunch Muslim, Imaduddin is proactive with socialist ideals. He could not support Subandrio, because Subandrio has sacrificed honesty and morality for success in politics. Subandrio in the late 1970s suspected the confluence of

science and Islam but later changed his opinion and aimed at "the model of the Indonesian new man" (8). Imaduddin blames colonization for his country's backwardness and by mastering science it can be prosperous and he further adds that "Science is something inherent in Islamic teaching" (24). But one needs to realize that freedom is sacrificed with the extensive use of science and technology. Khuri, in the chapter on "Assault on Freedom" states that "Reason, Science and Mechanism had unconsciously become one. To modernize was effectively to mechanize" (8).

President Suharto wishes to modernize Indonesia. In this process he supports the ideals of Habibie, who combines religion, politics and technology. Hence, Imaduddin finds it convenient to work with Habibie. Mr. Wahid contradicts with Imaduddin and Habibie upon the confluence of religion and politics. Wahid states that the "the sugar factory made people depend on it by providing easy money to gamble, for drinking, for prostitution, all kinds of things frowned on by Islam" (32). Wahid firmly believes that politics and religion should be separated. He narrates a small incident about the Japanese threatening the Dutch government in 1935 and concludes that his grandfather saw "Islam as a moral force, not as a political force" (35). When Wahid becomes the leader of his father's political party, he tries to separate politics and religion by keeping NU out of politics.

The Forum for Democracy established in 1991, rejects the Islamic politics strongly, and advocates that "people should practice Islam out of conscience not out of fear" (38). Dewi as a child used to say that she wanted to become an Ulama, a Muslim religious teacher when she grew up. Undoubtedly Wahid, Imaduddin and Dewi work for positive freedom.

After meeting Mr. Adi Sasono in central Jakarta, Naipaul observes that Islam has become a more Europeanized culture by departing from its traditional sub continental culture. But through the dialogues of Linus, one can understand that this Europeanization is not holistic but more over worked towards positive freedom.

In Yogyakarta, South of Java, Naipaul visits Linus, whom

he also met in his earlier visit in 1979. Linus is a Roman Catholic. Linus informs that their conversion has not resulted in a complete break away from their traditional social life. They continue their old customs and offer prayers to their ancestral spirits. In case of death they practice mixed rituals. The Muslims have published a leaflet against Linus titled "Hang Linus. Linus mocks muslims," in response to Linus's article published in a local news paper. In the essay he tries to look at circumcision, not only a religious practice (of both Muslim and Christian) but also a healthy practice. "I wasn't touching the Muslim custom only, because Christians here also practice circumcision. Today it's not only a religious thing, but a health precaution (91).

Linus opines that while Christianity and Javanese customs confluent, the Islamic practices differ not only from Javanese but also with the practices in Arabia. "And though Linus said that the new Muslim aggressiveness was being encouraged only by a few people, there was with him a clear irritation with this aggressiveness, as at something that went contrary to the way of Java" (92). Linus symbolizes modernity.

Six months after the revolution Naipaul arrived in Tehran, Iran which he visited earlier in August 1979. His expectation of Tehran as a "modern metropolis" proved negative. Not much change took place except an agony of the continuous war with Iraq for eight years. The glaring "sad beginnings of a new middle class" (145) is witnessed by Naipaul in Hyatt where he stayed in a hotel. During his visit in 1979 he found the city full of revolutionary posters and Naipaul comments that, at that time "The graphic art of the revolution was high, like the passions" (150).

Mehrdad accompanies Naipaul to Khomeini's shrine and its adjunct Cemetery for the martyrs of Iraq war. In the sign boards it is mentioned "Holy Shrine." There are stalls which offer free services. A thirteen year old boy who sacrificed his life in the first year of the war is a well known martyr who won the appreciation and extraordinary recognition by Khomeini.

In one corner of the Cemetery there are unknown martyrs and in another corner the neglected; those families who do not

know about their lost sons, offer prayers to those unknown and neglected. Mehrdad's family is a witness for a degraded life after revolution. His father has lost his job and his unmarried sister starts working in a publishing house, out of necessity and much against the demand of social life for unmarried woman during the revolution period. Initially the revolution follows Communist ideology, as the slogan is 'Bread, Work, Freedom' (146) but later it is changed to "Bread, Work and an Islamic Republic." Anyone is tempted to read that Iran is perhaps more Communist than Islamic and that is how the government utilized religion.

After the fateful and terrible eight year war with Iraq, Iranians pay a heavy price. A good example is Mr. Parvez who witnessed the rule of Shah and Khomeini. Islam is misinterpreted in the shadow line of politics. The Article 49 of the Constitution speaks about the regulatory business of a responsible government. "What made it Islamic was 'the integration of politics and religion,' a kind of institutional short-cut, since the integration was enshrined in the figure of the Leader, to whom absolute obedience was due" (163).

Khomeini promises employment and speaks about the oppressed and announces many more welfare measures for the poor. "The modernist Arab Muslim drive hence adopts an outlook that at once is regarded as the harbinger of immensely popular reforms, and yet is in contradiction with Arab Muslim society" (Khuri 20).

Iranians are very much attracted to the ideals of French Revolution. Unlike in other countries the Communist party played a different role in Iran. Another interesting man Naipaul meets is Mehrdad who is like the Lieutenant, a votary of democratic values in Graham Green's *The Power and the Glory* prefers the welfare of people to religious practices. He says "We believe in God most of us, but we think like Voltaire. . . . But in Iran, as I now saw, words like 'religious' and 'pagan' had Iranian meanings. . . . God is needed for life. But not those meaningless rules" (239). The devastation caused by the war denies security, stability and prosperity for the citizens. Society is slowly moving

away from human values. So when people completely lose hope they turn to God. And Iran being a poor country with many problems, they need someone high to look up to.

The war against Iraq proves a blessing in disguise for Iran, according to Parvez. Ironically the war that begins in the name of Islam brings aversion in the people for Islam.

The process of urbanization begins in Iran during 1940s and 1950s and the 1960s witnesses land reforms. The fertile land is retained by the old landowners. This results in the formation of Mujahidin. "Mentally they were Muslims. And since they were from poor families they had the mentality of Leftist socialism. That is why the Mujahidin had a good appeal: Marxism and Islam was their ideology. An irony: materialism and Allah" (257).

The smallest percentage of Iranians stay away from this movement. They have western education and westernization is completed with Shah's marriage with the last queen who is considered to be a replica of French Culture. Naipaul concludes that part of the book on his visit to Iran with Ali's words referring to the above division among people; "The two tribes of Iran still exist. If there is no marriage between them, I don't know where they are going" (259).

The Partition of India, perceives Naipaul as "the beginning of the intellectual distance between the two communities" (265)--Hindus and Muslims. He looks upon the partition which ". . . was Muslim insecurity that led to the call for the creation of Pakistan. It went at the same time with an idea of old glory of the invaders sweeping down from the north-west and looting the temples of Hindustan and imposing the faith on the infidels, the fantasy still lives; and for the Muslim converts of the subcontinent it is the start of their neurosis because in this fantasy" the convert forgets who or what he is and becomes the violator (265).

As a newly convert from Hinduism to Islam, Mohammed Iqbal in his speech for the first time in 1930, explains the need for formation of Pakistan. "Islam is not like Christianity, Iqbal says. It is not a religion of private conscience and private practice. Islam

comes with certain 'legal concepts.' These concepts have 'civic significance' and create a certain kind of social order. The 'religious ideal' cannot be separated from the social order" (269).

From the above speech of the poet Naipaul judiciously concludes that "What is really in the background of this demand for Pakistan and a Muslim polity, what isn't mentioned, is Iqbal's rejection of Hindu India" (269). When Iqbal says that Islam has certain legal concepts, does he mean that Hinduism is without such legal concepts?

Maulana Maudoodi, the founder of the most significant among the fundamentalist groups—the Jamaat-i-Islam (The Assembly of Islam) opposes the idea of formation of Pakistan contradicting the poet Iqbal for specific reasons. His intention is that the entire India should be under one umbrella – Islam. He believes that Muslim leaders of the subcontinent are not good enough and Jamaat-i-Islam continues with the same idea even after Maudoodi's death in 1979.

In his visit to Mansoura, Naipaul is informed by Saleem and his father, about their dissatisfaction about the present political nation. "They wanted an Islamic state. Pakistan wasn't an Islamic state (318). Saleem's father also finds fault with women's opposition to Islamic practices.

The 1965 Indo-Pakistan war gives birth to Mujahids in Pakistan. Unlike Jamaat, Mujahids give another interpretation to Islam. "There were songs exhorting Mujahids to go to war and promising them paradise, heaven" (327). The holy war is against the Hindus. One needs to think how the war in which killing humans take place is holy? The Mujahids "had to be turned back. They had been charged up by the mullah. The interesting thing was that the mullah was not leading those people. He was sitting safe in his mosque" (327). Pakistan has become a symbol of an aspect of Islam and the Muslim invaders would be invariably the heroes in Pakistan story. Mullah plays a pivotal role and his special vocation is to direct and inspire the people for jihad. "It was his business as a mullah to keep the converted people on their toes, and when there was need to charge them up, to fix their minds on

hell and heaven, and to tell them that when the time came only Allah would be their judge" (329).

To escape the Indian casteist ill-treatment many convert to Islam and unfortunately in Islam they meet with another type of discrepancy- between Arab-Muslims and subcontinent Muslims. Similar is the case with Pathans. "And they might be accepted as such outside the province, but the blue-blooded Pathans will not accept them as such. They will not let their daughters marry them" (344).

In 1980s life becomes miserable and living dangerous in Karachi, especially with the tensions of Mohajir. Life is unsafe. Hence Salman and his wife decide to go back to Lahore when they realize that situation is worsening day by day. It isn't really fear. ". . . It was the sorrow of living in an unjust, cruel society. Everything was collapsing. It's as though those poor people who died in Jalandhar died in vain" (333).

Abdul explains how insecure they are in their own country. He says "Please understand that when I leave home in the morning I am not sure whether I will return home" (366). And then he speaks about inner turmoil and the government's involvement in violence. The dacoits of Sindh, Mohajirs the Indian Muslim migrants, the sectarian groups-- all contribute to the perturbed life in Pakistan.

In his earlier visit (1979) Naipaul found Malaysia as a rich nation and in his second visit "it was extraordinary rich" (387). The youngsters do not wish to remember their colonial past or religious views. "A young lawyer said, that's been laid aside. Destroyed almost. It has been replaced by the idea of the Malays as a trading and manufacturing and innovative people. These are all words you would not have associated with Malays in the past" (389). In the present visit Naipaul also notices that "The government had done all that it could to bring Malays into business, and over the last two generations it had succeeded. The racial anxieties of sixteen years before had been swamped by the great new wealth, and new men had been created on both sides" (389). The new Malay man does not need concepts but really cares about money, food, house and shelter.

Rashid's parents being Taoist-- Buddhists suspect that one day he will become a Muslim. He still maintains the contact with the Pathan girl whom he considers a "living Muslim." "He was able now to recite Koranic verses. He didn't think it was enough for him; he thought he should read the Koran properly, in Arabic. He set himself to learn the Malay and Arabic script; it took him two years to do sight reading" (413). In 1969 Malaysia suffers race riots and a rise in Malay movement and new Islam among the young.

During the Japanese stay in Malaysia for three years and eight months violent deaths are reported, which were unknown till then. People have suffered and later with the help of Japanese, the circumstances changed. People of all races--Malay, Chinese and Indians lived together. But the recent studies state that despite the economic and social success and the emergence of Indian and Chinese groups as economic giants, these three ethnic groups Malay, Chinese and Indians live a separate life. Moreover, the Indian and Chinese groups complain that they get lesser opportunities in education and employment.

People in medieval times are governed by two factors--politics and religion. But now a third factor science/technology has entered. Both politics and religion wish to absorb science but fail to decide in marking the quantity of absorption. Khuri presents two types of modernity. One that consists of "self-interested and materialistic individuals" and the other based on Islamic societies "modeled on a world view that attaches great importance to spirituality and community" (XX). The general interest of the whole of humankind is replaced with individual self interest in the name of modernization. This negative freedom is observed in Subandrio in Indonesia and to certain extent in Iran, especially in the post-war period. The section on Iran in *Among the Believers* is concluded with Naipaul's remarks on the western civilization "that civilization couldn't be mastered. It was to be rejected; at the same time it was to be depended on" (3). In Pakistan when Abdul refers that his father prefers British rule which certainly indicates the state support of negative freedom.

Essentially Islam offers positive freedom and if any state

or Extremist/ fundamental groups in the name of Islam inculcate negative freedom, the committed people of the faith need to work for the establishment of positive freedom. Too much of modernization, use of science and technology at the cost of peoples' welfare and human values certainly result in peoples' movements like in Egypt or Libya most recently.

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Longing For the Home- A Return To Roots: Trends in the Diasporic Voices Post 9/11

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The basic question that all diasporic literary voices explore is the concept of home, what or where is home – does home refer to a specific place or location or the memory of an imagined place left behind by an individual or a group that has moved away from the land of its origin. The homeland is the country an individual is born in, has roots in its culture and language and one's cultural roots bind him/her to that particular land even when he/she is distanced from it. Home is that space which an individual chooses to live in; but home can also be the memory of a place to which one is connected to emotionally. Distance from the homeland can be both physical and mental, because the space where the individual strikes roots may not be the country of his/her origin but the place he/she is most attached to. The sense of belonging to a particular place is involuntary but the memory of belonging to an estranged homeland is a matter of choice. Thus the notion of 'feeling at home' is related to the question of belonging to a place, its culture and history, the policies of inclusion and exclusion that the host society exercises on the migrant. Home becomes a relative term signifying location and identity. The diasporic location becomes a liminal space where identity is reconstructed through the issues of longing and belonging. The theorist and critic Homi K. Bhabha suggests that this is "the Third space of enunciation" (9). Bhabha uses the concept of 'hybridity' to discuss the diasporic experience; the diasporic experience consists in relocation, but not without a home. As Bhabha points out: "To be unhomed is not to be homeless" (9).

The history of migration to America by the South Asians follows two major patterns as observed by critics like Bill Ashcroft and others in the book *The Empire Writes Back*; the first refers to the old diasporas—the migrations that took place on or before the 1940s necessitated by economic reasons, and the second phase post the 1960s refers to voluntary migrations for educational or professional reasons, which can be categorized as the new diasporas. The old diasporic voices are nostalgic about a homeland they have left behind and can never return to, an exilic feeling of guilt and anguish hinder their total assimilation to the host land and its culture. The new diasporic representations see an altered perspective towards home and belonging; the writer and critic Jasbir Jain in her article "The New Parochialism: Homeland in the Writing of Indian Diaspora" says: "The word 'home' no longer signifies a 'given,' it does not necessarily connote a sense of belonging, instead it increasingly foregrounds a personal choice which the individual has exercised, and 'home' and 'homeland' are for practical purposes separable units" (80). It is also significant to note that in the context of migration, the feeling of a lost home is peculiar to the first generation immigrants who are bound by memory to a particular homeland. For these first generation immigrants time stands still and they remember their homeland just as they left it. But in reality the homeland and its culture is subject to change and the immigrants can no longer relate to the changes being spatially dislocated from the homeland. The second generation immigrants who have not experienced migration and hence have no such memories are not inheritors of diasporic memories of their parents. They construct an imaginary homeland from the narratives that are told and retold to them and appropriate from these representations the actual homeland which by far remain an enigma. The meaning of home gets more complex for these later generations who consider the place they are born into their home, yet are always reminded of an unseen original home by reference to the place from where their parents had migrated.

The concept of home and belonging goes through another critical phase post the 9/11 attack on the Pentagon and the World

Trade Centre. The question of 'home' and 'homing' becomes problematic in the context of a single terrorist attack on America. The immigrants who have made America their homes suddenly find themselves in a no man's land where their safety and security is threatened. Home is no longer a safe place for these immigrants; the feeling of rootlessness becomes evident during this crisis as the immigrant tries to reconcile with the hate crimes against the non-whites that erupted in most parts of America after the attack. The sense of belonging neither 'there' nor 'here' is the cruel truth that the immigrant has to come to terms with. It called for a kind of rethinking about the issues of rejection and affiliation; the erst while homeland which was rejected in favour of the new land suddenly becomes alluring, there is an urgency for connecting to the roots and revalidating the history of the culture that was lost to a whole new generation. This becomes an emerging pattern in the diasporic texts post the 9/11 and the writers feel the need to revalidate their positions. A study of the latest publications of two of the most prominent Indian American writers Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri will illustrate this point further. Divakaruni has come up with two new diasporic fictions *One Amazing Thing* (2010) and *The Oleander Girl* (2013) and Lahiri has published her second diasporic fiction *The Lowland* (2013); all three novels look at India as a kind of alternate possibilities, a search for something that America cannot offer, one may call it spirituality or tranquility. The idea of home and belonging has been redefined in the writings of these two writers. In an interview given to Sarah A. Johnson in May, 2001 Divakaruni was asked if the individuals in her novel will ever be able to reconcile between finding home and what does home mean. In reply to the question Divakaruni says:

Some individuals may manage to reconcile this, but for many of us, this is the great dilemma of the twentieth and twenty-first century. Where is home? We've become such a mobile society, how many of us live in the homes where we were born? We've moved into a whole new way of life, and the question *where is home* becomes very important. Perhaps the only way to answer it is to create a sense of home inside of ourselves (66).

Lahiri broadens the topic by taking a look at it from the point of view of the second generation immigrants. For these unsettled generation home becomes a riddle, an enigma as they struggle to seek their roots. She is keenly aware of the disconnect that children like her felt while growing up in America, a strange yearning for a sense of belonging anywhere, but the inability to share the connection of their parents to a land they called home; an absent presence or a vacuum in the lived reality of America. Speaking at a "prologue" session of the Kolkata Literary Meet on 23 January, 2014 Lahiri said : Calcutta has been an absent presence in my life and occasionally it was a present presence, when we would come, but the majority of my conscious life and my upbringing was shaped by and informed by the absence of this city and what that absence meant to my parents. Calcutta was always there but it was also not there and so I think that tension, that contradiction in terms is something that's very much in my blood and all of my writing until now certainly has come out of that trying to understand how and why a place can have such a powerful hold on people (*The Telegraph*, metro. 23).

This kind of acknowledging the presence of a homeland that connects the roots of the immigrants is recognition of the writer's ethnic identity; a homecoming of the native. The city of the mind, the absent present that has framed the imagination of the writer becomes the locus of the stories they narrate in their fictions.

In her novel, *One Amazing Thing* (2010) Divakaruni brings together a group of people from different cultural backgrounds trapped in an US visa office due to an earthquake. The common thread between this group is that they all live in America, all of them immigrants representing a particular community and all destined to travel to India. All the characters are immigrants in America and as they engage in storytelling they reveal their purpose of visiting India. While India has been a home for some like Jiang, the elderly Chinese woman accompanied by her gifted teenage granddaughter Lily, it is also the home to Uma's parents who decided to relocate to Kolkata after spending twenty years in America. It is the country from where Cameron, an African-

American ex-soldier has adopted a child. It is the ultimate destination of Tariq, a Muslim immigrant in America who is torn between living in America and relocating to India under the present circumstances when FBI agents would be picking up people from the minority community as suspects of terrorist attacks. While his parents and folks would like him to relocate to India, he wonders why: "This was my country. I was an American. The thought of being driven from my home filled me with rage" (131). For the elderly couple Mr. and Mrs. Pritchett, India is a land of palaces and they had planned the visit to India because the image of India has stirred something in the ailing Mrs. Pritchett. The stories these characters tell are a journey within the self, within the inner 'I' and the retelling is an exercise of keeping the memory alive. While India is the common destination of this uncommon group, it entails different things for different people; to the first generation immigrants like the Chinese woman it is definitely a return to her home she had left behind, but to Tariq and Uma, second generation immigrants raised in America, it is a departure from their current home, a route taken for the sake of their parents. Divakaruni poses the question that whether home is a relative concept, especially for the immigrants who feel differently about migration, or whether home is a subjective location in the mind, a space created within the self. In an online interview given to Susan Comminos for *Atlantic Online* in 2012 Divakaruni says:

A lot of young people who have grown up here have seen India only as visitors. Or, in many cases, they have not seen India at all, if their parents didn't make a real effort, or perhaps couldn't afford a trip back home. So there's this connection and yet lack of connection to the homeland (n.pag). Divakaruni's perspectives broaden as she tries to address the issue of home and the connection to the homeland among the second generation immigrants; it becomes complicated because these people born of immigrant parents do not relate to India as their home because they know it only through their parents, while they take America for their home because they are born in this country and culture, yet still remain aliens or "other" to this side of the world. The

dilemma is dramatically brought out in *One Amazing Thing* (2010) through the nine immigrants from different backgrounds and age groups who are united by one common mission, survival against the odds. That is how Divakaruni sees the immigrants; they are homeless exiles who have made America their home and desperately trying to survive in the hostland braving the prejudices and racial intolerances post the 9/11.

In her next novel *Oleander Girl* (2013), Divakaruni shifts the topos of the story to Calcutta to depict the homeland and place it in contrast to contemporary New York. In Calcutta she begins with the story of two families—the Roys and the Boses engaged in a matrimonial negotiation, while the protagonist Korobi is troubled by the question of identity and travels to America in search of her unknown father by tracing her roots. The novel is in a way a re-looking at India, nurturing interest in the old world charm of North Calcutta with its traditional family heritage complete with the dilapidated buildings, Bengali cooking delicacies and faithful servants – all that America is not. In contrast, post 9/11 New York is engulfed in an atmosphere of suspicion, hatred, detention and humiliation; survival in America is struggling to maintain a decent lifestyle and providing sustenance through a dwindling business that tempts one to the path of treachery and gamble. Divakaruni's portrayal of the rich middle class Bengali represented by the Bose family, driving expensive cars, frequenting nightclubs and hotels in Calcutta and owning an art gallery in America is well contrived in the background of the emerging new India that Divakaruni has witnessed through her recent visits to the country. But her preference is obviously with the traditional Roy family that holds on to the culture even though the daughters of the family go to America in pursuit of higher studies (in the case of Anu) or identity (in the case of Korobi). It is India and home where they return to and continue to live their lives after their meaningful excursions into the world of promise. If there is a sense of disillusionment, there is also a sense of celebration in making it to the new land but returning to the roots in the homeland. Korobi expresses her relief in returning to her home and roots after her quest in America:

I think longingly of the beloved familiarity of 26 Tarak Prasad Roy Road, the old house waiting to shield me from the unjust angers of the world. I want it so much. For so long I've been a stranger in hostile places. It would be a relief to collapse into Grandmother's arms, into my childhood (271).

Her yearning for the familiarity of home encapsulates the anguish of the dislocated and the security that the home offers from "the unjust angers of the world" (271). Divakaruni treads a new ground in depicting the conflict of a soul that has to choose between the allures of America and the loyalty to roots in India; yet she carefully depicts the dangers attached to the country of allurements.

Jhumpa Lahiri's perspective of home is broadened by her being born in London and then moving to America and settling down there, yet writing about people from Bengal to Boston. Lahiri's narrative world moves from India to America and beyond; her characters are marked by their loss and longing, alienation and exasperation; by their search for roots and identities. Her own perspective of intimacy and distance to a place shaped her vision and she sets her stories in Calcutta and America. . In an online interview at the press release of her first novel *The Namesake* titled "A Conversation With Jhumpa Lahiri" she speaks candidly about the settings of her stories:

When I began writing fiction seriously, my first attempts were, for some reason, always set in Calcutta, which is a city I know quite well as a result of repeated visits with my family... These trips, to a vast, unruly, fascinating city so different from the small New England town where I was raised, shaped my perceptions of the world and of people from a very early age. I went to Calcutta neither as a tourist nor as a former resident – a valuable position, I think, for a writer. The reason my first stories were set in Calcutta is due partly to that perspective – that necessary combination of distance and intimacy with a place (n.pag).

Eventually Lahiri sets her stories in America, though India keeps cropping up in her writing sometimes literally and sometimes metaphorically as a longing for the homeland in her

immigrant characters. After choosing America as the setting of her first novel *The Namesake*, Lahiri shifts the paradigm of remembering the home to the actual act of living in an alien country and making it home. Lahiri in her next novel *The Lowland* (2013) shifts her focus on Calcutta, she depicts the predicament of the older generation immigrants, her own parents being her best examples, who yearned for the place they left behind and keenly felt its absence as they raised their children in the foreign land. She is also keenly aware of the disconnect that children like her felt while growing up in America, a strange yearning for a sense of belonging anywhere, but the inability to share the connection of their parents to a land they called home; an absent presence or a vacuum in the lived reality of America.

Lahiri engages in creating metaphors of space in this novel through the lowland, which is a piece of marshy land with two ponds, oblong, side by side that would flood in the monsoon and erase the embankment between them representing the two worlds in Lahiri's novel. Then there is the Tolly club with its high brick walls and wooden gates that forbade trespassing; it served as an impregnable border for the two brothers Udayan and Subhash who wanted to know what was "inside". The insider/outsider dichotomy is depicted through the real presence of the club in the novel and it becomes a part of the story like the lowland; signifiers of the difference between Calcutta and Rhode Island. In this novel Lahiri has dealt in some details with the Naxalite movement in Calcutta and to some extent raises the question as to how far a rebellion can penetrate the lives of those who get involved, even those who are passive participants in the movement and flee the country to escape its grip. Lahiri concentrates on the history of the rebellion in her home country that rocked the turbulent times of the 1960s and 70s yet was completely overlooked by the West, as Gauri learns in Rhode Island: "There was nothing about Calcutta. What had consumed the city, what had altered the course of her life and shattered it, was not reported here." Gauri flees Calcutta to escape the memories of her husband, the revolution and his brutal death but her prolonged stay at America does not make her a citizen:

Impractically, she'd remained a citizen of her birthplace. She was still a green-card holder, renewing her Indian passport when it expired. But she had never returned to India . . . In any case, California was her only home. Right away she had adapted to its climate, both comforting and strange, hot but seldom oppressive (235).

If Gauri has made California her home, it is to escape both Calcutta and Rhode Island; cities of mind trapped in painful memories that she wants to get rid of. So home to her connotes a kind of seclusion, a place which is not defined by any relations but by her rootlessness; she enjoys her home in California because it is neither imposing like the Tollygunge home nor oppressive like the home in Rhode Island. For Subhash home is both Calcutta and Rhode Island, he escapes the country just as his younger brother gets involved in the Naxalite movement, he goes back from time to time to his homeland as the occasions of filial duties require him to, but he remains an emigre to America in his attempt to escape the reality of the radical rebellion enveloping his country: "He had walked away from Calcutta just as Gauri had walked away from Bela" (220). Lahiri's writing is remarkable in its understatement; she seems to suggest that there are some realities of the home country that one can never escape; the immigrant in trying to escape these realities becomes a wandering soul in search of a place to belong.

The homeland, the city of origin has heightened the awareness of these writers so that it becomes a constant backdrop in their writings. They have become Americans through continued living yet feel connected to the homeland through the heightened memories of the place. Going back to the city of memories is a kind of journey undertaken by these writers to redefine their ethnic connections; a kind of rooting for roots. Divakaruni focuses on her homeland in her latest novel *The Oleander Girl* (2013) elaborating on the cultural richness of the city, its traditions and cultural heritage. The representation of the home is set in contrast to the dangers of contemporary America that is no home for the immigrants in spite of its allurements. Lahiri delves into a journey through the history of her country, the turbulent political

environment of the 1960s in her latest novel *The Lowland* (2013) to understand the period, its rebellions and struggles which are real in a substantial way. However she refrains from exploring the resurgence of the Maoist movement in Bengal in the present times and keeps her focus on those early years. What motivates these writers in reconnecting with their homeland after they have struck roots in the hostland is the need to redefine the homeland for the present generation of Indian kids who are growing up outside India with an emotional disconnect to India and also to reiterate that the differences in the two ways of life are shrinking just like the mental borders in the present ages.

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---. "The outsider's experience is my experience. Now I am used to it. I accept it".

Divided Space and Divided Subject : A Comparative analysis of Shauna Singh Baldwin's *What the Body Remembers* and Tahmima Anam's *A Golden Age*

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The modern and postmodern culture gives importance to the individual being and to their unique thoughts and experiences. The questions related with individuality had never in history found so much attention as in the twentieth century. The question that has been the most sought after is that whether an individual is really a free agent of his/her will or if there are some forces which determine his/her self and subjectivity; what an individual feels, thinks and does is the outcome of his/her own unique self or is it pre-determined even before his/her birth. French Marxist Philosopher Louis Pierre Althusser (1918-1990) explains: "Every human cannot be the agent of a practice unless he takes the form of a subject. The "subject form" is in fact the form that the historical existence of every individual, every agent of social practice, takes: for the relations of production and reproduction necessarily involve . . . ideological social relations which, in order to function, impose on every individual agent the form of a subject" (Althusser 1976: 95).

Earlier philosophers Rene Descartes, Friedrich Hegel, Immanuel Kant emphasizes on self determined subjectivity of an

individual. Various other thinkers like Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes, Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Locke, also reaffirmed the view of human being as a rational and independent subject in one or the other way. They challenged the notion which was prominent in earlier times that human beings are guided by some divine power. So these radical and enlightened views changed the age old pattern of thought. The poststructuralist theorists rejected the notion of autonomous and independent subject as self. The later theorists questioned the self determined subjectivity of an individual. They emphasized the notion that the subjectivity of a subject is influenced by various factors like language, culture, society, nationality, politics etc.

The change in the external factors influences the construction of the subjectivity of an individual. In the present paper, the novels *What the Body Remembers* (1999) by Shauna Singh Baldwin and *A Golden Age* (2007) by Tahmima Anam are analyzed, taking into consideration the idea of nation formation and the divided space and the construction of subjectivity in those tumultuous times in which identity finds new meanings and implications. The setting of the first novel is 1947 partition which resulted in the separate nations of India and Pakistan and the setting of the second novel is 1971 liberation war of Bangladesh for a separate nation.

What the Body Remembers is a personal story underlying the deep meaning of the construction of psychological, personal, national and historical sense of identity. The effects of colonialism in the pre- independence and post- independence period can be traced in the novel. The novel presents the story of two women Satya and Roop in a bigamous marriage. Sardarji is a foreign educated colonial subject who is under the influence of the discourse created by the colonial masters. Sardarji becomes a divided subject as he is shuffled between two identities. The crisis of identity becomes central in the postcolonial studies as everything related to the native culture is represented as inferior in the light of the “superior culture” of the colonial masters. This identity crisis of the natives gives birth to a dual personality.

On a very dramatic basis, Sardarji experiences the split from within. He has not a unified personality. He is not able to deal with what he assumes to be the ontological superiority of the colonizers. This results in a kind of alienation in his personality. He is not completely cut off from his roots but he is not even free from the impact of the colonial discourse which leads to the dismemberment of his personality. Cunningham is the symbol of the “double” identity of the Sardarji. Cunningham symbolizes the divided self of Sardarji as he: “. . . still saddles Sardarji mind, hoary phantom remnant of his years in England. And now Sardarji cannot remember how he thought before he learned to think with Cunningham. Cunningham, grafted so long ago, does the watching now and argues less and less as long Sardarji asks only the questions Cunningham approves of, walks and talks the way Cunningham has taught” (Baldwin 173).

There is a kind of master-slave relationship between Cunningham and Sardarji in which a continuous struggle keeps on going as there is a clash between the two extremes of personalities. The postcolonial subject is in a position of subordination to his colonial master. What is good and what is bad is decided by the discourse created by the colonial master. The subjectivity of the colonial subject is shaped by the colonial master because the native is practically in the condition as a “subject.” He is colonized, marginalized and also a subject to the colonial power. Here applies the idea of discourse and the production of knowledge by the colonial power given by the French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984). People who are in power create a certain kind of discourse which determines the behaviour of the people under power. Power creates the knowledge of truth and false, acceptable and unacceptable through discourse and unconsciously the subject is caught in the web of these discourses and forgets his true self.

