THE IMPACT OF DISPLACEMENT ON THE FORMATION OF NEW VALUES IN THE NOVELS OF DIASPORIC INDIAN WOMEN WRITERS

THESIS

Submitted by

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DECLARATION

I hereby certify that the work which is being presented in the thesis titled **"The Impact of Displacement on the Formation of New Values in the Novels of Diasporic Indian Women Writers"** in fulfilment of the requirement of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and submitted to Malaviya National Institute of Technology, Jaipur is an authentic record of my own work carried out at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences during the period from July 2009 to July 2015 under the supervision of Dr. Preeti Bhatt, Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, MNIT Jaipur.

The results contained in this thesis have not been submitted, in part or full, to any other university or institute for the award of any degree or diploma.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis titled **"The Impact of Displacement on the Formation of New Values in the Novels of Diasporic Indian Women Writers"** being submitted by **Kalpna Vijay** to Malaviya National Institute of Technology, Jaipur for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** is a bonafide record of research work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance. The thesis work, in my opinion, has reached the requisite standard fulfilling the requirement of **Doctor of Philosophy.**

The results contained in this thesis have not been submitted, in part or full, to any other university or institute for the award of any degree or diploma.

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ABSTRACT

The term ‘diaspora’ refers to a movement of people, as individuals or as groups, from a community or nation away from their place of origin. This movement could be voluntary or forced. Diaspora refers to the “other”, for the displaced groups of people who have been dislocated from their native home country due to migration or exile are sometimes disenfranchised in their country of adoption. The current usage of the term in globalist discourses however refers to the mutability of geographical boundaries, national identity and belonging. The people, who have migrated to foreign lands voluntarily or due to social, economic or religious reasons, defy the traditional markers of identity based on their ethnic or linguistic origin, religious affiliation or social class.

Diasporic movement questions the concept of a rigid and fixed identity based on religion, ethnicity, gender and nation, and leads to the formation of a new identity influenced by the new geographical location where one has migrated. Earlier notions of the term diaspora grounded it in the fixed geographical boundaries of home, identity and displacement. This perspective privileged the political, cultural, geographical boundaries, spaces of the home country, as an authentic space of origin and belonging. The space of dislocation and displacement was thus devalued, bastardized and considered inauthentic places of settling and home. However, contemporary meaning of the term focuses on diaspora subjectivity as a luminal space wherein identity is negotiated and reformed in different ways. Identity thus becomes hybridized as compared to the essentialised nativist identity associated with the traditional concept of the homeland.

Contemporary Indian diaspora writers Anita Desai, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri express through their characters a conflict between their native culture and the new environment; between the old Indian values and the modern values of individualism, materialism, bodily pleasures and a desire for luxury. Their works convey this tussle between values, through male and female, old and young characters that have either shifted to a foreign country or have temporarily moved into a distant land.

In ethics, value refers to something's degree of significance with the objective of determining what is the best action to do, or to explain the importance of different choices or actions. It involves considering actions themselves as abstract objects and assigning value to them. Value relates to right conduct and behaviour and good life in the sense that valuable actions are considered ethically good, while actions of low value are considered ethically bad. Personal values offer an internal reference to things or actions that are good, significant, beneficial, useful, desirable, beautiful etc. Values influence individuals to consider different choices and relate to why people do what they do and what course of action they prefer over others. Personal and cultural values are interrelated, since the former may agree with cultural values or may diverge from prevailing norms. A culture endorses a set of common values which support social expectations and collective understanding of what is considered good, constructive etc. Cultural values provide a reference against which personal values are measured and may vary.

The present project examines the influence of displacement and migration on the personal and cultural values of the individuals portrayed in the works of the three diaspora writers: Anita Desai, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri. Anita Desai and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni are veteran writers who have close ties with India and have carried the baggage of their native land offshore. Jhumpa Lahiri is a comparatively younger writer who was born and bred outside India. Divakaruni and Lahiri present a view of their country from the outside as an exotic place of their origin. Anita Desai has generally dealt with characters from her own displaced community but in a few novels, has also portrayed Western characters in a convincing manner.

Critics have examined the works of the South Asian women diaspora writers with a focus on the feelings of alienation and dejection, love for their homeland, a double identification with their original homeland and the adopted country that their protagonists and other characters feel in the fiction. They have also analyzed the crisis of identity, mythic memory and the protest against discrimination in the adopted country as portrayed in these works. But the impact on the personal and

cultural values of the characters due to the distancing from their home country has not received much critical attention. The present work is based on the impact of displacement on the formation of new values in the lives of Indian immigrants as presented Desai, Divakaruni and Lahiri. These values may relate to their lifestyle, food habits, choice of clothing, religious belief and its expression through customs and ceremonies, and their sense of bonding with people of their own community and of the host country.

The thesis is divided into six chapters, each focuses on the significant aspects of the selected novels of the three diaspora writers. The first chapter 'Introduction' focuses on the background and history of migration, the significance of diaspora writing, the life, major works, achievements and contributions of the three Indian diaspora women writers, Anita Desai, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri. The chapter also includes a Review of Literature and a brief overview of the theoretical positions expressed and maintained by prominent theorists and critics like Salman Rushdie, Stuart Hall, Makarand Paranjape, Jasbir Jain, C. Vijayasree, Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, Paul Gilroy, and Vijay Mishra.

The second chapter 'Love and Family Bonding' focuses on the portrayal of the personal and social relationships of immigrants in the novels by the three diaspora writers. The chapter discusses how alienation, loneliness and their status as outsiders affect their relationship with each other as with the people of the host country. The bonds between siblings, the transitions in their relationship due to their migrant condition have been studied. The role of parents in encouraging their foreign-born children to maintain their ties with each other and with the people of the host country has also been taken up.

These novels reflect the emotional dependence of diaspora on their family especially due to their sense of alienation as strangers in a foreign land. In Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* the strong marital bond between the first generation migrants Ashoke and Ashima helps the latter to face difficult situations after the death of her husband. In Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams,* Mrs. Gupta restricts her husband from continuing any physical relationship with her for fear of losing her power of dream

interpretation, yet continues living with him as a married couple. Tilo, the protagonist in Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Mistress of Spices* similarly is instructed not to enter into a relationship with any male, failing which she too would be deprived of her mystical powers. Tilo, however forms emotional bonds with her clients and helps them through the spices. In Divakaruni's *Vine of Desire* sisters Sudha and Anju are emotionally dependent on each other despite the fact that Sudha has an illegitimate relationship with Anju's husband Sunil and Anju is conscious of this painful situation.

The third chapter 'Changing Religious Beliefs and Spiritual Values' deals with the conflict experienced by immigrants in accommodating their religious and spiritual beliefs in the foreign country. It is analyzed whether they distance themselves from the other religion or choose a middle path and follow selected religious customs according to their convenience. The Ganguly family in Lahiri's *The Namesake* religiously follows all the Bengali ceremonies with other immigrant families from India with fervour and enthusiasm. However, the first generation diaspora in these novels consider the religion of their adopted country equally important. In *The Mistress of Spices*, Tilo's spirituality and asceticism is essential for her to be able to utilize the healing powers of the spices. Mrs. Gupta in *Queen of Dreams* again practices abstinence to protect her extraordinary powers of dream interpretation. In Desai's *Fasting, Feasting,* religion became a source of solace to Mira Masi, Uma's widowed aunt. She travels from place to place for pilgrimage and often, Uma the young divorced girl accompanies her.

The fourth chapter 'Adapting to a New Social System' focuses on the lifestyle and habits of the diaspora portrayed in the novels of the three diaspora writers. Their adaptation of the new food habits, dress sense and choice of companions is discussed through the characters of the first generation and their foreign-born children. The chapter focuses on the need for immigrants to adopt the culture of the host country due to the physical distancing from their home country. In their cultural encounter with the natives of the foreign country, characters react differently. While some characters like Adit in *Bye-Bye Blackbird* happily adapt the

ways of the host country, others gradually adapt themselves to a new culture and life style.

In her novel *Fasting, Feasting*, Desai presents the parents in India and America as the products of their society who simply continue the very same traditions they themselves have been accustomed to throughout their lives. The immigrants' friendly ties with the people of the host country, as well as an easy acceptance of the Western lifestyle and culture, is portrayed in *Bye-Bye Blackbird*. In *The Namesake*, Gogol finds it difficult to adjust with Maxine who belongs to the rich upper class of Americans, and similarly, he is not able to continue his relationship with another Bengali immigrant Moushumi, due to their different social circle and life-styles. In Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams*, Mrs Gupta and her family members adopt western customs, but also carry on their Indian way of life since it gives them a distinct identity in America.

The fifth chapter titled 'Shaping a New Identity' focuses on the struggle of the characters in an alien country for self- identity and survival. It studies how the migrants who leave their native place create a new identity in a home away from home and go through various phases of emotional, economical and psychological conflict. The protagonists in these novels struggle to acquire a sense of their true identity as they are influenced by the culture and tradition of the foreign land while they cannot completely give up their old beliefs and way of life. This internal conflict is intensified by the attitude and the response of the natives who are often hostile to the outsiders.

The Mistress of Spices focuses on Tilottama's quest for a more holistic identity which integrates her personal desires as well as her social responsibility to the world outside. An Indian by origin, she lives in America and uses her supernatural powers to heal people who are suffering. Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams* is largely set in the United States and focuses on the impact of the 9/11 attack on the lives of the immigrants as they are labelled as terrorists by American natives. Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird* depicts the immigrant experiences of people from the decolonized country India who have shifted to the former ruler country England. In Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*, the protagonist Gogol experiences an

identity crisis both as Indian immigrant in USA as well as due to the name he has been bestowed by his parents, which is neither meaningful, nor sophisticated in the Indian and American context.

The final chapter, ‘Conclusion’ presents an overview of the basic findings of the thesis and attempts to analyze the position of the Indian diaspora women writers, Anita Desai, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri, in the mainstream of important diaspora writers. It also looks into aspects of works by diaspora writers which offer scope for further research and which may contribute to the existing corpus of research in this area.

The thesis argues that works of Indian diaspora women writers who have themselves immigrated to foreign lands, open up a space where identity and values may be altered for the better. The three women writers discussed in this thesis are subjects of a postcolonial world of diaspora migrations and portray characters that are influenced and shaped by the culture of the host country which they have adopted. The life style, perspectives and values of these diaspora individuals are strongly influenced by those practiced in the adopted nation. The characters in these novels are portrayed as strong-willed people who improve their individual circumstances and begin a journey of self-discovery and value formation. The characters share the characteristic insider/outsider perspective of immigrants, but in the course of the narrative they develop new values and inner strength due to their double consciousness as diaspora individuals.

CONTENTS

Chapter One

Introduction

the twentieth century, caused due to independent movements in colonized countries, and refugees fleeing from strife-ridden nations and war, and also economic migrations after the Second World War. However, the term is not used to indicate homogeneity of experience of all the exiled people, instead, as Paul Gilroy points out, it marks the contradictions and ambivalence of the diaspora experience. Describing the essentialist standpoint, Gilroy argues that "it confronts a pluralistic position which affirms blackness as an open signifier and seeks to celebrate complex representations of a black particularity that is internally divided: by class, sexuality, gender, age, ethnicity, economics and political consciousness" (68).

Etymologically diaspora refers to the fertility of dispersal, the scattering of seeds for a new growth which is a positive connotation of the term. Jasbir Jain observes, "Migrations are themselves as ancient as known histories – whether we refer to the biblical journeys or the travels motivated by adventure, lure of wealth, search for land or power" (248). Recent theorizations of diaspora problematize the day-to-day lived experience of migrants, as they live in diaspora communities around the world. These people cannot be clubbed together as one fixed entity for there is heterogeneity among them – cultural, linguistic, ethnic and national, which needs to be taken into account.

Earlier notions of the term diaspora grounded it in the fixed geographical boundaries of home, identity and displacement. This perspective privileged the political, cultural, geographical boundaries, spaces of the home country, as an authentic space of origin and belonging. The space of dislocation and displacement was thus devalued, bastardized and considered to be inauthentic places of settling and home. However, contemporary meaning of the term focuses on diaspora subjectivity as a luminal space wherein identity is negotiated and reformed in different ways. Homi Bhabha observes, "The pact of interpretation is never simply an act of communication between the I and the You…." (53). He explains, "The production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot 'in itself' be conscious" (53). Bhabha critiques the concept of 'ethnic absolutism' through his theory of the Third

Space. He states, “It is only when we understand that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation, that we begin to understand why hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or ‘purity’ of cultures are untenable” (54). Identity thus becomes hybridized as compared to the essentialized nativist identity associated with the traditional concept of the homeland. Also, one has to remember that the term ‘diaspora’ should not be used in an uncritical and ahistorical manner but in the context of the historical conditions that produce diaspora migrations and the effect of these movements on the formation of identity in relation to race, gender, sexuality and ethnicity.

Contemporary diaspora writers express through their characters a conflict between their native culture and the new environment – between the old Indian values favouring traditions, religious customs, sacrifice, parental and filial duties, spirituality, and the modern values of individualism, materialism, bodily pleasures and a desire for luxury. The novels and short stories of these contemporary diaspora writers convey this tussle between values, through male and female, old and young characters that have either shifted to a foreign country or have temporarily moved to a distant land.

In ethics, value refers to something’s degree of significance with the objective of determining what is the best action to do, or to explain the importance of different choices or actions. It involves considering actions themselves as abstract objects and assigning value to them. Value relates to right conduct and behaviour and good life in the sense that valuable actions are considered ethically good, while actions of low value are considered ethically bad. Ethical values are sometimes used synonymously with goodness.

Personal and cultural values are taken to be relative as they vary between people and at a larger level, between different cultural groups. Value systems are a set of consistent values and standards. Similarly, principal values are the foundation upon which other values and measures of integrity are based. Shalom H. Schwartz states that theorists “view values as the criteria people use to evaluate actions, people and events.” While some values are related to the body like the desire to

avoid pain and seek pleasure, and are considered objective, others are considered subjective as they differ across the world and across cultures and are intricately related to belief and belief-systems. These may include ethical and moral values, doctrinal and ideological values related to religion and politics, social values and aesthetic values. Values can be defined as overall preference regarding appropriate courses of action or results. They reflect an individual's sense of right and wrong, and what is appropriate and what ought to be. Altruism, tolerance and respect are considered values. Human attitudes and behaviour are affected by the values one nurtures.

Personal values offer an internal reference to things or actions that are good, significant, beneficial, useful, desirable, beautiful etc. Values influence individuals to consider different choices and relate to why people do what they do and what course of action they prefer over others. Personal and cultural values are interrelated, since the former may agree with cultural values or may diverge from prevailing norms. A culture endorses a set of common values which permit social expectations and collective understanding of what is considered good, beautiful, constructive etc. Simon Blackburn states, "it is surely a mistake to think that an equation between living as we would wish and living virtuously is somehow written into things by nature. Insofar as it is approximately true, it is because it is written into things by *culture*" (italics mine) (98). Cultural values provide a reference against which personal values are measured and may vary. The members of a cultural group broadly share their cultural values. While norms involve rules of behaviour in specific situations, values decide what should be adjudged as good or evil. Values are abstract concepts of what is significant and of worth. The members of a culture often support its values even if their personal values do not completely agree with the normative values sanctioned in that culture. Conformity is encouraged in cultural groups and non-conformity may be stigmatized or opposed by the group members.

Schwartz describes ten basic values which cover almost all the values upheld by most cultures in the world. These ten basic values are: self-direction, which involves the ability to think independently, and choose, explore, and create; stimulation, which includes excitement, the will to take up challenges, and novelty;

hedonism, which focuses on self-gratification and bodily pleasures; achievement, which is success acquired through one's competence in society; power, which includes one's social status and esteem, and authority over people or resources; security, which involves stability and balance in relationship with others and with oneself; conformity, which means restraining actions and impulses which may hurt or harm others, or which defy social norms or expectations; tradition, which includes respect and adherence to customs which a culture or religion upholds; benevolence, which means kindness towards people with whom one is in frequent contact; and universalism, which includes acceptance and tolerance, and desire for the welfare of all human beings and nature. While these values are in general acceptable to, and upheld by all major cultures of the world, each individual culture and religion supports and propagates certain values which are accepted and appreciated by the members of the community who practice that culture or religion. Consequently, the cultural norms and beliefs of one ethnic community residing in a specific region vary from those of another community. People who migrate to other parts of the world thus experience a culture shock, since their beliefs and customs seem to be anomalous in the culture of the host country.

Most Indian diaspora writers who have migrated to prosperous countries to achieve different goals look back to their home country and portray the native Indian culture in their works. They compare and contrast the values of the Indians with those of Indian migrants. The values adopted by Indian diaspora are progressive and rational and suitable to the life and culture in the modern western world. These values include choices regarding food habits, religious beliefs and customs, choice of apparel and their belief in maintaining close ties with their family and friends. The diaspora who either settle down abroad or shift there temporarily, are caught between two poles. They may have a progressive and a modern outlook, yet they are torn between the old and the new values, and struggle to acquire a sense of their true identity. The cross-fertilization of cultures involves both western ethics and Indian values; the diaspora adopt new values and survive in the new world. Each country has its own cultural norms which are followed by the people and the society. When people migrate to another country, they face another set of cultural norms. This

displacement influences every facet of the diaspora's lives including what they value and how they behave. Their values change directly or indirectly due to the influence of the host country.

The present project examines the influence of displacement and migration on the personal and cultural values of the individuals portrayed in the works of the three diaspora writers: Anita Desai, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri. The Indian diaspora migrating to any part of the world are aware of their rich cultural heritage. They are not only the carriers of the Indian traditions and values but also they try to cherish these values and pass these on to their generations. However, with the passage of time as they live in a foreign country, the diaspora gradually adopt the culture of the adopted country and struggle to retain their own. Victor Ramraj asserts, "Diasporic writings are invariably concerned with the individual's or community's attachment to the centrifugal homeland. But this homeland is countered by a yearning for a sense of belonging to the current place of abode" (216). Writers of the Indian diaspora often present this conflict that migrants experience, as the deep-rooted values which are cherished by them are influenced by the values upheld in the host country.

This research study focuses on three such prominent writers of the Indian diaspora: Anita Desai, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri. Anita Desai and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni are veteran writers who have close ties with India and have carried the baggage of their native land offshore. Jhumpa Lahiri is a comparatively younger writer who was born and bred outside India. Divakaruni and Lahiri present a view of their country from the outside as an exotic place of their origin. These writers while depicting migrant characters in their fiction explore the theme of the impact of displacement on their individuality. Anita Desai in her later fiction has dealt with characters from her own displaced community, but in a few novels, has also portrayed Western characters in a convincing manner.

Anita Mazumdar Desai, the Indian novelist and short story writer, was born on June 24, 1937 in Mussoorie. She possesses the bicultural heritage of postcolonial India with her mother being German and her father a Bengali. The influence of a

mixed parentage enabled Desai to speak many languages as German, Bengali, Urdu, Hindi and English. Desai completed her early education from Queen Mary's Higher Secondary School in Delhi and graduated in English literature from the Miranda House, University of Delhi. She began to write at the age of seven and her first book was published at the age of nine. Desai lived in India till the 1950s. She was a member of the Advisory Board for English of the National Academy of Letters in Delhi and a Member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In 1985 she moved to England and the following year, she shifted to United States. In 1993 she became a teacher in Creative Writing at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge. Her daughter Kiran Desai is a prominent writer in English. Kiran Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) won the Man Booker Prize and has received wide public acclaim.

Anita Desai published her first novel, *Cry, the Peacock*, in 1963. It was followed by *Voices of the City* (1965) – a story about three siblings and their different ways of life in Calcutta. In the following years her novels *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (1971), *Journey to Ithaca* (1995), and *Fasting, Feasting* (1999) came out with pictorial depictions of immigrants' lives. Her novel *Fire on the Mountain* (1977) won the Winifred Holtby Memorial Prize. Desai's *Clear Light of Day* (1980) is considered as her most autobiographical work. The writer was shortlisted for the Booker Prize for *Clear Light of Day* (1980), *In Custody (1984)* and *Fasting, Feasting* (1999). In 2004 came out her last novel *The Zigzag Way* where an American academic and writer goes with his girlfriend to Mexico and rediscovers his passion for fiction-writing. Her early novels focus on the patriarchal subjugation and alienation women frequently experience in India while her later novels are written with a focus on the challenges of assimilation that the diaspora face in the countries where they have migrated.

In an interview with Corrine Demas Bliss, Desai describes herself as the one who is carrying, "a European core in her which protested certain Indian things, which always maintained its independence and its separateness." Desai shares her early experiences as a writer in her interview with Magda Costa. She states that their house was, "full of books. All of us were great readers. We were always going to the

library and the bookshop." The atmosphere inspired Desai to start writing short stories and she published her first story when she was only nine. She states that she thinks of a small and a single image which, "stays in your mind, so that you keep returning to it, and you keep adding other images to it, which fit, which are suitable and appropriate to it. So that gradually begins to grow." Desai states in her interview with Yashodhara Dalmia that her writing, "is an effort to discover, and then to underline, and finally to convey the true significance of things."

Desai's female protagonists are often solitary and struggle against the social system. In novels such as *Fasting, Feasting* and *Cry, the Peacock* they are portrayed as fragile introverts who suffer emotional trauma suffering due to the social conditions imposed on them. In novels such as *Bye-Bye Blackbird* descriptions of the social reality dominate the narrative. Desai's fiction does not create an illusionary world, instead it is closer to the facts and truths of the Indian society and the lives of immigrants in the different parts of the world.

Desai has written several novels and two collections of short stories. Desai's 3rd novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (1971) introduces the theme of diaspora conflicts and nostalgia for the homeland. It is a psychological analysis of the immigrants who suffer a mixed feeling of love and hatred towards the country to which they have migrated. In the novel Desai deals with encounters between the East and the West. 'Blackbird' used in the title refers to the immigrants, to whom London says goodbye. Desai highlights the physical and the psychological problems of Indian immigrants and explores the adjustment difficulties that they face in England. Desai describes the life in busy London and the quiet retired life in countryside, both of which contrast with each other. It reflects the inner conflicts and crisis which every immigrant experiences.

Short-listed for the 1999 Booker Prize, Anita Desai's novel *Fasting, Feasting* (1999) looks at an Indian family that, despite Western influence, is bound by Eastern traditions. It is a novel of contrast between two cultures, the one, India, known for its holy and longstanding customs representing 'fasting,' and the other, America, a country of abundant opportunities and sumptuousness epitomizing

'feasting.' The novel relates the disastrous attempts of an Indian daughter, Uma to leave her parents' home and achieve independence without marriage. Her parents, referred to as the indivisible unit MamaPapa, barely notice their daughter's aspirations as they lavish all of their attention on their only son. *Fasting, Feasting* runs from the heart of a close-knit Indian household, with its restrictions and prejudices, its noisy warmth and sensual appreciation of food, to the cool centre of an American family. Desai compares life in rural India with suburban America. The novel reflects her dual worlds, although her characters in India and the United States experience similar dreams and disappointments.