Sardarji shuffles between two worlds. His dual personality in the form of Cunningham results from the discourse created by the colonial masters. His self is affected by the practices which create certain ideology. He prefers English over her mother tongue, Punjabi. He prefers Western style of living. This duality in

his personality results from her western education. Education is the most important ideological state apparatuses (IASs) as given by Louis Althusser. The ideology which is propagated by these institutions becomes so inculcated in the mind of the individual that he/she is not conscious of his/her mental subjugation. Sardarji does not have a unified personality. He belongs to neither this and nor to that world. He is conscious of this duality in his personality but hegemony has created a certain discourse that his own voice of resistance is never raised.

Subjectivity of an individual cannot be devoid of the cultural and physical space s/he lives in. Language is associated with culture and society. The social and cultural spheres of Sardarji are fragmented and this leads to him being a divided subject. He is divided in his language. For him, Albert Memmi in *The Colonizer and the Colonized* says:

Colonial bilingualism cannot be compared to just any linguistic dualism. Possession of two languages is not merely a matter of having two tools, but actually means participation in two psychical and cultural realms. Here, the two words symbolized and conveyed by the two tongues are in conflict; they are those of the colonizer and the colonized (Memmi 151).

The second novel *A Golden Age* is set in East Pakistan during the nine months of the war and Anam's family history has also inspired this writing. The struggle of a woman who plays the double character of a mother and also of a freedom fighter is what interests us as a reader. The characters are shown in the state of emergency. Anam deals with the question of what the war entails for a common man and a family. The novel deals with the golden age of the history of Bangladesh when people became united to fight for their mother tongue, their unique identity and a separate nation. Rehana is the female protagonist of the novel who plays the dual role of a mother and a nationalist. She also suffers from the pain of divided identity as families are divided with the Partition of 1947 and then again with the war of 1971 for liberation, she suffers from an identity crisis. At this point, she emerges as a divided subject who is aware of her fragmented identity. The

question of the division of the subject is related with the psychology of the subject. The sisters of Rehana live in Karachi and she lives in Dhaka and Dhaka (East Pakistan) is fighting for liberation from Karachi (West Pakistan). There is a kind of conflict in her familial and national interests. After 1947 Partition, there was the feeling of fragmented identity and now again in 1971, this identity becomes further fragmented and the forces behind this fragmented identity also shape her subjectivity. The fragmentation between Urdu (West Pakistan) and Bengali (East Pakistan) also leads to the question of her true belonging. Her sisters accuse her for not speaking proper Urdu as she speaks Bengali.

After the war breaks out, Sohail joins the resistance to the West Pakistan. Rehana was born in Calcutta, and after her marriage, she settled in Dhaka with her husband, Iqbal. Her sisters were living in Karachi. Thus, she has her association with West Pakistan but now she needs to break all those ties and have to join the struggle which is ongoing against West Pakistan. Sohail joins the struggle to form their separate nation Bangladesh. His life is at stake as Pakistani army can go to any length to repress the rebel. Maya, the daughter of Rehana has a young blood and doing everything to support the rebel. She questions her mother's association with West Pakistan and breaks out that Sohail can be killed by one of her Pakistani soldiers. The self of Rehana suffers from fragmentation at this time. She has some emotional connection with the old country as she has memories of that place. She keeps: ". . . ambiguous feelings about the country she had adopted. She spoke, with fluency, the Urdu of the enemy. She was unable to pretend, as she saw so many others doing, that she could replace the mixed tongue with a pure Bengali one, so that the Muslim salutation As-Salaam Alaikum was replaced by the neutral Adaab, or even Namoshkar, the Hindu greeting. Rehana's tongue was too confused for these changes. She could not give up her love of Urdu, its lyrical lilt, its double meanings, its furrowed beat" (Anam 47).

Rehana is caught between two worlds and both the worlds belong to her. Urdu language symbolises the identity of West

Pakistan and now she belongs to East Pakistan symbolised by Bengali language but she cannot give up her love for Urdu language. This feeling of association with Urdu language is not felt by Maya and Sohail as they are young ones and have not any feeling of belonging which is always associated with memory and place. They feel attached to East Pakistan as they have perceived the problems and subordination of them by the West Pakistan. Their subjectivity is associated with their memory and experience, what they experience and do not experience. Their subjectivity is limited by their experiences of certain places and the association they feel towards those places. Rehana has that experience and Maya and Sohail does not have. She will have to break her emotional ties with West Pakistan to be fully loyal to East Pakistan.

She wants to prove that she belongs to East Pakistan. She sews blankets for the fighters and refugees out of her sari that her husband Iqbal had presented to her. She allows her house "Shona" to be used as a guerrilla hideout and she even helps an injured Major in recovering his health. They hide guns under rosebushes. She does all this to prove her association with the struggling nation, East Pakistan. At this point, her subjectivity is determined by the external forces. She does not have self determined subjectivity. She becomes a true nationalist and this feeling of nation and nationalism determines her subject position. She begins to feel Urdu as aggressive when the butcher in the meat market talks to her in Urdu: "How are you, madam?" he asked in Urdu, and saw her start . . . Rehana realized how strange the language suddenly sounded: aggressive, insinuating. She saw now that it was the language of her enemy . . . she tried to feel something else, some tenderness for her poets . . . Rehana could see that he was afraid of her, and she was pleased, and then ashamed to be pleased . . ." (Anam 119-120).

There was a feeling of resistance which was questioning her new association with new language and new nation as something was holding her back, the past memory associated with the older place. But she will have to prove her new association, her new belonging, her new loyalty and her new national feeling but

the question arises why does she need to prove that? Why does she need to change her association and belonging? Why does she feel ashamed to be pleased about her new identity? It will have to be measured if we have some control or influence over our identity. Rehana as a subject is associated with the other subjects of society. Her subjectivity cannot be autonomous and independent in this respect. She is a subject because she is linked with other subjects Present is more important than past as present conditions determine one's stand on certain things. At present, she is in East Pakistan and her children are supporting the cause of East Pakistan as against West Pakistan. She is conscious of her present association and belonging and at the same time at an unconscious level, her past belonging is still present and she cannot cut off completely from her past experience. As John Locke (1632-1704) asserts that past and memory determines the self of an individual, Rehana's fragmented self also results from her memory and past experience which is and which will always remain the part of her self and subjectivity. Rehana's association with Bengali supports the ideology of a separate nation. Association with language creates a practice through which a certain ideology is propagated and fulfilled.

Sardarji and Rehana are the two individuals who have fragmented subjectivity and they both try to come out of it. Rehana is a strong character as compared to Sardarji as she prefers to belong to one world than being shuffled in two. She accepts her association with West Pakistan in the formation of her national identity as the external conditions forces her to do so. In the case of Rehana, language and nationalism are the practices of discourse which determine her subjectivity. She is influenced by the prevailing notion of language and nationalism which determine the do's and don'ts for the individuals. In her case the element of 'I' as propounded by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) is more visible as compared to Sardarji. Kant emphasizes the functioning of 'I' in taking impressions from the world outside. Kant writes: "it must be possible for the "I think" to accompany all my representations" (Kant 152). Even when we come into contact

with the world outside, our own perception of perceiving and taking impression from the outside world is influenced by our thinking self. Rehana is also influenced by the ties which she shares with West Pakistan but her own thinking guides her to be on one side and to define her identity in her loyalty and association with East Pakistan (Bangladesh).

There is always the functioning of 'I' in taking impressions from the world outside. Our own perception and thinking self shapes our subjectivity to some extent. Rehana and Sardarji's own individual differences in thinking and perception influence the extent to which their subjectivity will be shaped by external forces. The thinking self of an individual also influences the construction of his/her subjectivity. Sardarji does not emerge as a strong character. He is more influenced than he can influence. Cunningham also symbolises a certain discourse which keeps on guiding our actions, our words and thoughts: ". . . Cunningham can edit paragraphs in Sardarji's mind before realizing them for utterance, and now that he has trained Sardarji on what is Done and Simply Not Done, generally stays within the bounds of reasonable discourse" (Baldwin 173).

A certain kind of discourse is created by the colonial masters which determines the subjectivity of an individual. Discourse is created in every field which constructs the binaries of right and wrong, acceptable and unacceptable. Cunningham symbolises a certain kind of discourse which determines the subjectivity of Sardarji. There is the influence of English culture and Education on Sardarji as his thinking, his ideas and values are influenced from the colonial discourse created by the west. "The haunting presence of a Doppelganger, in other words, his double, Cunningham, conveys the depth of identity crisis he is going through" (Ratti 147). He is a Punjabi accepting the values of English imperialism. He masters the colonizer's language. He is alienated from his own self. As Girard puts it "Cunningham embodies the imperialist essence of the colonial discourse, revealing its ideological mechanisms, namely its systematic dismemberment of the self" (Girard 23).

Roop, wife of Sardarji also signifies the situation of predicament faced by many Indians when their own identity became threatened with the influence of western culture and education. Atma Singh gives training to Roop to fit in the elite circle. She is taught to hold a silver fork and "how it must stab the roundness of peas, accurately, elegantly" (Baldwin 200). The natives feel a crisis of identity in their self psychologically. Everything English is associated with superiority and everything Indian is associated with "cheep-cheez" (Baldwin 27). She imitates the British habits in the hope of getting approval of the elite circle of Sardarji. Roop tries to occupy the gap created by the colonial discourse. She is subjected to dual colonialism. As a woman, she is also subjected to her husband. Her subjectivity is constructed through political and also social forces. During the partition, political and social forces lose their hold. She reasserted her actual being. She felt as there was reincarnation of Satya in her body. She began to sound like her. From a passive and submissive girl, she took charge of the critical situation. Her self is created with what her body remembers. Her body remembers the long suppression of culture and violence during partition. Her self is constructed through her past and memory. Her self remembers the recollections, narratives and stories of Partition and the memory of past shapes her subjectivity.

The division of nations is not a simple event. It places an individual in an entirely new set up of political, social and religious conditions. Even Bachan Singh, the father of Roop kills her own daughter-in-law Kusum to save the honour of his community. The fear of being socially unaccepted by his community in the case Kusum being raped is so much inculcated in his mind that this is all about what he can think about at this point. He prefers to kill her than to being dishonoured by the other community.

What the Body Remembers and *A Golden Age* are the novels dealing with the individual experiences and the personal stories during the times of crisis. The process of nation formation and the process of the construction of subjectivity are intermingled and the subjectivity of an individual is influenced by the forces behind the

struggle for separate nation. As the space divides, with that the associations, belongings and the values attached to that place, are also threatened. An individual is not a unique and autonomous subject in the process of nation formation as his social and political identity goes under change. The subjectivity of individuals is self determined when they ask the question 'why' and they are the determined subjects when they are just concerned about 'what.' In the first case, there is questioning regarding why one thing should be done or not, why one thing is acceptable or not and in the second case, individuals just what to know what should be done and what should not be, what is acceptable and what is not. When nations are formed, the element of questioning is more prevalent and this is not a unique condition of every individual as their subjectivity is formed in association with other subjects.

Rehana, Sohail and Maya in *A Golden Age* are under the influence of the political conditions though they seem to have their self determined subjectivity because they do not suffer from a fragmented self like Sardarji in *What the Body Remembers*. In the case of Sardarji, discursive forces are so strong that he suffers from a divided self. He is conscious of this influence and this is the reason of his divided self. When an individual is not conscious of the outer influences, he/she thinks of his/her subjectivity and identity as self determined and at a conscious level, he/she is more at peace with his/her self. Rehana is influenced by the forces of the outside world but she is not conscious about it as her self accepts the influences because her self is determined by the feelings of nation and nationalism. Sardarji is also influenced by the forces of the outside world but he is conscious of the influences as his self is not at peace with these influences because his subjectivity is determined by the discursive practices. Thus, the element of 'I' is crucial in taking impression from the outer world. Subjectivity of an individual is determined by the fact of his/her being conscious and unconscious of the forces influencing his/her self. The crisis of the self is felt by the natives in the process of nation formation. With the formation of new nations, there is a conflict of loyalties, fears, hopes, dreams as there is a warlike situation.

The space is divided and with that division, native as a subject is also divided in his/her self.

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Bharati Mukherjee and the Myth of American Dream

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With the discovery of America in the seventeenth century by the first/earliest group of settlers from Europe, as a land of promise, the unique belief of the waves after waves of immigrants coming down in the wilderness of America and establishing their own settlements, which ultimately have come to be known as the United States of America, gave rise to a peculiar phenomenon termed as 'American Dream' by scholars. Besides Europeans, people around the world have since then been following their dreams of a better existence in America, inspired by the true success stories of the settlers who left their past burdened life behind and built up a new and bright world to live, by sheer determination, will, and hardship. America's emergence as a new, golden place where life can be reinvented and made anew, where dreams can be realized, has given substance to the biblical myth of the Edenic Possibilities. In fact, on account of its being a real place within this material world, has established the concept of the American Dream as a new myth which embodies the archetypes of "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness"(ushistory.org), containing the universal, basic longings of humankind.

It is still with these archetypal yearnings in heart that an immigrant makes America his/her home, even though it includes the pains and hardships of starting a new life in an alien land and going through the trials and trauma of uprooting and re-rooting oneself. Amazingly, this myth even persists at present also, spreading in all directions and calling to individuals in Third World countries also, who envisage their migration to North

America as a passage to a comparatively superior life, greater liberty, and quick pursuit of happiness. And this is what has contributed in turning this phenomenon into a myth.

American Dream, which is a "cluster of indigenous myth" (Rajimwale,186), including the central myth of Edenic Possibilities and its offshoots; the myth of American Adam and the myth of the Dream of Success, gets full representation in the American literature, with all the changes of the different changing times. The Diasporas have also found voice through the writers who, while representing them, tell their stories in the context of their American Dream.

Bharati Mukherjee is the only literary figure who has claimed to be called an American who has realized her American Dream, and who has all the traits of an inheritor of this Dream. In fact, this myth contains the inherent but inter-related themes like heroism, individualism, identity, quest, and loyalty, albeit with one unifying undercurrent of the goal of success. It is in terms of first becoming American in the manner of the previous generations of Europeans and Jews have done which will then be followed by other worldly success stories of their own. And what becoming American means for her is letting go of the oppressive dogmas of a class based gender oriented society and bracing the opportunities offered constitutionally by America to confirm their assertive and equal presence in its society.

In an interview with Alson B. Carb, Bharati Mukherjee asserts herself as "an American author in the tradition of other American authors whose ancestors arrived at Ellis Island." And her claim can be justified in that the U.S.A is mainly a land of immigrants and so is she, or other like her, albeit with certain changes incurred in times, landscapes, and temperaments. As she tells N.P.Krishan Kumar, "I'm writing about the here and now of America" (6), she is obviously writing about the changed set of immigrants in a changed milieu that still contain the charm of a dream life to tempt outsiders in. Mukherjee tells Carb, "My characters want to make it in the new world. They are filled with a hustlerish kind of energy. Although they are often hurt or depressed by setbacks in their new lives and occupations they do

not give up. They take risks they would not have taken in their old comfortable worlds to solve their problems.” (654).

Mukherjee unabashedly makes her immigrants participate in the American Dream expanding the horizons of the archetypal immigrant experience in the New World, and thus turning this Euro-centric phenomenon into a global one which entertains no other differences and contradictions than the discrepancies of origin. In fact, Mukherjee falls in the line of writers who possess the possibility of sustaining the belief in this dream of desired freedom for the new immigrant's life in turmoil. And it in turn augurs well for the identification of the descendants of European immigrants with the new immigrants, as they themselves or their ancestors have already, more or less, gone through the chaos of an immigrant life. She asks: “All around me I see the face of America changing . . . But where, in fiction, do you read of it? Who . . . speaks for us, the new Americans from nontraditional immigrant countries?” (28-29). For Mukherjee, “America is an idea. It is a stage for transformation . . . What America offers me is romanticism and hope . . . Suddenly, I found myself in a country where—theoretically, anyway—merit counts, where I could choose to discard that part of my history that I want, and invent a whole new history for myself. It's that capacity to dream and then try to pull it off, if you can. (Bill Moyers 1990)

In *Desirable Daughters*, Tara Bhattacharjee is already participating in the American Dream when the novel opens, and on her way to explore the life of the Tree Bride, her distant ancestor and her name sake, yielding to “that most American of impulses, or compulsions, a “root search[”]” (17). Her story is, in fact, encompassed in two novels: *Desirable Daughters* and its sequel, *The Tree Bride*.

Although Tara is well educated, modern, and sophisticated, she has had a traditional marriage with an NRI with whom she is supposed to “jumpstart” (23) her life, and hence followed him like a good Hindu wife, shunning away the prospect of higher studies with scholarships won on merit. However, she is introduced to us after divorcing her multi-millionaire husband,

Bish, and staying separately along with her son and a live-in lover, Andy. She has come off the stages of Tara Banerjee and Dimple, or Jasmine, in that, she has rooted herself independently as a true American and takes upon tasks on her own free will, and does not dwell upon her losses much. It is not at all for money as a means for survival that Tara goes for the tenets of the American Dream; it is in terms of her concern for individual identity that this myth comes up for. Being one of the “blessed, elite minority” (29) in her paternal home in India and her husband's in America, she was provided for everything except the knowledge of and contemplation about her as an individual. The chaperoned existence of an utterly and strictly patriarchal system had conditioned her mind to think of nothing other than “duty and obedience” (28) to the god-like figures of the male-heads, though ironically enough, she is given convent education as to inculcate the spirit and skills of a ‘confident survival’ (28) in every situation.

After crossing ‘the dark waters’ (23) to the bright world of California, she has done away with the restricting ways of Hindu culture. She does what is “unthinkable” from Hindu culture's point of view; like his American friends, she calls her husband by his “not-quite-appropriate” (23) nick name, has divorced him, and takes upon a number of lovers, like “progressive” (25) people. She has come out of the elite position of a , “gated community in Atherton” (18) and is at home in Upper Haight in San Francisco, a place where she is “one with the neighbourhood . . . ethnically ambiguous” (25), a “happy landscape” (24) gifting her both, the liberties of America and the happy memories of India, like earlier European immigrants-turned-residents have done in their “Three-storied Victorians . . . meticulously emphasized and proudly restored” (25).

With Tara's case, she comes up with her latest and fittest solution towards validating the myth of American Dream. Tara unabashedly accepts the impact of the American voices of her friends, television, and magazines “yammering around” (*TB*, 16) her about her “amusing and appalling” way of getting married. And eight years after her married life of a “privileged prisoner’ as “Wife-

of-Bish-Chatterjee" (*ibid*, 19), she does the right "California thing and...went on to have a life" with her "own identity" (*ibid*, 16,19), according to American standard. The power and pull of the American Dream has so profoundly registered itself on her psyche that she calls it the beginning of her "[...]American adventure[...]" in total contrast to Parvati, her middle sister in India, who is far content being submissive, or rather servile to her husband, her "protector and provider" (*D D*,66). However, as to where and how the American Dream comes into play, the answer lies in the deliverance of the reward she reaps of her action; Bish realizes where he went amiss in marriage, causing her "defection from paradise" (*T B*, 16). Had it not been for their American experience, their marriage would have just been a formality that would have been based on the "Indian assumptions" of self-sustenance (*ibid*, 18).

In fact, both of them get reconciled through mending the mistakes and mishaps which are exposed by their American experience, by contemplating and judging in terms of their native philosophy and religion. Their American experience prepares them to share frankness with their son, and take the fact of his gayness and the futility of imposing their wishes on him, in stride, and let him be. Tara makes the free unconventional choice of taking Rabi out of the English modeled, Indo-Anglian academy at Atherton and getting him admitted in an arts- oriented school in San Francisco, ensuring freedom from "illiberal thoughts...repressive social codes and norms of behavior" and hoping that in this kind "unstructured environment ...chaos of America" for Indian sensibility, Rabi will create a "new American consciousness" and will be saved from a "life of ridicule and mal-adjustment" (*D D* 153, 155, 158). Although painfully, it gets Tara face to face with matters "relevant only to American families," for example, " . . . dating and drugs . . . family breakdown.[...] rebellion...individual identity" (*ibid*, 43-4). And while dealing independently with all this crumbling of the strong foothold of family values and honour, she get truly liberated; from traditional Indian domestic resistance in America, as well as cultural and social inhibitions, with a self-assigned "mission" (*T B* 65) of "roots-search"

(*ibid*, 20). She is well prepared and braced to confront the "consequences of (her) difficult love for this country" (*D D* 155). She declares her vision to Bish, i.e., "a vision of discipline and self-knowledge and of misfortune turned to new energy" (*ibid*, 280), and she remains determined and dauntless in the face all dangers and casualties. And that is what is required of an immigrant to realize the American Dream in the present day scenario of America.

Mukherjee makes it clear that to have a happy and successful existence in America, there does not always have to be such a cultural clash that the older culture must die and be buried deep; in fact the best of its values can be an addition to the already existing amalgamation of cultures in America, provided they provide them with an additional step in the ladder of success, rather than suffocating mental walls which alienates them, making them materially rich but emotionally, misers. When after the shocking revelations about her patriarchal family's past through the sinister arrival of Hai, Tara reconciles herself with her American son's observation that the "self-protective codes" of her family she was so proud of were actually "secretiveness and hypocrisy" and she forces out her disgust at it by uttering a purely American term, "Shit!" like a true "California girl" of the "land of frank expression" (*D D* 40, 63, 129), and later tell Bish also that "The scale of his achievement made it difficult for a wife to set her own sights" (*ibid*, 280). Bish survives the shock of his divorce, handicap, and loss in business by going back to the value system of his ancient culture and takes respite in its spiritual teachings "amateur yogis and sadhus" (*T B* 18) on *Dharma* (Duty), *Maya* (illusion).

Moreover, it is natural being sometimes nostalgic but dangerous to let it stay and take hold. Tara realizes it through Andy who himself is a self-reinvented, second generation Hungarian immigrant and who prefers going back to past only for "lifting the gloom, the cobweb, the dithering of the past few days" and suggest Tara as well to "separate what's over and gone from what's still out there" (*D D* 75, 93), not to keep "tugging" at it or else she will have 'nothing left" (*ibid*, 76). Although Tara, and even Bish, observe certain ancient Hindu rituals, even prejudices, and abhor

certain American traits, they are not the types to limit themselves to the Indian ghettos like that of Fremont, Atherton, New Jersey, or Jackson Heights in Queens. In fact they do not belong there despite their political collusion with the Other and their fixed Bengali-Hindu identity. Tara says that she thrives on the invisibility the modern San Francisco provides her with through its multicultural milieu. She gets fulfilled “the liberating promise of marriage and travel and the wider world”; “the promise of life as an American wife” (*D D* 81, 82), not by being Asian or Oriental, but by being “all things”, “a border-crashing claimant of all people's legacies” (*ibid*, 78, 79), and she calls it heroic, her success with the promise of America.

She has succeeded in her efforts to be a 'a good San Franciscan, tolerant, accepting, open to possibility, not judgmental, not quick to condemn" (*ibid*, 142); she takes Rabi's gayness and Andy's desertion of her with a cool perspective, is open to the reunion with the transformed Bish, and acts democratic with her sisters, especially Padma, for all her fickleness and falseness. She comes at last to pride herself for her “vigilant but enthusiastic adjustment to American life in all its perverse temptations” on her path to progress and freedom from the shackles of Indian dogmatism and a walled-off life of loneliness-in-marriage (*ibid*, 183). Whereas in India, she can be considered pitiable for her divorced-single mom-in alien land status or worst, “a disgrace to Indian womanhood, a divorcée walking around in (her) Atherton clothes”. But for all the disapproval or jealousy faced, she has emerged clearly “wondrous, or grotesque” (*ibid*, 184, 196).

Tara also fulfils a “promise of continuity” but she is very sure that she is never going to come back to India for good because she has become too Americanised to identify with and fit in the changed milieu of India. She has “lost her Indian radar” (*ibid*, 35, 71). Tara Bhattacharjee completes the cycle of an immigrant's American experience. She is “forward-looking” and “adaptable” rather than being too “traditional” and “brittle” (*ibid*, 133); the perfect example of a New American who is confident, refined, and balanced and who neither looks at her past wistfully nor fears the unknown present or future. They represent the new American

phenomenon of a 'salad-bowel' which has “Unbeatable combination(s)” of different cultural phenomena like “Medication plus meditation” (*TB* 289), and materialism plus spiritualism. She is a part and parcel of the 'salad bowel' culture; she does not dissolve into the American mainstream but will make noticeable changes in the margins of the American experience. In fact, the types of her add to its flavour through ushering in diverse mores of life, and subsequently transform the majority culture

Mukherjee's ultimate formula of emulating the myth of American Dream is completely in agreement with the changed mood and milieu of America itself and the nature and dreams of the majority of immigrants. Today's immigrants do not have to start from scratches; they are not much compelled by religious or political discontent, or agricultural hardships, as they are propelled by the vision of refining their talents or utilize them to their maximum best in the land of endless opportunities and resources. Tara's reflective reasoning about the successful entrepreneurs like Bish, validates Mukherjee's concept of the two-way transformation. She says Americans do not want to “turn away the Bish Chatterjees of this world” (*ibid*, 26) because they are “unthreatening” ‘Quite, prosperous, hard working, professional” (*T B* 15, 19), key figures of American trade market and financial network, and they “better their lives while strengthening the United States” (Martin & Midgley, 4), because in their own country they would have been “blocked by social convention and family duties” (*ibid*, 19). This is how America sustains its immigrant heritage and the charm of the Dream. In fact, Mukherjee proposes a gradual but major shift from the traditional interpretation of the American Dream myth. Tara Bhattacharjee fulfils all the requirements of a settler in the New Land; “resilience, curiosity and compassion, [and] a letting go of the rigid ideals about the purity of inherited culture” (qtd in Warwick, 11).

All in all, as a pioneer and “mythographer” of immigrant experience (Alam 80), especially to North America, Mukherjee offers an Avant-garde but universal agenda that embodies the nature of a woman's maturation as a self-aware individual, the

pathos, rebellions, and resilience, in a foreign land. Putting together the various imperatives leading to immigration, we observe that, contrary to their men folk who immigrate for economic accomplishments, Mukherjee's women cross borders for liberation, self-fulfillment; a kind of spiritual enlightenment. In addition to the journeys of their male counterparts across space and time, theirs is across the hierarchies of gender and situation as well reflecting and articulating their innate desire to subvert/challenge. America's constitutions with its "human right laws and ways to obtain legal redress" (Moline 1990), and "liberating potential" (Alam 74), though having its racial prejudices prevalent in the society, scores over other countries to let immigrant follow their American Dream. The route to dream realization has been the same, more or less; violent, corrosive, transforming, in a changed milieu with its own crowd. Mukherjee succeeds in her mission to "expose Americans to the energetic voices of new settlers in this country" (Carb) finding their way out in a open and free country in areas where their own countries create *cul-de-sacs*. Through her immigrant protagonists, Mukherjee offers, though with a tinge of romance, a glimpse into the realistic, kaleidoscopic images of the psyche, cultural prejudices, and striking imagination of women immigrants, mostly Indians, in the process of dealing with, acclimatizing, giving in to and being victims, or getting powerful by their American experiences. Moreover, thus maintaining the immunity of the American Dream in the face of abrasive changes, Bharati Mukherjee is making her own vital contribution in universalizing the American literature.

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Reading of Bharati Mukherjee's *Miss New India* : A Psychological Itinerary

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Every nation is a showcase of different narratives. These narratives are shaped by the myths, traditions and ideas of the diverse people of that country. The narrative of India has undergone metamorphic changes during the last few decades. Post - independent India has acquired a new status of being a part of the Third World. In the 1990s, India observed tremendous growth in the technology, social economy, endless opportunities etc. During this decade the old India, which was known as a land of poverty and darkness has been transformed into a confident world power. The credit for this transformation goes to the boom of call centers and rise of the outsourcing power house which was driven by the enthusiastic energy of the youth as the driving force.

Bharati Mukherjee has set her latest novel, *Miss New India*, against the backdrop of this new India. The author in this novel has tried to contrast the two different aspects of India. First is the traditional patriarchal India where all kinds of restrictions and 'laxman rekhas' were imposed on women. On the contrary, the second picture of India is one where women have crossed the border line of social etiquettes and bondages, drawn on them and have entered the global world of opportunities. Anjali's elder sister, Sonali Das, is the representative of the traditional Indian woman who married with the man chosen by her father. On the other hand, Anjali Bose, the protagonist is the woman of new India

who desires to cross the four walls of her house and to be a part of the social world:

The conventional form of Indian femininity projects itself through long-lashed Kohl-rimmed, startled black eyes. Modest women know to glance upward from a slightly bowed head. Anjali did not take the world with saucer eyed passivity (3).

As the title depicts, the *Miss New India* is the protagonist, Anjali Bose, nineteen years old daughter of a railway clerk. Anjali is a typical middle class girl with exceptional expertise in language skills, cultivated by her American expat teacher in town named, Peter Champion. Anjali feels more contented and happy in being called as Angie, rather than Anjali. She is from a small 'mofussil' town of Bihar, Gauripur, where she is brought up but it seems that Gauripur is not the place for the outsized ambitions of young and talented Angie. Mukherjee writes about Anjali: "From the backwater of Gauripur, she'd somehow caught the fever; she was part of the bold new India, an equal to anywhere, a land poised for takeoff".

Jacques Lacan, the French psychoanalyst, suggests that our desires rely on lack, because fantasy, by definition does not correspond to anything in real. Our object of desire is a way for us to establish coordinates for our own desire. He says:

At the heart of desire is a misrecognition of fullness where there is really nothing, but a screen for our own narcissistic projections. It is that lack at the heart of desire that e n s u r e s we continue to desire.

Anjali's dreams are given wings by Peter, who aspires her to go to Bangalore to explore her talents rather than passively settling in a married life. No doubt Anjali is charmed by the attraction of life in Bangalore but her rape by the man her parents have chosen as her husband, acts as the catalyst for her to leave Gauripur and move to Bangalore. Anjali leaves her family with the intention of working at a call center in Bangalore. Anjali has a kind of dual personality. Even in Gauripur, she has developed two versions of her personality. One, Anjali, who is a typical middle class traditionally docile girl, wearing saris and the second is Angie, an American version, who is more comfortable in jeans. Right from the beginning of the novel we see

Anjali's struggle for her own identity: "I felt more like Angie" or "This was a moment for Anjali".

As the story moves from Gauripur to Bangalore, Anjali's journey of transformation also begins. Anjali's story is somewhere a projection of the author herself. Bharati Mukherjee has been a witness as well as victim of the atrocities inflicted on women in the patriarchal society. She could feel the depth of pain of a middle class girl who is armed with Western education and accent. Dr. DNR Chandra writes: "Like Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Shashi Deshpande, Nayantara Sehgal, RP Jhabwala and Geeta Hariharan, Mukherjee exposes many facets of feminism encompassing agitation for equal opportunity, sexual autonomy and right to self determination.

The seed of Anjali's transformation was sown right in Gauripur. She seems to live like a person who is torn between two different and opposite aspects of human psychology. She tries to trace down her true personality but fails to do so. In Gauripur, when Peter aspires her to go to Bangalore for the sake of her bright future, Anjali's internal monologue gives a clear glimpse of her psyche:

He's treating me like an adult, she thought. He's forcing adulthood on me. This is what the adult world is like: this is how adults interact. I'm seeing it, but I shouldn't react to it in anyway. It seems odd, but also familiar. Was that a little kiss on his ear? I've passed through an invisible wall and I can't go back. May be I'm a ghost" (49).

According to Erik Erikson, the transition from childhood to adulthood is most important. The individual wants to belong to a society and fit in. It is during this stage, the individual re-examined his identity and try to find out exactly who he or she is. Her dual personality is clear when she admits to herself: "May be I'm not here. May be I'm not seeing any of this. May be "Anjali" is seeing it. "Angie" is somewhere else. Splitting herself in two was a comfort" (49-50). Anjali's desire to become or called as "Angie" is itself evident of her dual character. Then again, when she goes out with Subodh Mitra, her imagination takes her into a different kind of world :

. . . it was happening to an imaginary girl named Anjali while the real person, Angie, could sit back and watch (56).

After being raped by Subodh Mitra, she decides to leave her home and go to Bangalore. At this moment of taking decision, she becomes Anjali rather than Angie: "She was Anjali. She could look down and see poor little Angie whimpering on her bed" (65). Anjali boards a bus for Bangalore and on the way she observes a new unseen side of India which was unbelievable for her. She observes prostitutes with their children, performing their services to truck drivers. She feels emotionless to see all this: "Anjali walked like a ghost past the trucks ; nothing shocked her, nothing disgusted her" (73). Bharati Mukherjee has tried to throw light on the darker side of Indian society. Prostitution in India, is one of the worst plights of women, where they are compelled to suffer sexual harassment to survive. Ironically, in general, women are blamed for prostitution but the real cause is usually unseen. Women are thrust in prostitution because women are considered as a commodity, to be used according to one's convenience. Another aspect of women as a sexual commodity can be seen in Sonali's situation. She is not a prostitute but she has to satisfy sexual demands of her employer in order to retain her services. Anjali's dishonouring by Subodh leaves a deep impact on her mind. Her approach towards the society has been affected. It seems that she sees the world with a new angle, not obviously very inspiring. She experiences many fears and dilemmas on her way to Bangalore. She learns practical lessons about the real world in the course of her journey: "The numb certitudes of her life: I have no family. The only money in my pocket comes from a man whose world is alien to mine and whom I'll never see again. I have no job, no skills. School teaches little" (74).

After arriving in Bangalore, her perplexity increases. In less than a week ago, after her meeting with Subodh Mitra, her life has taken a new turn: "The immense journey and the enormous implications of her impetuousness remained" (79). She determines to begin afresh in Bangalore. She tries to forget her past painful, shameful and guilty memories and enthusiastically look forward for a new life: "She had nothing to lose, no good name to tarnish. No one knew her parents and her parents had no idea where she

was" (81). With Peter Champion's references in Bangalore, Anjali dreams of a new bright and luxurious life in the big city. In the beginning, Anjali hides her true identity. She lies about her past. When asked about her name, she buries Anjali and steps into the shoes of Angie. She shuffles her role between Anjali and Angie as per her requirement. She creates a complete fake selfhood identity. She confesses: "How liberating it felt, creating characters, obliterating oneself, being a composite" (99).

Within few hours of arriving in her dream city, she realizes: "A job is the key to happiness, she calculated. A job brings respect and power. Money brings transformation. Stagnation creates doubt and tyranny. Money transforms a girl from Gauripur into a woman from Bangalore" (108). In order to get accommodation in Bagehot's house, she again fakes her identity. She tells Mrs. Bagehot: "My father just died, madam. I have to support myself" (114). Anjali usually procrastinated in certain decision taking issues, intentionally which also signals towards her lack of self-confidence at this stage of her life. Day after day Anjali undergoes many transformations gradually. She leaves behind her ethics and values and becomes a big city girl: "...Gauripur's Angie too proud to stoop to stealing. Bangalore's Anjali, a creature of fantasy, considered herself a wily survivor, leveling an uneven playing field" (135). There are many scenes in the novel, where Anjali's thought process reveals her undergoing change in her mental approach. She tries to justify her fake identity as: "Everyone in my life has tried to change me, make me ashamed that I might not be good enough. Why should I want to change my name and my accent, why should I plead for a chance to be allowed to take calls from people who've spent too much money or driver their care into a ditch?" (137).

With every passing day, Anjali is hopeful of achieving her objective of a job and well settled life in Bangalore. She is unemployed but confident about her credentials: "Here I feel I can do anything. I feel I can change my life if that's what I want!" (163). When Peter arrives in Bangalore with sad news of death of Anjali's father, she feels herself responsible for her father's demise: "They

had morphed her into a ghost. Baba was dead, but so was she" (172). Her father's sudden death, again like her rape, acts as a turning point in her personality. It seems she has been transformed into a new self from the impulsive, naive runaway Anjali of past. She feels pity for her mother, for Peter but she also feels pity for her own self. She soon comes out of this guilty conscious mode. She regains her stability and self-confidence. She even dares to argue Mrs. Bagehot with whom she could not even talk properly. She enjoys her dual personality: "It was available, the world that she, Anjali/ Angie, aspired to" (204). She is very much at ease in changing her role: "Without even trying, Anjali slipped into her high - wattage Angie persona. Angie was smart, sexy and special" (207). She herself observes the extremities of her dual persona of Anjali/ Angie: "She could not be held responsible for anything that happened in her life because she was not an initiator of actions. Angie the bold one, the initiator, was beyond blame, or shame. Anjali just watched and let things happen" (222). Anjali of Gauripur has transformed into Angie who is confident, self controlled and self decisive. When she is seduced by Mr. Girish Gujral, she is fast enough to manipulate:

She made a lightning calculation: " If I'm to give myself away, it might as well be to a well established man who saved me and performed favours and kindnesses. A well-connected man who would owe me" (223).

She is very much aware of the transformation of her identities. She admits to herself: "She meant how quickly one changes identities. Half an hour ago, I was just trying to get a ride in your car. I was someone entirely different and now I'll never be that person again" (224). Angie puts her modesty and virtue on stake in order to accomplish her place in Bangalore. And she didn't feel any guilt for the same. Her encounter with Mr. GG makes her all the more confident: "I'm a woman now, she said to herself. I'm quite a woman. I'm hot, according to Tookie. Secretive and oh so mysterious, according to Husseina. Sherbet - cool, sherbet - refreshing, according to Moni. And funny and fascinating, if I'm reading Mr. GG correctly" (227).

Anjali's desire to be Angie corresponds to Lacan's concept of 'the mirror stage'. The concept of mirror stage marks the movement of the subject from primary 'need' to 'demand'. The mirror stage symbolizes 'the imaginary order'. The "imaginary" is basically narcissistic and it sets the stage for the desires and fantasies. Needs can be fulfilled but demands are unsatisfiable. In constructing our fantasy - version of reality, we establish coordinates for our desire; we situate both ourselves and our object of desire, as well as the relation between. Anjali is arrested by police from Bagehot's house on charge of Mrs. Bagehot's death. When asked about her name, she thinks: "Angie. Anjali Bose." It conferred no identity. She didn't own the name. She could have been anybody" (249). She is a victim of multiple identity and sometimes fails in identifying herself. In the police custody, her false identity becomes a problem for her. She tries to get rid of this nightmare: "It was not happening to me; it is happening to Angie. I am a ghost" (256). Her horrible experiences of police arrest and torture are terrible enough to shake her mind off. Rabi takes her to Parvati Banerji's house. During her stay in that house, remarkable changes come to her personality. She takes bold steps towards her search for identity. She tracks down her aim in life. She drops her earlier idea of working in a call center. She searches a new niche for herself, although this phase was not easy for her. She experienced many upheavals. She lost her charm and was in utter depression: "She was a ghost floating over alien terrain, as much a ghost as her father" (267). She is fed up of being Angie. She confesses to Rabi: "I'm not Angie" . . . "I guess I never was". Tell me my name. Don't ask me, don't ask me anything (268). She admits: "I'm a predeceased. I don't even have a name anymore" (269).

Her attraction or so called love for Mr. GG brings her back to senses. This relation revives her lost confidence and she returns to her normal mental state. Even after much love and care in Parvati's home, Anjali feels alienated: "Anjali felt like an alien in Rabi's universe" (290). She compares herself with a dog and a parasite at some point of time. Mr. GG proposes her to be with him always, but that Anjali/Angie has transformed into a new person

who does not fall prey to such lucrative proposal. This was something Anjali would have readily agreed to because she herself liked him. But the new miss India was not to follow someone but to carve her own path. Peter Champion's letter for Anjali brings new hope for Anjali. She feels mentally relieved to know that she was not the real cause of her father's death. She feels nostalgic about her native place. Eventually, Anjali settles in Bangalore, working as debt recovery agent.

Anjali's search for a real identity ends up in her encounter with nature. In nature's lap she realizes: "She had a sudden thought: Nothing bad can come of this" (323). She is contended with her work as debt recovery agent. She is satisfied in the end to attain a niche for herself. She even visits Gauripur which has changed a lot.

Being a diasporic writer, Bharati Mukherjee deals with cultural shock. *Miss New India*, is a story of not only new modern India but it also parallels the worlds of tradition and change, in such a way that illuminates each other. Anjali finds herself many a times in uncomfortable and hard situations where she is unable to identify herself but after her awareness to the precariousness of life in the new India resulted into her breakdown. But eventually she emerges out as a survivor not as a loser. She reinvents herself ultimately. Mukherjee's portrayal of Anjali's cultural dislocation are seen from a psychological perspective. Mukherjee says in an interview: "These were luckiest time to be young and adventurous, and Indian. And saddest for those like [Anjali], who knew she could be anything she wanted to be yet hadn't the foggiest idea what she wanted".

This novel is different from earlier novels written by Mukherjee, where she writes about the migrants' experiences only. *Miss New India* encompasses Anjali's hardships in a big city in order to reinvent herself. This novel addresses the dual identities of independence seeking Indian girls. Mukherjee writes about Anjali: "Anjali is an emblem of rebellion against that self - satisfaction. She wants personal happiness, not class or caste or tribal privilege".

The psychological itinerary of Anjali Bose covers the diverse aspects of human personality development. Anjali's movement from Gauripur to Bangalore traces her development as a person. During this journey, she discovers her fears and weakness. At the end, she not only overcomes them but also identifies her true credentials. She emerges as self-conscious, confident and independent Miss New India.

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Conflicts and Miscegenations in Jhumpa Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth*

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Belonging to the second line of diasporic generation, Jhumpa Lahiri skilfully paints the canvas of the emotions, experiences, living styles and the changes that have set in with the changing times in the lives of the diasporic fraternity in her works. She is a writer of change. *Unaccustomed Earth* is no exception. Divided into two sections, the work reflects the variations and upheavals as seen in the life of the Indian Diaspora thriving in the American milieu. A further sub-division of the two sections into eight stories: five in the first; and three interconnected in the second section, galvanizes the consciousness of the Indians living in an alien land. She sensitizes the readers about the lived-experiences of the first and the second generation Indians and how the rift is widely clear between the two. The first generation still clings on to the native cultural roots and tries to assimilate and adjust with the melting pot culture of the land they are living in. Emotional ties are still strong enough to openly accept the life and ways of this new land. Despite the fact that Ruma's father, after his wife's death, is associated with a divorced Indian lady Mrs Baagchi, he finds it difficult to reveal the same to his daughter. "But what would he say? That he had made a new friend? A girlfriend? The word was unknown to him, impossible to express; he had never had a girlfriend in his life" (UA: 40). The second generation Indians, who were either born in USA, or who came here as kids, are a product of change. As seen, Ruma, on the other, when comes to know about the truth, never makes an issue of it. On seeing the

postcard that her father was to send to Ms Baagchi, she gets a little nostalgic about her mother and then simply, "From the drawer she took out the roll of stamps and affixed one to the card, for the mailman, later in the day, to take away" (UA: 59). The change is just visible. The new generation echoes the change as is felt by the writer herself, of the Anglo-American clan.

The stories in the all the sections in the narrative are primarily focused on the life of the second generation, as seen, lived, affected and determined, within their families and in an alien environment. Lahiri herself belongs to this generation, thus the stories in the book seem to stem from her own experiences. When asked, "How much of her work is autobiographical?" "The basic nuts and bolts of life but not specific facts" said Jhumpa Lahiri (Rachel Hore, Interview with Jhumpa Lahiri). She discusses in the interview that how the second section of the book shows the situations and experiences that are so common with the Indian Americans living there. Not only living in an alien land but also being a female, the dichotomy is double edged. The binaries of male/ female and west/ east place them in a peculiar situation. It is within this situation that the new generation is seen in this narrative made up of short stories. All these characters are seen diametrically opposite to the old line of thought that the first generation people try to hold on to. In the book, the characters try to reconstruct their cultural and social identities as opposed to the previous generation and as seen in the multiple multi-shade characters painted by her. This reconstruction is seen parallel to the older generation, evolving out of it, and in consonance with the culture and American way of life. The main characters adapt themselves to the changing times and try to assert their own identity. Adjusting to a new milieu is not an easy thing. It requires a lot of adaptability, flexibility and willingness. Talking about the relevance of milieu, Parmar opines that:

Milieu does not limit itself only to the physical but it is a state of mind that responds to the vicissitudes affected by the external factors. Structure of feelings and man's relationship in the social dynamics are determined by the environment to a great

extent. Man's quest begins in a particular milieu which ultimately exerts its impact upon the reach and range of the quester. This is the reason that novelists or story writers set their works against a particular ethos, powerful and captivating with an overbearing presence to cast its shadow upon the lives of the characters. (Parmar: 2)

Holding on to their own cultural roots and then assimilating the one outside is how the second generation is trying to adjust themselves in this new era. The adjustment is on various fronts: self, profession, family, and relationships in the outside world. The question of self-identity, and issues concerned with it, along with social and cultural barriers are put to litmus test by the writer. Writing in a very realistic style, Lahiri successfully brings out the multifarious dimensions of her characters in a world that has been acquired by parents and has been handed over to them, where they are trying to adjust within the family and outside world.

As such, the paper will try to place the characters from the second generation within the focal point where they try to assert their individuality. Even though away from home, there is very little sense of homelessness felt by them, with the notions of 'our home' dissolving in this new world where there are frequent movements across the globe and where the concept of cultural hybridism is getting more space. A new sense, a new definition of self is being evolved within the framework of one's emotions, feelings, proximity with the culture, family, and society in which one is living. They are getting themselves assimilated, getting themselves accustomed to this new country in stark contrast to their previous generation. A new identity in this 'away world', is created, leading to cultural miscegenation, encouraging/ constructing a hybrid self within the 'third space' as defined by Bhabha. The concept of global cosmopolitanism encourages plurality of cultures as is seen in America where various cultures come and mix and the second generation in the narrative are just adhering to the acceptance of such cultures, thereby dissociating themselves from the traditional concepts of homelessness, displacement, nostalgia, up rootedness, dispossession as seen in

the diasporic writings. It is within this 'third space', that a new identity is evolving as is prominently visible in these characters.

It is not that the first generation came to this land without any dream. In the book, it is seen that the first migrants coming from India came here for higher studies and attained well respected and handsome jobs. But they maintained their cultural roots and continued to connect themselves to their motherland. Transnational migration made them live a hyphenated life but they did achieve success, living in this culturally hybrid space. Ruma's father, for instance, is one such example. He earns his degree, subsequently, a handsome job, and after his retirement he picks up American ways, associating himself with a political party by becoming its volunteer and is a frequent mover across countries. Ruma feels "her father resembled an American in his old age" (*UA*: 11). Contrary to him, Ruma, is seen as a lawyer, married to an American and has a well settled life. Yet she suffers, and is unable to come to terms with the life she is leading. Her sense of alienation is of a different sense, not like that of her parents who always made it a point to visit India whenever opportunity was there. Riding on the American dream, she suffers from it. She neither can associate herself with the present life nor with the culture of her parents. As seen, her displacement is again on a different plane. "The unquestioned endorsement of 'culture' hardly provides any protective coating against the trappings of an Indian-American second-generation identity known to be over determined from without but secretly intuited as organized around the category of the void (and, for the self, conveniently attached to it) (Delphine: 192). It is in this different sense of embodying an alien culture that Lahiri sketches her characters in this book.

Each of the eight stories in the book focuses around the Bengali families living in America. There is a constant conflict, constant struggle witnessed at various levels in the lives of two generations: one who travelled to America and second who immigrated here as kids or were born here. It is seen how they adjust themselves in this "Unaccustomed Earth". All these stories provide us with different characters from the second generation;

Ruma in first, Usha in second, Amit in third, Rahul and Sudha in fourth, Sang in fifth from the first section; whereas in the second section where all three stories are closely linked, Hema and Kaushik, second generation children of the two Bengali families in America, play central role. All these characters of second generation have little sense of up rootedness; and the feeling of living a hyphenated life as seen prominently in the lives of their parents is starkly missing. The unhappiness of the diasporic people who migrated to this land is shown in these stories but the life of the new crop is asserted more by the writer. Whereas the parents still feel connected to their homeland, the language, the people back home, the culture that they have lived and carried along with; the children, having been brought up in this new culture have little feeling of connectedness with India, its customs and way of life. It is from a distance, from a bird's eye view that the next generation looks towards India. They have a different attitude, different perspective. It is seen they are reluctant to go back to India for periodic visits. The new generation doesn't look forward to such visits whereas for the parents it is a time to go back to the country they belong to. Vijay Mishra terms this distinction as old and new Diasporas and feels that the change they reflect owes to "the very different historical conditions that produced them. The distinction between the old and the new becomes clearer when we note that the 'new' surfaces precisely at the moment of (post) modern ascendancy: it comes with globalization and hypermobility, it comes with modern means of communication already fully formed..." (Mishra). The kaleidoscope offers a variegated experience of these characters opposed to the previous generation. Living in this age of globalization, these characters are seen to be growing up in a cross- cultural arena and as such their experiences and way of life is quite different.

In the stories that are part of this book, there are certain things that are very apparent. In the first section, we notice that all second generation characters who are Bengalis are married to or are in a relationship with Americans. Be it Ruma/ Adam, Pranab Kaku/ Deobrah, Amit/ Megan, Sudha/ Roger, Sang/

Farouk. Another thing noticeable is that these relationships are not smooth at all. These are strained, at times, due to the cultural backgrounds of the Indian Americans. Conflicts do arise. There are, then, distinct ideological differences between the children and their parents who have migrated to this land. New generation Indian Americans listen little to the advice of their parents. They assert their own authority and take independent decisions. The second section, consisting of three stories focuses purely on the second generation Indian Americans Hema and Kaushik and the relationship that develops later on when they meet in Rome. She does enter into a relationship with an American called Julian, but it turns out to be a failed relationship. Overall, the stories focus on the Indian Americans of the new generation, their interpersonal relationships, attitudes, seeking identities, assimilating to new culture and asserting their individuality.

Ruma, in the title story of this book is seen well adjusted to the new culture, married to an American, named Adam, against her parents' wishes and she well remembers how "bold she'd had to be in order to withstand her mother's outrage, and her father's refusal to express even that, which had felt more cruel" (UA: 26). After her mother's death, when her father decides to meet her to see her newly shifted house, she is ill at ease. "Ruma feared that her father would become a responsibility, an added demand, continuously present in a way she was no longer used to" (UA: 7). Ruma and her father, after the death of her mother, are seen trying to adjust to new situations. Both try to reshape their identities. Romi, her brother, had already shrugged off his responsibilities, moving away to New Zealand. Father rightly observes such changes in the younger generation. To him, "The more the child grew, the less they had seemed to resemble either parent - they spoke differently, dressed differently, seemed foreign in every way, from the texture of their hair to the shapes of their feet and hands" (UA: 54). In fact, the change is in consonance to the American way of life. Although there is a very close knit connection that is noticed amongst families that have immigrated to these lands but with the new generation the bond is just missing,

the connections severing. It is a transition seen in the families moving towards leading a life that is convenient to them without any outside interference. They are more at home, leading lives on their own terms and aligning to the new culture. Ruma is happy speaking English than Bengali which to her "had never been a language in which she felt like an adult" (UA: 12).

Hell-Heaven focuses on the character of Pranab Kaku who epitomizes the voice of the new generation. After leaving India, he seems to be leaving behind his culture and even relatives. In spite of resistance from his parents back home, he decides to marry American girl Deborah and is contended to live the American way of life: "At larger gatherings, they kissed and held hands in front of everyone" (UA: 68). On the other hand, his parents had even settled for a girl in Bengal but he showed no respect to their decision. Living here in America, belonging to the second line of diaspora, the ties with the homeland seems to be missing and is replaced by those of the adopted land. Even his close relationship with Usha's family (Bengali's) especially with Usha's (narrator) mother, who is quite elder to him, when he comes to America, holds no importance. Once settled, professionally, and then married, he keeps little relationship with them. The rift in the two generation is again evident here. Usha's mother feels that Pranab Kaku will soon end his relationship with Deborah and will come back but to her dismay nothing of that sort happens. He marries, has children and it is only later on "after twenty-three years of marriage, Pranab Kaku and Deborah got divorced" (UA: 81). Fearing her daughter following the same line, Usha's mother warns her "Don't think you'll get away with marrying an American, the way Pranab Kaku did," (UA: 75). Such apprehensions show the fear with the first generation that they have towards their children, whom they feel may go astray. But her concerns are quite right as Usha turns out to be a typical American product as says "that I dated one American man, and then another, and then yet another, that I slept with them, and even that I lived with one though we were not married" (UA: 82). Pranab Kaku and Usha, both are perfect examples of the change that is seen in the

new generation. Both want to live according to their own rules and in line with the customs, life-style as is seen and lived in America.

The cross-cultural relationships that establish in this land are again seen in the third story *A Choice Of Accommodations* where the protagonist Amit marries Megan, has two daughters but finds that love is just missing in their lives once the second daughter was born. He constantly keeps worrying about his two daughters who appear more American than Indian. He had married, as is seen in other stories, against the wishes of his parents as they never wanted him to marry an American, especially “as had the fact that she was five years older than he was” (UA: 95). That mental compatibility seems to be missing in their relationship. It is more on a physical plane. He reminisces his school life as he decides to go to attend the marriage along with his wife, of a girl named Pam, on whom he had a crush during school days. The emotional bond that existed between Amit and Megan is seen at the ebb when he gets over drunk and leaves his wife at the marriage function. Away from his family in India, he is living an isolated life in this world which he has chosen on his own. “For these second-generation Bengali-Americans, however, the space of the home assumes different implications. It is no longer a distinctly Bengali space, yet it is also the space associated with the complexities of their conflicting affiliations, their lineage of growing up 'in-between', negotiating two cultures” (Chatterjee: 105). Amit is torn in these conflicting affiliations and has no escape. The dangers that were anticipated with regard to the marriages between the Indians and the Americans are well visualized in the conflicts seen in Amit's case. Away from his parents, he is also getting emotionally distant from his American wife thereby questioning the problems that lay in such inter-racial marriages. Lahiri never questions elaborately the issues that are related to such inter-racial relationships. The first generation does accept these changing truths, willingly or reluctantly. Ruth Maxey rightly opines in this regard

Certain South Asian American novelists – Lahiri and Sameer Parekh, for example – directly address first-generation fears about the interracial relationships of their children, born in the US following the liberalization of immigration laws in 1965....

Yet it would be reductive to suggest that in transatlantic South Asian literature, a hidebound, judgmental, and humourless first generation always rejects the idea of its children marrying non-South Asians just as it is clearly a cliché to suggest that an interracial relationship will straightforwardly resolve the second generation's cultural and ontological dilemmas... (Maxey 136)

His relationship with his American wife is a failed one and the wedding that he attends aggravates the situation, though at the end of the story he feels that his wife will forgive him of what he said to a lady at the wedding party about his relationship with his wife saying “It disappeared,” he repeated, with more force this time. “I guess it does for everyone, sooner or later” (UA: 114).

In *Only Goodness*, the rift between the two generations is again fore-grounded. Pining high hopes on their children, parents only get disappointment in the end. Both the children, Sudha and Rahul stand for the second generation, in their own way. Rahul turns out to be vain, refusing to excel in academics and gives in to drinking and whiling away his time. He turns deaf ears towards his parents as he “never lifted a finger, never cracked a book unless it appealed to him” (UA: 130). He is totally indifferent to their feelings and expectations. Failure at school, even with the profession he is interested in, he seems to be a hopeless person deviating from the American dream, only giving false promises to his parents. Her mother feels that this country is to be blamed to his son's failure to lead a successful life “...blame America and its laws instead of her son” (UA: 143). On the other hand, Sudha's attitude also echoes the changes witnessed in this new generation. She “preferred the homes of her American friends, crammed and plied with things, toothpaste caking their sinks, their soft beds unmade” (UA: 134). Her desires and aspirations are quite different from her parents. Both the children marry outside their race. Their success and failures, the tensions that are seen between the diaspora of the same generation are also highlighted by the writer. It is Sudha who indulges Rahul into drinking and soon he becomes a spoilt adolescent wanting to enjoy partying and shifting away from the cultural bindings of his parents and it is through him that the sister

tries to manifest her adolescent yearnings. Sudha tries to shield her brother right from the beginning and that too results in the brother moving away from the culture of his parents. Through Rahul she tries to live the American dream. She herself had tried to live the American way and always wanted to “disobey her parents” (UA: 129). Eventually she falls prey to this secretive doings of spoiling her brother when he leaves Sudha's kid in the bath tub. It is here that she reveals to her husband about her role in forcing her brother into drinking. The second generation displaces their Indian values and ethos, but is unsuccessful in assimilating themselves suitably to the American way of life.

Nobody's Business the last story of first section brings into focus the life of Sang, a Bengali American, who is working part time at a book store. To her, it's nobody's business to interfere in the way of life she is living and what she wants to be and have in life. She could have been a success but she drops out of Harvard to the dismay of her parents and on learning this, “her mother locked up in her bedroom for a week and her father refused to speak to her” (UA: 181). Away from her parents, living in America, she is a much sought after among the Bengali bachelors. But she is into a relationship with Farouk, who is an Egyptian but settled in America. She constantly refuses the offers of Indian Americans Bengalis for Farouk, who is seen carrying another relationship with an elderly lady called Deirdre. The story reflects the tensions that develop between the two. The constant refusal to suitors for marriage is an attempt to leave her Indian culture behind and to embrace that of the place she is living in. She is happily in love with Farouk and does menial household jobs for him, though he lives somewhere else. She is also sexually involved with him and in all probability wants to marry him. But all is not so happy in her relationship with Farouk. She wants to marry him but very soon it is revealed that he is carrying another love-affair with an elder woman called Deirdre. Tensions reach the zenith and finally Sang vents out her anger at Farouk only to move back to London to visit her sister. The whole story is about the failed relationship, the isolated lives lived by the characters. Paul, her inmate, is also living

a lonely life and is preparing for his PhD orals. He has very little connection with the outside world and earlier he did have a girlfriend but now he is living single. An American, Paul is a product of his culture and same is also seen with the second inmate Heather, of the house, where Sang lives. Heather is “a law student at Boston college, had been bitterly single for five years” (UA: 176). All three though live together but share little. Sang, an American Indian, living in an alien environment, has become a product of it. Living along with Paul and Heather, she perfectly embraces this new culture where we find people of all races living and working together but may not be living happily in relationships. She becomes like Paul in the end, living an isolated life and failing in her affair with a potential husband that she sees in Farouk. This second generation of Indian Americans is happy to live in an open relationship as opposed to the wishes of their parents, who still stick to their traditions. Even in this book, it is a recurrent feature and like other writers, Lahiri sees, “Sexuality is a major theme in powerful new writings by predominantly young women of Asian Indian descent in America” (Leonard: 72). Doubting the honesty in her relationship with Farouk, Sang tries to hold on to the bond only to move away from it in the end.

The second section of the story can be seen as a trilogy, consisting of three short stories where two characters Hema and Kaushik form an integral part in forwarding the plot. The first two stories are told from first person point of view by Hema and Kaushik whereas the last story is in third person narration. The first story *Once in a Lifetime* narrated by Hema recounts her childhood life and experiences when Kaushik and his parents came to her house to live in, till they found a house of their own to move in. The second story *Year's End* delves in deep about the experiences of Kaushik who has to go through a difficult time after his mother dies and his father remarries to a woman who has two daughters. The first two stories again focuses on the second generation American Indians and how they are seen imbibing this new culture and way of living. The third story *Going Ashore*, binding the two, as narrated from the writer's point of view; shows

these characters as moving away from the families and getting accustomed to the new way of life lived away from the land they belonged to. Hema and Kaushik meet, not in America, but in Rome, get physically involved, less on the mental level, and any hope of living together in life is remote as they have come too far and are product of the new cosmopolitan way of life, a product of new Diaspora. To them, their jobs are more important to leave and live together. Career is on the top priority and they both use it as a tool to move away from their Indian culture and live life with their self styled identities. Though Hema, belonging to the new diaspora is free to take up any career, she still picks up subjects of her father's choice but later on it's her own choice of profession that she ends up with. At 37, she is still unmarried. She gets into a relationship with Julian, who is already married. She feels that he will leave his family and come to her but it never happens. She decides to break away and is happy in her job as a Professor. After deciding to end her relationship with Julian, she is happy with her job. "In Rome she savoured her solitary isolation, immersed without effort in the silent routine of her days" (UA: 299). On the other hand, Kaushik is happy living away from his father's family. Emotionally drained, Kaushik is unable to come to terms with loss of his mother and his father marrying again, and is seen trying to seek shelter in work. He is a photojournalist leading a single life. "Kaushik then becomes the figure through which Lahiri performs an extreme mutilation of her second-generation American born Indian subject..." (Reshmi Dutt-Ballerstadt: 64). His life epitomizes the inclinations of second generation diaspora who fall prey to or willingly accept the global way of life.

Hema's need for the alternatal is both intense and almost impossible to fulfill – caught between worlds, she seems to need someone who is similarly inbetween, who bridges impossibly the gap between selfhood and otherness. In Kaushik she finds the (false) promise of one who might combine for her the natal and alternatal, the families of past and future. Kaushik, however, presents the pathology of a rootless individual who has never recovered from the compounded (and related) early losses of his

mother and home. His multiple transplantations and loss of natal family and cultural roots seemed to have damaged irrevocably his ability to form alternatal connections, to create his own nuclear family or to adjust to his father's remarriage and step-family (a second, different kind of natal family for both father and son. (Ambreen Hai, Smith College: 200-201).

Veering into different directions, both the characters try to build up their own individuality, assimilating themselves into this new world. As a photojournalist, Kaushik is happy doing his job, whereas Hema is happy the life she is leading and feels that her marriage with an Indian "might fix things" (UA: 313). Even after coming together and sharing the old relationship, neither of them is ready to budge. Though they do share intimacy, on a physical level, Hema is aware of the fact that the bond that they share is superficial. Whereas Hema is trying to find solace in getting married to an Indian, Kaushik is ready to go to Hong Kong. It is just that in their job that they find excuse in not entering into an everlasting relationship with each other. Both find their future shaky. They find escape in the jobs they are related with. Their identities, which have become strongly marked, seem to decide their way of life and they are happy living such isolated lives in this postcolonial world. The third section ends with Hema getting married to Navin, reluctantly, "I was repulsed by the sight of him, not because I had betrayed him but because he still breathed, because he was there for me and had countless more days to live" (UA:332). On the other hand, Kaushik becomes the victim of Tsunami in Thailand just before that he shared with Henrik, a Swedish tourist, "I don't live anywhere at the moment" (UA: 328). This sense of uprootedness, displacement, living a hyphenated life, though experienced by the first generation is all the more felt by him, living in this world of American dream. This extreme isolation, displacement experienced is symbolic of the life lived by the new diaspora leading to nowhere. The old issues of the diaspora have been replaced by the new ones and the last story is a perfect example reiterating the marked shift in the issues that were so vital and pertinent to the first generation Indian Americans. A

new definition to all such issues of that Unaccustomed Earth they have come to is given in this book. The change in all such issues put up by a writer who herself belongs to that generation brings in a sense of credibility.