Anita Desai's *Journey to Ithaca* (1996) is about the pilgrimage of the Italian couple Matteo and Sophie. Matteo and Sophie migrate from Italy to India in the quest for truth and God. The journey for the protagonists gradually becomes a journey for self-discovery. In their early experiences in India, Matteo and Sophie fall into the hands of fake gurus and teachers. However, Matteo continues his search and finds refuge in the Mother's ashram, who becomes his spiritual guru. Sophie who is a journalist is keen to know about the past of Laila, the spiritual guru of Matteo. Sophie in her early adventures also feels repulsive of the dirt, the disease and the poverty of India and wants to escape. However, her love for Matteo brings her back to India and she too, joins the Mother's ashram. Desai exhibits her spiritual leanings in the novel depicting the search of the Eternal Truth by her protagonists. Desai presents Ithaca as an imagined place that represents the dreams and ambitions people nurture, and aim to reach in life.

Desai, in an interview with Joshua Barnes, states that she was greatly impressed by writers like Virginia Woolf, D.H. Lawrence, and Thomas Hardy. She recalls, "Those are the ones we read, but as I progressed I also discovered Russian authors. It was a great revelation to learn that as a writer you could delve so deeply into the human mind and experience." For the Russian writers she says, "People like [Fyodor] Dostoyevsky and [Leo] Tolstoy write with such a range of human experience, but the one I particularly love is [Nikolai] Gogol." On being asked about what that writing process is like for her, she states, "I find the first stage of writing a book exhilarating. It's absorbing, but also frightening. You don't know where you'll

go, where you'll end up, or if it's going to work at all. You have to get through long periods of self-doubt." Desai shares that this stage is difficult but an interesting stage. For the next stage, she states, "I put the text aside for a while to come out of being so deep in my characters' stories. Then I can see what the errors are and try to put them right."

Desai has been writing since her early years of marriage while she reared four children. She states in the same interview that she is able to write more creatively when she is stressed, "That's when I feel compelled to write and tie my views and thoughts with reasons. It's curious, but I did write more in those years." Desai says that there were very few writers in India who were writing in English when she was in early stage of writing, hence she was not associated with any group of writers and developed her own writing strategies, "and because of this I was able follow my own stream of consciousness, uninterrupted." The writing process is thus a difficult one for all creative writers and for Desai, it is also a period of introspection and critical thinking. Desai has a clear view about the role of women in Indian society that is both traditional and modern. Still, Desai confesses in the interview that since she has lived out of India, "I don't like to be a spokesperson for India, specifically for Indian women. If I meet people outside India, they usually ask me questions about my country that I can't answer." Her distancing from her home country India is reflected clearly in the themes and characters of her later novels which are mostly located in America.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, another diaspora writer selected for this study, is an award-winning author and poet of Indian origin. She was born in 1956 in Calcutta, India. At the age of nineteen, she left Calcutta and went to the United States for her graduate studies. She received a Master's degree in English from Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio and a Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley. She has lived at many places in Northern California and presently lives with her family in Houston, Texas.

Divakaruni's short story collection, *Arranged Marriage* (1995), won the American Book Award in 1995, and two of her novels, *The Mistress of Spices*

(1997) and *Sister of My Heart* (1999) were made into films. *The Mistress of Spices* was short-listed for the Orange Prize (1997). Divakaruni draws on her own experiences and those of other immigrant Indian women in her fiction. Her works are largely set in India and the United States, and often focus on the experience of South Asian immigrants. Her other major novels are *Queen of Dreams* (2004), *One Amazing Thing* (2010), *The Vine of Desire* (2002), and *The Palace of Illusions* (2008). *Oleander Girl* (2013) is Divakaruni's latest enthralling novel.

Divakaruni's works have been published in over fifty magazines, including *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The New Yorker*. They have also been included in over fifty anthologies including the *Best American Short Stories*, the *O. Henry Prize Stories*, and the *Pushcart Prize Anthology*. Divakaruni's fiction has been translated into twenty languages, including Dutch, Hebrew, Indonesian and Japanese. She has been the president of *Maitri*, a helpline for South Asian women that particularly helps victims of domestic violence and other abusive situations.

As a writer of repute, Divakaruni has been invited to judge numerous competitions such as the National Book Award and the PEN Faulkner Award. She is a frequent visitor of literary festivals and conferences in the United States and in India. Divakaruni explains that the force behind some of her novels is her own immigrant experiences in North America, while few others are influenced by her memories of India and the Indian myths and folk tales she has known. As a lecturer, she often analyses her own writing in the context of contemporary literature. Students at different universities in the United States and abroad examine her works within the framework of South Asian studies, postcolonial theories, women's studies, and other interdisciplinary approaches.

In an interview with Neila C. Seshachari titled "Writing as Spiritual Experience: A Conversation with Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni," Divakaruni shares that she writes mainly for the South Asians. When she finishes writing a piece, she wishes that her writing should reach the people in India and the Indian diaspora in America. Divakaruni states that she is consciously or subconsciously influenced by the tastes of her readers and that is the strength of her writing process. Divakaruni believes

that a writer has a social responsibility, and states that she writes to fulfil hers. She states, "Too much of the writing we do today is done, especially in the more literary kinds of writing that we come across, for the sake of art, for the sake of structure. It's experimental or it's dealing with individual issues and has chosen specifically and purposely to stay away from social questions and social concerns." Divakaruni talks about her novels like *Sister of My Heart* which discusses the social issues in India whereas *The Mistress of Spices,* deals with the problems of the Indian diaspora settled abroad.

In the interview, Divakaruni throws light upon her writing strategy and states that she likes to use magic realism in her novels. She states that though it is not easy to use the Indian mythical elements and weave them in the present context keeping in mind the immigrant audience, but she enjoyed attempting this genre and is happy with the success of her works. She states that while writing *The Mistress of Spices* an inspired kind of image came to her mind which was beyond explanation which helped her to employ magic realism in the novel. In the same interview, Divakaruni explains that though she has used magic realism in her novel *Queen of Dreams* too, she realises that a diaspora writer like her has to be very careful about bringing together old Indian folklore in the contemporary context of life in America.

In another interview with Metka Zupancic on "The Power of Storytelling: An Interview with Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni," the writer discusses the themes of her novels which are usually exploration of race and multicultural relationships. Divakaruni points out that these themes also occur in the works of the diaspora writer Jhumpa Lahiri. Divakaruni states, "Jhumpa Lahiri and I share an interest in the lives of the second generation – the children of Indian ancestry who are born in America. How do they relate to India? How are they different from their parents? What happens when they make the reverse journey back to the country of their origin?" Divakaruni states that several of her novels and short stories focus on the new values the first and the second generation immigrants form to assimilate in the culture of their adopted country.

The novel *The Mistress of Spices* (1997) by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni follows Tilo, an Indian woman and a magical figure who runs a grocery store and uses spices to help the customers overcome their problems. Tilo provides spices for cooking to her clients, and also as a cure for the homesickness and alienation that the Indian immigrants experience in America. In the process, she develops dilemmas of her own when she falls in love with a non-Indian. This creates a greater conflict, as she has to choose whether to serve her people or to follow the path leading to her own happiness. Tilo has to decide which parts of her heritage she will keep and which parts she will choose to abandon. The novel was made into a movie and was well-received both by the Indian and the western audience. Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices* is a tale of joy and sorrow and one special woman's magical powers in an alien land.

Divakaruni succeeds in presenting to her readers a balanced picture of the world of immigrants in America. The situations of the Indian-immigrant customers that Tilo encounters represent larger global issues concerning the immigrant experience. Tilo, the mistress of spices, has many disguises and names that reveal her multiple identities. She keeps changing her name throughout the novel, making clear the complexity of the identity crisis that Indians face in a foreign land.

Divakaruni's novel *Sister of My Heart* (1999) is about how the lives of two women are changed by marriage, as one woman comes to California, and the other stays behind in India. This novel was followed in 2002 by a sequel *The Vine of Desire*. The work is an allegorical masterpiece of unfulfilled desire and sacrificial love. Anju and Sudha are cousins, born in the same household in Calcutta on the same day. The narrative spans many years and moves between India and America as the cousins first separate and then eventually reunite. During difficult times, they discover that despite distance and marriage, they must turn to each other once again for support and friendship. Indian traditions and culture, including dress, celebrations, and religious beliefs are part of the rich environment portrayed in the novel.

The Vine of Desire stands as an exploration of contemporary immigrant experience. The two cousins, Anju and Sudha have travelled away from their home

city of Calcutta to California, a place which is very different from their native culture and traditions and where they are constantly forced to question their beliefs and values. When the characters choose to move out of their culture and create a new identity, they experience self-doubt and conflict. After years of living separate lives, both of them revive their friendship in America. The deep-seated love they feel for each other provides the support each of them needs. Divakaruni poignantly tells the story of immigrants, especially women, who must accept the incongruities between the country they left behind and the one that they now consider their home.

Divakaruni's sixth novel *Queen of Dreams* (2004) is a tale of self-discovery. Rakhi, born in America is the daughter of Indian immigrants. As a California-based painter, the owner of a small business, and a divorced mother, Rakhi experiences both the advantages and the pain of a liberated, middle-class existence in America. Yet she remains obsessed with an imagined India which was abandoned by her parents years ago. Rakhi tries to deal with life as a single mother and understand her own mother, who is able to interpret dreams. This gift of vision fascinates Rakhi but also distances her from her mother's past in India and the world of dreams that she inhabits in the present.

The dreams are filled with symbolism and folklore that reveal India's cultural beliefs, myths, and the legends. They highlight the contrast between Western civilization and the old world of the East. *Queen of Dreams* is concerned with the various issues confronting the second generation in today's Indian-American community. The focus is on family, relationships, pride in one's heritage and the pressures on filial loyalty in the face of changing values.

In an interview in *The Hindu*, Divakaruni states that she started writing memories and poems after her grandfather's death. She was quite young at that time and did not share her work with anyone. Then she joined a writer's group and she says it "was very helpful as they gave me a lot of constructive criticism." Divakaruni moved abroad as a young woman and states about her experience that it was not an easy transition as she has come from a traditional family: "The world around me was suddenly so different. Immigration was certainly a transformational experience and I

tried to explore its intricacies in my early collections such as *Arranged Marriage*". Divakaruni states that in most of her works her Bengali roots are apparent, "That is the segment of Indian culture that I know and love best. I feel I can express the nuances of the Bengali lifestyle and ways of thinking better than other cultures."

The diaspora writer of Indian origin, Jhumpa Lahiri was born in London to Bengali parents on July 11, 1967. She spent her children in Kingston, Rhode Island, graduated from South Kingstown High School, Wakefield, Lahiri received her B.A. in English literature from Barnard College, New York. In Boston University she attained three Master's degrees and later earned a Doctorate. Lahiri also worked for a short time and taught Creative Writing at Boston University and the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, in the U.S. State of Rhode Island. Lahiri is currently living in Fort Greene, New York with her family.

Much of Jhumpa Lahiri's fiction deals with the lives of Indian-Americans, particularly Bengalis. Lahiri has travelled extensively in India and has experienced the effects of colonialism in India as well as the issues of the diaspora in the USA. She experiences a strong sense of bonding with her parents' homeland as well as with the United States and England. Lahiri's fiction reflects a sense of homelessness and desire to feel accepted. Lahiri's Pulitzer Prize winning debut collection of stories *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) is imbued with the nostalgia and longing experienced by migrants. It is a collection of nine short stories addressing the dilemmas in the lives of Indian immigrants. Lahiri uses Calcutta as the setting for three of the nine stories in *Interpreter of Maladies* and sensitively contrasts Indian values with American values in her stories.

The Namesake is Lahiri's second book and her first novel which came out in 2004. It was named the *New York Magazine* Book of the Year. It follows the immigrant experiences of a newlywed couple who migrate from Calcutta to Cambridge, Massachusetts. The novel mainly focuses on their children who are born in USA and have an Asian-American identity. Her second short-story collection, *Unaccustomed Earth* was published in 2008 and became an immediate *New York Times* bestseller. Lahiri's latest novel is *The Lowland* (2013) which is partially

inspired by real-world political events. The novel became a National Book Award finalist and was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2013.

Jhumpa Lahiri has won a number of awards including the Transatlantic Award from the Henfield Foundation (1993), the Pulitzer Prize (2000) and the O. Henry Award (1999) for her volume *Interpreter of Maladies*. The novel has also received the PEN/ Hemingway Best Fiction Debut of the Year award (1999). Lahiri is a member of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities in the USA.

Lahiri is one of the young diaspora writers who write what they feel and what they want to present in their work. Commenting upon her writing style in her interview with *Bookforum*, Lahiri states, "The way writers are perceived or categorized or featured is not the writer's business, because it's not in the writer's control." Lahiri has earned much name and fame in the field of creative writing, where she gives importance to her own perception and stays aloof from the external factors affecting her writing skills.

Lahiri is a distinguished writer, who is acclaimed for the poignancy and her sound hold on prose. She subtly and mesmerizingly establishes an emotional connection with the characters in her fiction. Lahiri states of her writing process in a write up in *The New York Times*, "I hear sentences as I'm staring out the window, or chopping vegetables, or waiting on a subway platform alone." She further adds, "They are pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, handed to me in no particular order, with no discernible logic. I only sense that they are part of the thing."

Massachusetts has been a frequent background of some of the books and stories of Lahiri. She chooses the setting outside Boston, for her debut novel *The Namesake* and some of the stories in the first collection of stories, *Interpreter of Maladies* despite the large part of her life that she has spent in Rhode Island. In an interview to *The New Yorker* Lahiri states the reason, "Maybe I felt awkward about naming the place where I grew up – feeling, I don't know, strange about it in some way. Massachusetts provided a convenient shield for a while." It is only in her recent second novel *The Lowland* that Lahiri sets Rhode Island as the background setting.

The Namesake (2004) Lahiri's first novel, spans across cultures and generations as it focuses on a Hindu Bengali family's journey to self-acceptance in Boston. Lahiri explores the themes of the complexities of the immigrant experience and acceptance, the contrast in lifestyles, culture shock, the problems of assimilation, and the difficult ties between generations. She paints a portrait of an Indian family experiencing a dilemma between the pull of family traditions, and the American way of life. The novel presents a family struggling to make peace with its divided loyalties to India and America.

In an interview with *Goodreads*, Jhumpa Lahiri shares that in the beginning of her career which started in her twenties, she liked to write in the weekends while she was attending college. Then Lahiri received a fellowship and went to a writing colony in Provincetown and devoted her all time on writing. By the time she was in Rome, Lahiri loved reading and writing Italian literature. She likes to read varied authors including, "Calvino, Pasolini, Pavese, Natalia Ginzburg, Moravia. It's been a fantastic and incredible experience for me as a reader—and a writer, I hope."

Immigrant cultures frequently thematize the rebellion and the breaking of tradition of the second and third generation immigrants. Traditional cultural practices observed by immigrants in their home country are disrupted and distorted in the country which they have relocated. Values which are strictly adhered to at home – like parental sacrifice for their children or the practice of acknowledging and respecting hierarchies of age may be best in the new culture of the modern west – where different class stratifications are promoted and gender roles are constructed differently. This disruption of tradition may be considered as a loss of the original cultural in exchange for the new American or British culture.

In many of the novels taken up for study here, generational conflict between the India-born first generation and the America/Britain-born second or third generation is portrayed. The differences between 'native' Indian values and the new westernized culture of Indian Americans are highlighted as the younger generation engages in a more individualistic pursuit of material wealth or happiness in the new home country. Indian values may include the sharing of ideas, plans with all the members of the

family, engaging in a routine keeping in view the likes/dislikes of the elderly members of the family, choosing the welfare of the family as compared to personal gain, respecting members of the older generation like parents, grandparents, uncles or aunts and following traditional religious practices like the front communal celebration of festivals and a strict adherence to rituals. Generational conflict may occur when the younger members of the family reject such traditional Indian values as they enter into a society which is more liberal and individualistic in its approach.

The cultural practices of the second and the third generation immigrants produce identity. Stuart Hall writes that cultural identity, "is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture." Hall thus reflects the idea of cultural identity not being a fixed entity but as being continuously transformed. Hall writes, "Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized part, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power" (Braziel 236).

The cultural identity of immigrants is affected by their degree of identification with and relation to a 'homeland' and by the extent of their assimilation, or distinction from the 'majority culture' of the country which they have emigrated. The boundaries and definitions of the cultural identity of immigrants are continually shifting and being moulded by pressures both inside and outside their Indian – origin community.

Critics have examined the works of diaspora writers with a focus on the feelings of alienation and dejection, love for their homeland, a double identification with their original homeland and the adopted country that their protagonists and other characters feel in the fiction. They have also analyzed the crisis of identity, mythic memory and the protest against discrimination in the adopted country as portrayed in these works.

Amit Shankar Saha in "Perspectives: Exile Literature and the Diasporic Indian Writer" discusses the various forms of exiles through John Simpson's *The*

Oxford Book of Exile. The article argues the point that diasporic Indian writing is none other than exile literature. Taking the example of the old Indian diaspora of forced labour as well as the modern technocrat diaspora, the essay states that there is an inherent exilic state in all dislocated lives whether it is willful or forced migration. According to the critic, "Whatever may be the geographical location of the exiled writer, in the mental landscape the writer is forever enmeshed among the strings attached to poles that pull in opposite directions. The only way the writer can rescue oneself from the tautness of the enmeshing strings is by writing or by other forms of artistic expression" (188). It is observed that there is a shift in the concerns of the second generation of diaspora writers in comparison to the previous generation that widens the field of exile literature.

In the article "That Third Space; Interrogating the Diasporic Paradigm," K. Satchidanandan disagrees with the idea that the diaspora writer occupies a kind of second space in contrast to Homi Bhabha's calling it 'a third space,' a hybrid location of antagonism. The critic discusses various factors that affect the class component of the diaspora experience in terms of language and the minority status of the immigrants that contributes to the intensity of felt alienation. The article also focuses on the different forms of 'othering' experienced within the diaspora. According to the critic, "Imagining the other is not necessarily a crippling experience; it also defines one's Self and reassures one about one's own distinct identity" (19). Satchidanandan discusses the diaspora experience of Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri as a gendered experience in his essay.

Latha Rengachari observes that women diaspora writers have a different perspective than the male writers on the issue of diaspora identity. She states that the "Third world women…use the auto-biography to give shape to an identity grounded in these diverse experiences of expatriation and self-definition" (35). Another critic Lois Tyson feels that displacement creates the feeling of unhomeliness and questions the identity of the diaspora. Tyson states, "Double consciousness and unhomeliness are the two features of postcolonial diasporas. 'Double consciousness' or an unstable sense of the self is the result of forced migration colonialism frequently caused" (421).

The article "One Foot in Canada and a Couple of Toes in India: Diaspora and Homelands in South Asian Canadian Experience" by Makarand Paranjape focuses on the relationship of the South Asian Canadian diaspora to their homelands. Paranjape notes that West Indian writing in Canada is preoccupied with the complexities and contradictions associated with leaving one society and adjusting to another. Paranjape discusses Rohinton Mistry's novels *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance* which do not celebrate the homeland but mourn its tragedies. Paranjape believes that "just as homelands give rise to diasporas, diasporas also have the capacity to shape, if not create homelands" (162).

N. Jayaram uses a sociological perspective to focus on the problems of adjustment of the immigrants in an alien country. The cultural heterogeneity of the two communities – the immigrants and the host, is reflected not only in the skin colour but also in the cultural difference between the two. He believes that the migrated people do not maintain a uniform behaviour pattern, "There were, in fact, significant divergences in the adjustment policy of different segments within the Indian community" (68). C. Vijayasree in "Survival as an Ethic: South Asian Immigrant Women's Writing" examines the literary representations of women's experience of dislocation, displacement and relocation. Vijayasree mentions the classic example of Dimple Dasgupta of Bharati Mukherjee's *Wife.* She states: "Going home is not an easy solution available to immigrant women. In instances where women do make a journey back home, they rarely find what they have lost" (135). Marriage and migration are discussed as survival strategies for women. Vijayasree takes the example of Chitra Divakaruni's *Yuba City School* where a working-class mother is portrayed as deeply hurt by the discrimination that her child suffers in school every day. The sad facts of race, difference and discrimination are discussed in the essay in the light of the personal lives of immigrants.

Rama Kundu affirms Desai's rejection of the western religious ethos of sin-evil-guilt-penance. She explains it in terms of the cross-culture heritage in Desai's personal life. For Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird,* Kundu comments "In this novel, she empathizes with the western search for India. Doing so, she attains a harmonious, clear vision of India, a sense of delighted, joyous, serene fulfillment" (99). Kundu

points out that in *Journey to Ithaca* Desai conveys the message of joy-light-truth through the journey of three main protagonists Matteo, Sophie and Laila. It represents their movement from the skeptical rationalism of the west to an enraptured mysticism of the east.

Jasbir Jain's article "The Rules of the Game" focuses on Anita Desai's narrative technique in her fiction and points out that the narrative perspective closely identifies itself with the consciousness of one or more characters in her early as well as recent novels like *Fasting, Feasting*, *The Zigzag Way* and others. Jain comments: "Desai's narrative technique has a pattern in so far as there are journeys into the past, and into the world of childhood, and one is a changed being at the end of the journey" (147). Jain argues that in Desai's novels the images constitute the pattern of psychological analysis as in her treatment of landscape, city and garden in *Voices in the City* and *Fire on the Mountain.*

Lorna Sage discusses the inner conflict and the social pressure of the outside world in Desai's characters. Sage points out that the sense of place has a special relevance for Desai, and that her novels reflect a concern with spatial metaphors. Her imagery is built upon cities and open spaces which affect her characters that are haunted by their own inner conflict. She comments, "Desai's world is full of violence, where the characters are constantly under pressure to test their survival skills" (182). She notes the parallel themes of loneliness and survival in *Cry, the Peacock* and *Voices in the City* and problems of cultural nostalgia and alienation in *Bye-Bye Blackbird*.

Monika Fludernik in "The Diasporic Imaginary: Postcolonial Reconfigurations in the Context of Multiculturalism" discusses the term 'diaspora' as propounded by different writers like Vijay Mishra, William Safran and James Clifford. She sets out to clarify the interrelationship between the recent rise in diasporic consciousness and the American concept of multiculturalism. She discusses the problematic issues within the framework of multiculturalism such as the economic, educational and employment rights of immigrants on a foreign land. The essay also underlines the fact that "the existence of more recent diaspora is wholly independent of multiculturalist settings, arising instead from a globalized capitalist economy" (Introduction xxxviii).

The essay points out one of the traditional drawbacks of a diasporic stance – the threat of being relegated to the status of the 'Other.'

The critics Shailja Sharma, Susheila Nasta and Anjali D. Parmar discuss the diaspora elements in Anita Desai's novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird*. They focus on narrative elements like the skillful interweaving of plot and character, and interesting shocks and surprises in the plot. Nasta states in *Home Truths: Fictions of the South Asian Diaspora in Britain* that this cultural traffic for the colonized may be seen as a "self-determined force for liberation" (32). In addition to these, a number of close readings of Indian diaspora writers have been done by M.G Vassanji and Monica Ali. They discuss the issues of alienation, loss of identity and the challenges of accommodating in the host country that the immigrants have to face inevitably in a foreign land.

Meenakshi Mukherjee comments upon the distinct style of Desai's narration. She states, "Her language is marked by three characteristics: sensuous richness, a high strung sensitiveness and a love for the sound of words" (189). For the same, Freedman Ralph states that Desai brings in technical innovations in her novels that, "combine features of both novel and lyrical poetry and shift the readers' attention from men and events to a formal design" (1). R.S. Sharma comments on Desai's prose style, "What is perhaps overlooked in the process is the fact that most of her problems as a fiction writer begin with her insistence on too much style on too small a canvas" (92). Sharma criticizes Desai's insistence on style where the thematic focus is more significant.

Critics have also commented upon the feminist perspective in Anita Desai's fiction. Ann Lowry Weir comments on her feminine sensibility: "She gives her readers valuable insights into the feminine consciousness through her memorable protagonists" (1). Asha Kanwar praises Desai's fiction for focusing "on the inner experience of life" (71). Peter Alcock states that Desai expresses a "uniquely Indian sensibility that is yet completely at ease in the mind of the west" (33). R.K. Srivastava notes that while Desai wrote short stories, she "illustrated them diligently and sewed them into covers so as to make them look as proper books" (217). Sudhakar Pandey observes, "In all her novels, Anita uses psychology as a dominant discipline in the shaping of character; this, together with the formal handling of various literary devices

and the attention she pays to the craftsmanship" distinguishes Anita Desai from other Indian diaspora novelists (xvii). Simone de Beauvoir analyses Desai's female protagonists' longing for self-dependence who like men move freely in their, "public life activities and avoid sado-masochistic relationships" in their personal life (670).

In the brief essay on Anita Desai, "A Guide to Twentieth Century Women Novelists," Wheeler presents a complete analysis of Desai's growth as a writer of short stories and novels. She finds the element of faith in Desai's novels which necessitates the intelligent, meaningful presentation of human experience. The critic notes the fine balance between the powerfully alive social life and the internal lives of the characters. In novels like *Baumgartner's Bombay, In Custody, Clear Light of Day* and *Fire on the Mountain*, Wheeler observes: "This unity involves a congruence of style, structure and thematic characteristic of intensely imaginative fiction, and such congruence is perceived by the reader as aesthetic beauty, a beauty, however, which is alive to change, to growth and to transformation" (259). The writer looks at the narrative structure which explores the psychological depths of the minds of the characters.

In the essay "Images of Alienation – A Study of Anita Desai's novels," S.P. Swain looks at the scientific images which create an aesthetic effect and stir up an emotional conflict in the alienated self. Swain observes that the images in her novels are in perfect harmony with the nature of the characters' alienation. He states: "The core images of alienation are found enmeshed with other images arising out of it. Each image holds within it the seeds of the self's own destruction" (132). Swain observes that in *Cry, the Peacock*, Maya's consciousness and her deteriorating psychic status is portrayed through images. Nanda Kaul, in *Fire on the Mountain* longs for the privacy, seclusion and solidity of trees. In *Baumgartner's Bombay*, Hygo's isolation during his infancy is portrayed through the image of the 'fir-tree.'

Bruce King comments that in Desai's novels the small objects, passing moods and attitudes of the characters acquire great significance in the plot. King argues that Desai's novels are not the reflections of Indian society, politics or characters but they are the part of her effort to seize upon the raw material of life which is shapeless and

meaningless. The article discusses Desai's portrayal of wives, older women and sisters in her fiction. King states, "They are from westernized families in which choice of life and independence for a woman is a moral and financial possibility" (239).

Anjana Sharma in her article "Food Transfigured: Writing the Body in Indian Women's Fiction in English" argues that food as flesh alters the projection of Indian society. Secondly, the womanspeak discloses the hidden narratives of women's sexuality in terms of culture. She says that Indian women writers use food and food-centered sequences to speak of the female body and its desire. In Anita Desai's *Fasting, Feasting*, the feasts that Uma helps to organize, reflect the parsimony of her own life – the sexual fast that is her life. Sharma comments, "Food becomes an agency of denial – Uma's bondage to meet the food needs of her parents – needs that are suggested in sexual terms – ensure the death of her own desires" (153).

Judith M. Brown and Gita Rajan focus on the works of South Asian diaspora and their representations in films. Rita Christian and Judith Misrahi-Barakand also see South Asian diaspora as contributing to the framework of global modernity and focus on the Indian diaspora imagination in their critical study.

Janice Albert, Richard Abcarian and Marvin Klotz have analyzed Divakaruni's fiction with a focus on the human experience of nostalgia and survival crisis that the characters undergo in her works. Frederick Luis Aldana and Huang Guiyou present their views in the depiction of Asian American stories and literary theory as depicted in Divakaruni's novels. Rocio G. Davis writes critically on the narrative style in Divakaruni's fiction and poetry. Devasree Chakravarti and G.A. Ghanshyam have discussed the shifting identities and re-invention of the self in Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices*.

Pallavi Rastogi analyzes the pedagogical strategies which can be used to teach Divakaruni's *Arranged Marriage* in the classroom. Rastogi notes that Divakaruni focuses on Indian cultural life, myth and legend in her narratives. The critic states that in *Arranged Marriage* there are, "references to Indian clothing, food, festivals, and religious practices. Her characters bring these customs to the United States,

asking American society to recognize the traditions of diasporic communities and so enrich itself" (35). Somdatta Mandal discusses the life and literary influences of Divakaruni in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*. Mandal states that Divakaruni is, "seen as giving a voice to female Asian immigrants and to portray the struggle with hybrid identities in her fictions" (115). Mandal focuses on Divakaruni's art of fusing Indian traditions, spiritualism and emancipated feminism in her works.

Brunda Moka-Dias, in the article "Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni (1956)" argues that Divakaruni's writing habit which developed late in life is directly tied to her migrant condition. She points out that Divakaruni's help-line, MAITRI acts as a bridge linguistically, socially and culturally with other South-Asian women. Her writings have the impulses of oral traditions and possess a lyrical quality. The critic states, "She depicts abused, marginalized women, the middle class and the working class. In elaborate characterizations, readers encounter Lalita, the battered victim of domestic violence" (89). Through brief references the author gives glimpses of the diaspora Indians who, despite being rich, face different kinds of problems in their adopted homeland.

Robert Ross comments upon the immigrant experience of Indian women in the works of Divakaruni, focusing especially on the stories from the collection *Arranged Marriage*. Ross states, "Each narrative explores the condition of Indian women adrift in a society where the past social rigidity no longer applies but has left a void in the present" (250). In *The Mistress of Spices,* Divakaruni presents the immigrant experience in realistic terms mixed with mythology and fantasy.

Buley-Meissner praises Divakaruni for "her literary creativity and personal sensitivity in dealing with cross-cultural complexities of self-identity, family relationships and community values" (43). The critic points out that Divakaruni's works reflect her boldly imaginative style of story-telling, her poetic sensibility, her creativity in genre-crossing, and breaking down of boundaries between serious and popular literature. The critic notes that Divakaruni's continuing concern with the experiences of Indian women and Indian American women is the most striking characteristic of her writings.

Begona Simal, Elizabetta Marino and Laurie Leach present their views about the Asian/American community where the diaspora struggle with their plural identities. They focus on the increasing number of South Asian immigrants to America who gradually acquire cosmopolitan and transnational Asian identities. Begona Simal states, "Asian/American communities now comprise a plural and diverse constituency: the increasing contingent of new immigrants and 'diasporic' Asian/Americans, living in between countries and cultures, at different stages of assimilation and dissimilation..." (153). She points out that the new Asian American writings owe a lot to the long traditions that the older diaspora have carried with them. Laurie Leach discusses the stories of Indian diaspora writers in her article and comments that there are hints in the resolution of the conflict that the Indian immigrants face in America, but, "the fundamental differences between American and Indian concepts of privacy are likely to continue to cause tensions even if the most favourable resolution is reached" (199).

B. Sudipta presents her critical study of the immigrant narratives of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. D. Dhanalakshmi explores the tension between Indian culture and western philosophy in Divakaruni's *Sister of My Heart*. K.S. Dhanam praises Divakaruni's portrayal of gender issues and for her "sensitivity to contemporary voices" in her novels. Dhanam argues that in Divakaruni's novels: "today's issues are threaded through with an ongoing search for identity beyond anthropology, beyond sociology and beyond academia" (62). In a discussion with Erika Bauer, Divakaruni says that if a writer's art is good, "everyone should be able to get something from it. And if it's good enough it should…touch something in people." Victor Ramraj draws attention to the inherent conflict in the diaspora individual's mind about their native homeland and the adopted one. He states, "Diaspora writings are invariably concerned with the individual or community's attachment to the centrifugal homeland. But this attachment is countered by a yearning for a sense of belonging to the current place of abode" (216). Susana Vega-González critically examines Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices* and focuses on the negotiation of the immigrants with the new culture that they have adopted.

The critics point out that these writers have a deep understanding of the value of cultural exchange. They praise the South Asian diaspora writers for the resolution of the conflict that arises due to the difference in culture between the diaspora and the natives. Elizabeth Softsky discusses the processes and challenges of adjustment and assimilation of the Indian diaspora in their host country in her critical essay. Mitali Wong and Zia Hasan analyze the narrative style and the motifs in the works of South Asians diaspora writers. O.P. Mathur analyses Jhumpa Lahiri's simple and sincere narrative style and the uncomplicated plots in her short stories. He discusses the lack of communication and emotional suffering among the characters in Lahiri's collection of stories *Interpreter of Maladies*, but praises Lahiri's stories for "they have variety of fragrances, subtle nuances of their own. They are deceptively simple on the surface like the calm waters of a deep river" (127).

O.P. Dwivedi and Vivek Kumar Dwivedi critically analyze the transnational element in the works of diaspora writer Jhumpa Lahiri. They focus on Lahiri's depiction of the immigrants' complex experience which involves assimilation in the new culture as well as nostalgia and alienation crisis. Natalie Friedman critically examines Lahiri's *The Namesake* where she has portrayed the characters' identity crisis, their inability to be easily accepted in the host society, and problems in relationships that the immigrant families face in the United States. A.M. Alfonso-Forero analyses Lahiri's *The Namesake* in context of the difficulties a pregnant woman faces in an alien country. The critic discusses the state of mind of a mother in an alien country when she plays her role to her best but also compares it with what it would have been, had she been in India. Alfonso-Forero also criticizes the portrayal of the characters in *Unaccustomed Earth* where Indian immigrants are unable to sustain their traditional values. Bahareh Bahmanpour studies the women characters and their quest for identity in Lahiri's *The Namesake*.

R. Malathy and Lara Merlin focus on the identity crisis as experienced by immigrants in a host culture in Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams*, *The Mistress of Spices* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*. Sunita Joshi discusses the interaction of the immigrants between the host and native culture in Lahiri's *The Namesake* and comments, "For them, homeland is just an idea and nothing much. They have no

safety net of nostalgia to fall back on. Other than these, cultural crisis too makes a difference up to certain extent" (89).

Saloni Prasad and Sujata Rana discuss the search for space by Lahiri's protagonists and the need to belong in an alien society as portrayed in *The Namesake* and *Interpreter of Maladies*. The critics discuss the cultural dilemma of the characters due to their displacement as portrayed in Lahiri's works. Saloni Prasad examines Lahiri's short stories and notes that they focus on the inner psyche of characters, the relationship between parents and children, siblings, lovers, and married couples. Prasad observes that Lahiri "deals most prolifically with the theme of the search for the inner self as defined by the self, by others, by location and by circumstance" (261). In her article, "Diasporic Crisis of Dual Identity in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*," Sujata Rana discusses the portrayal of the cultural dilemma and displacement, and the generational differences of the exiles. She presents Jhumpa Lahiri as a chronicler of immigrant experience and states: "Both *Interpreter of Maladies* and *The Namesake* explore the ideas of isolation and identity, not only personal but also cultural" (180). She also discusses the changes in the attitude of the diaspora within the changed global, economic, political and cultural scenario.

The works of the South Asian women diaspora have received much critical attention. Many critics like Michiko Kakutani, Patricia Holt, and Deirdre Donahue have explored the conflict as experienced by immigrants between the two cultures and the feeling of nostalgia as reflected in the works of diaspora writers. But the impact on the personal and cultural values of the characters due to the distancing from their home country has not been discussed. Similarly, the impact of displacement on the first generation and the second generation of the immigrants' lives in the writings of diaspora writers has not received much critical attention. The present work focuses on the impact of displacement on the formation of new values in the lives of Indian immigrants as presented by writers like Anita Desai, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri. These values may relate to the new lifestyle of the immigrants, their food habits, choice of clothing, religious belief and its expression through customs and ceremonies, and their sense of bonding with people of their own community and of the host country.

Expatriate writers have focused on their relationship to their homeland, their bonds with other immigrants and people of the host country, all of which influences their writings. Salman Rushdie in *Imaginary Homelands* explains that writers in his position, exiles, emigrants or expatriates are haunted by a sense of loss, and are forced to look back. But this gives rise to profound uncertainties since it creates the impression that their physical alienation from India means that they are no longer capable of reclaiming the past that is lost, and also that they will create fictitious, not actual cities or villages. Rushdie reveals that while writing *Midnight's Children*, what he was actually writing was a novel of memory, and the India portrayed in the novel was just 'his' India. He tried to make it as imaginatively true as he could. This is why he made his narrator, Saleem, an unreliable one. Rushdie states, "His mistakes are the mistakes of a fallible memory mixed with character and circumstances. And his vision is fragmentary. It may be that an onlooker Indian writer is obliged to deal in broken mirrors" (214). When Rushdie was writing the novel *Midnight's Children*, he realized how much he wanted to restore the past to himself. He spent many months trying to recall as much of the Bombay of the 1950's and 1960's as he could. He also travelled to Kashmir, Delhi, Aligarh and Agra trying to recall what clothes people wear on certain days, school scenes, and conversations between people.

It may be argued that the past is a lost homeland, from which everyone has emigrated, that its loss is shared by all humanity. But Rushdie suggests that the writer who is away from his country and even disconnected from his language, may experience this loss in an intensified form. While attending a conference on "The Need for New Ways of Describing the World," Rushdie discusses the specific case of Indian writers in England who are writing about India. He wonders if they could not do any more than recreate the world that they have left. This is of course a political question. So, it is clear that redescribing a world is the necessary first step towards changing it.

In Rushdie's opinion, "the making of the alternative realities of art, including the novel of memory, becomes politicized" (217). Writers and politicians are natural competitors. Both try to narrate the world according to their own perceptions; they contest the same territory. He feels that writers are not willing to be excluded from

any part of their heritage, which includes both a Bradford-born Indian kid and also any member of this post-diaspora community who wishes to draw on his roots for his art. He uses the Christian notion of the Fall – "we are now partly of the West. Our identity is at once plural and partial" (219). Immigrant writers feel that they bear two cultures. Indian writers in England include political exiles, migrants, expatriates whose residence in the UK is frequently temporary. As far as Indo-British fiction is concerned; it may come in future from addresses in London as well as from Delhi or Bombay.

Many critics argue about the appropriateness of English language for Indian themes. Rushdie admits that the diaspora writers cannot simply use the language the way British do, in spite of their ambiguous attitude towards it. But the British Indian writer does not have the option of rejecting English. Even his/her children grow up speaking it. He has to embrace it. Rushdie concludes his essay with the view that one must consciously avoid "the adoption of a ghetto mentality" (222). To forget that there is a world beyond the community to which we belong, to confine ourselves within narrowly defined areas, would be to go voluntarily into the form of internal exile which is called the 'homeland' in South Africa.

Paul Gilroy in the book *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (1991) examines the 'new racism' in Britain which links the concepts of patriotism, nationalism, Britishness and gender difference to define race in terms of culture and identity. According to Gilroy, educational institutions and family tend to reproduce race differences which are displayed in culture. In this way racial difference is enacted and practiced within the family "the nation in microcosm" which gradually turns into a social process (Mongia 249). Race, according to Gilroy is deployed in academic and other discourses so that national and racial identity is presented as one, as inseparable. In this way nation is posited as a homogeneous entity, where in the concept of ethnic absolutism which encompasses the notions of "authentic" or "inauthentic" belonging ensures that the non-British, including the blacks, are excluded from the national community.

Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1978) argues that Orientalism is a discourse by which European culture was able to manage, and even produce the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period. Said does not want to argue for a more 'real' Orient as compared to the one constructed by Orientalism, but points to the fact that the binary categories of the Orient and the Occident were created due to the historical events of European colonialism and imperialism. He avers that the idea of the West and the Orient support and reflect each other. Orientalism is not a vague, nebulous discourse, a piece of fantasy about the Orient, but "a system of knowledge" about it in which for many generations, there has been material investment (Mongia, 24). Orientalism is a product of the cultural hegemony of the West which asserts European superiority over Oriental backwardness. Said believes that cultural texts play an important role in political processes of colony and empire, and thus support and strengthen the structures of imperialism.

Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (1994) similarly focuses on the concept of identity not as a fixed, monolithic category, but as a complex, on-going negotiation that takes into account the cultural differences which create intervening spaces through which the idea of nationness is created. Bhabha calls it the "liminal space, in-between the designations of identity" which allows an interaction between the polarities of black and white, upper and lower, and opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity which is not based on the hierarchy of one category over another (4). Bhabha lays emphasis on the connection of the past with the present especially in the context of the terms postmodernity, post-colonialism and post-feminism which gesture to the beyond but transform the 'now' into a site of experience and empowerment. The term post-modernism, for example, encompasses the dissonant voices from the margins – those of the colonized, of the minorities, of women, and of people with alternate sexualities. Bhabha argues that the concept of new internationalism includes the history of postcolonial displacement of people – forced or voluntary, the narratives of cultural and political diaspora, the sad reality of economic refugees, and the exiled state of aborigines. Bhabha thus questions the concept of "homogeneous national cultures, the consensual or contiguous transmission

of historical traditions" and argues that it has evolved into a transnational sense of the hybridity of national identities (5).

The second wave consists of children of the first wave who then begin to build on these foundations. They still have memories of their origins, but their identity crisis is acute and its resolution has dilemmas and drama. Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai and Meera Syal, fall into this second category. These diaspora authors engage in a cultural transmission that can be explained as translating a map of reality for multiple readerships. Besides, they are equipped with a large storehouse of memories and articulate an amalgam of global and national strands that embody real and imagined experience. It is also true therefore, that diaspora writing is full of feelings of alienation in the new country, love for the homeland, a double identification with original homeland and adopted country, crisis of identity, a recalling of mythic memory and the protest against discrimination in the adopted country.

Critics and theorists have examined the concept of identity, nationality and belonging with reference to the diaspora through different perspectives. Stuart Hall in "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" describes the significance of the "positions from which we speak and write – the positions of enunciation" (110). He points out that the one who speaks and the one who is spoken about are never the same, never in the same place. Identity, according to Hall, is not a fixed, definite category which is represented through cultural practices, but a dynamic on-going process, a process of production through representation. Hall argues that all expression bears the imprint of the place and time, the history and culture that informs the writing, "What we say is always 'in context', positioned" (110). The subject of the discourse is influenced by the background and experience of the writer. Hall suggests that the immigrants from a common origin share a common structure of experiences and thus seem to possess the oneness of cultural identity which creates the impression of identity being fixed or stable. But the minor but critical points of difference which define what one is, or has become, and is positioned and subjected in the dominant regimes of representation, are also the telling aspects of cultural identity.

With reference to Derrida's term *'differance'*, Hall uses the three presences, as propounded by Derrida – African, European and American (115). He says that a Carribbean experiences all the three kinds of cultural identities. Firstly, he experiences the cultural identity of the African which is considered as the 'site of the repressed', secondly, he experiences the cultural identity of the European which is the 'site of the colonialist' and thirdly, he experiences the cultural identity of the Americans, which is the 'New World' and the 'site of cultural confrontation'. The presence of these three cultural identities provides the Caribbean's their diaspora identity. Hall supports his argument that though cultural identity has history but it is not constant. Cultural identity "is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being' (112). It belongs to the future as much as to the past." He believes cultural identities are not the stable standards of identification as they are "constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative, and myth" (113).

Vijay Mishra in his essay "Diasporas and the Art of Impossible Mourning" explains that the term diaspora was first used for the "the migration of the people of the Book, the Jews, from Israel to all corners of the world." And now it is cited as "a very culture-specific term" (24). Mishra concedes that the Indian diaspora "is contiguous with a much older wanderlust, the *ghummakar* tradition, that took the gypsies to the Middle East and to Europe, and treated a vibrant community of traders on the Malabar coast who traded across the Arabian Sea" (25). Mishra further observes that Indian diaspora has seen two moments: It began as the moment of classic capitalism. Here, the people were forcefully dislocated as slaves and used as cheap labour. They were made to work for the production of raw material for the growing empire of British and other ruling countries. The second is the moment of late capitalism when migrants and refugees migrate for economic gains to the ex-empire and the New World and Australia.

Mishra observes that old Indian diaspora "broke off contact with India which, consequently, existed for it as a pure imaginary space of epic plenitude" (26). Such diaspora are portrayed in V.S. Naipaul's *A House of Mr. Biswas*. Mishra then talks about the new Indian diaspora who are though complex, but more privileged diaspora, who keep coming back to India and stay tuned through video, films and

The term ‘diaspora’ is historically employed to refer to the suffering of the Jews living in exile from Palestine, their homeland. Their saga is described in the Hebrew Scriptures written in the 3rd century BC. The word ‘diaspora’ is etymologically derived from the Greek word *diasperier*, from *dia-* meaning ‘across’, and *-sperier* meaning ‘to sow or to scatter seeds.’ Diaspora refers to ‘the other’ for the displaced groups of people who have been dislocated from their native home country due to migration or exile. The current usage of the term in globalist discourses however refers to the mutability of geographical boundaries, national identity and belonging. The people who have migrated to foreign lands voluntarily or due to social, economic or religious reasons defy the traditional markers of identity based on their ethnic or linguistic origin, religious affiliation or social class.

The term diaspora has also been used historically to refer to the Black African diaspora of the early sixteenth century, who were forcibly exported for slave trade from their native lands in exchange for material goods or money. They were shifted to the “New World” – constituted of North and South America and the Caribbean islands in exchange for sugar, spices and land. Legalized slavery continued for almost 400 years from the early 16th century to 1830s and 40s. Slavery was abolished in the United States in 1865 but its impact has continued for long. As a result of this forced exile of the African natives to different parts of the globe, there has been a continuous migration of these diaspora to different cities and countries all over the world. In the modern context, diaspora refers to all the displaced people and ethnic groups as they move from one place to another as well as the movement of refugees, e.g. Palestinian refugees travelling from Jerusalem to Beirut and Pakistani refugees from Karachi going to Dar es Salaam, and political refugees seeking asylum and refuge in other countries.

Diaspora movement questions the concept of a rigid and fixed identity based on religion, ethnicity, gender and nation, and leads to the formation of a new identity influenced by the new geographical location where one has migrated. The term diaspora is now increasingly used by scholars of anthropology, literary studies and history to define the large-scale migration of people especially in the second half of

digital technology. They occupy their desired space in the new world and enjoy the luxuries of the western world. Among them are critics like Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha and novelists like Salman Rushdie and Rohinton Mistry.

Mishra feels that diaspora writing is afflicted with a sense of trauma for the homeland. He says that trauma and mourning are linked with each other, "the traumatic moment may be seen as crystallizing that loss, as a sign around which memory gives itself to the past. And the loss, the trauma, persists because there is no substitution for it in the 'new object of love'" (35).

Here Freud has a different opinion. He feels that in some people the same influences produce melancholia instead of mourning. Mishra connects both the states and observes that "In the imaginary of diasporas both mourning and melancholia find a place, sometimes mutually exclusively but often they intertwine and co-exist in the same individual" (35). He explains that mourning is a condition where the immigrant does not want to replace his memories of the old home with those of the new one for fear of the loss of the purity of the memories. Thus state of diasporic imaginary is understood as "impossible mourning". And when the diaspora wish to keep this feeling with them, this mourning transforms into melancholia. Mishra believes that trauma increases the state of mourning "occasioned by a prior 'death' of the homeland" (37). This loss may not be recovered, howsoever happy the person is in the new land, and it gives way to mourning and culminates into melancholia.