In *Unaccustomed Earth*, as is seen in all these stories, focus is upon the Indian American second generation in contrast to the previous generation. It is noticed that this new generation is trying to assimilate themselves in such an environment which was alien to their parents and there was an effort to adjust to such environment. The issue of adjustment is not related to this new generation. They identify themselves with this American culture. It is how successfully they assert their identity in this American culture that is seen in this narrative. Various issues come up, and it is their attitude that determines their success or failures towards their adaptability. Their self-identities, their success in profession, in relationships: at home and outside, all sum up their individuality in this land. All such issues find place in this work of Jhumpa Lahiri. Race, class and ethnicity which are so critical to the Indians coming to USA form no important issues with the second generation American Indians. They mix so easily with the people of other races, classes and belonging to other ethnic groups. The narrative abounds with such examples. Thus, *Unaccustomed Earth* focuses primarily on the new Diasporas, who find themselves, easily adjusting to the melting pot culture as opposed to the difficulties which are often found with the earlier generation. So whether it comes to language, food, relationships – within family and outside, behavioural patterns in society, this generation seems to be quite open and receptive to adjust and accept the new ways of life. It is their success to sustain in such an environment and create their own mark, which becomes the focus in this book. Whether they achieve their motives or not is well reflected through the characters in this work. They try to assimilate into the mainstream culture and live the American dream. The core issues of the previous generation are no longer important for this generation and they live a life within the spectrum of this neo-global world where various cultures mix to produce a culture of miscegenation.

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Identity Crisis in the Diasporic Space in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*

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In this era of globalisation, the postcolonial period, diaspora and diasporic experiences have attracted attention all over the world. The word diaspora refers to the displaced communities of the people who have been uprooted from their natural place to other worlds. The accelerated process of immigration in the twentieth century has created an enigma of the very notion of geographical space and nationality. Migration of people represents much of the experience of postcolonial identities. Diaspora characterises globalized culture. To be in diaspora (dia means through+spenro means scattered community) means to be in between space. The term was formerly associated with more traditional diasporic communities, i.e. Jewish and Armenian ones. Hence, diaspora literally means the forced dispersal of the people and communities who settle in different countries away from their homelands.

In multicultural countries like US and India, the identities such as nation language, caste, race, gender and sex are culture specific. The American concept of national identity rejects the basic European ideas, i.e. ethnic homogeneity and single language. So it is based on plurality and whosoever has settled in America has become part and parcel of the country. In this sense, The U.S. is the melting pot of different races. The Americans solved their problems of diversities by throwing their many immigrant communities into the melting pot.

The culture of India is an amalgamation of these diverse sub-cultures spread all over the Indian sub-continent and traditions that are several millennia old. The Indian caste system describes the social stratification and social restrictions in the Indian sub-continent, in which social classes are defined by thousands of endogamous hereditary groups often termed as *jatis* or castes. Caste is social component in Indian cultural matrix. Because of the clash of cultures, identity crisis creeps up in the diasporic space.

Even though distinction has to be made between forced and willing movement of people, the phenomenon of diaspora necessarily involves a 'structure of location followed by dislocation and relocation. Moving away from one's homeland and setting elsewhere on long-term basis does mean dislocation that brings in a sense of loss and nostalgia. This is followed by a bid for relocation in an alien milieu through negotiation and adjustment. Hybridity is quite common here. Diaspora is one of the most discussed phenomena of present time which inevitably associates itself with the issues of nation, migration, culture, and identity and deals with the human experiences such as dislocation marginalisation, discrimination, homelessness, memory and longing. Diasporic people adopt various strategies to cope up and survive in the host land and food becomes an infallible mode to cement the fragile bridge between their past and present. The purport of this exploration is to investigate the nature of identity crisis in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*.

The Namesake can be primarily viewed as a diasporic text which contains the sub-themes of family ties, clash of values, cross-cultural relationships, love and loneliness. It is deeply moving and finely wrought family drama that takes up Jhumpa Lahiri's favourite subject of immigrant experience. Here is the Ganguli couple, the first generation Indian immigrants whose experience in the U. S. are pitted against those of their son, all of which leads to the clash of cultures and tangled ties between generations. *The Namesake* is one of the national best-sellers and has been named as the 'Best Book of the Year' (2003) by the USA. Based on this novel

celebrated film director the film of the same name directed by Mira Nair was released internationally in February, 2007.

Lahiri's first novel *The Namesake* was published in 2003 and it deals with the life of an Indian Immigrant family over the period 1968 to 2000. *The Namesake*, takes it up as a challenge and shows convincingly the importance of name. The name is the first line of identity, suggesting something of nature, something of character of its bearer. Gogol Ganguli is named after the great Russian writer Nikolai Gogol. In case of Jhumpa Lahiri also, her first name, Jhumpa was actually her pet name. Her good name was supposed to be Nilanjana Swadeshana, which would have been quite an offbeat name even by Indian standards. Jumpa meant the jingling sound of bells. In an interview, she reveals her fascination for this dual-name system :

I can't speak for all Bengalis. But all the Bengalis I know personally, especially those living in India, have two names, one public, one private. It's always fascinated me.¹

Jhumpa Lahiri always had a nagging suspicion that her name didn't mean anything. In *The Namesake*, however, the name of the protagonist is meant to signify the identity problem that he faces, exposed as he is to twin cultures-American and Indian.

In the case of the immigrants in any society, their identity is threatened by the culture of the host country for the Indian parents, the children are known by their special names given for the purpose. We may call them nick names but these are not the fixed nick names the like of which Americans use for eg:- every William will be called Bill and every Elizabeth, lorry. This has been given strong support by Jhumpa Lahiri as, 'No parent ever called a child by his good name. Good names had no place within a family'²

It begins with the traditional scene in Indian families where the family of the prospective groom is invited to the girl's home to negotiate the matrimonial alliance. The ritual bears fruit and Ashoke and Ashima are tied in wedlock. For the young couple, life starts in Cambridge, USA. Ashoke was a doctoral candidate in

electrical engineering at the MIT. Ashoke looked forward to fulfilling his ambition in the land of promise and Ashima found it a kind of exile, away from her kith and kin. Passing time on the alien soil was a big problem but somehow she got used to it, soon the couple is blessed with their first baby, a boy named Gogol.

In a flashback, it is revealed that there is more to this name because it is connected to a near fatal train accident in which Ashoke was involved before he got married actually, on his way to visit his grandfather in Jamshedpur. Ashoke was reading his favourite story, famous Russian writer Nikolai Gogol's 'Overcoat', in the collection the short stories of Nikolai Gogol. When his train got derailed, Ashoke was almost taken for dead, but he managed to wave the torn pages of book meekly. This movement was noticed and he was rescued. It was like a second span of life for him, for whom he felt obliged to Nikolai Gogol or so the writers name got etched on Ashoke's mind as his saviour.

Even so, he would not have named his child Gogol had the letter sent by his grandmother suggesting a name for the newborn she had always given names to her progeny-had arrived in time. In fact the letter suggesting got lost in transit between India and the USA. and in order to meet the requirement of the hospital where the child was born before Ashima could be discharged Ashoke could think only of his favourite Russian writer, Nikolai Gogol at that crucial moment. The child had to be named then and there and the name Gogol came in handy. He thought he was giving his child a temporary name, a dakname to be used at home only as is the practice in Bengal and that when the child goes to school, he will be given the proper name a *bhalonam* at that time.

As the Gangulis prospered and moved to the suburbs, Gogol grew up absorbing the American culture and values like other children of his age in the school. He was made to see the absurdity of the name by his American friends and class-mates and he started hating it. Finally his odd name which was neither American nor Bengali, but Russian and a last name at that, finally, when he turned eighteen, after the completion of school education Gogol officially changed his name to Nikhil. By the time Gogol

reached the age of five, he also had a sister who was named Sonia. The important issue for any Indian immigrant parents is the acculturation of their children. Both Gogol and Sonia were occasionally taken to attend classes in Hindu culture as also to celebrations of Hindu festivals. There were got-together of Bengali friends of the Gangulis at their house. They celebrated Christmas and thanksgiving. Thus, the children were sought to introduce to Indian culture without their feeling alienated from American friends. Gogol and Sonia love Christmas more than Durga Puja and find Bengali culture festivities incapacitating. For their parents India is their *desh* (country) but "Gogol never thinks of India as *desh* (country). He thinks of it as Americans do, as India" (118).

Gogol's parents regularly visited Calcutta to keep in touch with their relatives there. Once they spent eight months in India. The children, brought up in America at that impressionable age, had a hard time getting adjusted to the Indian milieu. On his fourteenth birthday, Gogol was presented the short stories of Nikolai Gogol by his father but he did not read it and dumped the book in a corner. As Nikhil, he studied architecture and begun his career in New York. His father Ashoke took up the job of a Professor outside Boston but for Gogol and others of his generation mixing up with Americans of their age did not pose any problem. He also took to youthful habits like smoking pot and sometimes had a series of affairs and flirting with girls starting with his first regular girl-friend, Ruth. Gogol shifted to New York. It is here at a party that he met Maxine with whom he had a serious affair. She had a break-up already and her parents were quite liberal. This relationship lasted for a long time but came to an end some months after Gogol's father died of heart-attack unexpectedly. Maxine tried to extract Gogol out of grief but he was so overwhelmed by it or rather by the guilt complex over his disinterestedness in his own family that he wanted to devote himself only to look after his mother and he refused to leave his home and settle down with Maxine. The result was a break-up again.

Gogol's mother was now concerned about finding a bride for her son. She got him to meet Moushumi Mazoomdar, her

family friends who had a daughter of marriageable age. Both of them liked each other and got married later in a typical traditional Bengali manner. They had many memories of their teenage years to share. She was doing Ph.D. in French at the university. She was an ultra-modern girl who, like Gogol, also hated Bengali culture. She was a free-bird who hated restrictions of any type and her interests were different. When she visited Paris on account of a seminar, Gogol also went with her even though he had no business of his own there and had to pass time somehow. In the past also, she had been ready to sleep with any guy at the drop of a hat. Her unfaithfulness led to the undoing of her marriage. Moushi and Gogol divorce because of their temperamental differences.

They have not considered it their duty to stay married, as the Bengalis of Ashoke and Ashima's generation do. They are not willing to accept, to adjust, and to settle for something less than their ideal of happiness. That pressure has given way, in the case of subsequent generation, to American common sense (276).

In the end, we find Gogol alone, planning to set up his own firm in New York. His sister is to get married to Ben, a French-man. Their mother Ashima is seen to follow in the footsteps of her late husband, a roving life-spending six months in India and the remaining six in America.

Towards the end of novel, we find that Gogol grows philosophical. His marriage was failure and then his father's death was the worst accident. Then we find that Gogol has reconnected himself with the family and drawn right inspiration from his father's life.

In the death of his father, he finds a beginning, and awareness and understanding of community and of the place of the individual within family in society. The hour of personal grief unites him of his family and makes him accept their ways. The ambivalence of his in between states ceases to vex him any more. Responding to the binary oppositional, he eventually discovers and resuscitates his Indian roots and familial ties.³

Something inside of Gogol changes. He slowly withdraws from Maxine as he tries to sort out his emotion. Maxine tries to pressure him to open up to her. Gogol breaks off the relationship

and begins to spend more time with his mother and sister, Sonia.

But the house where Sonia and he grew up will be lost to them. When he is ready to launch his own firm in the land of promise and build the good will of his own name, he found the loss of his old name due to dispersal of family as a metaphor. The 'Gogol' name is neither American nor Indian as the protagonist muses at times. Where could he fit himself in it? How could he relate himself comfortably to a single cultural framework, be it American, Russian or Indian- that was the identity crisis before him.

At a party thrown by Ashima prior to her leaving for India Gogol discovers the book the short stories of Nikolai Gogol that had been lying unnoticed in his room. He started reading it now with a renewed understanding and interest. Through all his efforts to find an identity as Nikhil, the protagonist remains Gogol at home. He knows that his father's attachment to the name ran deeper than more literary affection.

Food and diaspora have a strong co-relation with each other because food is not merely a biological need required for sustenance but is strongly associated with the ancestral roots, religion and region. Immigrants like Ashok and Ashima Ganguli cherish their Bengali food as a source of familial happiness and comfort because it connects them with their past but for second generation immigrants such as Gogol and Sonia, it is constant source of shame and embarrassment. Music, Mother tongue, cloths art and rituals, and food are the prime components of immigrants life because they work as strategies to cope up in the absence of home by reconstructing a fantasized pristine homeland.

In the novel, Lahiri pays great attention to the significance of food in the diasporic scenario. On the very onset of the novel, the pregnant and lonely Ashima is shown making a spicy Indian shack *Jhalmuri*, using American ingredients keeps herself busy with cooking because it helps her to survive in an alien and hostile environment,

Rice crispies and planters peanuts and chopped red onion in a bowl. She adds salt, lemon Juice, thin slices of green chilipepper, wishing there were mustard oil to pour into the mix (1).

Here 'mustard oil' reminds her Calcutta where it was easy to find it. Besides, the mixing of various Indian and American ingredients suggests the mixing of cultures, people, and races which give birth to multiculturalism. Ashok and Ashima Ganguli in *The Namesake* make every possible effort to adjust in the socio-cultural matrix of the united states but feel continual attraction towards their past therefore, in order to retain their heritage they read Bengali literature, listen to Rabindra Sangeet, wear traditional Indian attire and cook delicious Bengali recipes and try to minimise her sense of loss. On the other hand, the younger generation of immigrants represented by Gogol and Sonia utterly disapproves their Bengali dishes in favour of American pizza and Hamburgers. They don't want to carry the burden of their past like their parents. For second generation this food or attire and parents everything becomes an object of shame and ridicule. We observe that the food in the diaspora immediately reminded of the past and instantly connected to the home. But it is not for the second generation immigrant (children) or offspring.

The Namesake tackles the problem of identity in an alien land through the portrayal of protagonist Gogol. The contrast between the first generation and second generation expatriates clearly reveals the difficulties of the process of acculturation. The first generation expatriate has greater difficulties in setting down in the new land on the other hand the second generation seems to fit in better into the new culture.

Permanently alone, and briefly turned away from the mirror . . . She feels over whelmed by the thought of the move she is about to make, to the city that was once home and is now in its own way foreign... She will now miss the country in which she had grown to know and love her husband (278-279).

The confluence of the East with the west produces complications for Indians as well as the British. One of the most significant traits of the

Jhumpa Lahiri, herself a second-generation child of Indian immigrants in the USA has primarily focused on first and second generation Bengali immigrants, exploring themes of exile,

isolation and assimilation. Jhumpa Lahiri as an Indian living in the U.S. has experience of growing up simultaneously in two worlds culturally displaced. She has a divided identity and constantly attempts to reconcile cross-cultural identities. Like the novelist herself, her characters too straddle two worlds and are pulled in two directions. Lahiri successfully shows the cultural rift between India and United States and suggests the means to bridge this gap through the conducive mixing of ingredients without losing the actual identity. In an interview released by Houghton Mifflin Company Lahiri views that the novel is definitely about those 'who are culturally displaced or those who grow up in two worlds simultaneously.'⁴ The implication is that one can easily remain rooted in one's home culture and be a part of the host culture at the same time, without affecting one's individuality and distinctness of identity.

The Namesake both deals with the problems of the immigrants in an alien land, the yearning of the exile and the emotional bewilderment. Being an immigrant herself Lahiri deeply feels the importance of family bonds which tie people to their homelands. She has undergone the trauma of failing to find her identity in a world where she could never have a sense of belongingness. Therefore, she tries to fall back upon the treasured memories of what Rushdie calls Imaginary homeland with its vibrant colours and versatility which give life to her starving existence. In her debut novel Lahiri tries to capture the experience and cultural dilemmas of the Ganguly family for their integration and assimilation into alien culture. *The Namesake* thus exposes the eternal quest for one's true identity in the backdrop of the cross-cultural transactions. A possible merging of two selves, namely the self of Gogol and that of Nikhil is necessary for the process of self-analysis that Gogol undergoes to identify his real self. Ultimately, Jhumpa Lahiri highlights human conditions that transcend all borders.

In the diasporic space, the immigrants venture to resolve crisis of identity by relocation. *The Namesake* successfully deals not only with issues of different culture and sufferings of the new

immigrants, but also with the identity crisis of second generation immigrants, who have no intention to be linked with India in any way, but fail to become hundred percent Americans in their approaches to life. The identities of the immigrant individuals or communities can neither be placed only in relation to some homeland to which they long to return, nor to that country where they settle down. They by all means face the crisis of fusion of dual identities.

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Postcolonial crisis in Naipaul's *The Mimic Men*

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V.S. Naipaul, Trinidad-born novelist of Indian ancestry has established his reputation as a novelist of postcolonial experience. Being a postcolonial writer of Diaspora, Naipaul mainly deals with the themes related to the problems of colonized: their sense of alienation, their identity crisis, the paradox of freedom, sense of dispossession, homelessness, mimicry and a relentless search for an authentic selfhood. The first four novels of Naipaul deal exclusively with the colonial society of Trinidad, the island where he was born, and are preoccupied with the themes of alienation, dispossession, mimicry, homelessness and identity crisis. The characters in these novels are incessantly in search of a room of their own. But in the later novels Naipaul emerges as a novelist of postcolonial crisis and his critical attitude and uncompromising commitment to truth give an explosive expression to the harsh realities about the ex-colonial societies. Champa Rao Mohan appropriately puts it:

The theme of alienation, homelessness and mimicry still occupy Naipaul, but the perspective has changed. They are now viewed as a universal condition of the modern world afflicting both colonized and colonizers alike. Besides the familiar themes that still haunt Naipaul's pen, there are themes that appear for the first time – the broader postcolonial themes of power and freedom and neocolonialism (81).

Most of Naipaul's literary output comes out of his personal experiences as an expatriate and a desire to understand his own

position in the world. Writing for him is an ordering of experience and the impetus behind his writing is a sort of compulsion to understand his own situation. Bruce King remarks, "Naipaul's writing, with its concern for utility, consciousness of the material basis of society and culture, and identification with India and the Indian Diaspora, offers a thorough, if at times, too pessimistic, examination of the problems of late colonialism, nationalism and the post-colonial" (19). An undercurrent of melancholy runs through the novels of Naipaul and in his vision of the world, pessimism may be said to be a central strain. As his vision matures, it becomes more pessimistic with his own sense of disillusionment and frustration due to postcolonial turmoil. His personal anguish, helplessness, disillusionment and a sense of loss set the tone of his all novels. Naipaul's funniest novels are fraught with pain as he himself acknowledges the fact in an interview, "Even my funniest novels were all begun in the blackest of moods, out of a sense of personal anguish and despair" (V.S. Naipaul 1980:38).

Postcolonial crisis finds a paramount place in the fictional world of Naipaul as he believes that writers addressing postcolonial societies and their crises have a greater purpose to serve than the mere fulfillment of the aesthetic function (*Quest* Sep.-Oct. 1972:55). His writing in post-independence period becomes serious and reflective as a result of his anguish at postcolonial situation. Naipaul's anguish is well conveyed in the serious, reflective and humourless tone of his novels. The purpose of this article is to examine postcolonial crisis in V.S. Naipaul's novel *The Mimic Men*.

The Mimic Men, set in a newly independent country in the Caribbean island of Isabella gives us a deep look in to the life of the colonized people living in postcolonial societies. It was previous colony which has become an independent now. But the formerly colonized people of the island are unable to establish law and order to govern their country effectively. A long colonial rule has made the colonized feel themselves as inferior to the colonizer. Colonial education and cultural colonization have presented the English

world, with its rich culture, as a world of order, discipline, power, success, and achievement. The natives consider their own culture, customs and traditions, religion, and race to be inferior to those of their master and try to identify themselves with the empire. Since they are far away from their original homeland, their own original traditions and religions have become meaningless to them, and thus, they cannot identify themselves with those remote rules and codes. However, as they are different from the master in cultural, traditional, racial, and religious backgrounds, they can never successfully associate themselves with the colonizer also. They become mimic men who imitate and reflect the colonizer's life style, values, and views. They are dependent on colonizers for many things even after achieving independence. Without the colonizer, the colonized see themselves as lost in their postcolonial society that fails to fulfill their cherished dreams.

Ralph Singh, the protagonist, is a political exile in London. Living alone in a suburban London hotel, he meditates on his fragmented life as a result of postcolonial society which becomes the subject matter of this novel. His life is a wrecked one with an uneasy childhood, a painful youth, an unsuccessful married life and to cap it all, an abortive political career. The memories of Singh are described in three parts. In part one, he records his disillusionment with London, his marriage with Sandra, an English girl, their return to Isabella island, his rise in business and at last, the breakdown of his marriage. Part two describes his childhood and part three gives an account of his political career.

When Singh comes to London, he is full of hopes, thinking it to be the centre of his world, a dreamland where he can find fulfillment. He knows it well that Isabella, the island of his birth offered him only an ambiguous New World background. He confesses that his postcolonial inheritance gave him an inferior complex and shame only. "To be descended from generations of idlers and failures, an unbroken line of the unimaginative, unenterprising and oppressed, had always seemed to me to be a cause for deep silent shame" (V.S.Naipaul 1969:83). Singh's

account of his humble childhood gives a graphic picture of materialistic postcolonial society of Isabella where being poor is a disgrace and achievements are assessed through materialistic gains. His father is a poor school teacher therefore Singh lays claims to his mother's family as they are among the richest of the island. The children are forced to live a dual life due to poverty, social and racial inferiority of their parents and they are borne-down by the burden of secrets. The duality is thrust upon them in Isabella and in any postcolonial society. School and home remain two separate worlds because disclosing their family identity means exposing themselves as it happens in the case of Singh's classmate, Hok.

Once Hok ignores his mother when he is in the company of his classmates. This matter is reported to the teacher who is outraged and compels Hok to go back and wish her. Hok breaks down into tears as he feels exposed before his classmates. "It wasn't only that the mother was black and of the people, though that was a point; it was he had been expelled from that private hemisphere of fantasy where lay his true life" (97). It is clear that it is postcolonial social milieu and education that compels them to deny the reality. Singh fashions his own fantasies in a different way. He imagines that he is a shipwrecked chieftain like Robinson Crusoe on an unknown shore "awaiting rescue, awaiting the arrival of ships of curious shape to take him back" (111). He even tries out other ways to overcome his inferior complex and a sense of inadequacy. He starts calling himself "Ralph" rejecting his real name "Ranjit." Change of name becomes one of his "heavy secrets" and keeps him in a perpetual fear of discovery at home. These examples are a sharp criticism of the postcolonial society which forces even children to resort to such acts of deception. The only alternative left to the colonized is to deny their reality and to resort to mimicry. Singh himself says: "To be born on an island like Isabella, an obscure New World transplantation, second-hand and barbarous, was to be born to disorder" (118). Out of his frustration at the postcolonial situation of his island, Singh decides to leave his country and make a fresh start in London.

On coming to London, Singh rents a room in a boarding house owned by a Jew. Singh's first experience of snow fall turns bitter as he goes into the attic to get a better view of it. He gets a peep into his landlord's secret life of pleasures. For him all the magic of the city goes away with his exposure to the forlornness of the city and the people who live in it. In the callous atmosphere of London, he experiences a deep sense of fragmentation, alienation and rootlessness. Instead of flowering of personality, he encounters a confusion, emptiness and alienation. To get rid himself of his isolation and emptiness he begins to visit brothels. But he is timely saved from mental breakdown by Sandra with whom he has been familiar for some time. He marries her and goes along with her to Isabella. But at the port itself his mother creates an embarrassing scene by refusing to accept Sandra as her daughter-in-law. Instead of going home they go to a hotel. He finds post-war Isabella completely changed. They attach themselves to a group of young men who have studied abroad and have a modern outlook. In this new and broadminded society, they feel at home. Singh makes a fortune by developing the land his grandfather left for him. But soon the isolated life of the island begins to tire Sandra, a metropolitan girl and she withdraws into her shell. Something goes wrong with the couple and they drift away from each other. Sandra starts hurting the racial susceptibilities of the people out of her frustration with Singh and the island. Everything in the island has begun to seem inferior to her. She takes the ultimate step to leave the island leaving a note for Singh which reads: "The Niger is a tributary of that Seine" (80). This note indicates the racial difference between them.

After the departure of Sandra, Singh embarks on his political career in Isabella along with his friend, Browne. They launch a socialist political party, win election and become ministers in the new government. On coming to power, Singh comes to realize the futility inherent to postcolonial politician's situation. His failure to bring about the nationalization of the sugar estates provokes race riots and he is compelled to escape to London

ending his political career then and there. While writing his memoir, Singh reflects on his unsuccessful political career and understands the fraudulence of power, disorder and the helplessness of politicians in the nascent nations of the postcolonial world. Singh portrays the political career of a postcolonial politician in this fashion:

Politics for us are a do-or-die, once-for-all change. Once we are committed we fight for more political battles; we often fight literally for our lives. Our transitional or makeshift societies do not cushion us. There are no universities or City houses to refresh us and absorb us after the heat of battle. For those who lose, and nearly everyone in the end loses, there is only one course: flight. Flight to the greater disorder, the final emptiness: London and the home countries (8).

Singh realizes that his political career was a typical example of a postcolonial politician's career. They had won election through mob-power. They came to realize that mob without skill in emergent postcolonial countries like theirs was unproductive, offered nothing, and was in the end without power (204). Without considering the fact that their country was dependent on foreign help, they had included the expulsion of the white expatriates in their party's agenda. On coming to power they came to realize the economic impossibility of such a decision. They also needed the technical expertise of the expatriates to run the government. They realized that it is the fate of postcolonial nations to depend on mother country for ideas, technologies and financial aid. Their lack of real power also makes Singh's and Browne's efforts at governance futile since they are stopped at every meaningful turn by those who truly hold power. They realize the government cannot run without the help of colonial officials and government aid from London (209) and the island's natural resources are already contracted out to multi-national firms with no chance of renegotiation (216). They cannot nationalize their industries or expel expatriate civil servants because London will not allow it (220). Ralph realizes that his and

his companions' efforts have been pointless and learns "that success changes nothing" (203); the island is still under the colonial yoke and they are "compelled to cater to the interests of those powerful actors that they cannot control" (Hintzen 9). Naipaul raises the issue of neocolonialism to which the postcolonial countries fall victim because of their dependence on foreign countries. Political independence of postcolonial nations is nothing, but a mockery.

Singh at last infers that the cause of this postcolonial crisis lies in the nature of the fragmented society itself:

But on power and the consolidation of passing power we wasted our energies, until the bigger truth came: that in a society like ours, fragmented, inorganic, no link between man and the landscape, a society not held together by common interests, there was no true internal source of power, and that no power was real which did not come from outside (206).

Through the statement of Singh, Naipaul asserts that postcolonial situation is such a helpless situation in which all power remains in the hands of ex-colonizers and ex-colonized get pseudo independence. The economic, intellectual and moral bankruptcy, fragmentation and neocolonialism are the main by products of colonial rule. Fragmentation at the level of society as well as at the level of individual proves to be a stumbling block to progress in all postcolonial societies and in the case of the West Indies it is of inherent nature as the West Indian societies are entirely the creation of empire. Nation-building becomes a difficult task as colonial rule reduces the social and political system to fragments. In postcolonial nations social restructuring is as important as economic restructuring because social setup is completely destroyed by the colonizers. The root cause of Singh's failure as a politician is that his government paid excessive attention to economic development and social development was completely neglected. A solid social foundation is necessary for restructuring nation as a whole in postcolonial countries.

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Search for Identity in V.S. Naipaul's Novel : *A House for Mr. Biswas*

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V.S. Naipaul, Trinidad-born British author of Indian origin is an eminent Commonwealth writer. He has been recognized as a literary giant—a novelist, historian, travel-writer, social critic and above all a prophet. He has written many novels, travel-books, history books and many articles and the main theme of all his writings is the feeling of alienation, loneliness, nowhere, hence search for identity which springs from the crisis of identity.

In his novels, Naipaul has delineated the trans-cultural and trans-ethnic reality, together with his 'vision of man' in an alien situation, as conditioned by his multifaceted experience. His novels, in a way, depict the transition from colonialism to independence. It is the sociological transition of individuals and groups that provides the basic material for his novels. Naipaul's literary imagination springs from his deep-rooted consciousness of the troubled history of the new world. He has depicted the Caribbean people as men with no anchors, no belonging, no resting place. They have always been oscillating between the land, lost land and no land. Naipaul, whose ancestors belonged to Eastern U.P. before migrating to the West Indies, considers himself an exile and judges the West Indies to be a 'a derelict land.'

Rootlessness and alienation form the dominant themes of Naipaul's best novels. His novels show his obsession with the predicament of the Caribbean people – their displacement, exile,

dispossession, alienation and isolation. His 'vision of placelessness' leads to his 'vision of disorder.' He analyses how the colonial experience of displacement and the consequent experience of acculturation inevitably lead to a larger problem of a lost center resulting in utter disorder and confusion everywhere. For Naipaul, Third World is nothing more than a theatre of absurdity and chaos. Disorganization, absurdity, cruelty, brutality and insensitivity which threaten man's existence have become the main characteristics of the New World.

Living in borrowed culture and a patternless and chaotic world, these transplanted people are faced with deep identity-crisis and are desperately searching for an independent personality and identity. Their urge to assert their identity stems from the requirement to assert one's separate group or cultural identity as well as from man's deeper psychological, metaphysical or existential needs. Thus, the theme of 'quest for identity' occupies a significant place in Naipaul's fiction.

In his novel, *A House for Mr. Biswas*, Naipaul has ironically depicted the complexities of existence in the transitional society of Trinidad. He has centered his focus on the dilemma of the Hindu immigrants and their descendants in the acculturated set up of the Caribbean islands. He believes that their condition is more pitiable than that of the Negroes because their alienation and disintegration have been quicker and much more disastrous. Their experiences are much more bewildering as compared to those of the Negroes.

A House for Mr. Biswas is a biographical sketch of Mr. Biswas, an unnecessary and unaccommodated man who struggles hard throughout his life to acquire a house of his own. His search for a house is symbolic of the West Indian search for moorings after centuries of suppression and slavery. In a most heroic manner, he determines to flight out the oppressive forces of his society which deny him place and personality. After a life long struggle and endless humiliations he succeeds in acquiring a mortgaged house. The irony of Mr. Biswas achieving a mortgaged house at the end of his life, is central to the novel. The tragic irony is an interesting

development in this novel. The fateful reversals in Biswas' life, which plunge him in gloom, evoke great sympathy for him. The tragic irony is, however, effectively brought home through the apparently comic episodes. The structure of *Tulsidom*, constructed by the novelist, greatly helps him in expressing his vision of the life of his ex-colonial society, in a comically ironic way. Though there are striking examples of the local irony, the narrative is dominated by the complex and the deep-rooted irony of the central situation.

In the words of Bruce F. Macdonald, "Naipaul has a deeper grasp of the themes of dereliction, dispossession, isolation and search for identity. Here the novelist fully explores "the psychological features of placelessness, denial, exploitation and search for a unifying ritual" (249). He analyses the failure, futility and aimlessness of the uprooted people of the Hindu community who have been affected by the experience of more than one culture. Being born and brought up in an alien land and living in a mixed and patternless society they have been unable to develop an organized personality which is necessary for the formation of true identity. As Naipaul himself stated, "Living in a borrowed culture, the West Indian, more than most, needs writers to tell him who he is and where he stands" (*The Middle Passage*, 73).

The novel moves far beyond preoccupations with race or the Hindu world in Trinidad, and depicts a classic struggle for personality. 'House' the central and guiding principle of the novel, is symbolic of a place where a man can assert his individuality and live with an air of respectability. Mr. Biswas, a member of the second generation of the dislocated and rootless Hindu Community aspires to acquire a house of his own. His search for a house was search for independent existence, a search of belonging to the world in a way that conferred upon him significance.

Acquisition of a house becomes an obsession with Biswas and he attempts to build it at many places one after the other. However, all his attempts to do so are ruthlessly thwarted by his society (represented here by the Tulsi family) which offers no scope for individuality.