C. Vijayasree in her essay "Survival as an Ethic: South Asian Immigrant Women's Writing" discusses the female experience of migration and women's life in the western countries as diaspora. She analyses how the women experience dislocation, displacement and relocation after shifting from their native place. She argues that living as diaspora makes the women feel as if they are doubly exiled. Their migration from the home country and relocation in the foreign country makes them feel as if they are uprooted and sometimes may never overcome this rupture. She calls it a "sense of perpetual elsewhereness" that "steadily reinforces the woman's need for survival and self-preservation" (131).

Vijayasree looks at this displacement and their problem of assimilation in the new culture in the context of the Darwinian concept of survival, which propounds the theory of "the survival of the fittest" (131). Their chances of survival, she explains, may vary according to the situation and the individual's potential. She states that those who stick to their familiar milieu feel secure and safe while those who have voluntarily or out of compulsion moved to unfamiliar places face the threat of being destroyed.

Vijayasree also discusses the crisis that immigrant women face regarding colour, race and gender. The moment they migrate, they become a member of a minority community in the acquired land. And this relocation and the new circumstances bring before them the question of ethnic identity. The cause of this crisis is that they have their own set of cultural values which they try to retain in the new land, and this complicates the process of relocation. Vijayasree notes that for the immigrant women, expatriation involves "a crisis of epistemology" (134).

Vijayasree takes up the issue of broken marriages that result due to women's excessive enthusiasm for their career. The decision once taken is not easy for them to reverse. Vijayasree says, "In instances where women do make a journey back home, they rarely find what they have lost" (134-5). Vijayasree observes that sometimes, in order to survive in an alien country, the immigrant women prefer to follow their traditional religious practices. In this way they feel safe and feel that they can defend themselves against the dominant culture of the host country. They feel connected to their homeland as they perform the rituals and customs of their own country. Vijayasree points out that the diaspora women tend to learn about their home country, its history, traditions and culture from their mother or grandmother. In Vijayasree's words: "they establish links across time and space creating networks of women which serve as their emotional and psychic support systems" (136).

Jasbir Jain's article "The New Parochialism: Homeland in the Writing of the Indian Diaspora" focuses on the relationship of the diaspora writer to his homeland and the culture of origin, and examines whether this relationship is valid in literary terms. Jain discusses the re-visioning of history as in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's*

Children and Kamala Markandaya's *The Golden Honeycomb*. Jain notes that "Narratives of personal history, memoirs and recollections also fall within this category, narratives which return to the homeland as for instance Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas*" (83). She emphasizes the fact that a diaspora writer in general, constantly reinvents himself and works out new strategies to relate to his experience of living in a foreign country. The writing mode of the present diaspora is quite different and privileged than the diaspora of the past. She points out that during last hundred years, three phases of diaspora may be observed. At the first place, are the white migrants who settled in another white country, thereby, their, "self was not threatened by the uprooting" (79). Henry James, James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, Joseph Conrad may be cited as such privileged white migrants. Then, she lists the migrants of a later generation who are "unhoused" and through their writing make a "house of words." The third and the present phase of migrants is more blessed as they are technology-savvy, and are in demand at the work-place.

Jain discusses the significance of the words – home and homeland. She argues that home does not necessarily indicate, "a sense of belonging" but suggests a personal choice that an individual makes. Hence, she says, both home and homeland are two separate units. Jain brings in Uma Parameswaran's comment to show that women are more adaptable and are able to adjust into the two homes. Migrants as Rushdie face the question of identity who is an 'Indian outside India.' She points out diaspora as Naipaul who are, "not-at-home anywhere" because of their extensive travel. Jain speaks about the term diaspora that it assimilates "two histories and two social realities." The influence of these two cultures constructs the identity of the diaspora and the difference in the socio-economic state of both the cultures influences the self.

Jain discusses the different approaches in the writings of the diaspora writers of pre-Independent India and the writers of post-Independent India. Taking up the examples of diaspora writers like Raja Rao and Seepersad Naipaul, Jain states that they created a mythical past, nostalgia and longing for return to home "and a redefining of the self within the trope of patriotism" whereas, the writer of post-independence period "works through other constructions" (82). Jain categorizes such

works as exotica, history, fantasy, collision and use of a third space. Jain says that the writers like Anita Desai in *Journey in Ithaca* present India as exotica. The diaspora writer shows his long and continued association with the tradition of his motherland. She says the ethnicity is a danger to creative writing, "it spreads its tentacles everywhere back into the homeland because it can disguise itself as a recovery of the past, a fascination with anthropological and mythological studies" (83). Diaspora writers revive history in their works in different ways. Rushdie reconstructs history in *Midnight's Children*, Naipaul brings in a personal element and a recollection of the past in *A House for Mr. Biswas*.

Jain discusses the point if there is Indian diaspora in Pakistan or Bangladesh. She argues that if their nation was evolved out of the mother nation, they were not dislocated; and if they migrated, it was a matter of their choice, so there are no Indian diaspora in Pakistan or Bangladesh. The refugees have memories, broken relationships, homesickness and myths which question their identity.

The diaspora writers who are writing in English have to keep in mind the global audience. They have to write about their home country so as to maintain their identity, and they also confront outside forces to take care of homogenizing ethnic identities. Jain argues that a diaspora writer's position in a host country is that of resistance, not acceptance. Thereby, she says, "His involvement and interpretation of his reality, no matter how fragmentary or selective, has a wider concern than the recovery of a subjectivity or the fear of erasure" (86).

Jain talks about the criticism of diaspora writers for providing misleading information about India or presenting inauthentic information, also writing for market gains. She argues that their writing is affected by memory, distance and their wish to recreate homeland in the text. Diaspora writing is like the introduction of a text which "occupies the space between the text and the reader, a space which does not necessarily belong to it" (87).

To conclude, Jain states, she would like to forget the western presence and read Mahasweta Devi because her narratives bear the real picture of India. She argues

that the diaspora writer in contrast do not have this freedom. They acknowledge that their distance from the home country and their fading memories affect their writing. Sometimes they do not represent their homeland appropriately. Jain says that because the writers abroad are not well accepted and assimilated in some of the host societies, so they attempt to bridge the gap by writing about their homeland. Jain ends her essay with an optimistic note that though the diaspora experience marginalization and rejections, distrust and dislocations, they should try to develop emotional roots, and not only physical ones.

Makarand Paranjape in his article titled "Displaced Relations: Diaspora, Empires, Homelands" discusses the relationship between the people of the host country and the diaspora. He discusses the various kinds of diaspora, their limitations and their gradual growth in terms of writing literature. How do the new and the old diaspora connect each other in terms of freedom of expression and getting their works printed? He also brings in the issue of how diaspora relate to their mother country.

The diaspora, once ruled by the imperialists have shifted to the countries of the colonizers like USA and Canada, have acquired land, taken up jobs, and are earning money. And the former colonialists now play their host. However, the diaspora face problems in getting assimilated in the new countries, whether at the peripheries or in the centre of the cities. This oppressed and alienated diaspora come together and try to make their colonies at the heart of the metropolis. Paranjape states, "What was formerly an empire has become the host to a new kind of colony…" (7). Thus, the native people act as host to the ones who they once ruled, and the diaspora now come together and take up their residence, markets and a little make-belief world of their homeland.

Referring to the South Asian diaspora, Paranjape notes that they may be seen as two different entities: the settlers and the visitors. The settlers are the ones who were forced to shift to other countries as slaves and in due course of time now become a permanent dislocated diaspora. Their ancestors, also had undergone the same phase and had lost their hope to return to their homeland. The visitors are the distinguished diaspora who for the sake of business, education or for professional

growth in career migrate to the other countries. The writers like Anita Desai, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri have the NRI status and have worked or are working in the universities of the host country. They try their fortune and get more opportunities to travel to their home countries as many times as they like. These two diasporas have a different approach to dislocation and also they have differences in their class backgrounds, economic status, market access, attitude to the mother country and many other issues. Those who can never go back to their mother country feel more at a loss as compared to the visitor diaspora who have a better place to explore their fortune at both the places.

Paranjape raises the question of how the diasporas construct homelands. He discusses that it all comes into existence as per the needs and forces applied upon them. The forcefully displaced diaspora, who were once brought in ships as slaves had a sudden break up with their mother land. They had no opportunities to travel back because of their oppressed position, poor economic state and less facilities of transport. So, the older diaspora once displaced were displaced physically and psychologically as well. Paranjape argues that this distance, "was so vast, that the motherland remained frozen in the diasporic imagination as a sort of sacred site or symbol, almost like an idol of memory and imagination" (9). The new diaspora feel that their return to their homeland is not possible, so they talk about the Indian objects and images that they carry with them and preserve them so as to create their own homelands. It becomes, "a process of replication, if not reproduction" (9).

It is seen that this old diaspora due to the lack of freedom of expression and writing could not write much literature. It was all oral. They created stories, songs, texts and other literature which could never be printed. Paranjape opines, "While the writings of the old diaspora are utterly marginalized, they find a new currency when they re-enter the world of discourse via the new diaspora" (10). The new diaspora has more freedom than the old diaspora and they are now writing free-lance literature and teaching in the universities, and are thus making themselves heard.

Paranjape brings in the example of one such new diaspora – the diaspora writer Salman Rushdie who presents the cracking up of India through the fragmented

personality of Saleem Sinai in his novel *Midnight's Dream*. Paranjape points out that the disconnected narratives in the novel represent the disintegration of India. He argues, "this deconstructive narrative is an outcome of the new diasporic consciousness which, because it lacks internal coherence, cannot see any cohesion in the object that it describes" (11). He observes that the new diaspora is making monetary gains by presenting India as an imaginary and unreal homeland, where not only the Indians but the people of the host country too welcome such works, which offers to them what they want to read.

Paranjape concludes his article with the note that now the gap between the old and the new diaspora is gradually fading. The old diaspora are identified through the chronological order, and the new diaspora have assimilated completely to the pattern of the host culture. This new diaspora has further relocated itself, thereby; by this second migration the old and the new diaspora share their cultures and their newly acquired values. He believes that now there is an easy access to the cultures "into the brave new digital world of virtual reality" (12).

These views as well as the perspectives of other major critics have been taken into account while examining the creation of new values in the novels by diaspora Indian writers.

The present project focuses on several research questions: How do the second generation Indians cope with a traditional upbringing at home and the more liberal and open community outside? How do these writers express their longing for their motherland as well as portray an objective picture of Indian society? Does this 'in-between-ness' leave them with uncertainty about their own role in society which is neither Indian, British nor American? How does the dispersal signify a complex set of negotiations and exchange between the nostalgia and desire for the homeland and the making of a new home? How do they adapt to the power-relationships between the natives and the migrant community?

Being a part of the Third World, belonging to a minority group that hails from another nation and possessing discrete and ethnic origins becomes an important issue. What do those origins have to do with the specificities of the construction of

race or ethnicity? Does the very state of diaspora, between and across nations, make the framework of multiculturalism more complex? Diaspora cultures translate differences which often appear within other hierarchical social orderings. How do these geopolitical forces of nationalism constrain the field of social formation? Several issues, including these, have been taken up in the present study.

The thesis is divided into six chapters, each focuses on different aspects of the novels of these three diaspora writers. The first chapter 'Introduction' focuses on the background and history of migration, the significance of diaspora writing, the life, major works, achievements and contributions of the three Indian diaspora women writers, Anita Desai, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri. The chapter also includes a Review of Literature and a brief overview of the theoretical positions expressed and maintained by the critics of diaspora.

Chapter two 'Love and Family Bonding' focuses on the portrayal of the relationship between characters in the novels by the three diaspora writers. The chapter discusses how alienation, suffering and boredom affect their relationship with each other as with the people of the host country. The bonds between siblings, the transitions in their relationship due to their migrant condition have been studied. The role of parents in encouraging their foreign-born children to maintain their ties with each other and also to form healthy bonds with the people of the host country has also been taken up.

Chapter three 'Changing Religious Beliefs and Spiritual Values' deals with the conflict experienced by individuals in accepting the new religious and spiritual beliefs in the alien country and how the second generation copes with or rebels against these values. It is analyzed whether they distance themselves from the other religion or choose a middle path and follow selected religious customs according to their convenience. How far do they maintain their religious beliefs and how flexible are they to adopt the religious customs of the host country? In most of the novels taken up for study, the diaspora consciously perform the religious ceremonies and festivals of their home country in the adopted land. It gives them the feeling of being connected to their home and culture.

Chapter four ‘Adapting to a New Social System’ is studied with a focus on the lifestyle and habits of the diaspora people portrayed within. Their adaptation of the new food habits, dress sense and choice of companions is discussed through the characters of the first generation and their foreign-born children. The chapter focuses on the need for immigrants to adopt the culture of the host country due to the physical distancing from their home country. It examines the existential problems arising in their lives due to the social and cultural differences in the new homeland. The culture shock that people with a traditional mind-set experience in a foreign country is brought out sensitively in these novels.

Chapter five titled ‘Shaping a New Identity’ focuses on the struggle of the characters in an alien country for self- identity and survival. It studies how the migrants who leave their native place create a new identity in a home away from home and successfully go through various phases of emotional, economical and psychological conflict. The chapter also examines their feeling of contentment or discontent in settling abroad.

The protagonists in these novels struggle to acquire a sense of their true identity as they are influenced by the culture and tradition of the foreign land while they cannot completely give up their old beliefs and way of life. This internal conflict is intensified by the attitude and the response of the natives who are often hostile to the outsiders.

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Chapter Two

Love and Family Bonding

R. Radhakrishnan in the essay "Ethnicity in an Age of Diaspora" discusses the question of the identity of the immigrants – are they Indians or Americans? The critic poses the problem, "How could *someone* be both *one* and something *other*? How could the unity of identity have more than one face or home?" (120). Radhakrishnan also questions the relationship of one's ethnic identity to one's national identity. He wonders if the national identity is hierarchically superior and subsumes the ethnic identity or does the coalition of the two produce a hyphenated identity – which is often taken to be inauthentic and not legitimate.

The critic discusses the differences in the perspectives of the two generations of diaspora – the parents and the children. He notes that the generational gap that inevitably exists between two generations, becomes more acute in the case of immigrants: "The tensions between the old and new homes create the problem of divided allegiances that the two generations experience differently" (123). The history and memory of the older generation is very different from that of the younger generation which has only experienced the present as the new homeland where they are currently living. In such a case, the unity and organicity of the family is disturbed and the divided allegiances of the two generations become noticeable. The rupture in the perspectives of the first generation diaspora and the second or third is acutely felt. Here, the older generation cannot refer to the Indian value system to solve the problems of the younger generation, neither can the younger generation "indulge in a spree of forgetfulness about 'where they have come from'" (123). Hence it is necessary for members of both the generations to bridge the gap by empathizing with the other and appreciating the experiences of the other.

Due to this gap in the understanding and perspectives of the different generations of the diaspora, their family relationships and social bonds are often under stress. The culture of the home country, and the country where they have migrated, exerts a pull from opposite directions on the immigrants. While the older generation falls back on the value system of the home country, and feels secure as it invokes the traditions and beliefs practiced by their countrymen, the younger generation often experiences a conflict in choosing between the two – the value

system of the country where they are residing, and that of their homeland upheld by their parents or grandparents. For the younger generation it is not easy to shake off the influence of the culture of their home country since they are also not completely assimilated in the new country where they have settled. The novels of the diaspora writers often focus on this conflict experienced by the diaspora, which affects their personal and social relationships.

The west has always attracted the South Asians due to better opportunities for education and employment available there. Even before the Independence, the Indians migrated to England and America and to other more developed and prosperous countries to seek a better life. During the second half of the twentieth century, the migration of the people for educational and economic reasons took place at a larger level than ever before. This kind of movement brings before the settlers the fear of losing their identity in a new, adopted place of residence. Some migrants move to their own diaspora community, while others accept a more hybridized identity. Thus, there arises the need for the search for the self and the dual vision of the migrants. Shao-ming Kung observes that the second generation migrants struggle with their conflicting realities. They are confused about their identity being "Indian-American, American-Indian, Overseas-Born-Indian, or American-Born-Indian" (127). These issues affect their family relationships largely. The members of the migrant families have different perspectives and experiences of migration. As they settle in a foreign country, they have to maintain their family ties in their home country and establish new social relationships.

The first generation diaspora have different experiences than what their children face in the new culture they are born and brought up in. Both the generations have different experiences of adjusting and accommodating in the foreign land and this difference is clearly noticeable in the relationships with each other. The first generation migrants are seen more closely connected to the family members and relatives in their home country and they desire that their children should also try to maintain this kind of bond. This conflict is reflected in the thinking and behaviour pattern of the second and the third generation diaspora who start acting and deciding independently at an early age, and begin to disregard Indian customs and traditions as they adopt the western lifestyle.

The immigrants can only assume and imagine a loving and caring relationship with their relatives in the home country, but cannot enjoy the same because of their displaced position in the other countries. As a result, in the novels discussed in this chapter, one observes that the relationship of the protagonists with their family members, whether close or distant, is always disturbed. This chapter focuses on the portrayal of the different opportunities that fascinate the Indians who migrate to other countries, the various factors that affect their relationship with the family at their home country, and the new relationships they form in the country that they have adopted. Indira Nityanandam believes that most of the second generation migrants suffer from a "constant conflict between the inner and outer worlds" (93). Desai and Lahiri have portrayed characters who though are men of humble origin, as well as ones who are rich and progressive, but are ready to move to new places, and to face the challenges of living in a distant land.

Anita Desai, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri have portrayed family values and the importance of personal and social relationships in their works. Rushdie states for the diaspora writers that they can write "from a kind of double perspective: because they, we, are at one and the same time insiders and outsiders in this society" (19). They are all open towards the growing possibilities of mutual love and friendly relations of Indian immigrants with other Indians and foreign natives. Gayatri Spivak comments that women are not in a better position than men in their diaspora state. She states that diaspora women are "super dominated, super exploited" (249). She believes that women may never get complete satisfaction, nor enjoy the advantages and find it difficult to adjust to the new surroundings as compared to men. She continues that the diaspora women are "never the full subjects of and agents in civil society: in other words, first-class citizens of a state" (249).

The Indian migrants as portrayed in the novels by the three Indian diaspora novelists are seen tied to their roots and family they have left in their home country. They feel a strong sense of love towards their relatives and friends in their home country and at the same time they maintain a good relationship with the local natives. Indian migrants are presented as close-knit families who pass on the traditional values of respecting every member in the family to their children. Parents feel

themselves responsible for ensuring that these family values are maintained by their children until they marry and try to maintain family ties closely. The children are portrayed as experiencing an internal conflict. In some novels the second generation immigrants reciprocate love and respect to their parents whereas in other novels, they value a free and independent life, and thus they may not agree with their parents on different issues. They do not like the Indian culture and norms to be forced upon them and rebel against these by adopting a western lifestyle.

Written after *Cry, The Peacock* (1963) and *Voices in the City* (1965), the novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (1971) is Anita Desai's third work of fiction. In this novel Desai portrays the psychological conflict of the Indian immigrants in England who are not sure about their ties with the host country and cannot establish a secure relationship with the country where they have settled. Desai brings out the desire of the immigrants to adjust in their new homeland and the problems they face during this process. She portrays the immigrants' suffering due to inner conflict and the relationship crisis that they sometimes experience in an alien country. M.K. Naik observes that if Desai's fiction is "able to advance from the vision of 'aloneness' as a psychological state of mind to that of pessimism as a metaphysical enigma – and one hopes it will – Anita Desai may one day achieve an amplified pattern of significant exploration of consciousness comparable to Virginia Woolf at her best" (243).

In *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, the protagonist, Adit Sen is an immigrant from Calcutta who comes to London and works there as a clerk in a small travel agency. He lives in the Clapham flat in Laurel Lane with his Anglo-Saxon wife Sarah. He had met Sarah in a party organized by another Anglo-Saxon friend of his, Christine Langford. Adit was attracted towards Sarah due to her humility and shyness, and her uprightness. Her reserved and quiet nature reminded him of Bengali women and appealed to him. He mentioned before her that her Oriental manners were probably because of her being an Indian in her past incarnation (74). After their marriage he expects Sarah to cook Indian food for him and declares, "No British broths and stews for me" (17). He enjoys teaching Sarah how to make the Indian sweet-dish "carrot halwa" and a typical Bengali dish "charchari" (17).

Adit also expects Sarah to wear a sari on special occasions as on their wedding anniversary or birthdays. Sarah usually cares for her husband's desires and lives the way he wishes. Sometimes, for fear of the rain ruining the saree's border, Sarah protests mildly in an embarrassed tone. But Adit flares up in anger mentioning the Bengali ladies who manage their saris in all kinds of weather and watches her drape the gold necklace around her neck correctly. Though Adit loves Sarah but he rears chauvinistic notions about English wives. He states, "they look very quiet and hardworking as long as you treat them right and roar at them regularly once or twice a week" (31). Otherwise Adit knows that Sarah, herself an immigrant in England, is a considerate and understanding woman.

Sarah adjusts with the temper of Adit which she understands is due to his displaced position from his homeland. Desai presents Sarah as the one who seems to sacrifice her wants and follows her husband only to "maintain order and discipline in her house, in her relationship with him" (195). While discussing the fiction of Anita Desai and Kamala Markandaya, Usha Pathania comments, "Marital relations are established with the explicit purpose of providing companionship to each other" (14). Though Sarah does not mix up easily with Adit's Indian immigrant friends, yet due to his insistence and pleasure, she participates in their conversation. Sarah cooks for them the Indian food that makes her husband happy, although she herself does not care to eat it. She never objects to Adit's going down the lane to see his friends off, leaving her to wash the dishes and go to bed alone.

Meenakshi Mukherjee describes Sarah as, "the most successful and a typical Desai character, complex, hypersensitive and intelligent" (225). Sarah has her reasons to accept Adit's ways as she has no attachment with her parents. She tries her best to avoid visiting her parents even once a year, the probable reason being her mother Mrs Rosecommon James's ill-treatment of her husband and her domineering nature. Sarah had left her mother's house in Hampstead even before her marriage for a job in London.

Sarah nurtures some very beautiful memories of her father. She recalls her childhood days when her father was an energetic and loving person, bringing her

muffins and other surprises. She respected her father as others too regarded him for his good name in his profession of a lawyer. But after his retirement his wife's ill-treatment has confined him to the maintenance of the garden. Sarah is pained to see her mother treating him as a dog calling "To-mmy," instructing him to bathe properly and clean his nails before giving him food to eat alone in the kitchen (141). Mr Rosecommon James distances himself from Sarah too and does not bother to come and meet her during her visits home. Gradually Sarah accepts it as a sign of his old age and starts taking interest in the letters of Adit's parents from India and in their life. D.H. Lawrence points out, "The greatest relationship for humanity will always be the relation between man and woman. The relation between man and man, woman and woman, parent and child will always be subsidiary" (130). Perhaps because of her shattered relationship with her own parents Sarah becomes very docile and fills her life with what Adit brings for her – relatives, stories and legends of India.

Dev is Adit's college-time friend in Calcutta and has come to London to study in the London School of Economics. Both the friends are very frank in their conversation, not hesitating even to slap each other in a friendly manner. They even use abusive words sometimes for each other as a gesture of intimacy. In spite of Dev's complaining and demanding nature, Adit always supports him and encourages him to pursue his degree. He shows Adit the way in which Indians have to mould themselves to survive in the alien country. Adit lets Dev live in his home as long as he wishes and takes him along to the home of Sarah's parents in Hampstead for a week-long holiday.

Dev, however feels slightly jealous for Adit's satisfactory job in an office and his settled married life with Sarah. Dev has experienced the hardships immigrants have to face in England. Dev is also envious of Adit, when the latter acquires a flat in the "black and white" storey of the "three-in-one-cake" building in Laurel Lane, London (115). In an interview with Atma Ram, Desai states for *Bye-Bye Blackbird* that, "of all my novels it is the most rooted in experience and the least literary in derivation." In this novel through the characters of Adit, Dev and Sarah, Desai has focused on the crisis of relationships the immigrants face amongst themselves and with the people of the host country.

Adit has a good relationship with most of the people he knows in London but not with the residents in the upper and the lower storey of the Clapham building. He does not like the too big Sikh family in the "black" ground floor flat and their informal ways to call him for casual talks. He dislikes their noisy ways – the singing and quarrelling of the children, and above all their keenness to make friends with all neighbours. He calls them "the authentic stuff" of Ludhiana (30).

Adit also hates his landlady Miss Emma Moffit who lives comfortably in the upper storey which he calls the "white" layer of the cake. He calls her a "Dirty old bag" for her untidy looks whereas Sarah admires her ways and wants to be just like her (42). Miss Moffit has an obsession with India, and due to this she is happy to give her flat on rent to Adit. Miss Moffit still remembers her lover who had worked in India. Since then the lady had a fascination for India. But her lover died during service. Even after his death Miss Moffit loved him and did not marry. She has always wished to go to India at least once in her lifetime where her lover had spent a few years of his life and was buried. She considers Englishmen as "lesser beings" and Indians as the ones who "help us to expand, to set our sights on farther, on Eastern horizons" (44).

Desai focuses on the East-West relationship in her novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, and portrays the complexities of the relationship of the Indian diaspora with the British. In Rudyard Kipling's opinion, "East is east and west is west and never the twain shall meet." But Desai, herself a diaspora, has witnessed the assimilation of east into west and the new values the immigrants acquire while living in the host country. Desai believes that this novel projects her own experiences as a diaspora. She states in her article "The Book I Enjoyed Writing Most": "*Bye-Bye Blackbird* is the closest of all my books to actuality – practically everything in it is drawn directly from my experience of living with Indian immigrants in London" (31).

Desai's novels are generally the study of human relationships and the assimilation of immigrants in diaspora settings. Most of her fiction deals with the solitude and the alienation of the diaspora that affects their relationship with family and friends. While Desai sets her novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird* in the United Kingdom,

she sets part of her novel *Fasting, Feasting* in the United States of America, for USA is also a dreamland for young, aspiring Indians like the protagonist Arun, who migrate there for academic and economic gains.

Desai's ninth novel *Fasting, Feasting* (1999), was nominated for the prestigious Booker prize. The binaries in the title of the novel are a reflection of the bipolar world of India and America as represented in Desai's novel, and the life and culture in these two countries. Desai focuses on themes like overpowering patriarchal forces, gender discrimination, the failure of marriage, isolation and loneliness due to the constricting norms of society in both India and America.

The first part of *Fasting, Feasting* concerns the family relationship of the parents MamaPapa with their two daughters Uma and Aruna and their son Arun as they are living in India. Desai does not mention the names of MamaPapa and what town they live in except that Mama was brought up in Kanpur and Papa belongs to Patna. MamaPapa are two parts of one entity. The joint name reflects that they are united in body and soul and also that they have similar thoughts and perspectives about most issues. Uma and Aruna know the fact that if either of their parents has forbidden them something, it would be pointless to approach their mother or father privately, as the other parent would never question the partner's decision and relax it on the plea of the children.

Mama is a traditional woman and enjoys her status as a housewife. She wants her daughters Uma and Aruna to be perfect in household work and lead a secure life. There is an unsaid silence and distance between the parents and the children, and very little conversation between them. Most of the time the parents sit talking together on the swing or in the veranda. Thus while the parents share a close relationship with each other, their children are deprived of the emotional support that they need from their parents.

Mama does not reveal her pregnancy to her daughters, she tells it to her older relatives instead. Uma does not feel happy either to know about it through their maid. Mama does not even share the details of her illness with her daughters. Uma comes to know from Dr. Dutt that hysterectomy tests need to be conducted to find

out the cause of Mama's discomfort (144). Desai projects the suffering of the young generation through Uma due to the adverse conditions created by the patriarchal forces. In this context, Jasbir Jain in *Stairs to the Attic: The Novels of Anita Desai* observes, "*Fasting, Feasting* is about cultural attitudes rather surface exuberance for or imitation of the others, more than that Desai is interested in family relationships, how freedom remains an abstract idea and identity, an elusive concept" (191). Gradually this distancing brings Uma closer to a distant cousin of Mama, Mira-masi, a pilgrim who spends time with Uma telling her stories of Lord Krishna.

When Uma is sixteen Mama gives birth to a son, Arun, a name which had been decided at the time of Aruna's birth in the anticipation of a son. Neither Uma nor Aruna is pleased to have a brother. Possibly, the large age gap between the youngest sibling and the two elder sisters, creates this lack of bonding between them. MamaPapa's desperation to have a son is reflected in the fact that their elder daughter is sixteen years old when their son is born. The first expression of Aruna who is thirteen years old when she sees the fragile body of her brother is, "So red – so ugly!" (16). The three siblings have no attachment or involvement in one another's lives till the end of the novel. Uma has to restrict her study in order to nurse her little brother Arun with, "Proper attention" (30). Uma wished to continue her studies, but her Mama would keep asking her to perform household chores one after the other. As T. Ravichandaran explains, "Reduced thus to a baby-sitter at her earlier days and an unpaid servant for her self-centered parents for the rest of her life, Uma finds no escape from her entrapment" (83). Uma is supposed to act according to her parents' will and not according to her own desires.

Uma has no other choice but to follow her mother's instructions – writing letters, spreading woollens in the sun, or preparing meals. Uma feels frustrated as she has no freedom; she wants space for herself, but feels helpless. Uma learns to compromise since her childhood. Krishna Murthy remarks, "Life is relationship. From the day we are born, we are in relationship until we die, and we must discover what is right way to relate so that in life there is harmony in relationship" (68). Uma wants to express her need for motherly affection from Mama but she becomes more depressed when she realizes that there is no one with whom she can share her thoughts.

After a long wait, giving birth to a son is an achievement for MamaPapa. Mama feels that being the mother of a son has improved her status at home as that of her husband who works as a lawyer. Amar Nath Prasad remarks on this gender-based attitude of the parents which is somehow unnatural, "Most probably, the reason of their frustration and step-motherly treatment can be sought in the psychology of the parents – such parents who are more interested in a boy child than in a girl child" (40). Arun's birth acts as glue to the attachment of MamaPapa and they stay together even more as inseparable entities. Even after having given birth to a son after so many years, MamaPapa do not take interest in the rearing of their son Arun. They distance themselves from him as they had done with their daughters.

Papa does not directly involve himself in Arun's upbringing, he gets an idea of his son's well-being and academic progress by the description that Mama offers to him. He just asks about Arun's food and studies daily and thus fulfils his duties as a father while Mama fulfils hers by providing Papa the information with all minute details. She scarcely feeds Arun out of pleasure or considering his choices, instead she does it nervously so as to present this task as a successful performance before her husband in the evening. Andrew Robinson comments that through MamaPapa, the Indian parents, Anita Desai creates, "two monsters of almost Gothic proportions, locked into inseparable marital disharmony, determined to inflict on their two daughters and only son every ounce of the prejudices and disappointments of their own lives, as a respectable barrister and his wife in an undistinguished town" (39).

Mama feels nervous on the issue of Arun's proper feeding as she knows that after completion of each meal "she still had to face Papa's interrogation regarding the whole occasion" (32). Arun is severely affected by this duty of Mama to feed him somehow a proper portion of the prescribed diet. He does not like being forced to eat, and usually spits out whatever is put into his mouth. He tries to keep himself occupied in some or the other game so as to avoid forced feeding. Only his sister Uma observes his slow and weak physical growth and draws her parents' attention towards it, "And have you seen the Joshis' son? He is already playing cricket!" (32).

Although Arun is an object of pride for MamaPapa, yet they converse very little with him and with their daughters. Mama is so little interested in knowing his tastes that it takes her many years to understand that he dislikes meat and prefers vegetarian food. It baffles Papa who retains the colonial concept in his mind that meat, cricket and the English language bring progress and success. He forces Arun to take tuitions in all subjects and afterwards play cricket or badminton believing in the maxim "healthy mind, healthy body" (119). This is the reason Arun feels no bond of affection with his parents. The choices and tastes of the children are monitored by parents. In spite of being raised under calculated observation, Arun suffers from many diseases and remains an undernourished boy. He does not share an emotional relationship with his sisters who are much older than him and have been married before he was grown up.

Arun likes to be alone and unnoticed. Keen to escape his family and home, Arun does not give a second thought to the idea of going abroad when he gets the acceptance letter to pursue his degree in Massachusetts. Once he has gone to the USA, his letters from Massachusetts are very formal, and express no longing to meet his parents or sisters or for coming back. In the introduction to Desai's novel, Rana Dasgupta comments that it "recounts human relationships in the language not only of fasting and feasting but of greed, craving, taboo, denial and disgust" (viii).

Mrs Patton, Arun's landlady in Massachusetts grows fond of him preparing meals according to his tastes, and gradually turns a vegetarian herself. She likes Arun's company while shopping for grocery and all other eatables, but Arun shows no interest in going with her. He has never been in this kind of close proximity with his mother, so he cannot accept his landlady's excessive involvement in his day-to-day life. Arun feels frustrated at the excess show of concern by Mrs Patton and wishes to point out to Mrs Patton that, "he is not her family" (197). In his home he has been suffering due to his preference for vegetarian food, and here when his landlady Mrs Patton provides him all that he likes to eat, he wishes that she should not interfere in his life.

Uma has ordinary looks, due to which it was not very easy for her father to find a good match for her. Aruna, her younger sister is more beautiful and modern than her, and attracts more suitors. Uma marries twice but neither of the marriages succeeds. Her marriages create an economical pressure upon her father who had to suffer the financial loss of managing two dowries and this affects her relationship with her family members. She is considered ill-fated by all. Mama's early sympathetic attitude changes into "mockery and goading" (86). Papa, having paid for two dowries, does not have the financial resources to marry her off again. Uma wonders "if she had never actually married or if she was now divorced" (95). Arun, though quite too young to comprehend the happenings, senses some tension and stops teasing her. Uma feels that her sister Aruna too is no longer sympathetic towards her and notices the mockery in her tone. Uma's position is that of a marginalized woman in her own house. According to R.S. Pathak the marginalized should speak, "It has to speak, voice, not hide its tears, fears and angst and wrath in as many forms as possible. Tongue, if unused, is a fleshy burden, tantamounting to its own detonguing" (15).

Desai portrays Uma as a sad young girl who surrenders her life in silence and loneliness and her dreams remain only a mirage for her. Desai brings out significant issues like gender bias, strained relationships among family members, and the lack of concern of parents for their daughters in the novel. Amar Nath Prasad states that Anita Desai, "aptly shows the constant urge for woman's freedom in *Fasting, Feasting*. She seems to give a good retort to the dictum prevalent in society that woman should be judged and perceived as object and not as subject" (44).

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, another prolific diaspora writer dwells on marital relationships and women's friendship in her novel *Sister of My Heart* (1999). It is one of her early novels for which Judith Handschuh comments, "Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has written an intense, powerful book about the close relationships that women form with each other." *Sister of My Heart* deals with the relationship of the cousins, Anju and Sudha. The novel depicts a strong bond of love between them since their childhood until their marriage. Anju is the daughter of the upper-class Chatterjee family in Calcutta, and Sudha is her distant cousin, the daughter of the so-called cousin of Anju's father. Both the girls are born the same day on which the

news of the death of their fathers Gopal and Bijoy comes. Divakaruni's *Sister of My Heart* portrays the relationship between these two sisters, as they lead their lives in the care and protection of their mothers.

The novel deals with the difficulties faced by women and their response to challenging situations. Anju and Sudha are brought up in the traditional joint family system in Calcutta. Since their fathers have already passed away, Anju's mother Gourima, Sudha's mother Nalini and aunt Pishi take care of them. After the death of her husband, Nalini continues to live in the Chatterjee house with her daughter as she has no family to go to and no means of earning her livelihood. The family also includes a maid, Ramur ma and a driver, Singhji. Through the Chatterjee family Divakaruni depicts the joint family system of Indian families, in which all the members of the family are welcome, even during hard times.

The novel brings out the multi-layered relationships of the characters with each other and also the immigrant characters' ties with their homeland. Though Divakaruni herself is based in the United States, she chooses Indian characters instead of American characters. This indicates Divakaruni's rootedness in India despite her immigrant status. Since the novel deals with the association of the Indian immigrants in California with India, the novel has been equally admired by her Indian readers as well as by the American readers. Divakaruni focuses on female bonding which she believes is unique because of life-changing experiences that they share – menstruation, childbirth, and menopause. In "Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni: A Rising Star in the Diasporic Literature," Divakaruni states that the force behind writing this novel, "is the desire to put women in the centre of stories, to have their voices be the voices of interpretation, their eyes the ones that we see through. There just hasn't been enough of that in the world, if you look back at literary history" (Lalitha 23).

Divakaruni uses a first person narrative voice in all the twenty-two chapters of the novel. The chapters are titled 'Sudha' and 'Anju' alternatively after the names of the protagonists where they narrate the events of their lives from their childhood to marriage. Through this narrative technique, Divakaruni presents the internal conflicts, dilemmas and the inner state of the mind of the protagonists in their own voice.

The protagonists Anju and Sudha regard each other as sisters of their heart since their childhood. They share an exceptionally loving bond since they are "born stuck together" (39). They find fulfilment in each other's company in Calcutta. Since there is the difference of only twelve hours, Sudha says, "That's why Anju is my twin, don't you see" (43). Anju also carries the same feelings for Sudha. She expresses, "I could never hate Sudha. Because she is my other half, the sister of my heart. I can tell Sudha everything I feel and not have to explain any of it…she understands me perfectly" (31). Anju and Sudha may not be the sisters by blood but they share the bond of sisterly love. Clenora Hudson-Weems comments upon their relationship, "This kind of friendship these women have goes beyond confiding in one another and sharing commonalities. Not only do they share their feelings, they share material things as well" (97).

The girls grow up together under the protection and care of their mothers. They respect Gouri, who runs the bookstore in the out-house and is the only earning member of the house. Gouri is a kind and vigilant mother and handles difficult situations intelligently. Once the girls are caught by their neighbours in a cinema with a young man called Ashok who lives in their neighbourhood. But instead of being hard upon them, Gouri coldly tells the girls that they should not repeat this in future. She instructs Sudha plainly not to encourage Ashok's overtures for the sake of the family's prestige.

Whereas Gouri handles the situation tactfully, understanding the girls' obvious attraction for the opposite gender, Nalini humiliates the girls. She thinks of punishing the girls by sending them to separate rooms. She addresses her absent husband melodramatically, "Where have you gone, leaving me to bring up this wicked girl all by myself?" (80). She becomes so critical of Anju that she indicates to Gouri harshly, "Your Anju is a bad influence on my daughter" (81). Nalini never seems to realize the goodness of Gouri who has accommodated them in her house with all respect, and loves Sudha as much as her own daughter. Instead, Nalini boasts of her own beauty and complains about the laxities of Gouri's household as compared to the luxuries of her parents' house.

Gouri and Nalini are poles apart in their behaviour with their daughters. Whereas Gouri is a considerate and intelligent mother, Nalini is not very affectionate towards the girls. Gouri senses the traces of first love in Sudha's heart, and advises Sudha to marry her love. Gouri understands that even after having separated from her husband Ramesh, Sudha has a soft corner for her first love Ashok, and thinks that she may be able to lead a happy life only with Ashok. On the other hand, Sudha's true mother Nalini has no considerations for Sudha's will and simply advises her to look for a surgeon or any other wealthy man in America to be able to lead a luxurious life. Sudha believes her mother "is built of sighs and complaints" (36).

However, the strong bond of their sisterly love is affected when aunt Pishi tells Sudha that it is her father who is responsible for the death of Anju's father. Aunt Pishi reveals the secret to Sudha that long back, Sudha's father heard a rumour that there were rubies in the caves of Sunderban jungles (43). He asked his cousin, Anju's father to accompany him there and have a share of the wealth hidden there. Unfortunately, Anju's father died in the adventure and since then Sudha's father considered himself responsible for his brother's untimely death. Aunt Pishi discloses the fact to Sudha that her father is alive but he does not come before the family and lives disguised as their driver Singhji, to punish himself for his greed that ultimately led to his brother's death. Sudha feels tormented when she comes to know this fact. Sudha feels guilt-ridden and distances herself from Anju. Sudha feels, "Something has changed between us, some innocence faded like earliest light" and decides to sacrifice her interest at every step to repay her debt to Anju (91).

Sudha sometimes cannot retain her calm as she suffers a psychological pressure of her father's wrongdoings and behaves rudely with Anju. She refuses to accept the expensive earrings that Anju offers as her birthday gift. Sudha asks Anju not to compare their status and says, "My mother and I might not have a lot, but at least we have self-respect" (59). Anju, bewildered by Sudha's behaviour reacts, "If you're so full of self-respect how come for the last thirteen years you and your mother have been eating our rice and taking up room in our house?" (60). Sudha however resolves the tension between them without disclosing the real cause of her disturbed mental state. Both of them believe that their relationship is precious and

should not be disturbed. bell hooks comments upon female bonding, "We must learn to live and work in solidarity. We must learn the true meaning and value of sisterhood" (63).

Divakaruni also focuses on the father-daughter relationship in the novel. Sudha respects Singhji, the driver, though she is not aware of his identity. Sudha feels, "Among all our servants – but no, I do not really think of him as a servant – I like Singhji the best" (19). After she comes to know of the fact that he is her father, Sudha respects him even more than she did before. Singhji too loves his daughter very much. While escorting Sudha and Anju to school, he would watch her in the rear mirror of the car. He would take care that no boy was bullying the girls. Singhji also gifted Sudha his hard-earned money on the occasion of her wedding. Divakaruni portrays true and selfless love between Singhji and his daughter Sudha.

In the novel, Divakaruni also dwells upon the treatment of faithful servants as family members in Indian families. Gouri and Nalini were suffering from the shock of the news of their husbands' untimely demise and Singhji offered to serve them without negotiating about the salary. Singhji is aware of the spark of love between Sudha and Ashok since the times he would escort her to school, so he sincerely wishes that Sudha should marry Ashok, whom she deeply loves and not compromise by marrying Ramesh. However, Sudha is bent upon repaying the debts of her father who is responsible for the death of Anju's father. Thus Divakaruni paints the picture of the suffering Sudha who drops the idea of eloping with Ashok fearing that it may bring a bad name to the Chatterjee family and act as a hindrance in the marriage of her cousin Anju.

Singhji is unhappy about Sudha's decision to marry Ramesh (143). Sudha even refuses to accept the money that Singhji offers as a wedding gift thinking that it is his hard-earned money and she does not have the right to use it. Sudha has to suffer for her wrong choice of marrying Ramesh throughout her life as it results in an annulled marriage with Ramesh later on. It is only at the moment of her departure for California that Singhji reveals his true identity in a letter (328). After a few days he dies and Sudha is never able to meet her father. As per his wish she does not

reveal this secret to anyone throughout her life. Divakaruni portrays Singhji as an honest man who could otherwise have enjoyed a family life in the Chatterjee house but as a guilt-ridden man he chooses a life of isolation and punishes himself.

Sudha does not receive love and affection at her in-laws. Her husband also does not express his love for her and Sudha keeps herself busy with the daily responsibilities of life. She is so fully occupied with the household work that she does not get time for stitching and designing clothes which is her passion. Sudha has to also cope with her husband's dominating mother and his two younger brothers. At heart she is not satisfied with her married life and often she is reminded of her past lover, Ashok, but tries to adjust in her new home.

Sudha has learnt from her mother to respect the family values and adjust with the husband and the in-laws in all circumstances. She receives a jolt when she is made to undergo an ultrasound test during pregnancy to determine the sex of her child. When her mother-in-law comes to know that it is a female foetus, she forces Sudha to undergo an abortion (258). Sudha is suffering from an inner conflict as she does not want to abort her child. She does not get the support of her husband Ramesh as he is passive and not prepared to go against his mother's will. Sudha says for her mother-in-law, "She cannot be persuaded. If I return at once and go through with the scheduled abortion, she will consider my foolish act of rebellion forgotten. If not, she is afraid she will have to set the divorce proceedings in motion" (267).

Not prepared to live with a family who does not value human life, especially that of a daughter, Sudha decides to separate from her husband. Simone de Beauvoir comments upon the fate of such a loveless married life, "Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society. It is still true that most women are married, or have been, or plan to be, or suffer from not being. The celibate woman is to be explained and defined with reference to marriage, whether she is frustrated, rebellious, or even indifferent in regard to that institution" (145). As a lonely pregnant lady Sudha has to go back to her mother's house and there she gives birth to her daughter, Dayita.

The novel *Sister of My Heart* ends at this point, while the sequel to the novel *The Vine of Desire* picks up the threads of the narrative from here, and moves on. Sudha, who has walked out of her marriage and does not want to live with her husband, gives birth to a daughter, whereas her sister Anju, who is living with her husband, suffers a miscarriage. Divakaruni continues the story in her novel *The Vine of Desire* (2002) which moves from India to the USA in its setting. In *The Vine of Desire*, Divakaruni brings in mixed feelings of longing for sisterly love. Sudha and Anju, who grew up together in the same household and were the two facets of the same coin, now, lead separate lives after marriage. Anju shifts to America after marriage and leads a more independent life. Sudha is separated from her husband and lives in her mother's house in India.

Divakaruni presents a sad twist in the life of her protagonists. Sudha now has to live with the tag of a single mother. According to the Indian family values it becomes very difficult for a woman to think of a second marriage when she already has a baby. Sudha's condition is in contrast to her sister Anju in America who is living happily with her husband. However, Anju's married life becomes disturbed after the miscarriage, as her husband Sunil was eagerly waiting for the birth of their baby.

At this moment of crisis in their lives the sisters turn to each other for mental and emotional support. Anju calls Sudha to come and live with her in America so that both of them may share their sorrows with each other and try to forget the mishaps in their life. Julie Mehta states that Divakaruni deals with issues such as, "racism, interracial relationships, economic disparity, abortion and divorce" in most of her fiction (4). Divakaruni brings out the significance of the sisterly love of Sudha and Anju in her novel *Sister of My Heart* which flows into its sequel *The Vine of Desire* where the sisters come to support each other in their hard times and try to rejuvenate their dull life.