In a most heroic manner, Biswas determines to fulfill his dream by fighting out the oppressive forces of his cruel society. At last, the New World hero does triumph in his attempts and starts leading an independent life in his house along with his family. But ironically, it happens not long before he falls a martyr to the oppression of his society. The hostile world ultimately takes away his life. . The theme of rootlessness of an exile and psychological effect of colonialism find their fuller treatment in *A House for Mr. Biswas*.

In this novel, Naipaul has fully explored the various modes of colonial exploitation – political, social, racial, cultural, economic, educational and above all psychological. In order to ironically demonstrate his vision of colonial oppression and exploitation, Naipaul has fictionalized a special set up of *Tulsidom*. *Tulsidom* is ironically presented as a replica of the colonial system in miniature. The Hanuman House with its fortress like walls denotes the spirit of slavery. Outwardly a benevolent reconstruction of the traditional Hindu Joint Family, *Tulsidom* is in fact a clan system to exploit and to enslave its members through oppression and emotional blackmail. The Hanuman House ironically symbolizes the regimentation of life which Biswas fights against throughout his life. It is symbolic of darkness, stagnation and decay.

Mrs. Tulsi and Mr. Seth are the allegorical representatives of the ruthless colonial masters and the sons, daughters and the sons-in-law, who are subjected to inhuman bondage by them, represent the oppressed in a colonized world. The arch-colonizers mercilessly exploit the individual aspirations of other members of the family. The fortress of Hanuman House also symbolizes the orthodox and conservatives Hindu society of Trinidad. By presenting *Tulsidom* as the 'monolith of conventions' Naipaul has attacked illiteracy, ritualism and conservatism of the tradition-ridden Hindu community in the West Indies. Through Biswas' rebellion against the ritualism of the Tulsis, Naipaul protests against and rejects the orthodoxy and superstitiousness of his society. He ridicules the traditional Hindu community which is

content to live in a shell and blindly sick to its rituals and customs, without questioning their real significance. He believes that these rituals are the unnatural social and racial impediments which tend to thwart the growth of personality and individuality of the people of a community. Such a society offers only failure and discontent. That is why Naipaul's protagonist refuses to surrender to the meaninglessness, void and darkness of Tulsidom and breaks away from it to live an independent life.

Biswas decides to fight against the oppressively traditional Tulsu family and conquer the superstitiousness, fatalism and ritualism of his community which it has inherited from its ancestors.

Though the surface story of *A House for Mr. Biswas* only gives a biographical sketch of Mr. Biswas, beginning with his inauspicious birth in a Trinidad village and ending with his death in Port of Spain as a 'sacked journalist at the age of forty six, yet the soft ironic touch that underlines the whole story reveals some deeper meanings. The formal biographical treatment of the life of an unnecessary and unaccommodated man like Mr. Biswas gives the whole story an ironic touch.

The very name Mohan as given to the protagonist is ironic. As we read in the novel Mohan means "the beloved . . . the name given by the milkmaids to Lord Krishna" (17). But here this name has been ironically given to the most neglected child in the family-- necessary to no one and dependent on everyone.

Biswas is an unwelcome child in the family because the midwife at the time of his birth predicts that he being born six-fingered and "born in the wrong way. At midnight, The inauspicious hour" would bring disastrous misfortune for the family and "eat up his own mother and father" (16). The Pundit also prophecies that he would bring bad luck to the family. He also predicts that his potential for spreading disaster would be reduced if he were kept away from water and trees. It might be coincidence or it might have been fated. Water and trees play pivotal role in Biswas' life. Ironically, true to the prophecies, Biswas cannot escape his role as a generator of tragedy. He first brings about the drowning of Dhari's calf and then of his own father.

Like Oedipus he is fated to kill his father, unlike Oedipus he fulfils his 'prophecy' in the most ridiculous way (Gordon Rohlehr 84).

After he receives elementary education along with severe flogging, he is sent to Pandit Jairam's house. Then he is made to work at Ajodha's rum shop, where he is cruelly treated by Bhandit. He feels too frustrated here and his frustration is often expressed in his grotesque actions like spitting in the rum shops. He is made to move from one place to another aimlessly and purposelessly. The purposelessness and nothingness of his life is clearly revealed in the very first lesson he is taught. 'Ought oughts are ought' i.e. 'nothing come out of nothing'.

Ultimately Biswas becomes a sign painter and is seen entrapped into the Tulsu family after he marries Shama, one of the Tulsu daughters. While he was expecting to achieve some security in the Tulsu family, ironically he is faced by total oppression of the various Tulsu members. Biswas is treated like a mere object by all the Tulsu sons, daughters and sons-in-law. In fact, they themselves have totally abdicated their individuality and live like slaves always following the dictates of the arch-colonizers.

Mr. Biswas, an individualist, feels too insecure and frustrated in such a claustrophobic atmosphere. He has a constant feeling of loss of identity and extinction. He has open conflict with the Tulsus who deny him a place in the family. He often tries to assert his individuality. Sign painting becomes a means of preserving and asserting his independent identity. While Govind, one of Tulsu's sons-in-law, asks him to give up the sign-painting, he immediately says, "Give up sign-painting" and independence. No boy, motto is "paddle your own canoe" (96). Thus, he rebels against the Tulsu autocracy as he knows that surrender to such a system would mean submission to darkness, void and utter chaos.

The whole plot of the novel revolves around the problems which confront Biswas as he tries to assert his individuality in a hostile world. Because of his individualism, he is ridiculed and humiliated by the Tulsus. He is labeled as 'Biswas, the paddler' by Seth. He is called a 'serpent', a 'creole' the worst insulting word

used for the East Indian Hindus. He is even beaten by a person like Govind. Whenever he indulges in any act of individualism he is asked to appear before the family tribunal, because assertion of one's identity is considered to be the biggest sin and crime in the Hanuman House. When Biswas brings a 'doll house' for his daughter, Savi, the whole atmosphere of the house gets upset and there is a commotion in the family. The toy is smashed into pieces by Shama in her protest against his act of individualism.

To his great humiliation, he is told by his wife, Shama, that a non-entity like him can gain significance only through complete submission to Tulsidom. Shama degrades him by telling him, "I suppose if it wasn't for my family you would have a grass root over your head" (341). Earlier also she says,

You know, nobody hearing you talk would believe that you come to this house with no more things than you could hang up on a one-inch nail (115).

She aggravates his mental agony by calling him 'a barking puppy dog.' Due to his being a non-conformist he is considered to be a 'buffoon' by Tulsis including the children who often make fun of him. "The role of the buffoon is one which he at times accepts in humiliation and other rejects with bitterness." His despair and acute mental agony is generally expressed in his eccentric and grotesque behaviour which makes him look ridiculous. He is often seen indulging in one or the other absurdity.

Too much of frustration and mental agony paralyse Biswas completely and he is unable to carry out his work at the Tulsi shop. Ultimately he is sent to The Chase to run an independent shop. But all his ventures here end in utter failure. He feels too lonely and has a constant feeling that his stay here is only temporary. "How lonely the shop was! And how frightening... afraid to disturb the silence, afraid to open the door of the shop, to step into the light..." (130).

From the Chase he is asked to move to Green Vale. Here he occupies an incomplete house because it is his hope that living in a new house might bring about a new state of mind. But this act of his brings further awareness of isolation and futility. He is dogged by

a black cloud whenever he is alone in the house. He feels darkness lapping about him.

His recovery from the mental disintegration begins during his semi-independent occupation of the rented house in Port of Spain where he spends fifteen years of his life. The city helps him to become a social being and he now wants to involve himself in the world around him. He wants to be a part of it.

Moreover he gets a job as a journalist which wins him respectability in the society. It also rescues him from the total collapse because writing for him is an assertion of independence. Later on he feels as dissatisfied as anywhere else, in Port of Spain too. He has no alternative but to go back to the Hanuman house, when he learns that his son, Anand is taunted at School about his being a journalist. He tells Anand, "I don't depend on them for a job. You know that. We could go back any time to Hanuman House. All of us. You know that" (345).

However, the vision of his own house sustains Mr. Biswas throughout all these years of instability of mind. Ultimately he succeeds in acquiring his own house and settles in it along with his family. The house at Sikkim Street assumes a greater importance among every other relationship. Now he is absolutely free and no more a mere object in the hands of the Tulsis. He is happy that Shama has become loyal to him and does not desert him any more as she used to do earlier by running frequently to the Hanuman House. "But bigger than them all was the house, his house" (12).

Ironically enough, soon Mr. Biswas discovers that the house occupied by him is poorly built and he could have got a better one for much lesser price. He discovers the absence of the back door. Shama discovers that two of the wooden pillars supporting the staircase landing were rotten, the staircase was dangerous. The biggest irony is that the house acquired by Mr. Biswas after a life-long struggle is mortgaged to his uncle Ajodhya. His freedom of living independently in his house ironically means his life-long bondage to Ajodhya.

However, unlike Naipaul's early novels, irony here is not destructive in any sense. It strikes a hopeful note in the face of man's

helplessness. The house, though, turns out to be jerry built, is still a house. Though, he has achieved only partial independence yet this independence means a lot to him. Biswas is able to 'lay claim to his portion of earth' before he dies, as we read in the Prologue,

How terrible it would have been at this time, to be without it to have died among the Tulsis, amid the squalor of that large, disintegrating and indifferent family; worst to have lived without even attempt to lay claim to one's portion of the earth; to have lived and died as one had been born, unnecessary and unaccommodated (12-13).

In the Prologue we also read that during his illness and despair Biswas is "Struck again and again by the wonder of being in his own house, the audacity of it . . . To wander freely from room to room and about his yard, instead of being condemned, as before (8). The Phrase 'to wander freely' has a special significance here. It reveals the transformation of Biswas-- of a slave to place.

The house acquired by Biswas represents his success in turning the traditional passivity of his religion and society into a more purposive activity. His passivity and inaction change into his active participation in the shaping of events. His career emerges as a great possibility and hope for the destitute, the degraded and harassed people. The reason why Biswas recedes from the past is that it is a Hindu past. He is fearful of his past and his identity in it as a curse and destroyer. Ironically, earlier Biswas has been regretful at the loss of his past, oral past in its replacement by his life with Shama and the Tulsis. It has been aptly remarked that,

Mr. Biswas is both an elegiac lament for the new irrevocably lost pastoral Hindu world of the opening and a satirical critique of the older Hindu way of life. Throughout a delicate balance is maintained and it is this ironic neutrality that gives the Hindu fable much of its power. and one feels that the roots of such irony lie deeper (John Theime 508).

The Creole culture in Trinidad adversely affects the Hindu traditional society and brings about the downfall of Tulsidom. As a result of their exposure to the social complexities of the urban life, most of the Tulsi members become rebellious and refuse to accept

the conventional norms of Tulsidom. Govind refuses to welcome Owad on his return from England and finally has an encounter with Mrs. Tulsi. The younger son Owad has already left for England and the elder son Shekhar marries an educated modern girl from outside his community and ultimately leaves the family. Seth and Mrs. Tulsi too develop differences and often quarrel with each other. Hari, a symbol of traditional Hindu life also dies and his death signifies the decay and downfall of the traditional and conservative Hindu life.

We see that in this novel, Naipaul has delineated his vision of the overall predicament of the protagonist depicting his physical as well as spiritual sufferings. In his physical life, the atmosphere at the Hanuman House is sick and disgusting, which ironically reveals the miseries of the displaced West Indian people who suffer from rootlessness and alienation in the new land. Like the generation he represents, Biswas' predicament is that he cannot return to India. But as he tries to settle in Trinidad he is completely denied independence and human dignity by his oppressive society. He decides to bring order and form in a patternless and chaotic society by rebelling against it and ultimately departing from its norms. However, his rebellion and non-conformity prove to be a futile exercise in a world beset with oppression and cruelty. Here the novelist emphasizes the individual and social limitations of a person.

At the spiritual level, Biswas is often haunted by a feeling of loneliness, void and meaninglessness in his life. He thinks that he has lived in so many houses but is not being missed in any of these places. He has a feeling that his life is absolutely insignificant and purposeless. 'Suppose that at one word I could just disappear from this room, what would remain, to speak of me? A few clothes, a few books.' The incomplete house at Green Vale is ironically symbolic of the emptiness and purposelessness of human life. Here he decides to watch each action as significant but as contemplates on each action, it becomes a symbol of greater futility and he becomes more and more aware of the meaninglessness of his life. He often suffers from an acute feeling of isolation. In Short Hills, the house in the forest reflects the isolation of the self.

The image of the boy standing all alone near a wayside as glimpsed by Biswas ironically depicts the futility of man's life. The meaninglessness, alienation and homelessness, is the fate that awaits the child and everyone else in this world.

“The sun fell, and in the short dusk they passed a lonely hut set in a clearing far back from the road. Smoke came from under the ragged thatched caves; the evening meal was being prepared. And, in the gloom, a boy was leaning against the hut, his hands behind him, at the road (171).

In this passage the novelist has depicted man's perennial existential dilemma, his placelessness and helplessness to dispel the eternal fear of getting lost in the chaos around him.

The recurring images of darkness, decay and death in the novel ironically depict man's helplessness in the face of the hostile nature forces. The imaginary clouds which chase Biswas at Green Vale and the terrible storm which almost drowns Biswas and Anand are also symbolic of the cruel forces which act against man. We read about Biswas' helplessness in the novel, “He was rocking on the creaking board one night when he thought of the power of the rockersto guide and crush and inflict pain on his body . . . on the wall he could puncture his eye . . . He lay face down on the bed, not wanting to see (206).

Critics have commented on the problem of the theme and the technique of this novel in a diverse manner. Kenneth Ram Chand calls '*A House for Mr. Biswas*' a novel of 'rootlessness *par excellence*.' He sees a profound vision revealed in this novel. Francis Wyndham says that 'the novel is conceived and executed within the great tradition of the humanist novel' and further remarks that the novel is a subtle and comprehensive analysis of the colonial situation as anything in imaginative literature. Robert D. Hammer says that Naipaul in this novel has emphasized that 'environment and place have a great impact on the lives of individuals. Ormerod points to the dominance of individualism in this novel. Another critic has observed,

A House for Mr. Biswas can be read as a Hindu fable in which the protagonist is Finally despite all ironies a positive Hindu Hero . . . (John Theime 509).

William Walsh sees a 'deep poetic truth which lies at the heart of the novel.' Bruce Macdonald holds that the search for a house in the novel is the symbolic search for order. According to Rohlehr the symbols of decay and darkness exposed the enclosed Hindu world which Biswas struggles against and the novel can also be read at the existential and metaphysical level.

Keeping in view the structure of the novel, the changing tones and moods of the novelist and the wide criticism this novel has received at the hands of the critics, we may say at the end that the visions of Mr. Biswas arrested in his overall deterioration, are both physical and spiritual and irony has been employed by Naipaul as a means of revelation of these visions. While revealing Biswas' insufferable and tormenting condition in an oppressive society, the novelist gives a rare insight into the nature of human life itself. It is only to delineate his larger vision of life that Naipaul took up the problematic situation of the protagonist whose birth and death are preceded and followed by emptiness and void – which begins with nothing and achieves only a little when he dies at the age of forty six.

The whole novel has been structured in a way that while at the superficial level it reveals the total vision of a dislocated and alienated man; at a deeper level it expresses the novelist's higher vision of cosmic homelessness, loneliness and meaninglessness of life. The novel depicts man's futility in the face of the hostile natural forces which act against man. However, while emphasizing human frailty and failure the novelist does recognize the value of hope and reconciliation in the face of odds. Irony that ranges from lightly humorous to profoundly somber expressions, helps the novelist in reaching new levels of exploration of the deeper human experience. It is with the help of his irony that Naipaul has been able to elevate the regional theme of dereliction

to the cosmic placelessness and homelessness, transcending all the regional barriers. *A House for Mr. Biswas* is undoubtedly a novel on an epic scale, embodying the subtle existential and metaphysical overtones of human experience.

The book's popularity must be largely due to its universality of subject and theme, the struggle of one ordinary man to climb – or clink on to – the ladder of life (Michael Thorpe 129).

The novelist deeply explores the problems of rootlessness, alienation, isolation and search for identity which the uprooted and dispossessed people have to face in an alien land. Uprooted from their ancestral culture, they are constantly haunted by a feeling of being 'shipwrecked' in the new environment.

Naipaul believes that acute awareness of shipwreck in such places is born out of rootlessness as well as the colonial oppression and exploitation. He ironically hints at the colonial victimization of these migrated people at the physical, social, financial and above all psychological level for centuries together. The story of Biswas is the story of the whole society of the West Indies and of all Commonwealth countries--exploited, brutalized, used and left in a state of neglect. While living in such oppressive society the local people are faced with deep identity crisis. As Biswas says,

I don't look like anything at all. Shopkeeper, lawyer, doctor, labourer, overseer, I don't look like any of them (65).

The fact that the protagonists of Naipaul belong to a transitional society, further adds to their distress. The society which Biswas represents was undergoing a rapid change of values. Traditionalism was giving way to modernism. Consequently, there was cultural confrontation leading to disorder in the society.

To sum up, Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* explores the displacement, rootlessness, feeling of being lost in the new places, loneliness, the emotion of nowhere and all this brings into focus the crisis of identity. It is at this juncture that Mr. Biswas' search for identity begins.

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A Fine Balance : 'Walk' as a Metaphor in Anita Rau Badami's *The Hero's Walk*

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With a Rushdie-like swagger, Anita Rau Badami in her sophomore novel *The Hero's Walk* (2000), brings to us different aspects of life in a fictional South Indian town Toturpuram, viewed through the new lens of Sripathi Rao, the protagonist of the novel. The India which Rau Badami has portrayed here, is very much akin to the concept of post modern anti-hero, as opposed to the conventional exotic notions of a 'hero', as if prancing with his self-acclaimed royalty. Diaspora in its real sense of the term had been a marker of cultural and political identity, and had always referred to the spread or dissemination of something originally confined to a local, homogenous group, as a language or cultural institution. The exoticism that most Diasporic writers fecundate in the portrayal of their ancestral home stands diagonally and diametrically antonymous to Rau Badami's delineation. Even though these are hackneyed plots of transgression, tinged with the desperate repercussions, a 'little true desolation' heralds the disintegration and dissolution of always "duty conscious" Sripathi. Heike Harting in her essay "Diaspora Cross Currents in Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* and Anita Rau Badami's *The Hero's Walk*" opines that the novel "...examines how Sripathi's multiple displacements and rerootings and Nandana's reversed journey to the Old World, mediate diaspora through the characters' everyday life experiences and locally defined events." In most Diasporic writers there has always been a trend in

succumbing to the popular notions of diasporic identity as beginning with a physical displacement from one's home country to the host country only, but here in the novel *The Hero's Walk* Anita Rau Badami has counter-argued and challenged proposing that diasporic consciousness of human beings are not only confined to physical displacements. That an individual consciousness is diasporic, doesn't necessitate it to be historically and geographically mobile, "mobility" (Mishra, 422) as a fundamental criteria or proof of it being affected by the similar symptoms. Hence it is imperative to say, going according to the grain of Rau Badami, that the very notions of the decline of sovereignty of nation-states and diasporic identity from national to transnational levels being mutually dependent on it can be challenged, those that have been skilfully woven through the portrayal of several characters in the text.

The novel is unique in its renderings of the local flavours of the fictional space; it also alters the trend of diaspora fictions where usually the protagonists give voice to their discovery of 'home' in a foreign land. But here Rau Badami plays with her characters and gives liberation to this cliché theme by planting Nandana, who discovers her 'home' with her foreign eye in her ancestral land, a complete flipside of the usual trend. Hence, departing from Harting's concept that diaspora can be an "alternative configuration of social space and human connections," it is possible to explore its surrogate aspects, which is established by this act of our everyday lives' 'fine balancing' between life's little ironies and hopes; alternated by humble gait, striding or stumbling, thereby questioning the novel's regulatory politics of diasporic identity. The movement is from Sripathi's paternalistic, egoistic self to the mellowed one who succumbs to the social activism of Arun, regarding the rarity and the simultaneous destruction of Olive Ridley turtles, where he understands that life is not always about translating every possible thing into the category of "lost and found" and everything good in life comes to us with an edging of not-so-good. Sripathi's movement is testimonial to the movement of Rau Badami, where

she divorces from the conventional belief of diaspora as a political category of identity necessarily dependent on transnational mobility. On the contrary, as Harting says, it explores the intersections of local and global genealogies of belonging and displacement, and most of all, “is essential to the constitution of translocal communities of “popular dissent””.

The Hero's Walk dramatises diaspora as a form of cultural critique that questions the very categories of identity. Sripathi's movement from despair to hope delivers himself free as he disentangles himself from his bondages of ego, the moment he accepts, and in this very act of acceptance there lies his and also the reader's understanding of his identity, of his coming in terms with his new 'self', the one which he had never been able to grip with, always at a loss. There is no longer a necessity of diasporic identity rather there is in Harting's words “diasporic identification”. Harting very skilfully points out in her erstwhile mentioned essay,

Thus, to discern the particular cultural and political dynamics of diaspora, it is necessary not only to emphasize the dialectical relationship between diaporic and non-diasporic people, but also to distinguish between forced diasporas, flexible transnational diasporas, and what I call intra-national diasporas (Harting, n.p.).

It is this “intra-national diaspora” which perfectly defines the pangs and pains of Sripathi, Arun, Nandana and at times the non-physical Maya—illusion. *The Hero's Walk* thematizes the diasporic identity being necessarily not bound to the circumscription of “transnational border crossings” thereby suggesting ways in which the effects of environmental degradation and alterations in global economic policies have provided us with certain given notions of national and cultural identity to which we seem to attach ourselves. They seem to transform the “micro spaces of social life” (Harting, n.p.). Arun, Sripathi and Nandana become the ploy that Rau Badami had used to thwart such 'given-and-happily-accepted' kind of approach to diaspora studies and diaspora writing.

Sripathi's problem begins the day Maya, his daughter

whom he had considered to be the reason for the ascent of his social and financial standing, rejects her groom for the love of Alan. Maya has a haunting presence who could have been ideally the permanent diasporic character but for her death. Her decision to reject the Brahmin match and getting married to a white Canadian was simply a way to shun the rest of the world and by this act of hers she “had dared everyone” (Rau Badami, 46). As a proud father Sripathi always felt that Maya was the “perfectly formed creature” (Rau Badami, 95) he had fathered and was destined “to reach for the skies, nothing less” (Rau Badami, 96). But his entire plan for his life and his patriarchal control shifts with this incident and immediately he thinks it better sorted as a man of the family to sever all ties with her daughter, which then becomes his last resort to control and power. That otherwise would have seemed little less manly. Harting opines that the death of Maya instead of being an accident, becomes the symbolic necessity of Sripathi's diasporic transformation which was catered externally. She explains saying that, By defying her father's wishes and forsaking her family duties, Maya on the one hand, initiates her own transformation into a diasporic subject with multiple belongings and groundings; on the other, she confronts Sripathi with the changing reality of his social, personal work environment and the decay of the civil society of India's nation-state. Both aspects eventually facilitate Sripathi's diasporic transformation . . . What remains problematic, however, is that the novel assigns Maya the traditional task of diaspora women, namely the painful role of “mediating discrepant worlds” and of “connecting and disconnecting, forgetting and remembering, in complex, strategic ways”” (Harting, n.p.).

Some critics consider that Bhaba's understanding of one of the most influential articulations of the term cultural hybridity is at the same time controversial. They forge the idea that his concepts of cultural hybridity lacks a “material and historically specific grounding” and hence can be denied the authority terming it as hegemonic in its approach in terms of its “identity management” which also reinforces the growth of the concepts of global capital. His earlier works where he conceptualizes hybridity as a strategy

employed to “subvert colonial authority through the play of cultural difference, ambiguity and mimicry” testifies and somewhere justifies this treatment towards him for his inclination. In *The Hero's Walk* Rau Badami seemed to have challenged this stereotyped version suggesting ways to think differently where our mind races to and fro, getting anchored to two things – one, it was not exactly possible to fit Nandana's character in the midst of this chaos of the so-called “cultural hybridity” framework because her transformation or 'homecoming' was exactly a flipside from the general view of diaspora, it was as if deliberately done by Rau Badami as if to approve the different way of recognition of the other side of the self, it was truly a homecoming for her, literally and figuratively. Secondly, silenced by the death of her parents, the very cause of Nandana's stay in Toturpuram, the need of Sripathi's visit to Vancouver and the exposure to the world of Maya he so scornfully rejected, Nandana's very presence, all were so skilfully braided as if to show the cause and effect relationship and hence propound that it was a transformation for both Nandana and Sripathi and that too diasporic, which though entails a displacement, is a temporary one, but not in the conventional transnational level. Rau Badami seems to have transformed the notions of identity, as an exclusive fad of diaspora. Nandana's breaking of silence and “homing” materialises in the zenith of her realisation when she is able to grip the 'loss' once more, being abducted for some time by the memory-stricken woman Mrs. Poorna. Suddenly she realises Arun, Putti, Mamma Lady and the Old man were not around, the faces with whom she tend to have become familiar with. It was her first utterance, in India, even surprising her own self, “I want to go to my home.” (Rau Badami, 301), indicating the Big House which she never had accepted until then, as her 'home.'

Rau Badami in one of her interviews conducted by Eliza McCarthy talked about the reasons for having chosen the title of the novel remembering the intention behind the use of the word walk. She says,

When I was young, I noticed that the hero in dance-

dramas always came in with this strutting gait. When the demons came on they used the same kind of walk, except that there were some embellishments....The clown in the piece would stumble and fall and trip, so it seemed to me a fine metaphor to use for the way each of us lives his or her life....I don't think anybody in this world is absolutely good or bad or stupid. Each one of us combines all those qualities in our daily lives, I think (Rau Badami, n.p.).

When Nirmala teaches Bharatnatyam to her students she also gives similar reasons for appropriate expressions in dance forms, able to strike the audience with its unique appeal. Barbara Godard in her essay “Notes from the Cultural Field: Canadian Literature Identity to Hybridity” examines the ways in which the global transformations have affected the Canadian Literature and Cultural theory, thereby suggesting that multiculturalism rather than being a liberating, political and cultural trend is a reactionary movement against these forces, and the Canadian nation-state sees to it that the concept of “Culture”, as she again emphasizes, becomes “autonomous and self-regulating force” and acts “as a counter-force to democracy within an all-encompassing 'economy' to whose end it is sub-ordinate” (Godard, 211). Therefore it is true that one should be warned and alert about the economic aspects, the “marketability” and “profitability” of the notions of diasporic concepts of identity in the “global trade of cultures” (Harting, n.p.). The concept of 'diaspora space' as has been pointed out by Avtar Brah in *Cartographies of Diaspora* is an intersection of two positions and those are “genealogies of dispersion” and “those of 'staying put'” (Brah, 209). The notion of 'diaspora space' has also been valorised by Rau Badami by the character of Sripathi Rao, which then becomes the site of production of knowledge regarding cultural identity. The characteristics that we ascertain to “indigenous” inhabitants are also complicit and in none of these categories do Sripathi succumb to. Sripathi Rao had been a culturally rooted man until he goes to Vancouver to bring her grand-daughter Nandana back to her mother's hometown Toturpuram. But even if he accommodates a space which cannot be conventionally termed as a “diasporic” one, but still he goes

through the pangs of being uprooted, feeling of no belongingness always looming large, being denied the glorious name and fame of his father, followed by only a legacy of few Latin words and phrases which kind of tumble out in wrong places and circumstances in his life, contributing nothing. It is so skilfully used in the narrative by Rau Badami that the reader feels irritated, jolted and at times disappointed which becomes misfit for its purpose of use, with a function of filling a void only and nothing else, it is in these moments that we can understand the lack of meaning, a mere engaged, occupied life of Sripathi, floating from one form of existence to another without any proper end or destination. Probably the very nomadic existence provided to Sripathi was the original intention of the author. The image of the 'nomad' which is a kind of celebration of a group of people who can translate the "seemingly illogical space" (Kaplan, 66) of the "desert" into a "track of path . . . without succumbing to the nation-state," as purported by the Western critics as an embodiment of "other" in the spectrum of claims of high-modernist and postmodernist individual bearing the imperial colonial legacies underneath, then according to Heike Harting a 'nomad' is also the one who is an embodiment of sense of dislocation, loss and uncertainty inherent to modernity. As Deleuze and Guattari propose in their concept of "deterritorialization," which also is a means of "reterritorialization," the very approach for Sripathi's character as terming it a diasporic is justified in that most critics' belief that being diasporic restricted one to the seamless neat compartmentalizations within and outside the national boundaries was thwarted, that it didn't mean to be a mandate to be an imperializing factor in host country if one is himself cornered and isolated. That he got disturbed by the changes taking place around him, a minister's likes being responsible for the abolition of wearing turbans among "traffic policemen", and at the same time heaping of piles of debris in front of his home by a gang of thugs, was very much apparent, all these negative effects of globalization added a toll on his mental disposition, and all remained unprotected because he lacked every materialistic thing to execute

his wishes. His only respite was his letters under a pseudo identity "Pro Bono Publico" meaning "on behalf of the public," that would perhaps bring notice to many people the chaotic incidents happening around. His cultural and personal transformation starts the day he moves from Toturpuram to Vancouver to bring her grand-daughter Nandana back, it is only then he becomes doubly diasporic, then he actually grapples with his scenario, at the cost of a dislocation which "unmoors him from the earth after fifty seven years of being tied to it" (Rau Badami, 140). It is his guilt of keeping her daughter away from all the love and affection that tortures him every moment, and he could now understand that "He knew that he could never be sure of anything in the world again, not even his own body" (Rau Badami, 162). A similar feeling that overcame him when he cut Maya out her world, as if it were some deceased limb, unsettling yet always already present, and this was physically affecting him and making him aware of his gradually "dematerializing body" (Harting, n.p.). Harting mentions in her essay that,

The pain itself seems to emulate diasporic movements. Sripathi's vanishing body parts indicate his loss of holistic self-image, while symbolically enacting the ecological decay and political corruption of the nation . . . While Sripathi's physical pain reflects his psychic state of displacement and the decay of his material world . . . [his] body is not merely a receptacle but also a producer of power . . . The dissolving body parts also signal a change of the ways in which Sripathi produces knowledge. No longer can he subscribe to the existence of a single truth with which he judged his daughter's decision and defended his "self-righteous behaviour towards Arun.

Thus Sripathi acknowledges the fact that his body is not merely a product of capitalist power but also a "site of cultural agency" and hence it needs to be the totality of his being the "sum of all that happens in the world around us" (Rau badami, 213). The movement of Sripathi is like the act of finely balancing on tight rope walking of life, which consists of challenging and coming out of conformist and foundationalist terms, and establishing oneself

by not metamorphosing into a “naturalized form of identity” and *The Hero's Walk* suggests that being diasporic is not a culturally given phenomenon rather quoting eminent critic Keya Ganguly's words, “ a mode of operating within a cultural and historical canvas of understandings and misunderstandings about the emergence of a particular [diasporic] subject” (Ganguly. 13).

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***A River Sutra* : Quest for Meaning in Life**

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A River Sutra (1993), the third novel by Gita Mehta, proffers a mythical rendering of Indian spirituality and befittingly corroborates the quintessence of human nature in diverse situations. The backdrop of the holy river *Narmada* mirrors the seamless flow of the narrative where each tale is a rivulet gushing into the ocean of life with a new truth. The novel is a confluence of Hinduism, Jainism and Islam presented through a medley of myths, mysticism and metaphorical ratiocination of legends on the banks of holy *Narmada*. Like other diaspora writers, Gita Mehta has lent a touch of exoticism to Indian way of life and belief system of the East that does not look forward to the West for confirmation. She has written this book privately and has not thought of getting it published outside India but surprisingly, it is one that people have responded to the most. Her effort is to “make Modern India accessible to Westerners and to a whole generation of Indians who have no idea what happened twentyfive years before they were born” (Randomhouse.com). Dividing her time among New York, London and India, Mehta is perhaps uniquely qualified to interpret her homeland for the diverse audience she aspires to. “There is a tremendous richness to living on three continents. The Magic of America is the can-doism; it gives me the belief that anything is possible. Each time I finish a book and think I'll never write another, America makes me think, 'Yeah I'll have another shot'. London's great virtue is that, as the capital of an empire, its libraries have staggering material on India. And because of the

British reticence, it's easy to be alone and write there. My heart is in India- it's home- so when I'm there I don't write, I just let it all seep in through my pores" (Randomhouse.com).