Sudha accepts Anju's invitation because she has no way other to find solace in her present position. She can envisage her dark future with her in-laws in case she has to go back to them. Sudha knows that due to her orthodox beliefs her mother-in-law would never accept her with a daughter who had been keen for a grandson

instead. Sudha does not hope for a renewed healthy and loving relationship with her husband either. She is not willing to live with her mother either. She is aware of the Indian family values where a woman who is a single mother may never be able to live happily nor receive the respect she deserves in society. However, Sudha thinks that she will be able to bring up her daughter Dayita better in the liberal society of America, and takes a flight to try her fortune miles away from her home. Laxmi Sharma comments upon Sudha's bold step of breaking free from an unfruitful marriage, which is against the traditional Indian values. She says, "Once bound in marriage, woman has little room for escape and running away is a disgrace not only to her family but also to the whole of society and its tradition. That's why women never dare to come out of their marriage" (21).

The Vine of Desire focuses on the circumstances that bring the sisters together again in America where Sudha is a single mother and Anju has a husband but has lost her child. Sudha, an Indian immigrant woman has to face new challenges of adjustment with the already settled family of her sister Anju in America. Both the sisters have had difficult experiences after their marriage. Their migration from their home country to America brings before them entirely different situations. In an interview in *The Telegraph*, (13 Mar. 2005) Divakaruni states, "Women in particular respond to my work because I'm writing about them, women in love, in difficulties, women in relationships. I want people to relate to my characters, to feel their joy and pain, because it will be harder to [be] prejudiced when they meet them in real life" (179).

Divakaruni depicts the deep-rooted love between the sisters which despite many hardships in their life, makes them look forward to a new beginning in each other's company. They are excited to revive their friendship in America. Anju feels reassured and hopes that their reunion will open before her the doors of happiness. Sudha envisages a good future for herself and her daughter Dayita in the adopted land. Bhikhu Parekh has observed that the Indian diaspora is "like the banyan tree, the traditional symbol of the Indian way of life, he spreads out his roots in several soils, drawing nourishment from one when the rest dry up. Far from being homeless, he has several homes, and that is the only way he has increasingly come to feel at home in the world" (106). Sudha finds solace in Anju's company and lives happily in the latter's house.

However, after some time the faith and bond of love between the sisters is shaken by the passionate feelings of Anju's husband Sunil for Sudha. Sunil has admired Sudha since the first time he saw her before his marriage. When Sudha and Anju were young, the neighbours commented upon the sharp and beautiful features of Sudha and compared her looks with the ordinary looks of Anju, the daughter of the Chatterjees, and asked Anju to make, "friends with girls from other important families" so that she could find a good match for herself (27). At the time of fixing Anju's marriage with Sunil, however, Sunil seems to be more inclined towards Sudha's beauty and charms than towards his fiancé Anju.

However, after Sunil and Anju's marriage, the couple migrates to America and Sunil's feelings for Sudha subside. But now Sudha's all-time presence in his house revives his feelings for her. Sudha is aware of Sunil's growing infatuation with her. Sudha has suffered failed relationships with her lover Ashok and then with her husband Ramesh, so she desires love and affection of a male partner. Consequently, she does not object to the advancements of Sunil, and does not bring it to the notice of Anju either. This incident draws a line between the sisters where Sudha acts selfishly for a male partner's companionship and does not bother about its effect upon her relationship with her sister who is also his wife. Anju also observes silently the difference in her husband's attitude towards her and his obsession with Sudha but does not protest.

There is a silence between Sudha and Anju who despite knowing the increasing tension between them do not try to resolve it. Sudha does not tell her true friend how much she has suffered after marriage. Sudha has an emotional conflict in her mind and wishes to tell Anju that she had not seen "one hundred and one faces of my cowardice. My resentment. Someday I will tell her, I did care. All the things I had to leave behind, not only clothes and jewellery but my good name. The legitimacy of wifehood that I had worked so hard to earn" (43). Sudha suffers the guilt of developing a physical relationship with her sister's husband but is unable to discuss it with Anju, instead, she carries on her illegitimate relationship with Anju's husband. Jasbir Jain states in *Writers of Indian Diaspora*, "Yet this multiplicity of 'homes' does not bridge the gap between 'home of origin' and 'world'" (12). Anju has her

own conflict in her mind. She can neither afford to lose her husband nor her cousin Sudha because she has invited her to America. Anju only expresses her appreciation for Sudha for her decision to give up a loveless marriage and come to California.

During her teenage Sudha had been attracted to Ashok and wanted to marry him, but somehow she was married to Ramesh and tried to forget Ashok after her marriage. However, she cannot forget him completely, when she is wavering between her decision whether to abandon her husband's house or not, she seeks Ashok's advice. Ashok supports Sudha at this crucial moment and with his support Sudha takes the decision to leave her husband's house. He proposes to Sudha to marry him; however, he makes it clear to her that he is not ready to adopt her daughter. Through Ashok's character Divakaruni presents the Indian family values, where a man may rebel against his family and convince them for his marriage to a divorcee, but himself cannot accept her child from her first marriage.

Divakaruni presents Sudha as a strong character who refuses Ashoke's proposal. Sudha takes a strong stand against the atrocities done to her in the male-dominated society and decides to live alone and not marry a person who is not ready to adopt her daughter. Divakaruni portrays Sudha as a woman who receives admiration of many men but cannot find fulfilment in any relationship. Ashok loves her since her childhood but cannot marry her due to the family circumstances. Ramesh marries her but does not love her and she has to abandon his home. Ashok comes forward and offers to marry her but does not want to adopt her daughter. As a result, Sudha does not wish to discourage Sunil's growing interest in her, despite knowing the fact that it will strain his relationship with his wife, and hers too with Anju.

The lack of communication between the sisters becomes the reason for emotional isolation in the lives of Sudha and Anju. Anju, who would share her each and every feeling with her dear sister, now jots them down in letters and essays, whereas Sudha turns to the immigrant friends' circle of Sunil and Anju and becomes more conversant with them. She becomes friendlier with the Indian immigrants like Sara, Lalit and Myra and distances herself from Anju. The relationship deteriorates even more when Sunil reveals his love for Sudha to Anju.

The family is fragmented, Sudha separates from them and shifts to another house in California. Anju too abandons Sunil's house and moves to another house. Thus the love bond between the sisters that Divakaruni portrays in *Sister of My Heart* has an ironical twist in its sequel *The Vine of Desire.* Anju's invitation to Sudha to make each other's life comfortable unfortunately makes it even worse for both of them. Sudha decides to return to India with her past lover Ashok and Sunil apologizes to Anju for his behaviour. Bhikhu Parekh observes that some diaspora are as "banyan tree making a new home in the host nation but the roots not always permanently secure its roots in the alien soil. Some roots detach due to yearning and become desperate for home and to breathe their last in the native land" (13). Anju forgives both of her loved ones who betrayed her and revives her married life with Sunil. Both the sisters learn to compromise with the events life seems to thrust on them. They do not hesitate to acknowledge their mistakes and apologize for them. They realize that if they have to progress for the better and move towards freedom they have to correct their mistakes and value their relationships.

Divakaruni depicts in *The Vine of Desire* that each person's journey of life is unique which changes that person in a special way. The sisters Sudha and Anju emerge as caring and loving sisters who prove to be the best supporting system to each other in the time of need. Divakaruni focuses on female bonding in her novel and suggests that these relationships are vital to immigrant women in America.

Divakaruni uses a particular narrative technique to connect the situation in a character's life with a current event. The time when Anju invites Sudha to come to America, Divakaruni writes, "It is the year of dangerous movements. Two weeks back a major earthquake hit Los Angeles, causing seven billion dollars damage and leaving more than ten thousand people homeless" (317). Thus, she hints at this disastrous end of the relationship between Sudha, Anju and Sunil. Divakaruni uses the same technique in her sixth novel *Queen of Dreams* where she refers to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 in the narrative that affects the relationships in the Gupta family as well as their relationship with the Americans.

Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams* deals with three generations of a Bengali immigrant family of the Guptas in California. She brings out the various circumstances that affect the married life of the Guptas themselves and their daughter Rakhi. The novel also portrays the relationship of the Indian diaspora with their second and the third generations. Experiences of racism and colour bias that the diaspora community faces in a new homeland are depicted in the novel. The protagonist, Rakhi represents the second generation of the family. Born and brought up in Fremont, California, Rakhi is a divorcee and a single mother, very much like Sudha in *The Vine of Desire*. She is also a painter and runs a tea house in Berkeley, California.

Rakhi's mother, Mrs Gupta is a dream interpreter. In order to sustain this power, she is forbidden to have a physical relationship with a man. However, Mrs Gupta also wants to live in a family so she decides to get married. Since a temple wedding would snatch her powers of interpreting dreams, she opts for a legal wedding ceremony. Initially the couple enjoys their married life, but as Mrs Gupta becomes pregnant, she senses her powers diminishing. Mrs Gupta decides to stay separately in the same house, away from her husband. The marriage does not make Mr Gupta happy because he is supposed not to have a physical relationship with his wife any more. He feels upset in the beginning but he accepts his wife's priorities. Mr Gupta loves Divakaruni's 'queen' of dreams as "queen of my dreams" and "my queen of dreams" (33).

Goldman states for Divakaruni in *Bookpleasures* that in *Queen of Dreams* Divakaruni masters the juggling act of, "writing in the first person narrative and switching to third person, when it is her daughter's Rakhi's 'whisper' voice or consciousness that prods her." When Rakhi is eight, she notices that her parents sleep separately and do not have a close relationship like her friends' parents. Her mother explains to Rakhi, "my work is to dream. I can't do it if someone is in bed with me" (7). Rakhi finds her mother's profession to dream other people's dreams so glamorous that she takes her mother to be an icon and wishes to be like her.

Mrs Gupta does not discuss her profession with Rakhi, however she talks about issues like boyfriends and bodily changes in a friendly manner with her.

Though they are frank enough on such issues, Rakhi however longs for special care and attention from her mother. She wishes that as the other immigrant women show their concern towards their children, her mother should also express her love for Rakhi instead of giving a cold response to her. It hurts Rakhi that though it is her mother's dream-world that fascinates her most, yet she is deliberately kept out of it by her mother.

Since childhood Rakhi has been fascinated with India where her mother Mrs Gupta has come from. Though Rakhi has never been there but she longs to hear stories about India. India is always in her thoughts and she paints what she thinks. Avtar Brah conceptualises this dilemma, "the native is as much a diasporian as the diasporian is the native" (209). In an interview with Luan Gaines, Divakaruni explains the reason for Rakhi's fascination for her mother's mysterious past in India and her obsession with India, "Rakhi's parents have been atypical in not telling her much about India – which causes her to hunger for it. India becomes looming and mythical in her imagination." Divakaruni continues, "Because in some ways she has been denied her heritage, she longs to recreate it for herself. Her friend Belle, on the other hand, wants to escape from all the pressure her parents put upon her to be Indian."

Rakhi idealises her mother and loves watching her cooking Indian food. She loves everything that her mother has brought from India, like scarves and sarees. In an interview with Susan Comninos, Divakaruni states, "Usually, children have these wonderful ideas about India, and their immigrant parents, who have a real emotional connection to the homeland, are all for furthering them: 'Yes, yes, it's just as wonderful as you think it is.' Of course that will lead to problems if the young person ever returns to India." Rakhi also has some complaints against her mother that she does not attempt to satisfy Rakhi's curiosity about her profession of interpreting dreams and keeps her secrets to herself.

Though Rakhi wants to be close to her mother, she does not want her mother to intervene in her married or professional life. Rakhi has been living separately from her husband Sonny, but she does not seek her mother's help in settling the matter through her talent of dream interpretation. Rakhi also experiences problems in

establishing her tea house, but does not seek her mother's help. Rakhi herself handles the court proceedings of the divorce and the custody issues of her daughter, Jona. Rakhi feels that her mother may have powers to look into her clients' future and help them through her powers of dream interpretations, however she should control her family life herself without the intervene of her mother. Divakaruni explains this state of mind of Rakhi in her interview with Luan Gaines as, "she feels she is in her mother's shadow — and yet strangely neglected by her. She feels she is a failure because she doesn't have her mother's gift, which she has always longed to possess."

Rakhi is married to Sonny whose parents too are Indian immigrants. He was brought up in America and both Rakhi and Sonny have similar choices – they enjoy long drives and spicy Indian food. Sonny is dedicated to his job of a jockey in a night club and loves to work the whole night there, which Rakhi dislikes and thinks "he was a night spirit" (71). Their relationship gets sour when one night in his club she is attacked and harassed by some men and Sonny does not come to help her. Rakhi can never forget the incident of that night when she was trapped between strange men: "Her lips felt swollen" (125) and "There were hands everywhere" (126). Sonny tries hard to convince her that he was unable to listen to her cries for help due to the loud music. But Rakhi is not able to excuse him especially when Sonny refuses to investigate the matter and punish the culprits. Not willing to live with a man who does not care for her dignity and respect, Rakhi shifts to another house and applies for a divorce.

Sonny still loves Rakhi and wants their reunion. He feels that as Rakhi's mother has the power to control other people' life, Rakhi too wants a control over her family life and Sonny. He believes that Rakhi left him as he did not act according to her wish and did not complain against the attackers for their misbehaviour, "because I wouldn't let you control my whole existence" (137). However, Sonny looks after his daughter Jona very well, who in turn loves him and wants to stay with him. Despite Sonny's caring attitude for Jona, Rakhi calls him, "Sonny-the delinquent-dad" thinking that he does not look after Jona well (96).

Divakaruni portrays Rakhi as a dissatisfied person who does not trust her husband and complains on all petty matters. She is also not able to completely detach herself from him and acts as a possessive ex-wife. Rakhi feels curious about the woman who often calls Sonny on his phone, wondering "who's been calling him so many times" (55). She also feels jealous and curious when Sonny cancels the trip which he planned with Jona and takes a woman on the trip instead. Due to her fear of his involvement with another woman, Rakhi hesitates to enter his bedroom suspecting Sonny might be making love to another woman.

Sonny maintains a friendly relationship with Rakhi's mother and visits her from time to time. Divakaruni portrays Sonny as a romantic and caring person who tries his best to resolve the tension in his marital life and live with Rakhi again. But Rakhi blames him alone for the breakdown of their relationship. She believes that, "A relationship doesn't spoil in one night, like milk" (12). Rakhi wishes that Sonny could be like her father, understanding and docile. Rakhi has observed her father Mr Gupta as a calm and uninterfering husband, always surrendering to his wife's wishes. Rakhi compares him with her over-imposing husband and dislikes Sonny for his "me, myself and I" attitude (95). Rakhi also feels irritated with his passion for his job as a disc jockey and his affectionate terms with her mother for which she calls him, "Sonny-the master-tactician" (61).

Rakhi calls Sonny, "Sonny-the-infuriating" (23) and "Sonny-the-hell-raker" (213) and does not try to resolve the misunderstanding between them. However Sonny ignores Rakhi's attitude and performs the rites of Mrs Gupta's funeral sincerely. He is shocked by her unexpected death and breaks into tears when he scatters her ashes. Even then Rakhi does not see any goodness in him and feels envious, "When I'd left him, he'd shouted and threatened, begged and sulked. But he hadn't cried. What had my mother meant to him that he should cry now?" (134). Rakhi has never liked his closeness with her mother, who she thinks is only her own.

Possessive and secretive about her mother, Rakhi wants to keep her mother's journals wholly to herself and does not bring it to the notice of Sonny, who otherwise would have read them. Gradually Rakhi acknowledges his concern for her

when he helps her father in establishing her tea house by sending his friends there to buy food and promote their sale. Rakhi's faith in Sonny is revived on the fatal night of 9/11 when Sonny fights to protect Rakhi and saves her from the terrorist attack in her tea house. Sonny's concern and courage makes her forget her old grudges and she starts admiring him, "because death brushed by us so closely, and because I'm thankful to be alive" (272). She is filled with gratitude and she decides to begin her life with him as his wife again.

There is a lack of affection between Rakhi and her father too. Since childhood she has seen him living in a separate room in the same house and conversing very little with anyone. Rakhi feels that his presence is not more than a vague image in her life. During weekends Mr Gupta engages himself in drinking and listening to old Hindi songs. Rakhi loves her mother so much that she thinks her father should have died instead of her mother in the car accident. She considers her father responsible for the accident and feels that since he was with her mother in the car, the mishap occurred. After the sudden death of her mother, Rakhi shows no sympathy towards Mr Gupta while taking care of his bruises. She avoids touching him while dressing his bruises, does not talk to him and even stops calling him dad.

Though marginalized in his own home Mr Gupta is a sensible man and wants to clarify the misunderstanding between him and Rakhi. He explains to her that at the time of the accident Mrs Gupta was upto something and was chasing a black car saying, "He's my only chance to get back what I've lost" (117). She was driving at such a high speed that she lost control over the car and the accident took place. Mr Gupta convinces his daughter that he had respected his wife's wish to stay aloof from him and not have a physical relationship in order to keep her powers of dream interpretation intact. He says that it is his love for the family that he never expressed his desires and never demanded anything from anyone, but distanced himself from everyone. Rakhi is not fully convinced by her father's explanation; however is urged to reconsider her feelings for him due to his affectionate behaviour.

Rakhi is happy to have her mother's dream journals, but is also puzzled by their content and is unable to understand them. Her father offers to help her in

reading the journals and gradually together they are able to interpret the meaning of the journals. Mr Gupta also offers to support her tea house when Rakhi is struggling to save it from being shut down. With the success of these two tasks, Rakhi starts believing in her father and his abilities. Now the father-daughter relationship grows stronger than before and they work together in the tea house. Mr Gupta expresses his interest in cooking Indian food for their guests and their sale increases.

Rakhi is impressed by her father's hidden talents that are unfurled gradually. Mr Gupta sings Indian songs while cooking in the tea house and is admired by their Indian clients. Very soon they have a good clientele of their Indian immigrant friends who frequently visit their tea house. Rakhi is happy at the success of her tea house and feels grateful to her father for the immense patience he has shown despite her cold attitude towards him earlier. She is also thankful to him for all the support he has offered her.

Rakhi feels relaxed in her father's company and converses with him freely. She develops faith in him and shares with him her one night's adventure with a black car. She tells him that the words EMIT MAERD written on the license plate of the car puzzled her. She could not interpret the meaning of those words and seeks his help in solving the mystery. Mr Gupta tells her that when these words are read in the reverse order they mean DREAM TIME. Now Rakhi admires her father more than ever for solving mysteries and for running the tea house successfully. Rakhi praises him saying, "Is there no end to the personalities hiding inside my father's skin?" (181).

Mr Gupta also shows his affection for his daughter and the bond of father-daughter relationship strengthens between them. He freely shares his experience and memories of his childhood in Calcutta. Rakhi takes much interest in learning about his past in India, which her mother had never discussed with her. It is only now that Rakhi comes to know about her father's life in India and feels attached to him. Divakaruni portrays Rakhi as a modern girl who is brought up according to the American ways of life; however, she is always curious to know the kind of life her parents have spent in India. Gonzalez and Marino comment upon Divakaruni that,

"Being a transnational writer, there is 'the sign of blurring of boundaries between things, Asian and things Asian/American" (12).

Together, Rakhi and her father work to reopen the tea house under the new name Kurma House. Rakhi wishes her mother could see them together supporting each other. She does not blame her father for a fire in the Kurma House and tries to avoid any unpleasantness between them. She now wishes for an everlasting positive relationship with her father. Rakhi remembers her mother's words: "Calamity happens so we can understand caring" (237).

Rakhi has no deep attachment with her daughter Jona either. After the separation of Rakhi and Sonny, Jona prefers to live with her father and stays happy in his company. Jona does not like her mother's attitude towards Sonny when she insults him in her painting show (97). Jona reacts at Rakhi's behaviour, and says, "You told him to go away. How could you be so mean, Mom?" and leaves the hall with her father. She does not care to stay back till the end of the show (98). Though Jona is a little girl, she understands human nature well. She knows that her mother loses her temper on trivial matters, so she is not affected by Rakhi's outburst. Rakhi loses her temper again when she is invited at Sonny's house for dinner, and walks out of the house refusing the dinner prepared by them. Jona remains indifferent and enjoys the food with her father and lets her mother follow her whims.

Divakaruni presents Rakhi as a quick-tempered woman. Rakhi's unpredictable behaviour is the outcome of her mother Mrs Gupta's strained relationship with her husband Mr Gupta. Rakhi has always seen her mother disagreeing on certain matters with her husband and having no consideration for his feelings. Rakhi inherits this attitude from her mother and herself suffers in her relationship with Sonny and Jona. As R. Ivekovic writes, "in such extreme situations, it is the "second" or "third generation" that may sometimes bring about something new (31). Rakhi has seen her mother as a self-dependent woman, and following her ways she does not trust Sonny in any matter related to Jona.

Rakhi believes that Sonny would not be taking good care of Jona when he takes Jona on a trip to Mendocino (14). Rakhi does not like to live with them and does not consider herself completely separated from them either. Rakhi exposes her inner-self through her whisper voice which says, "You're just afraid Jona will have too much fun with Sonny" and "You're afraid she won't want to come back to you" (15). Divakaruni presents the instability of Rakhi's mind where she cannot decide whether they are her family or not, whether she needs them back in her life or not. Rakhi feels satisfied when she is able to find fault with Sonny, where she can put him down. After her return from the trip when Jona asks her for food, Rakhi, instead of planning about cooking something for her daughter, feels happy that Sonny is not taking care of Jona properly. Internally, her whisper voice says to Sonny-the-irresponsible, "I knew you wouldn't feed her right" (57).

Jona likes to live with her father, however she wishes that Rakhi should also try to resolve the conflict and stay together with them happily. Jona acts like a bridge between her parents. She visits Rakhi with her father practically every day and invites Rakhi to Sonny's house. While on rides, Jona makes them sit like a husband and a wife in the front seats of the car. Rakhi also enjoys their company and likes to spend time with them. The night when Jona is suffering from fever, Rakhi has to spend the whole night at Sonny's house. As Rakhi has improved her relationship with her father, she also resolves to develop a loving and affectionate relationship with her husband and daughter again.

The novel *Queen of Dreams* focuses on independent women who introspect about their life as immigrants and form new values to adjust in the host country with sensitivity and objectivity. In *The Mistress of Spices* (1997), Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni presents the life of a woman who has a weird past and no real family relations. *The Mistress of Spices* is similar to *Queen of Dreams* in the sense that both of these novels focus on supernatural powers of the protagonists. While *Queen of Dreams* is realistic and mimetic in its plot, structure and setting, *The Mistress of Spices* involves magic realism through the protagonist Tilo's extraordinary powers to transform her appearance.

In *The Mistress of Spices*, Divakaruni introduces Tilo, the protagonist, who is born to poor parents in India. She is regarded in her childhood as the one who would bring misery to her parents when they would have to arrange dowry for her marriage later. Tilo has supernatural powers of foreseeing the future which her parents too are initially not aware of. Gradually, as people come to know about her powers, some pirates kill her parents and kidnap her. Though Tilo is not able to enjoy the loving and secure relationship with her parents and family, she is safe due to her power of prophecy and her visionary skills.

Divakaruni focuses on the power of female relationship in *The Mistress of Spices.* The novel depicts the upsurge of women's resistance to male dominance in the society. Divakaruni portrays the protagonist Tilo's emotional bonding with many women characters in the novel. In *The Mistress of Spices* the female characters establish bonds with one another irrespective of their age, colour, class and nationality. Divakaruni creates a female universe where women learn to survive in the patriarchal world with dignity and respect. In Nancy Chadorow's opinion, "they try to assert and redefine themselves through a network of relationships with other women" (189). Since Tilo opts to be the mistress of spices, initially she suppresses her feminine desires of entering into relationships with the opposite sex or getting married.

The island of the spices that Divakaruni portrays in the novel is distant and mystical with "green slumbering volcano, red sands of beaches, granite outcrop like grey teeth" (23). It is a matriarchal female universe without any interference of the traditional and real patriarchal male world. When Tilo lands on the island, she is naked and the First Mother wraps her shawl around Tilo's shoulders. The First Mother welcomes her into her enclave. Tilo feels a special affection for her. To Tilo, the First Mother, "was truly the first mother" (42). The First Mother senses that Tilo is free-willed in nature, however she does not reject her assuming that Tilo is, "the only one in whose hands the spices sang back" (34). Tilo becomes the brightest pupil of the Old One. Under the guidance of the Old One, Tilo masters every spell and chant.

Tilo is happy to form loving and affectionate relationships with other girls on the island, "where we woke to birdcall and slept to the First Mother's singing, where we swam naked without shame in lakes of blue lotus" (54). There are no men on the island, hence the mistresses do not develop the feelings of jealousy, hatred, shame and fear.

The Old One is the oldest and the most beautiful woman on the island. She is, "surrounded by her novices, and the sun a halo behind her head and shimmering many-coloured in her lashes" (32). Tilo and other novices feel, "A yearning to belong to her" (33). The mother-daughter relationship Divakaruni portrays in *The Mistress of Spices* is not that of the patriarchal society of the real world. The girls who are found to be insincere towards their responsibilities and are denied entry to this female universe kill themselves, "Because death is easier to bear than the ordinary life, cooking and washing clothes and bathing…and bearing children" – the routine life of women in the real male-dominated world (34).

The mistresses learn the lesson of female bonding during their training. They enjoy spending time with each other and performing the daily chores: "We learned to be neat and industrious and to work together, to protect one another when we could from the Old One's anger" (52). They feel that above all "we learned to feel without words the sorrows of our sisters and without words to console them" (52). All the mistresses live like sisters in the matriarchal set-up of the Old One.

The Old One allows Tilo to choose her name as a mistress, and also allows her to choose the city where she would be serving as a mistress of spices. Tilo chooses Oakland to be the place to go to as a mistress of spices. There is so much affection and trust in this mother-daughter relationship that when Tilo's training is over she feels sad and unhappy before plunging into Shampati's fire and leaving the Old One and the island behind. The Old One feels the same for Tilo, "Tilo my daughter…most gifted most troublesome most loved, Tilo travelling to America eager as an arrow, I have something for you" (58). Tilo also senses the emotions of the Old One, "by her face I knew she felt my struggle in her own heart." The Old One places a slice of ginger-root on Tilo's tongue, "to give my heart steadfastness,

to keep me strong in my vows" (58). Tilo is her favourite because probably, "Did she see mirrored, in my headstrong self, her own girlhood?" (42).

Tilo is born in the material world where looks and appearance find special consideration. Tilo is born, "coloured like mud" (7). She feels lonely and isolated in her childhood when she is not admired due to her ordinary looks. However, Tilo determines not to care for them who dislike her, "was it the loneliness, the need rising angry in a dark girl left to wander the village unattended, with no one caring enough to tell her Don't" (8). Gifted with magical powers, she proves her supremacy over the patriarchal world. After her migration to Oakland, California, Tilo opens up a spice store which is as isolated a female universe as the island. Tilo disguises into an aged, ugly lady and helps the women who feel lonely and neglected. Veena Selvam points out that the spice store, "is a confined space allocated to men by the women, where men can enter but cannot belong" (12).

Tilo develops affectionate bonds with the Indian immigrant customers like Daksha, Geeta, Lalita, Dr. Lalchand's wife, the bougainvillaea girls, the American mail woman and others. Tilo relates to them the tales of her home village and the island. Thus as Tilo learned lessons with other mistresses and made friendly bonds with them on the island, her friendly association with women continues in her spice store in America. She interacts with her women clients at the spice store and tries to cure their problems with the help of the spices.

Daksha is a nurse and despite her independent status she lives like a traditional Indian married woman with her in-laws. She is an obedient daughter-in-law and wife but is not treated well by her family. She spends her time cooking and doing household chores as her family members feel that, "after all isn't the kitchen the woman's place" (80). Daksha is docile and submissive and does not object to their behaviour. Tilo helps Daksha to oppose these repressive Indian values which confine her growth and independence. Tilo offers her the seeds of black pepper, "so you can learn to say No, that word so hard for Indian women. No and Hear me now" (81). Tilo also gives her amla so that she may gain strength to resist the pain and suffering of her patients (83). Daksha follows Tilo's advice and gradually regains her status in the family.

Divakaruni presents the Indian male immigrants as the ones who do not leave behind their patriarchal values in the home country but carry it even in the adopted country. Through Geeta's grandfather Haroun, Divakaruni portrays the age-old Indian custom of restricting the freedom of the girls in the family. Geeta's grandfather does not like the excessive liberty his son Ramu allows the women in the family. He is critical of the American way of life adopted by Ramu's daughter Geeta. He objects at Geeta's taking up a job, working late hours with other men, cutting her hair short, buying herself a car with her own money. He disapproves this saying, "this is no way to bring up children, girls specially" (87). Geeta wants to marry Juan, a Chicano. Upon her grandfather's objection Geeta declares, "arranged marriages aren't for me either. When I marry, I'll choose my own husband" (88). Ramu also objects at his daughter's choice of her life partner and turns down her proposal. Geeta turns to Tilo for help. Cristina Bacchilega states, "'[D]issolving boundaries' not only applies to globalization as a whole but also speaks directly to the building of coalitions between different yet equally stereotyped groups – for instance, in the novel, between Asian Indians and American Indians" (187).

Tilo helps Geeta to resolve the matter and till then Geeta stays with her friend. Tilo meets Haroun and Ramu, and convinces them about Geeta's right choice. In her article "Bold Type," Divakaruni brings out the need of female friendship, "In the best friendships…with women, there is a closeness that is unique, a sympathy that comes from somewhere deep and primal in our bodies and does not need explanation, perhaps because of the life-changing experiences we share." Tilo breaks the rules of a mistress and steps out of the store. She buys herself new American clothes and meets Geeta in her office. She talks to Geeta and helps her to reconcile with her father Ramu. Ramu also gives his consent for the marriage of Geeta with Juan and thus the family restores its relationship.

Divakaruni has always expressed concern for the Indian women living in America who are physically abused by their family members. In 1991, she started MAITRI, a helpline for South Asian Women who suffer domestic violence and abuse. These women also suffer because of their immigrant status since they do not have access to the American laws and rights. These women are caught in the old

Indian value system and have no source of help. Divakaruni states, "My work with Maitri has been at once valuable and harrowing, I have seen things I would never have believed could happen. I have heard of acts of cruelty beyond imagining. The lives of many of the women I have met through this organization have touched me deeply" (Padmashini 236).

Divakaruni portrays one such battered woman Lalita in *The Mistress of Spices* who becomes a target of violence in her married life. Lalita's husband Ahuja who is much older than her considers her as only his possession and does not love or respect her. When Lalita blurts out that she has been betrayed by her parents into marrying him, Ahuja gets furious and rapes her. Lalita loses all hope, "silence and tears, silence and tears, all the way to America" (102). She cannot go back to her parents thinking that a woman's place is with her husband, "At least with him I had honor – her lips twist a little at the word – because I was a wife" (102). Ahuja beats her for trivial reasons and does not allow her to seek a job because he thinks he is capable enough to take care of his wife.

Lalita is not allowed to do her favourite work of sewing or go anywhere except the spice store. Lalita who cannot go to her mother for solace, confides in Tilo. She develops a female bond with Tilo and calls her Mataji. Lalita shares with her that she longs for a child to fill the void in her life and even wishes for death. Tilo is driven to tears as she listens to Lalita's sad and painful story. Tilo again violates the rules of the spices to pacify Lalita and touches her arm to comfort her.

Through the narrative Divakaruni presents the changing Indian values where women are gradually learning to assert themselves. Tilo is a woman with magical powers and is not permitted human touch. However she has empathy and compassion for the suffering women and ignores the rules of the spices in order to help them. Tilo tries to restore courage in Lalita who is depressed because of her husband's ill-treatment, "Daughter, remember this, no matter what happens. You did no wrong in telling me. No man has the right to beat you, to force you to a bed that sickens you" (105). Tilo offers her the spices and also a copy of the India Currents magazine. The empowerment of women through female bonding is one of the main concerns of

Divakaruni. In her article "Do South Asian Women need Separate Shelter Homes?" the writer states, "I always want to connect with women and women's groups." Lalita gets motivated by Tilo's encouraging words and leaves her husband's home with the help of the volunteers of the helpline she found in the magazine given by Tilo. She does not carry anything with her from Ahuja's house. She is reminded of the words Tilo said to her, "You deserve happiness. You deserve dignity" (111). Inspired by Tilo's words, Lalita becomes self-dependent and resolves to fight for her rights, "coming at last into her own" (273). She sets up a small tailoring business and gets the happiness that she deserves.

Tilo not only feels the pain of women, she is equally sensitive towards the suffering of Indian immigrant males. She meets Mohan and his wife Veena who are the targets of racism in America and feel themselves isolated from other minority communities. They seek Tilo's help to face the traumatic situation. Tilo feels their pain as if it were her own. After looking at the marks of beating on Mohan's body, Tilo says, "My limbs ache as after a long illness, my sari is damp with shiver-sweat, and in my heart I cannot tell where your pain ends and mine begins." She continues, "For your story is the story of all those I have learned to love in this country, and to fear for" (182). It indicates that Tilo, though living a secluded life, is sensitive enough to feel the pains and sorrows of the people who come in her contact. Consequently Tilo tries to help them as much as she can to alleviate their suffering. *Publishers Weekly* praises Divakaruni for dealing with current issues in her novels: "Divakaruni (*The Mistress of Spices; Sister of My Heart* etc.) does a good job working current issues into the novel and avoids synthetic characterization, creating a free-flowing story that will captivate readers" (*chitradivakaruni.com*).

Divakaruni refers to incidents of racial attacks in America in *The Mistress of Spices* as well as in her other novel *Queen of Dreams.* Vijay Prashad comments that the Indian immigrants' experience of being discriminated is, "common to many South Asians living in America, and acts of violence against South Asian immigrants have only increased over the years" (87). Tilo is taken aback when kids of South Asian families tell her how they were hurt by the assaulting remarks of the natives who scream, "Talk English son of a bitch. Speak up nigger wetback asshole"

(41). Tilo calms them down with soft words and offers them the remedy of spices. She is aware of the racial discrimination that Indian diaspora face in America, so she encourages her friends and clients to face the situation with confidence. Tilo and her customers try to re-establish their ties with India with the help of the magical remedy of the spices, a heritage that they share in common.

Tilo's association with her clients and the service of spices takes a new turn when she feels attracted towards Raven, an American. She feels such a strong attraction towards him that she commits errors in the choice of spices at times and her efforts to cure the diseases go futile. Raven visits her store occasionally and after a few meetings Tilo feels a charm for him. Though she is aware that contact with males is forbidden to her, and may snatch away her supernatural powers, she keeps waiting for his visits to her store. The Old One warns Tilo about the sin she may commit if she falls in love and the loss of powers and the punishment that she may have to suffer as a result. But Tilo yearns for a male partner's love and ignores the Old One's commands. She feels a growing attraction towards Raven and wishes to share her secrets with him. She says to him, "Raven, now I must tell you my name. Will you believe it if I say you are the only man in America, in the entire world, to know it?" (164).

Tilo is constantly struggling between her love for Raven and her duty towards the spices. Gavani comments for Tilo: "She transforms herself into a woman, feeling guilty about her "self indulgence," but decides to brave the retribution that she would have to face" (80). Raven too is fascinated by Tilo. He admires her and the powers of the spices. He reveals to her the secret that he too possesses a very powerful legacy of magic that his grandfather has wished to pass on to him but his mother did not permit him to accept the legacy, as a result of which, he had taken the form of a raven. He now seeks solace in drugs, alcohol and even poisonous mushrooms. He proposes his love for Tilo and confesses to her that her companionship gives him earthly pleasures which he too was bereft of.

Tilo is so much in love with Raven that one day she goes out on a pleasure trip with him. This action of Tilo causes her intense suffering in the future. Tilo

expresses her state of mind, “For the first time I admit I am giving myself to love. Not the worship I offered the Old One, not the awe I felt for the spices. But human love, all tangled up, at once giving and demanding and pouring ardent.” Tilo is aware of the consequences of her action, she adds, “And I see that the risk lies not in what I always feared, the anger of the spices, their desertion. The true risk is that I will somehow lose this love” (219).

Tilo is ready to attain Raven’s love even at the cost of her magical powers and decides to spend a night with him. The Old One forbids Tilo doing so and commands her to return to the island. But Tilo who has never experienced true earthly love argues that as people live a happy life with their families, why she should be deprived of it. And Tilo braces herself up to face any punishment that comes her way. Thus, Tilo represents a woman, whose life is devoted to the welfare of humanity but, somewhere, in her heart, also longs for the pleasures of womanhood as others do. In *Transnational America* Inderpal Grewal comments that the exceptional skills Tilo is bestowed with is indicative of women empowerment. She states, “Exotic power is empowerment, and feminism and exoticism are first demarcated and then reconciled. Exotic spices enable women to become feminist subjects by using their magical and healing qualities to fight patriarchal Indian tradition” (77). Divakaruni gives a happy end to the tale of Tilo’s dreams, desires and struggles. Tilo helps many people at the cost of the spices’ wrath. She makes up her mind to accept the punishment, hence, the spices finally set Tilo free from their charm and she becomes a mortal woman again.

Karen Isaksen Leonard observes that Tilo’s work is similar to the services the South Asian women in America offer to their community, “doing many things beyond the family: providing support for battered South Asian women, educating women about physical and mental health issues, and working on legal issues related to marriage, divorce, and migration” (88). Divakaruni sends across the message through the novel that female bonding is not only a refuge from domestic violence and a challenge to patriarchy, but a loving relationship that strengthens women. Tilo not only empowers other women, but also her own self. At the end of the novel, she reconstructs her own life with her American lover Raven.

Both Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri depict immigrant experiences in the United States. Each of them tackles this subject from a different enthnographic perspective, and presents the conflict between the old native culture and the new immigrant one. Like Divakaruni in many of her novels, Lahiri in her novel *The Namesake* (2004) showcases arranged marriages, Indian family culture and struggles of Indian immigrants. Julie Myerson praises Jhumpa Lahiri for *The Namesake* in *The Guardian*. Myerson writes: "even though it's the first we've heard of this expedition, we get a vital sense of lives and events lived off the edge of these pages…Nothing, absolutely nothing, in this novel seems artificial. Nothing seems remotely made-up."

Lahiri presents the immigrant experiences of Ashoke Ganguli and his wife Ashima Ganguli who migrate from Calcutta to America. Ashok is a doctoral candidate in electrical engineering at MIT, US. They are a newly wedded couple and share a loving relationship. Lahiri depicts the Indian family values that the Gangulis try to retain as diaspora, maintaining a friendly relationship both with other Indian immigrants there and native Americans. The Gangulis try to follow the ancestral culture of their homeland. They desire to pass on the values they carry from their homeland to their next generation too. After the birth of their son Gogol and daughter Sonia, they try to teach them the same family values and the heritage they have brought with them from Calcutta.

Gogol grows up with the love and care of his parents and learns to value family relationships. In adolescence, Gogol has been attracted towards many pretty girls. He feels a strong attraction for Maxine Ratliff who is an affluent white American woman and a New Yorker by birth. She is a modern girl and lives a more westernized and cosmopolitan life as compared to that of the Gangulis. Lahiri shares her own experience in her interview with Jeffrey Brown, "I've always been aware of my parents came from Calcutta. I have found myself sort of caught between the worlds of left behind and still clung to, and also the world that surrounded me at school and everywhere else." The issue of class difference finds place in the narrative when Gogol enters Maxine's home and meets her parents. Lahiri writes, "He is stunned by the house, a Greek Revival, admiring it for several minutes like a

tourist before opening the gate" (130). Gogol is, in a sense, a foreigner to Maxine's world of sophistication. The narrative states, "He tries to consume or get assimilated her ways. He goes shopping with her on Madison Avenue stores they must be buzzed into, for cashmere cardigans and outrageously expensive English colognes which Maxine buys without deliberation or guilt" (136).

Maxine's parents are open to their daughter's friendship with an Indian. They permit her to live with Gogol and go out with him to restaurants and movies. It is in contrast with Gogol's Indian background where this kind of openness is not permitted. Gogol tells Maxine that when they would be visiting his family they will have to behave differently, "that they will not be able to touch or kiss each other in front of his parents, that there will be no wine with lunch" (145). Gogol loves Maxine and tries to adjust his way according to her so they may have a happy relationship. He tries all he can do to acquire her tastes. He loves her parents' manner of living and wants to love all that surrounds Maxine with all odds and outs. He even loves all her unkempt ways, "her hundreds of things always covering her floor and her bedside table, her habit, when they are alone in the fifth floor, of not shutting the door when she goes to the bathroom" charm him (137).

Simultaneously, Gogol also tries to learn all their sophisticated table manners, like keeping the cloth napkin partially folded on his lap. He learns to love the food Maxine and her parents eat, "the polenta and risotto, the bouillabaisse and osso buco, the meat baked in parchment paper" (137). He learns that "Parmesan cheese is not grated over pasta dishes which contain seafood," and that "wooden spoons are never put in the dishwasher," something that he had mistakenly done an evening while offering to help Maxine (137).

Gogol learns many things from Maxine who herself keeps instructing him the proper way of eating, drinking and buying articles. Maxine is frank enough to point out the difference between their family status and their upbringing. Gogol sometimes finds it difficult to bear such harsh words. Their relationship starts wavering due to Maxine's habit of pointing out their differences in class and social background every now and then. Gogol is impressed with her parents, the Ratliffs

and their sophisticated life style. He contemplates over the time which he spent with them at their lake house and compares their aristocracy with the simple life of his parents who preferred taking the family to other Bengali families for recreation during his childhood. Gogol feels a cultural difference in the ways of his family with that of the Ratliffs. Rocio G. Davis comments, "Asian American autobiographies generally highlight the protagonist's growing comprehension of the meaning or value that society places on questions and attitudes about ethnic differences, historical reconstruction, and the place of their communities in American societies" (41). Thus, Gogol loves Maxine but the difference in their class becomes a barrier in their relationship.

Gogol feels that due to the difference in the family cultures, he should not take Maxine with him to India to perform the rituals of his father's death. However, Maxine misinterprets it, thinking that Gogol does not like to involve her in family matters. She feels he loves his mother and sister more than her because Gogol goes off to Calcutta with them leaving her behind. Maxine realizes that she felt, "jealous of his mother and sister" (188). Maxine feels deeply hurt by his indifference and after some time they part. Gayatri Gopinath observes that Gogol realizes his responsibility towards his family which is the sign of the cultural heritage he inherits from his parents. She states that since Gogol returns to his family, even though after his father's death, it projects the strong ties of father-son relationship. In Gopinath's opinion, "*The Namesake* provides a particularly stark example of this as the patriarchal relationship is forged through a complete elision of the female characters" (5). Gogol and Maxine's relationship experiences the difficulties of interracial romance where both the protagonists try to negotiate their own complicated and diverse cultural affiliations.

Gogol has been into relationships with women since his adolescence. Next he comes in close contact with Moushumi, a Bengali-American girl whom he marries later. They get attracted towards each other due to their Indian background and heritage and common experience of a recent heartbreak. Gogol's mother Ashima points out that they had been to the same parties when they were growing up, that they had frequently been to Calcutta for months sharing the same culture.

While their talks, “They calculate the many months that they were in that distant city together, on trips that had overlapped by weeks and once by months, unaware of each other’s presence” (212).

Gogol and Moushumi come close due to their Bengali culture and shared experience, but during their early meetings they also realize how their ethnicity is misperceived in the US. During their visit to an Italian restaurant a waiter asks if they are brother and sister. Gogol is “at once insulted and oddly aroused. In a way he realizes, it’s true – they share the same coloring, the straight eyebrows, the long slender bodies, the high cheekbones and dark hair” (203). Moushumi takes it easy in the sense that, “our parents raised us according to the illusion that we were cousins that we were all part of some makeshift extended Bengali family, and now here we are, years later, and someone actually thinks we’re related” (204). But as to Gogol, the waiter’s comment makes him think if his relationship with Moushumi is illicit.

Gogol and Moushumi continue their courtship and get married, conscious of the fact that their marriage within the Bengali community will make their parents happy. The Gangulis are indeed happy to see that through this marriage they have somehow kept the Indian traditions and family values in America. Robin Field sums up this position in his article, “In *The Namesake,* marriage is a complicated manipulation between the traditional expectations of immigrant parents and the desires of the second generation” (173).

However, Gogol and Moushumi cannot maintain their relationship for long. On their visit to Paris, Gogol is somewhat jealous to see her well-settled and enjoying a good friends circle there: “He admires her, even resents her little, for having moved to another country and made a separate life. He realizes that this is what their parents had done in America. What he, in all likelihood, will never do” (233). Gogol notices her changed behaviour in Paris: “she is gloomy in the aftermath, as if seeing them serves only to remind her that their own lives will never match up” (238). She picks up a fight with him after Astrid and Donald’s dinner party, and complains about trivial matters. During their minor arguments, Gogol keeps calm, and sympathises with her, “it’s the stress – she’s been studying for her orals, holed up in her carrel at library until nine o’clock most nights” (238).

Later on Gogol also gets upset when Moushumi reveals to her friends that Gogol has changed his name to Nikhil. Gogol feels that it was a secret which Moushumi should have kept to herself and not have discussed it with her friends publically. He has told her "he still felt guilty at times for changing his name, more so now that his father was dead. And she'd assured him that it was understandable…But now it's become a joke to her" (244). Moushumi's character becomes increasingly callous and Gogol struggles to understand Moushumi's indifference towards him.

Moushumi is not ready to adjust to the expectations of the Bengali family and this ultimately causes their break up. Their marriage is arranged by their families, yet in due course of time, it fails. Laura Anh Williams comments that their relationship is, "a revision to the fable of ethnic romance because it demonstrates that cultural similarity does not resolve in easy romantic relationships" (70). Another critic Patricia Chu explains this failed marriage: "Asian American protagonists generally can't appear as well-married heroes because marriage would signify their successful integration into the nation, a full assimilation that has not yet occurred either in fact or in the symbolic realm of mainstream culture" (19).

Lahiri brings the fact in the novel that the second generation immigrants are emotionally independent and usually do not like their parents to guide their ways. They have their own novel concepts to carry on relationships that sometimes have fatal ends. Lahiri conveys the message that there is an obvious tendency of the second generation immigrants to refuse Eastern fatalism and accept Western individuality that sometimes brings a major change in their relationship with the family and friends.

The diaspora, as portrayed by Desai, Divakaruni and Lahiri in their novels, forge deep and lasting emotional bonds with their family members and friends from the host country. Conflict is inevitable, especially in the immigrant situation, where, as R. Radhakrishnan avers, the older and younger generations of immigrants nurture different memories of the past, and have different values in life. First generation diaspora are more rooted in the culture and tradition of their home country, while the second and later generations of diaspora gradually break away from the value system upheld by their parents or grandparents, and adopt the cultural practices of the country where they reside.