This feeling of absorbing native values and culture predominantly expresses itself in the polyphonic texture of the novel. It has a series of six interlocked stories bound by the thread of one narrator who is a story-teller, translator, and at times, a listener as well. The porous identity of the narrator assumes different character with a new tale. Through the diffusion of multiple voices and multiculturalism, the narrative is transformed into meta-narrative. "A meta-narrative is a global or totalizing cultural narrative scheme which orders and explains knowledge and experience" (Stephen 62-63). The pluralism of the narrative is substantiated by the mythical code of the river *Narmada*. There are many fables about the origin of the *Narmada*. According to one of them, once Lord Shiva, the Destroyer of the Universe, meditated so hard that he started perspiring. His sweat accumulated in a tank and started flowing in the form of a river, the *Narmada*. Legends also claim that the *Narmada* River is older than the river *Ganga*. According to a legend, the river *Ganga*, polluted by millions of people bathing in it, assumes the form of a black cow and comes to the *Narmada* to bathe and cleanse itself in its holy water. The choice of this river as a backdrop lends a unifying and authenticating force to the multiplicity of themes evoked by Mehta. The narrator employed by Mehta follows the narrative technique of the traditional clown-narrator (the 'Vidushka') in the ancient Indian performance art of *Kuttiyattam*:

"The Vidushka can take all kinds of liberties; in fact he is expected to and encouraged to do so. He can indulge in any kind of extravagance, provided he can come back to the main thread of the narrative without losing in his own elaborations. He could turn his narrative into a string of short stories or take one of these stories and lengthen it for hours or days. Thus, the oral narrative can easily achieve the length of a novel- if length is a criterion at all" (*Criterion*: 1986).

The novel begins at a time when the narrator is already retired and has chosen the post at a government rest house situated

on the *Narmada* River. He is a perfect recluse and has been in search of such solitude for a long time. He has already developed a passion for the *Narmada* River which is considered as the daughter of *Shiva*. The narrator is Indian but he endeavours to look through different perspectives offered by a number of characters he comes across. The novel opens with the following lines from *Love Songs of Chandidas*,

"Listen, O brother.
Man is the greatest truth.
Nothing beyond."

The whole of the novel appears as an explanation of these lines. The conflict confronting the mind of the narrator presupposes the clarity of it on the banks of the river *Narmada*. He imagines the ascetics on its river bank and is astonished at their renunciation of human world. This question triggers the first story i.e. 'The Monk's Story'. The Monk had once been one of the richest persons in India. His father owned the diamond mines and he had everything which money could buy. But the glimpse of contentment on a monk's face left him disturbed and in order to possess the same, he left the lavish life of affluence. He admits to the narrator,

"Gradually life of unremitting pleasure ceased to satisfy me, leaving me exhausted from the last indulgence while anticipating the next. At the age of twenty-six, I had already become fatigued by the world, knowing that even at the moment of gratification, the seed of new desire was being sown" (Mehta 29).

This was the first trait of alienation but which altogether hinted at the vacuity of all human efforts. The man (*Ashok*) was given one more chance by his father and was married to a traditional girl who believed in fasting as instructed in Jainism. But after the birth of two children, the vacuum overpowered *Ashok* again and he met holy men and discussed the teachings of *Mahavira*. An old Monk ignited the subdued desires of *Ashoka*. So, he could no longer bear the life as a captive of human desires and renounced. His father spent sixty two millions on the

ceremony of renunciation. Having heard the account of his life, the narrator finds himself all the more embezzled and like a disciple, he reaches his Guru. The role of Guru or the interpreter is played by Tariq Mia, the mullah of a nearby mosque who has the knack of reading the narrator's mind.

To clear the obscurity of narrator's mind, Tariq Mia narrates one more story and this story is related with capacity of human heart to love. Master Mohan, the son of a music teacher suffers the pangs of penury. On the auspicious day of becoming a singer, he loses his voice and finds himself consoling in being a husband of a rich girl. But Master Mohan could never acquire the respect of his family. He was banished from the comforts of a family and spent his life in the attic of his house. Master Mohan would spend his time with Mohammed Sahib, a lover of music who one day made a turning point in his life. He took Master Mohan to the Qawwali singers where he happened to listen to the mesmerizing voice of young Imrat. He was a blind boy and his voice had the touch of the Divine in it. As Master Mohan stood there bewitched by his voice, Imrat's sister came to him and told him the woeful story of her life. The siblings had no home and she would get job only on one condition if she were alone. She begged Master Mohan to help her.

Though he knew well the scarcity of food and abundance of humiliation in his home yet he could not resist the offer of Imrat's sister. He brought Imrat to his home and started giving him lessons in music. They were not tolerated in the home. So, he could take Imrat to a park nearby and would instruct him in music early in the morning. The heavenly magical voice of Imrat cast a spell over people and they would find their admirers waiting for them before they could reach the park. The greedy wife of Master Mohan signed the contract of the great Sahib and forced them to visit him. By the time, Master Mohan has already got voice of Imrat recorded and his voice was getting popular in the market. He could not avoid the avarice of his wife and reached the great Sahib's place-who was so jealous of Imrat's voice that he slit his throat while Imrat was himself intoxicated by the profusion of his voice. Master

Mohan fell into the pit of self guilt and could not face himself till then. On one night, he came to Tariq Mia to hand over the record of Imrat as the departed soul always had a wish to sing on the mosque of Amir Rumi. The swan song of Imrat beautifully evokes the passion of human heart:

“Do not reveal the Truth in a world where
blasphemy prevails

O wondrous source of Mystery

O knower of Secrets”.

and

“In the very spasm of death I see Your face

O, the wonder of my submission.

O, the wonder of Your protection...” (Mehta 88-89).

The murder of Imrat came as a bolt from the blue for the narrator. He had come to Tariq Mia for a solution but a new question was popping up in his mind now. He wanted to know the secret of human heart and the story of Master Mohan perplexed him all the more. He was at his wit's end when Tariq Mia told him that Master Mohan committed suicide in the end. To the queries of the narrator, Tariq Mia replied calmly, “Perhaps he could not exist without loving someone as he had loved the blind child. I don't know the answer little brother. It is only a story about the human heart” (Mehta 91).

The narrator leaves the place of Tariq Mia, engrossed in the entangled stories of the Monk and Master Mohan. The first story dealt with anaesthesia of wealth and the other about hazards of penury. What could be the wish of human heart? With a number of questions in his mind, he reached the guest house where he found another story awaiting. A letter informing the arrival of an executive Nitin Bose was waiting for him. His junior Mr. Chagla, supplied the detail of Bose that the latter was coming there for curing his ailment as he was possessed. He wanted to pray at the banks of the river Narmada and be free of all evil powers. The

narrator developed a curiosity to meet Nitin Bose and the first encounter left him confused. Nitin Bose was addressing himself as a woman, Rima. He was repeatedly singing the songs of tribal women waiting for the union with their lovers. The narrator comes to know about Nitin Bose's life from his diary. It opens up the third perspective of the novel. Nitin was suffering from the desire to be loved and was living a life of loneliness. From the extensive reading of *Puranas* and *Upnishads*, he imagined his lady love, Rima who would visit him only in the darkness of night and would leave him in the light of day. Once Nitin had to go out for a few days, and on his return, he found himself totally in the clutches of his beloved. He started chanting her songs and nights became sleepless. On closing the diary of Nitin Bose, the narrator found himself grappling with one secret of human heart; the capacity to love. If it was natural why he wanted to be free of it? And why was he declared mad?

Dr. Mitra, the scholar on the river Narmada helps the narrator in demystification of the story. But he doubts the medicinal powers of the river Narmada and attaches it to the habit of Indians who want to make every religious thing gigantic. The innumerable legends of the river are discussed. Dr. Mitra focuses on one particular tale: the tale of an Aryan warrior. It is assumed that a four-thousand-year-old Aryan warrior is asleep on the north bank of the Narmada. His name is *Avatihuma*. But now the place has been out of reach of common man because Bandits and all sorts of bad elements live in those parts. The slain head of the immortal still lies there and a swarm of honeybees encircles it. It is a myth that one stung by those bees become immortal himself.

The narrator found himself imprisoned in the labyrinths of eternal doubt. Every move to solve the mystery seemed to be futile. The author surprises with one more tale that comes to the narrator's threshold in the form of an old woman. Mr. Chagla requests the narrator to grant her some room in their guest house as she was on her way to reunite with her lost daughter. The tale she narrated opened a new vista of experience to him. She had come from Shahbag and belonged to the family of the Courtesan. She

told the narrator about the expensive gifts received by their family from the Nawaabs and took pride in reporting their great love of music and art. After the decline of that period, she started inculcating the same musical tastes in her daughter. Her eyes widened with surprise and happiness while giving details of her daughter's beauty and modesty. She had safeguarded her daughter by not sending her anywhere to perform. But at the age of seventeen, she was forced by the Member of Parliament of her region to let her daughter perform at his meeting for election. She took her daughter to Delhi for performance but had a premonition of losing her. True to her fears, she was abducted by Rahul Singh, the notorious criminal of the valley. Now, she was on her way to meet her.

When the old lady left in the morning, the narrator received a new guest, the daughter of the courtesan. She related to the narrator a bewitching tale of love, revenge and possession. Through her narrator, he came to know how Rahul Singh had won the heart of the courtesan. In one of his expeditions to please her, he entered the market place and was recognized by the police and was ultimately killed. Now, the beautiful courtesan wanted the arms that have somehow reached the narrator as they were found abandoned near the guest house. Before he could help the girl, the police reaches there. She escapes from there but after meeting her mother, she loses herself in the tides of the Narmada.

The whirlpool of doubts was churning at top speed. The doubts of the narrator were multiplying and he found himself standing face to face with an ugly woman who seemed to despise almost everything. Through his conversation with her, the narrator realized that she had been schooled in music but something tragic had left her oblivious to the appeal of music. Juxtaposing the tale of beauty and fame of the courtesan, this woman was afflicted with human, had been schooled in music by her father (a great musician) and he has instructed a very handsome man on one condition only that he would accept his daughter in marriage. Eventually, he left her and returned all the presents sent to him by the family of the girl. The deception robbed

the girl of all hopes and desires and she ended hating music which once had been the cordial link between herself and her lover. When the narrator approached Tariq Mia with his tale, he felt sympathy for him, not for the daughter of musician. He again declared that the narrator knew a little about the world. His complacency annoyed the narrator because he felt the old Mullah had no idea of respect, influence and power the narrator once had enjoyed as a civil servant. But the old Mullah laughed at his indignation and declared, "I still say you should envy your musician, not pity her. Think of your misfortune. To hear of love without ever having melted in its embrace. To acknowledge beauty with your eyes and never carry its image in your soul. Sing with me if you dare, "O Beloved, can you not see/Only Love disfigures me" (Mehta 229).

Tariq Mia had one more tale to clear the haze of the narrator. This last tale centres on the river Narmada and he asks the narrator to imagine Narmada as a woman and experience the band with it. The last tale was about the minstrel who sing songs of the Narmada for the Naga Baba. It told the story of a young girl who was abandoned by her parents and rescued by the Naga Baba on the auspicious day of Shivratri. Nobody denied alms to the Naga Babas on that night. He asked that girl in alms and adopted her took her along with himself to the seclusion of caves and taught her music and the mystical song of the Sadhu and schooled her in language of elements. She was given a new name Uma. She is the same girl who reaches the narrator's place towards the end of the novel and sings various songs of Narmada.

She introduced to the narrator his guests (Professor Shankar and a group of research fellows or archaeologists) the reason of Narmada's birth. The river descended on earth after hearing the requests of the Sages and is known as *kirpa* or Grace itself. It is also known as *Surasa* or the bold soul, *Rewa* or the leaping one. Shiva called it delight and named it *Narmada*. The next songs of the girl presented *Narmada* as a beautiful woman who had tempted the ascetics and Gods even. She became the life-giver and a symbol of fertility. She was twice-born, once from penance and once from love. Her songs extolled Narmada so much that it just

merged it with the creator. It appeared before the narrator as eternal beauty, untouched by the callous hands of time and destruction.

"You were present at the Creation
By Shiva's command you alone will remain
At the Destruction" (Mehta 277).

At the end of her songs, the girl touched the feet of Professor Shankar and addressed him as Naga Baba. The narrator was dumbfounded and wanted an explanation of it. But he observed the narrator's agitation with polite indifference and replied, "I have no great truths to share, my friend. I told you, I am only a man" (Mehta 281).

The narrator was further puzzled by this answer. He could not understand that Prof. Shankar had been through such a difficult lie just to realize that he was a man. The party left the guest house and the narrator kept standing on the terrace of the guest house musing over the meaning of whatever he has heard from Prof. Shankar.

Mehta has left the reader with a set of six interlocked stories in the end. Each tale is just in opposite to the previous one. The narrator is a symbol of a quester, in search of meaning of life. The intricate design of the novel through the labyrinths of all the tales, points at the essential incomprehensible nature of life itself. The monk's story showed the negative effect of wealth, Master Mohan's that of penury, Nitin Bose's story affirmed the desire to be loved, the courtesan came from a world of love, revenge and music, the musician's daughter was also afflicted with the desire to be loved and the last story of Minstrel confirmed the value of companionship in life Tariq Mia teased the narrator many times because of his lack of experience in life. In other words, affliction was better than loneliness.

The story ends in a circle. It started with lines from the love songs of Chandidas and ended. The continuous flow of the narrative embodies the flow of life (on the same remarks by Prof. Shankar). Life is a journey. Those who look for meaning in this

journey try to interrupt its flow which is not possible. All the stories discussed above deal with the capacity of human heart to love. Those who stand by the side of the river and want to experience the thrill of flowing water, always end like the narrator. The journey of life is metaphorically presented by the flow of the river, Narmada. Many legends and myths live at its bank. Similarly, diverse philosophers have interpreted life in diverse contexts and situations but the truth of life lies in experiencing it. Desire, love, pride and hatred can only be experienced. The narrator remains at the receiving end, listening and listening endlessly but he is not able to reach anywhere. He could not solve the puzzle with which he started his mental journey. Perhaps, the meaning of it is nowhere to be found. The meaning of life is in journey itself, not in destination. Mehta makes the reader conscious of this fact in the ending of the novel when the narrator finds himself looking at the flow of the river. All the myths merge and float in the source, Narmada.

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M. G. Vassanji's *No New Land* : A Journey of Cultural Violation and Adaptation

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This paper proposes to analyze the novel *No New Land* by M. G. Vassanji closely, as it unveils many less accounted for and ignored pathos of Asian immigrant communities in the new lands to which they immigrate and place high hopes on. *No New Land* is voice of the millions of Asians who were forced to leave East Africa for Canada and other Western countries in the post-colonial times. It represents the plight of an immigrant who is doubly displaced from his or her culture, community and society. The position of Indian trader communities in East Africa came under the scanner of native racialists due to their affiliation with the colonizers. They were forced to immigrate to western countries especially Canada, the immigration laws being easier there. *No New Land* accounts for the experiences of these Indian immigrants in the Canadian culture and society, which is not at all a pleasant dream. "The ironies, the pathos and the hardships of having to live between two worlds, neither of which provides the harmony of a life that the mind imagines and craves for . . ." (Kanaganayam 1999: 200), is brought forth by Vassanji through the story of Nurdin Lalani. It narrates the experiences of immigrants who were forced into a more advanced and modern culture. The central theme of the novel is alienation from the Canadian surrounding and adaptation into new setting, but process of adaptation and acculturation leads to cultural violation of the Indian values and traditions. The

negation of own roots is the major challenge and traumatic experience for the Indian immigrants. Rightly remarked,

The identity of being Indian cannot be shaken off, even if India is a lost paradise or an unknown territory, even if the individual has discarded all recognizable traces of Indianness. Self and identity may, at times, work contrary to each other thus acknowledging the split in the individual's life (Jain 2005: 86).

The central axis of the novel is the story of Nurdin Lalani and his family. Nurdin faces many situations in Canada which lead to his embarrassment and consequent alienation in a much advanced society. He tries hard to adapt in the new setting but at the same time he feels the pressure of his community to keep intact his faith and culture. The culture and setting of Canada casts an equal and opposite pull on Nurdin for survival. Before arriving to Canada his family was of the view of the lavish grandeur of Canada. The novel reveals various situations and circumstances which lead to disillusionment and alienation. The grave conflict between Nurdin's culture and Canadian culture are brought out realistically by Vassanji. The work highlights the dilemma of a family that has to confront the issue of identity crisis with its already much hybrid identity. In Indian society as we know and in the African society as we read, the constant allurements for West is a passion. West signifies success, hope, prosperity and progress. The disillusionment and non-acceptance by the White world shatters the immigrant, who reaches the land after spending much of his wealth, is quite distressing and painful. This Western dream does not belong to Lalani family alone but there are still several Indian youth who every year reach the shores of Canada, England, America and other western countries.

The novel is divided into eighteen small chapters which account for Nurdin's life and various phases he undergoes during his journey toward acculturation, which in the end seems to be a never ending and futile saga of cultural violation. The novel opens into a Canadian setting where Lalani family lives in Don Valley, Rosecliffe Park, which is inhabited by many other Asian immigrants like them. The place is quite crowded and the elevators

seem jammed all the time. Nurdin Lalani lived there with his wife Zera and two teenage children, girl Fatima and son Hanif. Lalani mostly caught up in a racial trap returns home sad and failed. He remembers his past and his roots, which are indeed inseparable from any human being's present and future, for "We are but creatures of our origins, and however stalwartly we march forward, paving new roads, seeking new world, the ghosts from our pasts stand not far behind and are not easily shaken off (NNL: 9). Through the story of Nurdin Lalani, Vassanji reveals many facets of Indian trader community named as Dukawalaha which belongs to Shamsi sect. They were quite successful in preservation of their religion and culture in East Africa, before it gained independence. But after independence the conditions changed and living became quite tough under the constant fear of being robbed off by the native blacks. Riots against Arabs and Asians became a common scene in the newly independent Africa, forcing them to seek new home.

The place where Nurdin was born and brought up is Tanzania. Nurdin's father Haji Lalani was a God-fearing man; he was one of the Indian shopkeepers who were settled in East Africa. He kept his religion and culture alive in new land-East Africa. "He could have taken into his protection a discarded slave woman without a home and fathered a half-breed or two to join the small band that already made up some of the town's youth. Instead he prayed and fasted and became friendly with the fathers at the German Catholic Mission" (NNL: 13). Haji had three sons, Akber, Nurdin and Shamsu. Haji was a strict taskmaster and didn't do anything outside his faith. He married off his son Akber to a local girl of the same community after it was discovered that he was having an affair with a Hindu low caste girl. Akber was sent off to Belgian Congo after marriage. Nurdin was an average looking boy, who had failed in school. He was a meek fellow, who worked as a sales boy in shoe shop. He was also married off to a religious girl Zera, though Nurdin had always wanted a modern stylish girl as a wife. Zera had long talks of religion and philosophy with her father-in-law Haji. Haji died due to a heart attack one day. The

political disorder and turmoil grew meanwhile, forcing Asians to look for a new shelter. The next nomadic journey was awaiting Nurdin and his family also like other Asian immigrants living in East Africa. Dar, their very own and dear Dar was to be left and Canada was to be embraced. Canada was open and, for the rich, America too. Thus began a run on Canada. Haji Lalani thoughts here aptly symbolize the nomadic life of Asian immigrants who seem to be on the constant run for "home".

Haji Lalani, who in his last days would sit at the ocean looking towards the land of his birth with a twinge of nostalgia ("After all, we've brought India with us"), died believing he had found a new country for his decedents. Two years later, his middle son, with his own family, set off for yet another continent (NNL: 30).

Finally, owing to the constant fear of being chipped off by blacks, Nurdin and Zera along with their two children boarded their first flight ever in an airplane, to Canada, with a feeling of butterflies in their stomachs. The plot of coming ill-fate and circumstances started giving knock in the flight itself. The mindset of being an inferior race from an inferior country, began to trouble the easiness with which they had lived for so many years in East Africa. The pressure to prove them as wiser and modern, at par with the Western culture, had already begun as an ordeal in the flight.

The embarrassments: to be told like a child how to fasten seat belts and open trays and turn the reading lights on; searching for the toilets, trailing European passengers with your eyes... going there and fumbling with the bolts, the hostess lingering to look on and not helping... And later from the Europeans: the toilets are dirty. Goodness was Canada going to be like this: every step a mystery and trap, fraught with belittling embarrassments, and people waiting to show you up (NNL: 32).

Apprehensions of Nurdin regarding Canada were turning quite true, at least for him. The flight on which Nurdin Lalani and his family were aboard, stopped at London. The another aspect which Vassanji made noticed in *No New Land* is that during the

time of political turmoil and the uprootment of Asian communities from British- East African colonies, the British Empire kept its immigrant laws strict against the Asians.

Finally, "I am sorry, sir, you are refused permission to land in the United Kingdom." Words that did not make sense, that cut deeply, for their sheer obstinate wrongness, their boot-like sensitivity. A rubber stamp on their passport to deter future attempted visits... In Montreal, the immigration official smiled genially at them. "Welcome to Canada (NNL:34). The Lalani family was not granted permission to see London during their short halt at the city during flight to Canada, due to their mixed identity of being Afro-Asians. Whereas the immigration laws were comparatively gentler in Canada, the result was more immigration to Canada leading to the present multicultural texture of the Canadian society. Canada, the land of dreams, for millions of uprooted immigrants like them was awaiting Lalani family. As they landed on the soil of the new land, the feeling of being a stranger, a misfit in new land and an alien weather surrounded them. The chilling winds and cold weather was enough to disturb their already dwindling mind. Vassanji's superb skills as a writer touch its zenith in the following lines. The below mentioned lines are symbolic also; they reveal the unwelcoming environment of new land. The condition described above touches deeper areas of the reader's heart. "Toes freezing, faces partly paralyzed, eyes tearing, they stood outside, stood hunched. The two children were moaning and shivering, weeping, hiding behind adult coats, creating fresh pockets and exposing fresher areas of anatomy for the wind to snatch at. (NNL: 35)

The East African-Asian immigrants carried meager monetary resources along with them. Nurdin and family were received by his wife Zera's sister Roshan and her husband Abdul. Nurdin converted fare of taxi from dollars to shillings and finally decided to board a bus to Roshan's apartment. Apartment was very well furnished. They felt respite but it was short-lived. Soon the Roshan and Abdul began to quarrel over Nurdin and family's stay. The apartment seemed suffocating to Abdul and his children

in the presence of Nurdin and his children. Zera realized that relations are also of not much help in this Western modern country. They will have to hasten up their search for a job and some place to live. They found a moderate apartment and their complete money went off in paying the first month's rent. Zera got a job as a receptionist after few tries, but Nurdin could not find job. Then started the depression building up inside Nurdin's mind. The more he failed in getting job with the passing time, more his male ego was hurt and he felt useless in his own house, resulting in family quarrels. Nurdin felt belittled and humiliated in each and every aspect in new land Canada also, he felt that he was a failure at school, failure at business in Dar and was failure now also in the new land. Hence, Canada may be a new land for others, but not for him. Symbolically also immigrant's fear of losing all, fear of being thrashed out of the host country any time and fear of losing own culture remain same whether it is Dar es Salaam or Canada. There is no new land for them, which can embrace them completely, the alienation remains always. Adaptation which is to be sought and got is always at the cost of cultural violation.

Taking refuge in donut shops, using precious change to make phone calls doomed by the first word, the accent. I am a salesman, I was a salesman. Just give me a chance. Why don't they understand we can do the job. "Canadian experience" is the trump they always call, against which you have no answer. Or rather you have answers, dozens, but whom to tell except fellow immigrants at Sixty-nine. You try different accents, practice idioms, buy shoes to raise your height. Deodorize yourself silly (NNL: 44).

With Zera's job Nurdin's family managed to furnish their accommodation quite decently. The place where they lived provided a little respite from other places also, because of the familiarity it bred. Many Asian immigrants lived there. Sixty-nine Rosecliff is portrayed as a perfect showcase of Canada's multicultural rubric by Vassanji. He portrays characters of fictional Shamis community as clinging hard to maintain their culture and roots. Immigrants create their small own old world, the difference lies in the outer setting only. The language, religious practices,

dresses and food are the same Indian. The power of common culture strongly binds them in a multicultural country like Canada. "You can buy halal meat now, from Ram Deen, an Asian man from Caribbean. You knock on the door decorated with two suras from the Quran in Arabic calligraphy and one in English (NNL: 62). An immigrant may weave his own illusionist old world, like the Asian immigrant residents of Sixty-nine Rosecliff, where Nurdin and family lived, but when they step out of this setting, the wide sea of strange and alien country, language and culture surrounds him. The hunt for a job in this wide strange country became extremely difficult day after day for Nurdin. In such moments of despair Nurdin would go downstairs to the A-T shop for chit-chat with fellow Dar immigrants. The A-T shop is symbolically used by Vassanji in *No New Land*. This shop is a place where Indian Dukawallah's get together. They talk about their interests, religion, culture and roots. The shop is less a tea shop and more a place where people belonging to same community find ventilation of their nostalgia. The purpose of this tea shop is exactly the same as was of the famous A-T shop in Dar i.e. to unite people and give them some ventilation and relief from their nostalgia. This time the immigrants from Asian community visiting the shop not only discuss India but also Dar. The double displacement resulting in a double baggage of nostalgia is carried over unconsciously by the immigrants to Canada. The shop is also symbolic of the way immigrants try to replicate their culture and lost land in the new environs.

In *No New Land* another important inference that is drawn by Vassanji, is that younger generation and children adapted very well to the Western culture. This can be attributed to their young and quick minds as well as freedom the Canada provided. Western culture is more open and free as compared to the Indian; hence it is a general tendency of children to develop more affinity to the new culture forgetting the shackles of an orthodox upbringing. "Fatima, who went to school and spoke English with an accent neither of her parents could even move their mouths to imitate, now had a mind of her own" (NNL: 67). The free adaptation to a

modern culture gives insecurity to parents, which is regarded as putting their own culture and values at stake.

Jamal, a young smart advocate developed friendship with Nurdin Lalani's family, soon after their Dar connection was discovered. Jamal was a smart and worldly-wise man with his connections in Canada and Dar. Jamal was the man who later helped Nurdin to come out of the worst crisis of his life. Nanji, his friend was a philosophic person by nature and a university professor by profession. Jamal and Nanji were good friends and Nurdin family also came in close family ties with Nanji. Jamal and Nanji discussed on the various issues. This close-knit company of Jamal, Nanji and Lalani family all belonging to Dar and India, often discussed their pasts and took discussions to a nostalgic turn. The presence of past and Dar remained always in the mind of Afro-Asian immigrants. Zera held her roots and past close to her heart more than Nurdin, she was better adjusted in Canadian surrounding as compared to her husband Nurdin, and she also preserved her religion and culture better than Nurdin. Nurdin's failure at getting a regular job depressed him. He had tried all odd jobs that are meant for Asians in the West. His self-esteem fell down day by day. He grabbed whatever menial job came his way. His worries were true worries of a middle aged family man, whose responsibilities grew with time. He compared the better times they had in Dar. Canada didn't turn up the way he had imagined. Life of Nurdin became burdensome. Vassanji has thrown light on the lifestyle of Indian trader immigrants which was quite lavish in colonial East Africa. During colonial times the money flew to their kitties, but after independence of Africa, the great betrayal uprooted them, as they were forced to immigrate to Canada and other western countries. They had to again carve niche for themselves, which seemed herculean task in the racist Western world.

Uprooting and re-rooting brought immense pain and hardships to these immigrants that have not been accounted for in any chronicle of the time but only in the writings of writers like M G Vassanji, who have themselves experienced this traumatic experience.

Back home even your glass of water was brought by a servant. A servant to fetch you from school, to hold your bag... In Canada. He had carried cases on his back the likes of which he would have thought he could not even move an inch; he had pressed trousers, cooked French fries, swept and mopped floors. You could weep. But the children wanted a car, a brand-new Chevy, to go to Wasaga Beach... (NNL: 89).

Adaptation to the Western culture and societies is not at all easy, racial discrimination surfaces out as one major challenge for immigrants as brought out by Vassanji in his writings. Racial discrimination and killings form part of international news every now and then. Racism is the harsh reality of the developed Western world, which puts a blemish on its entire dazzle. Despite of all big claims by Western politicians of being secular and democratic, the racial discrimination and killings confront the Asian students and immigrants frequently. Nurdin Lalani was no exception to this. The situation of job crisis which Nurdin faced was complicated more by the racial killings and riots. The fear of insecurity loomed large on all the Asian immigrants. Nanji on his way back home was the witness of this racial hatred, when he had a narrow escape, but another fellow Afro-Asian immigrant Esmail suffered the wrath.

Esmail, a little over average height, looking taller for the thick-soled shoes, which many Dar men wore for that purpose, and a very conspicuous beige Kaunda suit, which they had all bought in a frenzy of African patriotism in Dar but now wore proudly in Toronto to set themselves apart...The three louts (blonde bullies) had come up behind Esmail and began their abuse. "Paki one of them shouted joyfully...Perhaps Esmail had answered them back, or perhaps his silence simply goaded the gloating, prancing youths beyond control...Esmail, punched in the stomach, had been thrown down and was crying in horrible, pathetic moans, "Save, save me, I have done nothing" (NNL: 96).

Through his novels like *No New Land* Vassanji has sent a message to the world regarding problems of Asian immigrants. He has voiced the problems that an immigrant especially colonization victim-immigrant has to face. The writer writes his own life in a

way, whether it is a fiction or non-fiction. Vassanji himself being part of the traumatic immigration has realistically represented the pathetic conditions and worries of an Asian immigrant in *No New Land*, where even multi-cultural Canada doesn't seem to be any new or a stable land. Constant fear of being questioned for their identity becomes integral part the immigrant's existence.

Nanji's reasons for coming to Canada highlight the discriminating attitude of Western world especially America and UK. Nanji's past like that of Nurdin was that of alone, adrift and floating individual. His reminiscences about how he was barred from visiting New York reflect the discriminating and rude attitude of these Western countries. The news of racial attack on Esmail spread among the Asian immigrant community like a fire. The close-knit Asian immigrant community came closer. Soon the politics on this incident grew. Banners were up and immigrants raised their voices demanding security in this new land. Jamal was the leader of this uprising. He addressed the fellow immigrants in a most convincing way. "Don't worry. Your brother will go down in history. His suffering will not have been in vain. He is first and last. From now on we will fight back. . . . "The blacks kicked us out, now the whites will do the same. . . . Where do we go from here?" (NNL: 103).

The trouble with these racial discriminations and riots is that these pose tough question before an immigrant about his identity and nationality. Again, he is reminded of his existence in limbo. The twice immigrants like Esmail and other characters of *No New Land* are living in an over-hyphenated existence. They are Asians by ancestry, Africans by birth and Canadian by citizenship. The immigrants who immigrated from Dar feel attached to Dar only, India falls after Dar for them in priority and emotional attachment. They are labeled as "Pakis", despite of the fact that they have no relationship with Pakistan. "A woman cut in impatiently. "Why doesn't someone tell these Canadians we are not Pakis. I have never been to Pakistan, have you been to Pakistan? Tell them we are East Africans" (NNL: 104).

The importance of Dar in the fictional characters created

by Vassanji, echo his own voice. These immigrants feel more close to Dar es Salaam, emphasizing the fact of human existence that one feels closest to one's place of birth and the place where one spends his childhood. This same thing finds ratification in one of the interviews of Vassanji, where he has accepted that he finds himself closest to Dar.

I am more comfortable defining myself in terms of my locale and city. That war *Dar es Salaam* would be probably the first place that figures as home. Every writer, I think, belongs to his city, to the streets and his urban landscape, assuming (my italics for emphasis) he is part of an urban ethos. Another place I could call home in that sense would be Toronto in Canada (Dasgupta 2000: np)

This incident of racial hatred marked a new beginning in the lives of Dar immigrants. Their way of thinking in perceiving the Canada- a dreamland, changed. The support they were getting from other fellow immigrants was not of their use. They were not Asians or Pakistanis, but were from Dar. Nobody wanted to listen to them, and understand such intricacy of their hyphenated existence. The processions didn't attract them much now.

A Paki rally was not really their cup of tea – weren't they from Africa? A few of them went to the meeting, to see what it was all about. It seemed that they were being forced into an identity they didn't care for . . . None of them seemed to realize, or care, that Esmail belonged to them, their particular East African Asian Shamsi community (NNL: 109).

'Multi-culturalism' is termed as 'multi-vulturalism' in the rally which was organized by Asians especially Indians and Pakistanis. It seemed more of a party and get-together, than a rally to raise issues of immigrants and racial discrimination. The politics was cooked hot on this issue. Realization came to these immigrants from Dar, that nobody is willing to understand their peculiar identity. In Canada they are categorized according to their color and all were Asians, whether Indian or Pakistani or Sri Lankan or Afro-Asians, they all fell into the common category of brown people. Africans are simply blacks. Due to the same melanin levels

of their skin these immigrants from Dar were forced along with brown people. Their willingness or non-willingness to be categorized along with brown people of Asia hardly mattered to anyone. The categorization of all brown immigrants by not respecting their individual (Indian, Sri Lankan etc) or hyphenated (Afro-Asian) cultural identity, stakes their existence in Western world at once. It imposes a question of falsehood on their cultural identity at once and gives impetus to colour based racism.

After three years of the stay at Canada, Lalani children were quite Canadian in their accent and ways. They mingled well in the Canadian culture. On contrary, their father, Nurdin, was not able to get a job. A twist of events took place and Nurdin helped one distressed man Mohan and his pregnant wife by allowing them to stay in his apartment overnight. Later, man was so thankful to Nurdin that he helped him to get a job. Nurdin got a job as an Errand boy in Ontario Addiction Centre. Mohan's brother Romesh worked there. Nurdin got well with Romesh, who was a friendly fellow. One day during a lunch break Romesh bought sausage for both of them, Nurdin was in the middle of his lunch when it was discovered during the conversation that sausage was made up of, much prohibited by Muslim religious faith, pork. Nurdin felt shattered, he felt dirty and sinful. He had violated his culture and teachings of the religion. The void and spiritual crisis begins to engulf Nurdin. This cultural violation ripped apart peace of Nurdin.

Vassanji has also highlighted in *No New Land* that our culture is so much inter-twined in our daily routines that it becomes a habit, whether in the way we dress or we eat. To follow these habits is easier and natural in the native land where the same culture surrounds the person, but for immigrant it becomes extremely difficult to upkeep these signifiers of culture. The vast sea of alien and strange culture surrounds the cultural cocoon weaved by the immigrant community. This cocoon is not diffusion proof and is perforated, as cultures are always dynamic; consequently the alien culture begins to creep in this cultural cocoon. The unavoidable mixing of two cultures and consequent

overtaking by the 'alien' dominant culture leads to frustration in the immigrant, where in sprouts the guilt of betrayal and sin. Nurdin begins to feel that he has no escape from the vast undercurrents Canadian cultural sea, he compromises by surrendering himself to the dominant cultural pulls. The result is painful and shattering. The depression finds its way into his mind and he closes his eyes to psychological decay he feels inside.

The people of native root countries like India and Pakistan from where these immigrants or their ancestors migrated have progressed from the cultural primitiveness and they have naturally moved ahead, feeling no guilt or feeling of betrayal. They are free from responsibility of perseverance of their culture, as they live in a homogenous culture, but these immigrants have not lost their basic clinging to root culture, they stand where they left India many years ago. Hence for the mixing of Western culture, they feel guilty. They place themselves in roles of self appointed preservers of culture and religion. Aptly remarked,

Unfortunately, the homeland that the diasporic sensibility reconstructs is not the real one. It is frozen in time, frozen at the moment when the first step is taken out of its boundaries into the outside world. It does not grow, it does not evolve... As a result, the diasporic Indian community sometimes becomes more traditional than its rooted counterpart in the country of its origin (Jaidka 2005: 23).

Thus younger generation feels pressure of two opposite pulls that are exercised on them, one by their parents and one by the surroundings in which they live. Their situation becomes highly perplexing. Nurdin begins to take more of Western culture, his sins against his own faith grew and so does his guilt. His life became chaotic, he contemplated that the things which seemed so unnatural and not-imaginable to him in Dar, are now very natural part of his new surroundings. The old-people homes, increasing divorces, free sex-life, the very features of Canadian culture and society became familiar to him.

As the void inside Nurdin grew he felt an urge to fill this void, a natural human tendency. He looked forward to companionship from his wife, Zera, whom he still found very

attractive. But Zera was too much religious and pious for Nurdin, contrary to his sinful self. He became distant emotionally and physically to her, more due to his guilt of having consumed pork. Unable to fill his void and find solace for his sins through emotional or physical involvement with his wife, Nurdin started looking out for outer sources to fill up this vacancy inside him which has been created inside him due the loss of his culture. His sexual fantasies grew.

Nurdin's lusty eye, he had discovered, hovered not only on the ample but forbidden body of his wife – which God would surely excuse – but on practically all women, it seemed . . . Later, after witnessing such a vision, he would be overcome by bouts of guilt. The picture on the wall fixing him with its eyes, reminded him of that hymn, “Lust and anger, those two you shall avoid.” . . . Nurdin's problem was lust . . . Hell will have scorpions as large as camels. And sinful will cry in anguish, mercy, mercy (NNL: 142).

The picture of his father hanging on the wall is symbolic, which often haunts Nurdin Lalani. It symbolizes the baggage of culture and past that an immigrant carries with him. Though Nurdin had not committed any adultery yet, he felt sinful and ashamed of his unreligious behavior. He is reminded by the picture again and again that he belonged to some other corner of the world which does not permit what this new land, Canada, offers to him.

Despite of realization he goes on doing all that his culture and faith denied. Cultural walls are highly perforated, how much so ever one may try hard to avoid this mixing of cultures, it does take place. The environs around Nurdin played an important role in his committing sins toward his faith. Nurdin who was once a timid, god-fearing and more of a father-fearing man in Dar, felt no force working upon him now in an alien society. To impose one's own force and limits upon one-self is extremely difficult. Nurdin began drinking beer also. Nurdin's vagueness and crossing cultural boundaries is attributed the infinite void and anxiety that is created into immigrant's psyche, due to displacement.

Vassanji has clearly focussed on the fact that taking a flight

and reaching a new place or new country or a new continent is easy and a matter of hours. Only a setting is changed, the background or weather conditions are changed. But to accept a new culture is very tough, it may take another life-time to mingle-up. Some people adapt and live happily, some people are forced to adapt and they are shattered as they are laden with tones of guilt. They are morally thrown into pieces; they could not change their basic selves for example the protagonist Nurdin Lalani of *No New Land*. In Indian culture prohibitions dominate whereas in Western culture openness and freedom dominates. Equal and opposite pull is reason enough to shatter existence of immigrants like Nurdin in a Western society.

Sex, the display of which is much prohibited by the faith to which Nurdin belonged, was free and quite open in Canada for him. Nurdin goes relentless in this newly found freedom. His animal instinct overcomes his human instinct, he forgets about his culture, wife and the holy Book. Along with Romesh he starts visiting sex-booths where real sex was shown on the payment basis in peep shows. One day Nurdin meets Sushila, by chance in a drug addiction center where she had been admitted. Sushila was daughter of Hindu cobbler, who was once their neighbor in Dar. He immediately clicked with her as she was having attractive figure in which Nurdin was most interested. She also talked freely with Nurdin and he realized that he was interested in her. He had found a soul-mate in her. He was more open in emotional expression to her than he was open to his wife Zera. Nurdin started feeling more and more dejected and alone at home. His children became more alien to him. “Gone were the days of fullness of heart, the sense of wholeness at having children. . . But this country had taken his children away, and he felt distanced, rejected by them” (NNL: 166). Vassanji unveils the saga of loss that an immigrant's life becomes, he loses his anchorage. The existence shorn off from cultural roots becomes truly a floating existence.

Children of these immigrants get distanced from their roots and origins, so much so that they feel ashamed of their past. Though the parents try their best to keep them close to their faith

and culture, by creating a mini Dar in Canada; children drift into the wide sea of western culture. "Of course, the Shamsis of Dar had recreated their community life in Toronto: the mosques, the neighbourhoods, the clubs, and the associations . . . Their Dar, however close they tried to make it to the original, was not quite the same (NNL: 171). The situation of immigrants, especially double immigrants that Vassanji has portrayed in *No New Land* seems very confusing to understand. Their origins are Indian, they are practically preserving Indian culture, their language is Gujarati-Swahili-English mix and they remember nostalgically Dar not India in Canada. They do not clearly belong to any one side; such an existence is not only painful to live but is also very complicated to understand as a reader. The desire of immigrants is to be recognized, like all human beings; recognition of their own mixed identity and culture. They are not at all Pakis as are referred by the bullies who attacked Esmail. The struggles to exhort own identity, which is not easy to articulate, is a challenge of an immigrant that Vassanji has brought forth through the story of Nurdin.

Vassanji highlights the vulnerability of an immigrant through the life of Nurdin. The major crisis that Nurdin faced was that of wrong accusation by a blonde girl, when Nurdin's job was running as usual as an Errand boy at Ontario Addiction Centre a fateful day comes when he was going to be doomed. As he was doing his regular chores of loading in the basement level, he suddenly heard crying sounds of a blonde girl sitting with her head down. Her face was puffy and red. Nurdin was not fully aware of the metro world yet, he instinctively hurried toward her and he asked her many times about reasons for her crying so much, but as he came closer to her, he for a fraction of second forgot his purpose. He became aware of her white attractive body. He soon realized his fault and came out of that weak moment asking again reasons for her crying. But she started howling and accused him of attempting rape. Nurdin was astonished and nervous. A case was registered against him without listening to him. The world lay upside down before him now.

He had heard long ago that in America you did not touch a

person even if they were dying and needed help. Why should Canada be different. He should have known better (NNL: 181).

The different places work differently. In metro cities one can't be foolish like Nurdin, though human concise says that we should help the needy, but the ill-fated incident which took place with Nurdin, was partly due to racism also. He should have called the police or his boss before coming closer, but Nurdin was not aware of the cautiousness he should have known in the new place. Nurdin was already in a state of depression and this case destabilized him more. The attitude of Jamal, Romesh and Nanji seemed to have changed for him; they somewhere felt that Nurdin may have committed the crime. Nurdin felt disappointed as he seemed to have built no trust, neither in the hearts of his family nor friends. He was not able to instill values in his children too. Nurdin's worry regarding the accusation against him brought to his knowledge that he had to learn the Canadian ways, like his children if he wanted to survive. His life becomes a symbol of conflict between an individual and society.

Nurdin Lalani is the perfect example of individual struggling for identity in new land which is in fact no new land. He is alien from the Western culture and also is alienated from his own community and culture in the process of adapting in new surroundings. Racism, cultural-conflict and individual struggle are the main focus in *No New Land*. Rightly said, "*No New Land* is a seminal postcolonial novel that fore-grounds the voice of the margins without apology or rancor. Problematizing our perception of nation and identity" (Asnani 1998: 80). Nurdin's life is an apt representation of the post-colonial theme of "in-betweenness" with reference to color, culture and identity. *No New Land* forms excellent reading in a post-colonial perspective, where deep seated effects of colonization are studied to the best. The main argument that Indian Diaspora today poses to world politics is mouth-pieced by Vassanji through *No New Land*. The Canada though is a land of opportunities, at the same time it becomes a space of cultural dislocation. The journey of adaptation becomes a journey of cultural violation in a true sense.

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Portrayal of Empress Nur Jahan in Indu Sundaresan's *The Twentieth Wife*

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An expatriate Indian writer seeking to connect to her roots, Indu Sundaresan pored over books pertaining to Indian history and culture and was fascinated by the character of Nur Jahan and, drawing on diverse sources, wrote two novels on her life- *The Twentieth Wife* and *The Feast of Roses*, skillfully weaving the enchanting tale of this charming, dynamic, exceptionally beautiful, highly educated and extremely ambitious Mughal Queen, a tale that had long remained suppressed and muted in the dominant patrilineal discourse of history. Sundaresan, being a woman herself, excavates history which has little to say about Nur Jahan and then goes on to bring forth her character in such a way that she has the agency to dictate the fortunes of an empire. The present paper focuses on *The Twentieth Wife* that traces the life of Mehrunnisa from her birth to the time she marries Jahangir and is bestowed with the name 'Nur Jahan'. Her accomplishments as a queen as well as her downfall after Jahangir's death have been dealt with in *The Feast of Roses*.

The exclusionary 'masculinist' grand narrative of history has been opened to substantial modifications, moving from dynastic and empire-centric approach to the analysis of institutions and structures. A certain disquiet has been expressed with the standardized approaches to history with deep skepticism towards all notions of historical 'truths'. The problem with historical narrative, as Hayden White and other recent theorists of history have pointed out, is that, while it proceeds from

empirically validated facts or events, it necessarily requires imaginative strategies to place them in a coherent story. Therefore, a fictional element willy-nilly enters into all historical discourse. The blurring of boundaries between fact and fiction as well as history and literature has opened new avenues for the reconfiguration of the past, highlighting the multipolarities and multidimensionalities of the historical narrative.

The issue of representation has been of paramount importance in historical fiction of any kind. Inherent in the study of women's history is the belief that traditional recordings of history have minimized or simply ignored the contributions of women, their feats and accomplishments. Georg G. Iggers in his book *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* points out the limitations of the elitist approach of traditional history and the emergence of new ways of writing history from alternate points of view. He observes that, "The newer histories indeed challenged the traditional historiography, which had concentrated on political and social elites, and demanded the inclusion of those segments of the population that had long been neglected. They offered "a history from below," which not only included women but also introduced a feminist perspective" (7).

With history being a lopsided narrative focusing on just the male rulers and warriors, a resounding silence seems to engulf the status and role of women in history. These missing links and lack of representation can be partly filled by historical fiction based on the life of queens, in fact, by what Truman Capote calls 'faction', a work employing novelistic techniques to bring to life actual historical events and personages with substantial details for a fine balance between fact and fiction. Such an endeavour is bound to throw light on the exceptional royal women who played an important role in the administration of the empire but, unfortunately, do not find adequate, suitable or positive mention in the available historical records. Indu Sundaresan points out in this direction in the Afterword to *The Twentieth Wife*:

When one thinks of the six main Mughal Emperors, it is

usually in these terms: Babur founded the empire; Humayun lost it...; Akbar, inheriting the throne at the age of thirteen, consolidated the empire; Jahangir added few kingdoms...; Shah Jahan built the Taj Mahal...; Aurangzeb, steeped in religious intolerance, was instrumental in the break-up of the empire.

There are few mentions of the women these kings married or of the power they exercised. *The Twentieth Wife* seeks to fill that gap (387).

Thus, despite being one of the most prosperous and opulent empires in the history of India, the Mughal rule has been primarily remembered and celebrated for its charismatic and dynamic emperors. Whenever a mention is made of the great Mughals, the only names that invariably come to the mind are that of Humayun, Babar, Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan, Aurangzeb, and, to a lesser degree, Bahadur Shah Zafar. These monarchs occupied the throne and their exploits and accomplishments have been eulogized in the annals of history. But if one turns to the powerful women of the Mughal dynasty, the names do not come that easily or that many. Surprisingly, one can hardly name any queens who have been celebrated in the historical records of their own accord.

A petite woman who rose through the ranks and towered over everyone else by assuming a greater-than-life stature through her powerful wit and dynamism, Nur Jahan conquered the heart of Jahangir and through her marriage to the king, was able to control the affairs of the Empire for a long time. A text charting the evolution of Mehrunnisa from a Persian refugee to a Mughal queen, *The Twentieth Wife* largely focuses on the legendary romance and eventual marriage of a monarch and the daughter of a Persian refugee, synthesizing fiction and history to spin an engrossing tale. Vibha Sharma in her article "Reviving Mystique of the Mughals" observes that, "Sundaresan's books are based in parts on historical facts, gossips of bazaars during that time and travellers' accounts with gaps filled with fictional spice. The result is a wonderfully woven world of flavor and fragrance" (1).

When Nur Jahan is born, she is named as 'Mehrunnisa' or 'sun among women'. Though she is destined to shine like the sun,

yet, ironically, not much light has been shed on this extraordinary queen. Jahangir, out of love for his newly wedded beautiful wife, gives her the name 'Nur Mahal' as one of the wedding gifts and later changes it to 'Nur Jahan'. It is interesting to note that a woman gains importance not of her own accord but only because of her relation to a man, and that too a sovereign, and is known by the name that the king gives to her. People who have heard about Nur Jahan rarely know that her real name was Mehrunnisa. Name is an integral part of one's identity and patriarchal set up remains functional and dominant even at the most fundamental level like when ascribing a name.

It is pertinent to point out that Mehrunnisa's new name comprises of just two words which do not include her maiden name at all, but, on the other hand, when Jahangir ascends to the throne, he names himself as 'Nur-ud-din Muhammad Jahangir Padshah Ghazi'. This assembly of illustrious words as a name for a king is indicative of the power and splendor that is invariably associated with a monarch, something that seems to be in sharp contrast to women who seem to be mere non-entities with no individuality of their own.

Using the feminist lens, Sundaresan gives the reader a loving portraiture of this charismatic woman who knows how to hold her own in a male-dominated social structure. Even as a child, Mehrunnisa has a keen desire to enter the male bastion and transgress the limits imposed on her due to her gender. She does not think much of the injunctions given to her by her mother regarding how a lady should behave. In fact, she wants to do all that her brothers do as one of them quips:

I will tell Bapa that you went with me three nights ago. Dressed as a man, with a kohl- painted moustache and got drunk on three sips of wine. That I had to carry you home early. That my friends still ask after the pale-faced youth who has such a weak stomach that "he" puts even a baby to shame (41).

Trying her best to step out of traditional moulds, Mehrunnisa, unfortunately, cannot resist patriarchal norms and traps for long. Due to the intervention of Emperor Akbar, the

budding love between Prince Salim and Mehrunnisa is severed and she is asked to marry a Persian soldier Ali Quli. The command of the Emperor is irrefutable and Mehrunnisa is deeply upset with the turn of events. The conversation on the matter between father and daughter is particularly revealing of the well-entrenched male attitudes:

'You have not said anything, my dear.'

'Can I say no?'

Ghias frowned. 'Have you been talking to your mother?'

'What does Maji have to do with this? I am the one who is to be married to a soldier,' Mehrunnisa said bitterly. 'Why?...'*Why could it not be Salim?*

Ghias stared at her until she lowered her eyes. "It would seem I was too indulgent with you, Nisa, have given you too many liberties. But in this matter there will be no argument. It is not your choice who you marry. I am telling you of the rishta; most fathers would not even have done this(79)."

Thus, men decide fate of women, relegating them to the invisible margins where women's genderised identities become tools for state politics. Vital decisions that have lifelong repercussions are the prerogative of males and women have to tow the given line if they want acceptance and some modicum of dignity.

Mehrunnisa marries against her will and moves to Bengal, miles away from her family and the imperial court. She feels stifled by her loveless marriage and the societal pressures that keep her bound to her coarse and unfaithful husband. She sighs: "There were always strictures in society: how one must live, eat, even what to talk about and what to keep silent on. When she had been younger it had been easier, sheltered as she was under Bapa and Maji. But now, as a married woman, she came under very close scrutiny" (115). She is completely shattered when she finds her husband in bed with a slave girl and feels entrapped in her marriage: "Her tears came unchecked, blocking her breathing, tiring her immeasurably.... There was no turning back from this marriage, no escape from this life. It had to go on. She had to go on: one step in front of another, a smile on her face on family

occasions" (180). Evidently, as a woman, she feels cornered because of the familial, social and cultural constraints and compulsions that hamper the full blossoming of her personality, enchaining her to the least desirable.

Mehrunnisa's marital acrimony is further exacerbated by her numerous miscarriages and more than a decade long wait for a child. A woman who is infertile does not seem to be worthy of respect in a society where roles for women are pre-defined, inflexible and restrictive. Mehrunnisa prays: "*Please Allah, please, let this one live. Let me fulfil my responsibility as a woman. Let me be a woman.* For she knew she would never be considered one until she had a child" (181).

Even in popular literature, one can find interesting and contradictory references to Nur Jahan's marriage. While Sundaresan endeavours to present the forced marriage of Mehrunnisa and Sher Afghan, their sordid married life as well as the helplessness of Prince Saleem who remained out of touch with her till some years after she returned to the imperial harem as a widow, Diwan Jarmani Dass and Rakesh Bhan Dass in their popular book *Maharani* present an entirely different picture: "Had Sher Afghan not been murdered by the Governor of Bengal, she would have remained faithful to him. For her, wealth and kingdom had no glamour when she was giving her husband the full love of her heart" (125). But in *The Twentieth Wife*, it has been suggested that Mehrunnisa fails to receive love, affection and dignity entitled to a wife as she is treated unsympathetically and ruthlessly by her husband:

'I did not come to you for advice, Mehrunnisa, merely to inform you of what I was doing. Even that seems to have been unnecessary-' He held up his hand as she opened her mouth. 'Keep quiet and listen. Confine your interests to the house and the children you are supposed to have.... I will talk to you as I wish. I am your husband. I know your father is a powerful courtier; I know he is respected by the Emperor. But it is under my roof you live. You are my wife, not any more your father's daughter. Is that clear?(179)'

In *The Twentieth Wife*, Mehrunnisa is shown to be hopelessly in love with Prince Saleem even as a child, whereas in *Maharani*, it has been stated: "Jahangir tried to court her but she never agreed to love Jahangir.... He used to send her bouquets of flowers and love messages which were returned scornfully. As Jahangir had become a lovesick neurasthenic, he neglected the affairs of the State. The Ministers requested Mehr-un-Nissa to accept him as her husband" (124). Similarly, Edward S. Holden in *The Mogul Emperors of Hindustan*, writes that "...Nur-Mahal seems to have repulsed Jahangir's offer of marriage with disgust, and to have made the emperor forget her" (252). Sundaresan, however, presents an entirely different view as Jahangir proposes marriage:

'Thank you for waiting for me, your Majesty.'

'I would have waited longer if you had wished.'

Then he sat next to her, took off his embroidered silk turban, and laid it by her side. 'I come to you, not as a king, but as a suitor. If you will have me.'

If she would have him. Her heart skittered. And she knew there was nothing else she wanted(355-56).

It is also interesting to note that the Mughal kings, though keeping their women on the other side of the curtain, gave importance to their zenanas and these royal queens, concubines and mistresses could witness court proceedings from behind a screen and sometimes could wield influence on the king. Little Mehrunnisa observes:

Bapa came home with stories about his day, little tidbits about Emperor Akbar's rulings, about the zenana women hidden behind a screen as they watched the court proceedings, sometimes in silence and sometimes calling out a joke or a comment in a musical voice. The Emperor always listened to them, always turned his head to the screen to hear what they had to say (22).

Thus, women have been confined to the margins of the court but, paradoxically, have been allowed to witness court proceedings and give their opinion on certain issues.

Nur Jahan, despite her exceptional qualities and striking accomplishments, has been neglected in historical narratives and it

is rather ironical that the 'nur' of Mehrunnisa seems to have been lost in the light of Jahangir as we have minute details of his life and times in most canonical history books but it is hard to find more than one page devoted to his exquisite Queen. The sun of Mehrunnisa seems to be engulfed in the darkness of a patriarchal set-up where every institution and discipline, including history, is patrilineal, selective and reductive. Nur Jahan's light seems to have been lost upon the historians who have at best ignored her and at worst misrepresented her. Satish Chandra in his book *Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals* observes that: "Perhaps, much of the prejudice against Nur Jahan, and the charge of meddling in imperial affairs leading to disaffection and rebellion, reflected the deep seated anti-feminist bias of many contemporary historians which has often been repeated uncritically by a number of modern historians" (245).

The stereotypes related to women abound who are otherwise also expected to revel in the reflected glory of their distinguished spouses. In fact, women have many a times been used as a tool to consolidate empires but no mention of much consequence has been made of them in historical narratives which is in sharp contrast to the rich harvest of historical records pertaining to males. Hence, the importance of such works such as *The Twentieth Wife*. Reviewing the novel, Balwinder Kaur writes in her article "The Power Behind the Throne":

When tales are told about empires and kingdoms, they are usually about kings. But *The Twentieth Wife* by Indu Sundaresan is about Mehr-un-Nissa, better known as Nur Jahan. This is the story of a woman who reached through the bars of her gilded cage and governed a nation. The author brings to life this unforgettable and enigmatic figure who occupies a unique place in history (5).

Thus, a fictionalized study of elided and forgotten female historical characters is a serious quest that makes seminal contribution to literature. Revisiting the past is a step towards representation of hitherto marginalized and voiceless sections of society who have largely been ignored by historians, scholars as well as the literati.

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Constructivism and Liberalism as Diasporic Consciousness in Kamala Markandaya's *Some Inner Fury*

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Kamala Markandaya was born Kamala Purnaiya into a Brahmin family in 1924. Markandaya was her literary pseudonym, taken after her mother's maiden name. She was educated at various schools. Ruth Montgomery, writing in *Wilson Library Bulletin* (November, 1963) notes that Markandaya's father was in the Indian Civil Service, in the Railways, and that enabled her to travel widely, not only in South India but also in England and Europe because of "a pleasant freemasonry" in the railway fraternity (Parameswaran 34). According to Uma Parameswaran, the railway mansions, love of history and journalistic experience, all feature in Kamala Markandaya's novels. The war years find mention in several novels and more so the departure of the British from India. Markandaya left for England after India declared its independence and started working in a solicitor's office for a while. She married an Englishman in 1948. Some of her novels are listed in libraries in the west under the name Kamala Purnaiya Taylor. Since 1948 she lived in England and visited India on several occasions. Though proclaimed by critics to be one of the early successful and established women writers of Indian English fiction, Markandaya's works are unique because of her physical presence outside the homeland. It is perhaps because of her distance from India that she is able to assess and depict her characters more objectively.

Nectar in a Sieve was published in 1954. *Contemporary Authors* says it was her third novel, but does not provide details of the first two. It is likely she wrote two earlier novels that were not published. Nine other novels followed in the next thirty years: *Some Inner Fury* (1955); *A Silence of Desire* (1960); *Possession* (1963); *A Handful of Rice* (1966); *The Coffey Dams* (1969); *The Nowhere Man* (1972); *Two Virgins* (1973); *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977), and *Pleasure City* (1982).

Markandaya is one of the pioneers of the Indian diaspora, and one of the first Indian English women novelists to do so. It is because of the geographical relocation and physical distance with her country that led to Markandaya's eulogizing the Indian way of life, as evident in *Nectar in a Sieve*. According to Yossi Shain and Aharon Barth's article "Diasporas and International Relations Theory", diasporic activities can be better understood by setting their study in the 'theoretical space' shared by constructivism and liberalism. They argue: "Because of their unique status, diasporas - geographically outside the state, but identity-wise perceived as 'inside the people' --attach great importance to kinship identity. Given their international location, diasporas are aptly suited to manipulate international images and thus to focus attention on the issue of identity" (451).

It is in this context of imaging the homeland that Kamala Markandaya has often been accused of trying to sell India to a western audience, hence her representations of womanhood too have very often come under the scanner. There is poverty, dogma, illiteracy and she is far from advocating any kind of western feminism. To juxtapose the tenets of western feminism on a social, cultural and economic paradigm so vastly different would be ridiculously absurd. She is a realist as she represents women as the victims of imperialism and patriarchal control. She posits an interesting change in representation and perception. She has often been criticized as a steady traditionalist. The women as represented in her novels like *Nectar in a Sieve* and *A Handful of Rice* are represented as doubly marginalized while crusading against grinding poverty and other social evils. But they are not non-agential.

It is also Markandaya's position as the insider-outsider that provides her with an objective distancing, necessary to critically evaluate her country and her homeland. Since the diasporic consciousness is often confronted with divided loyalties to homelands and host countries, tension of political orientations is a common theme among writers of the Indian diaspora. Diasporas are regarded as a force in identity formation because they reside outside their kin-state but claim a legitimate stake in it and in diasporas defy the conventional meaning of the state, "They are therefore defined as the "paradigmatic Other of the nation-state," as challengers of its traditional boundaries, as transnational transporters of cultures, and as manifestations of 'de-territorialized communities'" (Shain and Barth 450). In the novels of Kamala Markandaya, the east-west culture clash is usually prompted by her interest in the political plight of her country of origin and her experiences as an expatriate, living in England. The awareness of multi-locality and of the 'routes' and 'roots' invests her with a sensibility that is astutely critical of the gender politics both in the east and in the west.

Kamala Markandaya left for England in 1948, leaving behind a new India, a modern nation state in its nascent stage. This was also the time to attain the long cherished dreams of freedom, progress and modernity. In the year 1955, as a part of the Hindu Code Bill, the Hindu Marriage Act was enacted by the Parliament of India. The main purpose of the enactment was to amend and codify the law relating to marriage among Hindus. Beside, amendment and codification of 'Sastrik Law', it introduced separation and divorce which was earlier not permissible as *Sastras* and *Smrities* (like Manu Smriti) declared that marriage was indissoluble and for life. Within the traditional framework of Hindu society, marriage was undoubtedly the most important cultural milestone. Therefore there was fierce religious opposition to enacting such laws for marriage, succession and adoption. These Acts were put forth under the leadership of the then Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, who strongly believed in the modernization of Hindus laws. Those opposed to the acts argued

that Hindu marriage could not be subjected to legislative intervention, since the dominant view in Hindu society was that marriage was a form of social obligation. Interestingly it is the same year that Markandaya's *Some Inner Fury* (1955) was published. And in this novel she addresses this ambiguous project of Indian modernity, particularly in the context of marriage and family. *Some Inner Fury* is the story of Mirabai, a young woman from a partly Westernized Hindu family in pre-Independence India. Mira's brother Kit returns from Oxford bringing with him a new lifestyle and his friend Richard. Mira's love for Richard grows against the background of the country's anti-British agitation. Kit (a district magistrate), his wife Premala, and Govind, (Kit's and Mira's adoptive brother, who is rumoured to be the mastermind behind the anti-British violence) are all engulfed in the crisis. Events come to a head when Premala is killed, Kit is murdered and Govind is put on trial. In the end Mira is forced to choose between her love for Richard and duty towards her country.

In the novel Markandaya does not adhere to the nationalist iconography of the woman as the timeless upholder of Indian morality and chastity. Nor does Kamala Markandaya borrow the white man's/woman's lenses. Third World societies are perceived by the west as repressive to women and the women of eastern societies are necessarily seen as veiled and shackled. Such imperialist gendering is countered by Kamala Markandaya in *Some Inner Fury*. One finds in the novel the stock situation of a white man coming to India and falling in love with an Indian woman. But Markandaya changes the perspective by not conforming to the tropes of the western gaze. Mira and her family are westernized and remarkably modern especially so for their times: "My mother went to play bridge and keep my father company. I went because I was taken, and to learn to mix with Europeans. This last was part of my training, for one day – soon – I would marry, a man of my own class who, like my brother, would have been educated abroad, and who would expect his wife to move as freely in European circles as he himself did" (24).

Markandaya depicts how it was a dichotomous way of life

for the women like Mira's mother. These women had to be society ladies and traditional housewives at the same time. As the better/other half they were expected to excel themselves as Hindu wives they were supposed to be experts at serving meat and drinks to their guests but they themselves were expected to partake of traditional food. Such a hybrid lifestyle necessitated that they bring up their children in a manner in which their dress and education would be western, but they would be follow conventions when it came to morality and marriage. Mira's mother is an interesting product of such a lifestyle. She is a club hopping matriarch who well manages both the worlds. She allows her daughter Mira to escort the male English guest (Richard), not without hiccups over what people might say and also lets her accompany her brother Kit and his English friend on several occasions. Yet she is wary that some 'barmaid' might have ingratiated herself with her son during his stay abroad. Hence she keeps track of his mails, and rummages through his room once he returns. Finally through sheer persistence she earns his consent to a traditional match. She invites Premala and her mother to come and live with them in the hope they take a liking and further adjust to each other. This is a remarkably bold step even in a contemporary setup and almost unthinkable in a pre-independence India. What is even more surprising is that Premala's mother actually consents to this proposal and even lets Premala stay on without her, with the hope that Kit might eventually agree to marry her daughter. This is unconventional on the part of the two ladies no doubt but this also brings to light their desperation to meet the demands of an outwardly western but at heart traditional social circle. The convention bound mothers and wives/wives-to-be are expected to keep their ways and yet adjust to the demands of the new breed of foreign returned, westernized sons and husbands. Mira's mother like any normal mother plays her cards in postponing Mira's visit to Kit's house, ensuring well enough that Richard would have departed by the time Mira reached her destination. Again when Richard asks for Mira's hand, she diplomatically asks them to wait before rushing into marriage,

citing Mira's age. It is interesting that she on most occasions establishes control by invoking her husband. This can be viewed as a self-assured woman's clever manipulation of patriarchy.

However, it is Premala for whom the lessons of modernity are the hardest. Premala was quiet and home loving with "no great liking to be always out and doing" (76). But as she was neither an introvert she went about the house helping with the household chores, chatting with the women of the house, playing veena or reciting verses from the Gita. Her ordeals lay in trying to fit into Kit's westernized lifestyle. Unused to club hopping, "she never knew what to do or say...embarrassed, hands nervous in her lap, smiling her stiff, set smile when others laughed, otherwise silent with taunt face and eyes lowered..."(49). Yet she would accompany him again and again only to please him. She takes to playing tennis in spite of the fact that she was no good at the game and heartily disliked playing. Yet "she persisted, perhaps having been warned that a woman must be companion as well as wife to her husband" (48). She even wears a pair of shorts at Kit's recommendation, yet "what she gained in freedom of movement was more than lost by her self-consciousness" (49) because she had never worn anything but a sari. The irony of the situation lies in the fact that such modesty, traditionally becoming in a woman finds little favour in Kit's eyes. After marriage they move to a presidential town, and settle down into a house that is furnished in a European style and has nothing Indian about it. Having a butler and a cook trained in English households and evidently more used to English ways than she herself was, Premala is content to see that the house ran well enough without any effort on her part. Yet when Mira visits her, she cannot help wondering what Premala did with herself all day, leading a life (rather fleeting through it) with things she hardly identified with and which too held her in very little regard, "Dinner parties to Kit, were fun...he would begin to sparkle. And Premala would grow quieter, more rigid, more tense and the graces which flowered so delicately when she was at ease among people she knew faded and stiffened into *gaucherie*" (130). Kit not being an unfeeling man is equally painted and distraught.

The project of modernity brings in its wake a cultural chasm that is almost impossible to bridge.

As Partha Chatterjee observes in his essay "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question", the 'new' woman defined in this way was subjected to a new patriarchy. Chatterjee feels that nationalist reformation had merely readjusted and reconstructed the position of the woman; her role outside the home received a convenient makeover. Similarly Markandaya begins by drawing our attention to the fact that such a project of modernity could be severely unflattering for a woman as it completely negates the question of choice. Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan looks into this phenomena or new brand of woman in her book *Real and Imagined Women* (1993). She feels that a significant mode of interpellation and projection can be perceived in the construction of the Indian 'new woman':

She is new in the senses both of having evolved and arrived in response to the times, as well as of being intrinsically 'modern' and 'liberated'...She is 'Indian' in the sense of possessing a pan-Indian identity that escapes regional, communal, or linguistic specifications, but does not thereby become 'westernized' (Rajan 130). Hence Rajan feels that the Indian woman is 'perennially' and 'transcendentally' wife, mother, home-maker, who is modern without being westernized. Contemporary liberated female figures, elite, educated, professional women effortlessly hold on to the traditional values of husband-worship, family nurturance, self-sacrifice and sexual chastity. "Their exemplary virtue – as well as virtuosity – is a saga of an individualism that functions for the social good rather than at odds with it" (135). In terms of representation, the tradition bound woman is the projected hero while the modern and in this case westernized woman, is necessarily condemnable if not evil. Meenakshi Mukherjee in her book *The Twice Born Fiction* (1971), argues that marital bliss is a more frequent subject in Indian novels than romantic love, then we might also expect to find that in Indian feminist novels the central source of conflict is that found between wives and their husbands and rests upon women's role within the

home (29). Patriarchal hegemony then demands that a woman should negotiate with modernity while successfully discharging the stereotypical functions expected of her as mother, as wife. Markandaya shams this idea through Mira, as she steps out of her Europeanized, club hopping, and wealthy family to begin a life of her own as a journalist and chose a life of love with Richard rather than a well negotiated arranged marriage that could have provided for her every possible luxury. She rides bicycles, plays tennis in shorts, goes clubbing, even discovers "the gateway to the freedoms of the mind" (65). She enjoys a live-in relation with Richard, one of passion fulfilment and satisfaction. Markandaya through Mira describes a woman's intense awakening to love and a powerful arousal to sexual passion: "How does one know when a man looks at you – when his eyes are on your hair, on the curve of your lips, on the lines of your body? I cannot say; but suddenly the knowledge is there and somewhere within you the tumult begins, you do not know how or where, and you find yourself responding, your whole self-responds and it is none of your doing" (118).

It is laudable that Markandaya's representation of women chaffs against the pacifist tendencies of patriarchal rationalizing. For women sex was duty, to ensure the continuity of a family line. Sex for pleasure and not procreation and outside the bond of marriage was to vilify sanctioned moral codes, hence a strict taboo. Mira in choosing to love and live outside marriage changes the status quo.

Roshan Merchant, is Markandaya's 'new woman'. When Mira first meets her at Kit's wedding, she "in a chiffon sari coloured like a rainbow, and slippers with rhinestone heels, and a mouth as bright and vivid as a geranium petal" (63) was easily the most striking. She was "ultramodern" without being aggressive, "forward" without being conscious. She was a columnist in a paper she owned. Even to this day divorce is an issue that raises eyebrows and hiccups. For a woman in pre-independence India, it is indeed a formidable decision. Roshan is divorced without being acerbic or discreet about it. She was "turbulent" and "unafraid". As Mira puts it, "she stood alone and thought nothing of it" (64),

“no man's warder” (91), free and untamed. She takes active part in the anti-British movement, using her paper to disseminate anti-government messages. Under Govind's influence they grow from being impudent to virulent. And it is then her paper comes under suspension. Her fiery nature finds alternative measures of showing dissent. She organizes a meeting and subsequently leads a march, proclaiming freedom, through areas put off limits to civilians. In doing so she is arrested and put into prison. She campaigns for the improvement of third class travel conditions. She herself makes these arduous journeys (in spite of being the daughter of a millionaire and the wife of an influential government servant) and organizes passenger revolt, when her writings produce no effect. But while travellers in batches began to be arrested, the authorities chose to turn a blind eye to Roshan, “...when you step out of your class and environment and embroil yourself in affairs which are clearly not your concern, no one is quite sure what, in the absence of precedent, to do” (109). Finally in exasperation, Roshan writes a defamatory article about the management of the railway company. When she is sued by them, she moves to court against them, only to lose the case. A fine is levied and having refused to pay the fine, she goes to prison, “exulting” (109). She is a firebrand who can go to lengths for the cause she hearts. When Govind is arrested and put on trial for anti-British violence, it is she who arranges an excellent lawyer for him and testifies that Govind had spent the night with her on the fateful day. The lawyer plays his cards well by harping on issues of morality hence of course accounting for Roshan's reluctance to come forward, she being a married woman. When the time demanded, she too boycotted British goods, stopped smoking and with deep regret gave up wearing lipstick until she met an American officer who supplied her with American brands. She threw all her European georgettes and chiffons in the fire and chose to wear the rough homespun. Yet under no circumstances did she give up on her English friends. She moved between the two worlds effortlessly and the English too accepted her the way she was, “homespun, nationalism and all” (156).

Yossi Shain and Aharon Barth state that Diasporas are among “the most prominent actors that link international and domestic spheres of politics” (474). Furthermore, diasporic activities and influence in the homeland, despite their international location, expand the meaning of the term 'domestic politics' (Shain and Barth 475) to include not only politics inside the state but also inside the people. Kamala Markandaya's *Some Inner Fury* as a diasporic text is the meeting point between the constructivist emphasis on identity, and the liberal focus on domestic politics. Markandaya's identity based motivation in the novel should therefore be seen as an effort to explain the reconstruction of identities, particularly those of women, moving between the home and the world.

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A Study of Diaspora, Disorientation and Cultural Divide in Anita Desai's *Bye-bye, Blackbird*

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People all over the world suffer Diaspora as an inevitable condition in their lives commonly. Consequentially, they acutely experience nostalgia and cultural divide. This has been the experience of the Jews in Europe and the Blacks all over the world. The Westernized Indian experiences it in India. And the Indian who emigrates to Europe or America experiences Diaspora and the consequential cultural divide. A Westernized Indian longs for the company of another Westernized Indian, while staying in India because of passing through cultural hiatus.

Diaspora, disorientation, re-orientation, nostalgia and cultural divide run together. Anita Desai does not study any one of these in isolation. The loss of the past is painful. Equally painful are Diaspora and nostalgia and cultural divide. Incidentally, one could argue the point with the definition of nostalgia as severe homesickness, sorrowful longing for conditions of the past age, and regretful or wistful memory of earliest time. Thus nostalgia is a substitute gratification and carries a stigma in its excess, whereas reminiscence is just a collection of some past event. In this context the definition as presented in *Everyman's Encyclopedia* is worth recording here: "Nostalgia is a return home, or homesickness. It is sometimes an early phase of melancholia, but is usually a psychic manifestation merely. It varies in intensity from a sentimental

inclination to think fondly of a homeland to an uncontrollable desire to return and a settled dislike of one's present surroundings..... The cause of the condition is undoubtedly the realization of the change of circumstances and the absence of familiar people and impressions..."

This feeling of nostalgia, and the acute sense of cultural divide, arising out of nostalgia can be tided over if there is adjustment and accommodation to new conditions of life but of course without losing one's distinct identity. We do not have to abandon our familiar and known to achieve distinction; rather in that place, if only we make ourselves sufficiently aware of it, do we join others in other places.... (William Carlos Williams).

This is precisely the case of Dev in *Bye-Bye, Blackbird* when he strikes healthy relationships with Emma, and thereby he begins to take roots in England and he shakes off his loneliness. And Sarah makes the decision to leave the world of the known for the unknown.

The Diaspora, displacement, disorientation, resettlement, reorientation, nostalgia and cultural divide, denials, deprivations, degeneration, exploitation and dehumanization have been the common denominators in the lives of Dev and Adit in *Bye-Bye, Blackbird*. Dev to begin with is not able to accept the cultural divide. He turns furious at British manners and customs. This is cryptically distilled by Anita Desai in the opening paragraph of the fiction, *Bye-Bye-Blackbird* thus: He (Dev) wondered if it (the watch) had died in the night of an inability to acclimatize itself (5).

Dev has come to England to study at the London School of Economics. Adit points out to him that it is not easy to gain admission at the London School of Economics and that in England Dev cannot bribe his way up and gain admission. Sarah joins them soon and has her cup of tea and enquires about Bruce, the cat, who is in heat. Dev tells her that Bruce has jumped through the window and is gone. The dialogue admirably captures the taste of the English for pets, whereas the Indian mind is not willing to accept animals inside the house.

Dev found that life in London was dissimilar to the life in

India. Back at home he could assume arrogance, and a superiority to the rest however disagreeable and unpleasant. But here he has to indulge in acquiescence. He feels that he is a stranger. And he has the taste of disorientation and Anita Desai narrates it thus: "But there (in London) surrounded by the easy informal Sunday people, smiling to themselves at the thought of their Sunday roast and amiably talking of horses and dogs, and the Labor Government, he found easy to lose his self consciousness, to think only of what lay outside and around him, and concentrate comfortably on the six pences and shillings, the half crowns and farthings that Sarah laid out and counted for him" (12).

As the outsider in England, Dev realizes at every step the contrastive features of India and Britain. For instance, the Mall of a Himalayan hill station stands in sharp contrast to the Mall in the High Streets of London suburbs. Dev turns disconcerted at the insulting cry of the British boy when he, Sarah, and Adit wait for the bus in a cluster. The boy's insulting language only reflects the racial prejudice of the British towards Indians (Blackbirds).

And the textual passage runs as given below:

"Wog?" said a damson-checked boy in a brass-buttoned blazer to him (Dev) only under his breath but, just before he leapt aboard the bus, "Wog!" he said again quite loudly.... (14).

Once again, Anita Desai subtly captures the cultural differences that mark India and Britain, and how these differences are tinged with racial prejudice: "He watched with soulful, romantic eyes the blond girls in their short, tight skirts stomp and twist and scribble about the crowded floor, and he said, "My religion forbids me to drink, or smoke, or touch a woman. But here in this country, what am I to do? I also do the things I see other men doing", and then he was, on the floor frightenedly clasping a girl by her waist and moving his feet hesitantly and self-consciously, out of step with the quick, brisk music. The audience on the carpet whistled and made ribald comments on Pakistani fitters and landladies' daughters" ... (22).

Sarah is identified with everything Indian much to her discomfort. Her friends foresee the day when she will leave

England permanently with Adit to India. The point that is made here is that because Sarah has married Adit the Indian she is disowned by the other British. And this is indicative of the racial prejudice entertained by the British against the Asiatic. The relevant passage from the text goes as follows: "Course you're the adventurous one really. Still waters run deep, eh? You'll desert all on a horrid, foggy day and make off for sunny India, I know".

Sarah put down the tea pot and said, as quietly as she could, "I don't know. Why do you say that?"

"Why? Well your husband isn't going to stay here forever, is he?"

Julia shouted aggressively... (34).

In a subtle fashion Anita Desai traces the cultural divide through a taste for dress modes and distaste for particular kinds of food thus:

"Oh no", cried Sarah in dismay. She dreaded Indian sweets. She dreaded meeting young Ms. Singh dressed in pink or parrot green *salwar kameez* and always, even in the coldest weather had two half moons or perspiration into this cat-quiet kitchen with a jingle of glass bangles, bearing a plate of rich, silvery sweets, made Sarah shrink with dread... (41).

In spite of his Bachelor's Degree from the Indian University Dev is not able to further his studies or get even a menial job. Adit tells Dev that in England one has to learn to adjust to the developing circumstances. Otherwise the Indian will find himself in dire straits. What Adit ignores are self-respect, honour and dignity. But one thing he truthfully underscores is that the education in India does not make the individual suit the job requirements. The text reads thus:

The truth is we **babus** get it neat. People like the Singhs manage to find a place in any society, even if it is on the bottom rung of the ladder. At least they have a trade, they are useful – even the British recognize that and admit it. But not us. We haven't studied for any profession, we want to gate crash into one. We haven't the time, money or patience to acquire one in a school, we want to grab and learn in a week what others take three years to

master. Cheek, that's what. It's the age old babu dilemma-executive temperaments linked with worthless qualifications. (102).

Dev with deep regret and nostalgia contrasts India with England. He came to England with a venturesome spirit. He was disillusioned. He felt helpless. He wanted a job and he could not get one. All these get projected in the following textual passage:

He (Dev) was slowly, regretfully letting drop and melt away his dreams of adventure, seeing now quite clearly that he had left the true land of adventure, of the unexpected, the spontaneous, the wild and weird, for a very enclosed part of the world, a pigeoncote in which it was necessary to find an empty and warm niche before one was pushed over the ledge into the sea that lapped the island's stony shore. (104).

What Dev disliked most was the immigrant's sheepishness and abject of self-respect. He remarks to Adit thus:

The trouble with you immigrants is that you go soft. If anyone in India told you to turn off your radio, you wouldn't dream of doing it. You might even pull out a knife and blood would spill. Over here all you do is shut up and look sat upon.... (Bye-Bye-Blackbird, 27).

In a subtle manner Anita Desai draws the attention of the perspective readers that religion is the strong base of western culture and the Orientals have only one way of negotiating it and that is through conversion. The textual passage worth quoting here:

"Ahh", beamed the little man, growing more and more jovial as Dev shrank and shriveled. "Mission College, eh? Does that mean you are a Catholic?"

"No", said Dev, deciding to leave, "Hindu".

"Oh dear, oh dear", lamented the little man. "Not Catholic? Not even Christian?".... I am sorry. Dear me, I ought to have mentioned it at once, oughtn't I? We simply must have a Catholic, or at least a High Church man. It's public relations, you see? It wouldn't do, no. I'm afraid it wouldn't do to have a Hindu gentleman in this job.... (108).

On his arrival in England, Dev pours out his feelings of disgust, to Adit and Sarah, at the Western ways of living, which are quite new and strange to him. Nothing seems to interest him. He hates everything – English food and food habits, the love of the English for curios and pets, English dress modes, and in fine English conservation traditions, and customs.

Ironically, Adit hates everything that is of India and Indian. He is in great love with everything English. He pours out his feelings of disgust at the thoughts that stream across his mind concerning India. Sarah and Dev listen to his long harangue against India, which is quoted in extenso, for it projects the mind of the Indian who is ashamed to call himself an India and one who suffers from Anglo-Phobia: Then Adit said, "One would travel from Bombay to Calcutta and from Kashmir to Cap Comorin and not find two consecutive miles as rich and even as all the land here".

"There would be miles and miles of desert instead. There would be trees without fruit or even leaves. The cattle would be starved, their skeletons lying around the rocks. Values wheeling in the sky. And sun, sun, sun". there is famine or flood, there is drought or epidemic, always. Here, the rain falls so softly and evenly, never too much, never too short. The sun is mild. The earth is fertile. The rivers are full. The birds are plump. The beasts are fat. Everything so wealthy, so luxuriant – so fortunate (129).

But soon Adit's infatuation for everything English disappears. The catalyst is the Indo-Pakistan riots, and the partition effected in a partisan fashion by the British to keep the sub-continent divided always. He turns furious against England for its Pro-Pakistan attitudes. The text reads thus:

"Always partisan, always prejudiced. These British – they always sided with the Muslims – now it's out in the open, you can see it quite clearly" (183).

This passage clearly captures the Indian ethnic emotions and it is understandable. It is salutary that Indians wherever they are, they are not to give up their separate Indian identity, but embrace the mainstream culture of the place where they have domiciled.

The anti-Indian and Pro-Pakistan attitude of the British at once awakens thoughts of Indian and fills him with nostalgia and the ironic longing to return to India. Adit expresses his nostalgia thus: The ferocity of his growing nostalgia broke that stone dam that had silenced him for long and he began to tell Sarah of this nostalgia that had become an illness, an ache. She listened intently, gravely, his torrential, often incoherent words constructed for her a vision of a deep veranda with round white pillars – “Roman pillars?” she murmured and he replied, “Colonial, I should think” ... He (Adit) talked of the buffaloes in the yard, of the pigeons that were kept on the rooftop, of the puja season in Calcutta when prayers were conducted in the house every evening and visits were made from one private to community altar to the other, everyone dressed in the newest clothes and fed on the richest of sweets...” (184).

Thus, Anita Desai projects Adit and Dev of *Bye-Bye-Blackbird* as the wandering hero experiencing Diaspora, disorientation, reorientation and nostalgia and suffering from racial or class prejudice and experience acutely and sharply cultural divide.

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A Review Essay

Soname Yangchen. *Child of Tibet. Portrait*. Great Britain.
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Soname Yangchen's *Child of Tibet* is the “story of a remarkable young woman's flight to freedom . . . In this inspiring autobiography, set against the beautiful backdrop of Tibet, we witness how one woman's indomitable spirit sustains her through desperate circumstances, heartaches, international singing success and, at last, reunion with her lost family” (jacket). The novel is a cultural eye opener, as at one time , we were unable to read about Tibetan life and socio-cultural living through literature. Whatever reading material was available was related only to sociological studies or were politico-historical documents. The book is a Tibetan girl's journey from Oppression to Freedom. Freedom, which is still questionable. This autobiographical book is an important landmark work in new literature/ marginalized literature/ or peripheral literature. This is a non canonical work which is not mainstream but an effort to connect the struggles, the pain, the rootlessness and the experiences of the Tibetans.

There are fifteen chapters in the book – the first one is “Wild Beginnings” and the last one is “Blood Ties.” The book covers Soname's harrowing flight across the world's highest mountain ranges, the Everest to Dharamshala in north India, home of the Dalai Lama, prime spiritual and temporal leader of all Tibet. Born into a noble family Soname Yangchen's mother descended from a dual line of aristocracy. One ancestor was the the renowned physician to the Fifth Dalai Lama and the other was the tutor to the Eighth Dalai Lama. Soname was born at a time

when Tibet was in the middle of the Cultural Revolution. This was the most turbulent and tragic time in Tibetan history. The Chinese People's Liberation Army was brutally overthrowing the Buddhist culture and bringing in Communism. The Chinese invasion of Tibet, the hunger, poverty and reasons for her own safety Soname's parents send her to the Tashi's in Lhasa. Here she works as a servant and for her the housework started at 6am, before sunrise and it was not until 11pm that she would roll out her mattress on the kitchen floor. A child slave, exploited and deprived of affection for ten years Soname decided to run away from the Tashi's to go back to her home Yarlung , in Tibet. It is through her mother's death that we learn about the sky burial, the traditional Tibetan funeral ritual. Chapter five of the book is titled 'Sky Burial', which describes how the body of the dead is kept in the house for three days and butter lamps and incense are put around it. Then the lama is called to recite the Tibetan Book of the Dead , which is read for 49 days, the time the deceased is in Bardo which is the space between the lives, where karma dictates the form and conditions of the next existence. After the third day the monks expose the corpse to the vultures to eat. The *ragyapas* are the clan who have performed the sky burial for thousands of years. The sky burials are a special, sacred rite which no tourist is ever allowed to see. Through Soname we come to know how Tibetan women are bold , feisty , strong earthy creatures given to flirting and laughing out loud. They are highly independent and have equal rights both in the home and in business.

In 1987 demonstrations were held in Lhasa by the Tibetans against the Chinese rule. The protest was put down by the Chinese authorities and many monks were shot or viciously beaten up. Some were carted away to gulags, tortured and never seen again. This became known as the October Uprising, the biggest revolt since the invasion of Tibet by the Chinese. At this time Soname , aged 16 , thought about escaping from Tibet to find the Dalai Lama , to find freedom. Not knowing where India was Soname decides to take the 'Freedom Highway' to India, which like Shangri-la beckoned her. With Buddhist monks for company Soname faced

starvation, icy cold winds , the constant danger of wild animals and the perpetual threat of being discovered by the Chinese soldiers on her harrowing flight to India. The journey was treacherous through the narrow icy paths, jungles and across the "most magnificent peak known as Everest by the Westerners and Chomolungma, 'Mother Goddess of the Earth' by the Tibetans." After seven weeks Soname and the small group reached Katmandu, in Nepal. Soname stayed in Katmandu for a month with her great uncle and then decided to go to Dharamsala, the former British hill station where the fourteenth Dalai Lama , Tenzin Gyatso and thousands of Tibetans have made their home. The Dalai Lama is a living divinity----the emanation of the Buddha of Compassion. He is the prime spiritual and temporal leader of all Tibet. Most Tibetans just call him *kundun*, which means The Presence. On reaching Dharamsala, Soname enrolled at a boarding school in Biri, a hamlet near Dharamsala. After the Tibetan New Year Soname went to Dharamsala to seek the blessings of His Holiness, the Dalai Lama. It is here she meets Tenzin, who worked in the Tibetan Information Office. The pouring rain made it impossible for her to go back to school the same day, and she stayed back with Tenzin as there was no other option for her. During the night Tenzin forced himself on Soname and she became pregnant. She wrote to Tenzin about it from school, who invited her to stay with him. Soname gave birth to a daughter Deckyi, who was doted on by her parents. A few months later Tenzin left for New York never to return again. Soname worked here and there to support herself and Deckyi . One day she bumped into a friend of Tenzin who introduced her to Tenzin's parents, who were on a pilgrimage to India. They asked Soname to let them take Deckyi with them to Tibet as they felt that Soname was not in a position to look after her daughter. Soname was desperate, down to her last rupees and thought that maybe this was the answer to her cry to the Buddha. After Deckyi left Soname did menial jobs in Dharamsala. Coming back from a *kalachakra* initiation in Spiti Soname stayed back for the summer at Manali with a girl Dolma, and worked in a hotel to sustain herself. The hotel closed down for

the winters and Soname moved to Delhi where she worked in a shop selling saris. One day through a Kashmiri friend she met Marc a Frenchman who was pivotal in shaping the next stage of her life. Marc takes Soname to France, little did Soname realize nine years ago that her flight to freedom would take her this far. After staying a month in France Soname moved to Brighton, England to visit Michael Windsor whom she had met at a café in New Delhi. Soname marries Michael and starts a career in singing. She starts singing for BBC, making her own CD's and performing at concerts. Soname performs at the Royal Opera House and the Usher Hall, Edinburg at the Dalai Lama's World Peace Ceremony which was the greatest accolade of her singing career. Soname settles well into the Western life and gets used to the English ways of doing things. She meets her daughter Deckyi after nine years in Mussorie and it takes a longtime for Deckyi to open up to her mother. In the final chapter 'Blood Ties' Soname is united with her sister Lakchung Dorga, from Tibet, she gets letters from her brothers and learns about her father in Tibet. She goes to Dharamsala and meets Ngawang Panchen, the torch bearing monk who had helped her to escape from Tibet. Though Soname is united to her family she sees Michael departing from her life. Soname's singing career took her time and Michael enjoyed the pub culture, in which Soname never joined in. They started leading increasingly separate lives and finally Michael decides to sell his flat in England and moves to Goa in India. Soname didn't go back to India; she felt that England was her country. Soname writes that she misses Tibet, "the massive rugged mountains, the vast open skies, the sense of limitless space, the sheer magnificent wildness of it all- and my people." She has collected all the hair that falls from comb with the idea that it is put on the sacred Shitak Mountain where her mother was given the sky burial, that way a part of her body will be returned to Tibet.

The Tibetan communities suffer from the twin traumas of loss of homeland and stateless refugee existence. On one hand they are pushed towards material temptations of Western society and on the other hand pulled back into Tibetan traditions, which causes role conflicts. . A Tibetan is always torn between his native land,

culture, appearance, languages, customs, etc. and the reality of foreign life and culture where he/she lives. The search for identity is done by internalizing socio-cultural values and norms. The absorption of these values and norms, whether they come from their own culture or the foreign culture, can only be successful, if they can be applied in concrete situations. The conflict is painful. The original identity fades due to compulsory and necessary adaptation to local conditions. Adaptation means adapting their external behaviour to the customs of the host country. Adaptation is followed by acculturation; the Tibetans accept and internalize specific behaviour patterns and cultural values of the host countries. Assimilation is the last stage. It is the gradual assimilation into the culture of the host country by adapting to the lifestyle, customs and habits, values and way of thinking, although assimilation is not complete and unconditional and will never be. The Tibetans in exile do not strive for integration in the sense of a complete and unconditional assimilation. It is also not possible. Their appearance marks them as strangers in India, Europe or North America. The Buddhist culture of the Tibetans, the Hindu culture of India or the Christian culture of Europe and America are so extreme, that a complete assimilation of the values of the host countries would pose the danger of a total loss of cultural roots and therefore, the loss of their national identity. The Tibetan youth loses his original identity as a result of compulsory and necessary adaptation to local conditions. At the same time he cannot simply adopt the identity of the local people. This creates a vacuum that the youth has to attempt to fill by going through an often painful and conflict-laden process of finding himself within the framework of two different cultures.

Though the Tibetans in exile have accommodated well within their host cultures, yet the struggle and activism for freedom, for identity, for nationality and the powers and rights appended to it continues and keeps alive the spirit of togetherness. Exile is defined as a state or period of absence of one's homeland; but perhaps this definition does not apply to many Tibetans as they have not set foot on their homeland ever. On

a critical evaluation of the social and cultural norms and values of the original and host culture it is found that there is a meaningful synthesis between the two identities. This is the diaspora living in hybrid, interstitial, liminal spaces. To put it in the late American professor of literature, Edward Said's words: "Exiles cross borders, break barriers of thoughts and experiences. Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home, exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions" Exile signifies an amalgam of experiences-- insecurities, regrets, confusion and resentment on one hand, and opportunities, growth, fulfillment and pride on the other. This thread of Tibetan culture includes various aspects such as political history, global space, activism, food. Though the Tibetans cross physical borders they emotionally and mentally keep going back to their homeland. The book reflects Soname's quest for belongingness, the search for identity, love for the homeland, and the pain, agony, trauma of leaving home, friends, relatives and her daughter. For most Tibetans like Soname it is not just 'flight to freedom' but flight for emancipation as well.

Is this the End?

Dr Geeta Bhandari

S.D.P. College for Women

Ludhiana

Walking on the pebbles of life,
Bearing the unbearable
Tolerating the intolerable
A slave to existence
Debating over the issues of existence,
Man sinks and emerges.
Trembling over the very idea of coldness,
Standing alone and forlorn
Pondering over the end,
Till the very end.
He exists.
Facing the stark reality,
What is hidden behind the rotten veil of deceptive appearance?
He never knows.
The rising fog prevents from seeing what is real,
Shocking isn't it?
The stranger enters the strange world doing strange things
The strings of his heart being pulled by something strange
and strangely mysterious.
Naked and barefoot he exits with a heavy weight of non-clarity

Let's Do Something

Sushminderjit Kaur
GGN Khalsa College
Ludhiana

Come, my friend, come;
let's do something.
Let us not live on
charity of history
Wrapping ourselves
in past glory and magnificence
and rest on oars
far too long.

The sea around us is wide
and the shores
nowhere in sight.
Time is fleeting by.

The child in fable
once cried for moon
is already held in arms
the bride of sky.
Prophecies, promises
slogans and cheers
high sounding words indeed
fail to wipe the tears
and bring in solace.

The oracle of Delphi
only half reveals.
Stars foretell nothing.

Nothing really takes place
Only the blinded bulls
move around the wheels.
Let us not strike
at the very branch
we eagerly hold on to
with our eagle talons.

Remember, my friend, remember:
Revolutions are never subversive
Nor judged by their hues
red, green, white or tan
Revolutions are measured
by the quality of man
they tend to produce.
Come, my friend, come!
Let's do something.

A Perspective

Savgun Lubana

Aurobindo College of Commerce
Ludhiana

Life goes through its dismal hour,
'best friends' stop caring as they go far,
Wilde says" heart was made to be broken"
People forget words they have spoken.
Why should the heart suffer?
For how long can it act as a buffer
Against friendly treasons
Which it bears
In all seasons?

With Best Compliments from:



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