In such circumstances too, in the fiction of the diaspora writers, one observes close ties between family members – between spouses as Adit and Sarah in *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, Ashoke and Ashima in *The Namesake*, between parents and children, as Rakhi and Mrs Gupta in *Queen of Dreams*, Sudha and Nalini in *Sister of My Heart*, Sonny and Jona in *Queen of Dreams*; between siblings, as Sudha and Anju in *Sister of My Heart*, Gogol and Sonia in *The Namesake*. Immigrants are found to form friendly bonds with people of the host country which provide them emotional and moral support. Tilo in *The Mistress of Spices* develops a close relationship with many of her American clients who are suffering due to various reasons and require her help. Tilo also falls in love with Raven, an American, an experience that transforms her life. In *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, Adit and Dev have English friends whose companionship they value and enjoy.

The emotional bonding between immigrants becomes stronger despite several odds in novels like *Queen of Dreams* where Rakhi revives her relationship with her father Mr Gupta, husband Sonny, and daughter Jona. In *The Vine of Desire* the marital relationship between Anju and Sunil suffers many ups and downs but is strengthened in the end. Adit and Dev in *Bye-Bye Blackbird* remain good friends till the end of the novel. Tilo in *The Mistress of Spices* shares an emotional bond with Indian immigrants especially, Daksha, Geeta and Lalita, whom she helps through the spices. Gogol, though unable to sustain his marital relationship with Moushumi, is deeply attached to his parents and is emotionally dependent on them. The emotional bonds of immigrants as portrayed in these novels, provide them with the moral strength and support necessary for them to be able to survive even in difficult circumstances in a foreign country.

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Chapter Three

Changing Religious Beliefs and Spiritual Values

The nation as a spiritual domain has since long been considered one of the defining elements of the concept of nation and nationality. Ernest Renan, as early as in 1882, discussed in a lecture the idea of what is a nation. The concept of the nation as prevalent in society urges people to express their patriotism, their love and bonding with their country and a staunch affirmation of their nationality. The idea of the nation also influences the thoughts and actions of the diaspora, who have migrated to other countries, yet at heart nurture the same values of love and loyalty towards their homeland, and oneness with their countrymen – whether in their homeland or abroad.

Beginning with the dynastic origin of nations, where the people were bound to the land through a contract and the nation had a feudal history, Renan considers such a concept of the nation outdated. He moves on to discuss the role of race in the formation of the nation. However Renan believed that though race was important in tribes and old cities, it held less significance in the formation of larger provinces like the Roman Empire. Mentioning nations such as France, Germany, England and Italy, Renan pointed out that these countries have people of mixed racial origin and hence the importance of race and ethnography in the shaping of a nation is refuted. Similarly, language could not be considered as a defining factor of a nation, for "Language invites people to unite but it does not force them to do so" (Renan 16). According to the theorist, people in countries like England, USA, Spain and Latin America may speak English, yet are different nations, while Switzerland has three or four languages and yet is one nation.

Discussing the significance of religion in the formation of nations, Renan argues that social groups were formed on the basis of a common religion being practised by the people. Religions were state religions and had to be mandatorily practised. However Renan argues that in the modern nations, "religion has become an individual matter; it concerns the conscience of the individual" (18). Religion no longer binds the people into one nation and thus does not define the boundaries of a nation.

Renan also rejects community of interest and geography as the formative factor for nations. He believes that rivers help a nation to progress while mountains limit it but political boundaries are not based on the presence of natural frontiers.

Renan then moves on to define what constitutes a nation. He states that it is the people who are sacred and who lead to the formation of the country. He explains, "A nation is a spiritual principle, the outcome of the profound complications of history; it is a spiritual family not a group determined by the shape of the earth" (18-19).

Renan explains that there are two essential components of this spiritual principle: the first is the "rich legacy of memories" which the people of a nation share, which is based on the past; the second is the desire to live with each other and pass on the cultural heritage which the people of the nation have received, and which exists in the present (15). Nations, according to Renan are founded on their glorious past and the common will in the present. He notes that "a nation is therefore a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future" (19). Consequently, a large group of people who have a balanced mind and a loving heart share a kind of collective moral conscience which forms a nation.

Benedict Anderson traces the history of nationalist thought in his book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983; 1991). In the introduction to the volume, Anderson defines the nation as "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (6). Discussing the characteristics of a nation, Anderson moves on to explain the key ideas of the definition of 'nation' as propounded by him. The critic explains that a nation is imagined because the idea of a nation is sustained and propagated as it is imagined by the members of a community.

Anderson explains that the nation is imagined by its people in three ways. Firstly, it is imagined as limited because nations are demarcated by their boundaries, and even the largest of nations have borders beyond which lay other countries. Anderson states, "No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind" (7). The nation is considered limited, because though the boundaries of a nation may be elastic and may extend further or recede, no nation ever imagines that its boundaries will encompass the whole world, and that the world will become one nation. Secondly, the nation is imagined as sovereign because the concept of nation developed in the

age when Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution were questioning "the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm" (7). The idea of religion was being debated and its fixed nature was being challenged as being a plural one. The people of nations thus dreamt of being free and the nation was symbolic of freedom from monarchy and religious domination.

Thirdly, according to Anderson, a nation is imagined because while the people of even smaller nations do not get to meet each other or to know or hear of them, yet they share the image of their country in their thoughts and speech. Anderson points out that all communities that are larger than a village or where individual face-to-face contact is not possible, are imagined. The nation, according to Anderson is imagined as a community because the people of a nation have a feeling of solidarity and comradeship for their countrymen. Though in reality, the people of different classes in a nation may not be treated equally or fairly and there might be exploitation of the weak and the poor, yet, the feeling of belonging to a community exists among all the people of a nation. Anderson states, "Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings" (7). Momentous acts of sacrifice for the nation are inspired by the imagining of the concept of the nation, and not by any concrete reality of this concept.

This feeling of solidarity for the nation is shared all over the world by the diaspora belonging to a particular nation since they share common memories about their home country and a spiritual bond with all their countrymen. Though they may be displaced to distant corners of the world, yet at heart, they are aware of their common origin, history and past, and this consciousness is manifested in their thoughts, actions and writings. Their solidarity with their nation is also expressed through the traditional customs and religious ceremonies that the diaspora consciously perform individually or in larger groups in the countries where they have migrated. These ceremonies are a means to preserve and propagate one's culture and belief-systems even in a foreign land. When performed together by people in a community, religious practices affirm the oneness of the people and provide them a feeling of security of being a member of a group of like-minded people.

However, culture tends to change, to adapt, due to the influence of the society around. The diaspora living across the world adopt new cultures with the passage of time. Religious beliefs too are remoulded with the adoption of the religious practices of the host country. This change in the spiritual values of the diaspora is significant, for it discourages stagnation and the hardening of religious beliefs into dogma. Jasbir Jain states, "Religious orthodoxy, in itself, closes in the world, creates barriers, sends out messages of closure" (24). The fiction of diaspora writers reflects the changing religious beliefs and spiritual values of the immigrant communities living abroad.

The diaspora who were forcefully displaced for indentured labour or due to religious or political reasons were not only exiled physically but felt themselves alienated psychologically and spiritually too. The newer diaspora who migrate of their will, do not suffer the feeling of being exiled. The external circumstances do not force upon them so much as to think themselves deprived of their home country or its culture. They have a secured sense of returning home as and when they may feel like. The migrants in the contemporary times, whether displaced due to some compulsion or by choice, make themselves psychologically and spiritually strong so that distance from their homeland does not remain a geographical barrier. Using advanced technologies like internet and mobile phones, and through films, magazines, online chatting etc. they keep in touch with their home country, their relatives and friends. Hamid Naficy comments that due to "the globalization of travel, media, and capital, exile appears to have become a postmodern condition" (4).

It is presumed that the mythological stories that the diaspora in the pre-exiled state have imbibed through religious texts like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata have a deep impact upon their sub-conscious mind. Lord Rama and his wife Sita's exile for fourteen years in the Ramayana and of the Pandavas for thirteen years in the Mahabharata are again a reflection of the diaspora condition. The *vahans* of many gods and goddesses, their journey to the other places for the welfare of human society or for other noble causes bring to mind the displacement of the immigrants from their native land. However, all mythological stories extol the sacrifices and hardships faced by migrants and have a happy ending. These religious texts offer

psychological support to the diaspora by praising the efforts and inner strength of the displaced people. While this displaced condition might aggravate a sense of loneliness in the minds of the diaspora, their religious and spiritual values might help them to cope with psychological stress of living in a foreign land.

Adit, the protagonist in Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird* is a man of English tastes. He likes English food and social mannerisms and enjoys living in England. Married to an Anglo-Saxon girl Sarah, he ensures that things are done according to his will in his house. He loves Sarah very much but he loses patience when he finds her cooking the rice in which her cat has put its nose. He reacts angrily and asks her to throw it away arguing that cats eat rats and also poke their noses in the trash bin. He reminds her of his mother who is a religious lady and would never cook or serve this unhygienic rice to her family. He highlights the fault of Sarah saying that if his mother would have seen this filthy way of hers, "she'd have a heart attack" (50).

Adit understands that his Anglo-Saxon wife knows very little about India and its religious customs. So, from time to time, he explains to Sarah some of the traditional practices followed in India. He tells her that in every house, in India people usually build an altar in the kitchen. He explains to her the importance of the kitchen – it is such a pious place for the Indians that they enter it bare-feet, and all family members assemble there for prayers in the evenings. Adit explains to his wife the Indians' way of scattering flour to feed ants. Suresh Kohli comments "No other writer is so much concerned with the life of young men and women in Indian cities as Anita Desai is" (3). Adit respects the Indian ways of worshipping, but at the same time he mocks their superfluous ways of observing these norms. When he comes to know that his mother is going to Amarnath for a pilgrimage, his heart is filled with regard for her. But, as he comes to know that she would be climbing the mountains with materialistic objects like trucks full of sarees, the keys of lockers in the house and tasty pickles, he starts making fun of this act of his mother (46). He sarcastically says that the East is mythical and mysterious at the same time, where the pilgrims do not hesitate to burden the backs of poor coolies and the mules with their luggage and consider themselves on a quest for spiritual enlightenment. He calls India the "land of contrasts, of the mythical and the modern" where the bullock carts and naked fakirs jostle with the buses (46).

The Indian practice of giving instructions to their children in Sanskrit language is appreciated by the non-Indian immigrants in England too. Adit's former landlord, the Muhlsteins, are Germans, but changed their name to the Millers when they came to England just before the war. They appreciate Adit's good store of memory and want to know if it is due to the instructions in Sanskrit that he must have received in his childhood. Adit feels proud to tell them the fact that it is a common practice in India that "Every Indian child, by the time he leaves school, has read most of the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana* and a good portion of the *Vedas* as well" (79). However Adit himself has to cut a sorry figure to the Millers for not been able to recite a Sanskrit verse on their request. It shows that though Adit has less practical knowledge of the holy books and their scripts, he likes to talk about the Indian ways of practising religion amongst his Indian immigrant friends as well as non-Indian immigrants.

Adit is also a lover of English ways and his wife's Anglo-Saxon ways of practicing religion. On being mocked by Sarah and his friend Dev that he likes the *Sunday Times* as much as he likes *Mother Goose*, he preaches to Sarah the religious importance of the *Mother Goose*. He tells Sarah that *Mother Goose* is the Anglo-Saxon's "milk and porridge and sugar, all mixed up in a Bopeep pattern bowl" (150). He tells her that the Britons grow up reading *Mother Goose*. He is proud of himself for his knowledge and says, "I am a man of parts. Many parts" (150).

Adit is also critical of the rites performed on the banks of some holy rivers of India in name of religion. He dislikes people, especially fakirs and yogis spoiling the glory of these rivers. The rivers have their religious importance in Hindu mythology but their being contaminated fills him with such anger that he names them as "the shameful little Jumna, so unworthy of its mythical glory; the mud and slush of the Ganges with its temples and yogis, its jackals and alligators lining the banks; the murderous Mahanadi" and "the uncivilised, mosquitoridden Brahmaputra" (173). Viney Kirpal comments that Adit's sudden admiration and love for spiritual India not only invokes him to shift physically from England but it also inspires him to establish his "spiritual and symbiotic ties with his mother country" (45). When Adit makes up his mind completely to go back to his country, his heart is filled with the

love for India and he longs to see the fire-works and oil-lamps of the Diwali celebrations, and the colourful festival of Holi.

Dev also appreciates the Indian ways of managing the kitchen. Like his friend Adit, he too, does not like Sarah's decision of keeping the cat in the house for insulation and not restricting it from entering the kitchen. He gets upset on his first morning in England at Adit's house when at tea time he finds a strand of cat's hair on the inner lining of the Kashmir tea cosy. In Indian kitchens, pets are kept out of kitchens, so he looks at the cat's hair lined "tea cosy with distaste inflating his nostrils" (9). Dev also reacts the same way as his friend, Adit had done to the food sniffed by Sarah's cat "he himself loathed the thought of" what he was going to eat (51). He observes the daily routine of his hosts and is surprised at Adit's habit of waking up late at 8:30 AM even on working days (9). Dev compares the Hindus' way of beginning their day with the worship of God and asks Adit why he does not do the same in England. He observes that as it is a religious practice in India to worship the rising sun on the banks of the Ganges, he may do the same early in the morning on the banks of the Thames (9).

Dev has always been fascinated by the massive buildings in England as that of the Battersea power station. When he gazes at it he wants to utter words of worship for it (55). He compares it with the structures of pyramids and feels that the Battersea power station seems like "a secret vault of mighty emperors" (56). The smoke coming out of its towering chimney makes him imagine the *puja* taking place in the locked chambers of "the temple of power" (55). Dev shows his deep sense of spiritual delight talking with Adit and sharing his imagination that the priests would be in saffron and the maidens in white robes while performing these rituals here too, as it is done in India. Dev feels thrilled imagining the herbs, spices and other magic potions they would be pouring into the massive bonfire they would have built therein. He admires the clanging of the bells and the hymns chanting inside it, he also admires the blowing of the long horns. It fills Dev with so much devotion and religious fervour that he goes to the extent to say, "I believe the electricity of London is generated by that sacrificial bonfire, right in the innermost heart of that temple" (56). He feels like kneeling down to pray and sing a Vedic hymn to the Fire.

However, Dev is not impressed when he visits St. Paul's and the Westminster Abbey. He feels that these are not the temples of Christ which celebrate the Christian concept of God, but they are huge massive buildings meant to show off the might of the British Empire. Unlike the Battersea power station, they celebrate the British concept of God, king and country. Dev feels that due to this most of the visitors are tourists there and not worshippers. Dev becomes critical of the religious faith of the countrymen, who visit these secular places which are more of memorials of great political figures than of priests or bishops.

While Dev appreciates and respects the religious practices of the host country, he is sarcastic of any humiliation or insult made to the political or Godly figures of his own country. On his visit to Sarah's parents, he reacts bitterly when he comes to know that the family is fond of Churchill and tells them that the very mention of his name makes him feel sick: "I'll vomit. I'll spit" (160). He shows his dislike for Churchill who insulted Gandhi calling him a "naked fakir" (161). Dev feels that Gandhi could "probably be another incarnation of Jesus Christ," whereas Churchill was no human to him (161). He becomes critical of the fact that Churchill is given as sacred a place in the house of Sarah's mother as that of St. Paul's. Dev reacts so instantly that he does not give the family a chance to say that the Churchill they are very much fond of is not the political figure but their naughty dog (161). Dev is dumbfounded at this odd British humour saying, "Crazy! A dog named Churchill – crazy!" (162).

Dev shows a mixed response for the Hindu as well as English places of worship. During his visit to Sarah's parents, a little churchyard fascinates him. The perfect silence and simplicity reminds him of "a curiously Hindu atmosphere that spread this calm philosophy about the gravestones" (167). The simplicity of the altar entices him. He wishes he had an incense stick to burn as it is done during prayers in Hindu temples. He also wishes he had some flowers to offer to the grace of Christianity. Thus, his migration to another country makes him reverent for the religions of the two countries, the one, he was born and brought up in, and the other he has adopted.

In *Bye-Bye Blackbird* as well as in her other novel *Journey to Ithaca*, Desai deals with the problems of human expectation. Matteo, the protagonist in *Journey to Ithaca* has a fanatic vision of India as a mythical place. He does not see the real but fantasizes for what he imagines as the real, thereby suffers a great deal.

Since the colonial period, India has fascinated the West in terms of the spiritualism and its socio-cultural panorama that makes it a coveted place for tourists. As the interactions between the West and the East increased over the period of time, the people's migrations between the two worlds increased. These journeys and migrations of people who exchange religious and spiritual beliefs as they travelled are the focus of works like *Journey to the East, A Passage to India*, *The Razer's Edge* and *Siddharth*. Most Indian diaspora writers like Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan have presented the social reality in their fiction, whereas, Desai deals with these social realities from a psychological perspective. Desai believes that women have an enclosed and restricted field of observation as compared to men. She says in an interview with Atma Ram, "This leads to their placing their emphasis differently from men, on having very different sense of values. Whereas a man is concerned with action, experiences and achievement, a woman writer is more concerned with thought, emotion and sensation" (102). Desai's novel *Journey to Ithaca* (1995) deals with the concept of an endless journey, a kind of 'ananta yatra' which is the basic concept of the Indian philosophy of life.

Ithaca is the name of a mythical place that does not exist geopolitically on the globe. It is a symbolic place of solace for the pilgrims who have wandered and suffered in the journey for the search of their soul. In the present novel, Desai presents Ithaca as a home which is actually a state of homelessness. Edward Said comments in *Orientalism,* "the Orient was a place of pilgrimage, and every major work belonging to a genuine if not always to an academic Orientalism took its form, style and intention from the idea of pilgrimage there" (168). Pilgrims arrive here but they feel homeless because Ithaca does not offer them the comforts of a home and family. It is an ongoing search for truth and God.

Desai discusses three main characters: Matteo, his wife Sophie and Matteo's spiritual guru, Laila. All three undertake a chain of journeys to quench their thirst for truth and God. They migrate from the West to reach Ithaca, an imaginary place of spiritual importance in India. Desai emphasises the significance of the term 'Ithaca', perhaps that is why she begins the novel with C.P. Cavafy's poem 'Ithaca' with the words:

> Ithaca has given you a beautiful voyage,
> Without her, you would never have taken the road,
> But she has nothing to give you none.
> And if you have found her poor Ithaca has not defrauded you,
> With such great wisdom you have gained, with much experience,
> You must surely have understood by then what Ithacas mean.

The plural Ithacas in the last line suggest that people from anywhere on a quest may find ultimate fulfilment there. It also suggests that there is more than one Ithaca in spiritual India that itself is Ithaca. Paranjape argues that although it is a "metaphoric mismatch" but, "Desai, no doubt, intended India to be a type of Ithaca" (*makarand.com*).

Desai presents the protagonist Matteo in the first part of the novel as a single child of his well-off Italian parents who does not feel attuned to the family atmosphere and the social set-up around him. He is an unhappy soul and does not believe in the mundane pursuits of the world. He feels alienated since his childhood. As Matteo grows old he feels comfort in the company of his tutor Fabian. Fabian advises Matteo to read Hermann Hesse, the German-Swiss novelist and poet who himself had travelled many times to India. Matteo reads Hesse's poems on Indian philosophy and is strongly influenced by the works. He longs for a pilgrimage to India. Matteo feels indebted to his tutor to have awakened the latent pilgrim within his soul and have guided him to go in search for spiritualism. Matteo makes up his mind to migrate to Ithaca, the spiritual India. Desai brings out this restlessness in Matteo when he looks over a lake, "with the eyes of a man who is planning a long voyage" (27).

Matteo marries Sophie, a confident journalist and the daughter of his parents' friends after a brief courtship. Soon after their marriage, they set off for the shores of India. They move from place to place in search of a guru. Many times during the journey Matteo comes across 'fake yogis' (65) and other 'ridiculous delusions' (66). But Matteo is intent on finding a real guru religiously because since childhood he has been looking for a meaningful way of life. After reaching India he feels he has found the path to attain the spiritual values that he has long aspired for. Matteo reaches an ashram on the Himalayan Mountain and feels joy, peace and deep contentment and becomes the disciple of Laila, the Mother, and head of the ashram. Desai reveals in an interview with *Magda Costa* that the character of Mother is inspired by a real person. She states that the Mother is a, "French woman who set up this ashram in Pondicherry with a very famous Indian sage, Aurobindo" and served there till her nineties. Desai says, "What intrigued me was that, being a foreigner, she became this mystic." Matteo feels he has now reached the right place and is blessed with the guru with whose blessings and guidance, he would seek the truth.

Sophie accompanies Matteo to India more as an adventurer who is keen to enjoy the natural beauty of India. She is critical of Matteo's obsession for his guru's company and his lack of interest in their newly married life. She does not want to travel from ashram to ashram with him, but wants to lead a normal life of a married couple. But Matteo's quest for truth and spirituality works heavy upon their married life. Only a few months after their arrival, Sophie walks out from this frustrating relationship and joins a drug-tribe on the beach of Goa. But Sophie cannot adjust in the miserable life there and returns to her husband in the ashram. Matteo now keeps her in a strict custody. Sophie lives as a helpless and exhausted sick person in the ashram which appears to her a place no better than a prison. Sophie follows all the rules of the ashram and lives quietly there. In the Mother's ashram Matteo finds peace, but Sophie remains unaccepted there. She gives birth to two babies in quick succession, but the kids too, cannot bind Matteo and Sophie in love ties. Sophie has no interest in spirituality, so she migrates with her children initially to her parents and then to Matteo's parents.

As her children get well-adjusted with their grandparents, Sophie finds herself an alien in the materialistic world of the West. Although it was her self-willed decision to quit India, now she feels an unknown fascination for Ithaca and her spiritual journey to Ithaca begins. On receiving the news of Matteo's illness and hospitalisation, Sophie sets off again for India. She finds fulfilment in enlightening her soul while living in the ashram, hence, after the Mother's death, Sophie continues her journey. Thus Sophie decides to become a devoted pilgrim like her husband and continue exploring Ithaca. Now she understands that it is an endless voyage of a searching soul without any port to reach. In her interview with Bliss Corrine Demas, Desai states that the narrative skill of this novel is influenced by her mixed parentage. She says that she feels about India as an Indian but thinks about it as an outsider.

The third significant character in the novel is Laila. She is the daughter of a Muslim Egyptian named Hamed, a University Lecturer, and Alma, a French teacher. Like Matteo she too, could not adjust with the common ways of family life and the conventional religion of her society since her childhood. Laila has more interest in dancing than in her studies. So her parents send her to Venice for her education and thereafter to Paris thinking that they might get a suitable match if she studies well. This forced dislocation does not create her interest in studies either. In Paris, Laila feels strongly attracted towards an Indian dancer who plays the role of Krishna in theatres. She starts feeling a fascination for Eastern occultism and spirituality. Laila joins this troupe and travels to many places in Europe and North America to perform in shows with them.

Laila feels an urge for sublime life and considers the dancer Lord Krishna himself. The person creates an aura that he is Krishna himself, thus, creates interest of many people. Laila gets attracted towards his personality too, and this is her first experience of falling into the hands of a false guru. Laila is so determined to reach her spiritual goals that innocently she mistakes the actor as the real Krishna. However, her devotion to God is evident when she says, "Krishna is my country and my religion" (227). In Paris, Laila reads the lines of the Rig Veda, the holy Indian book, "There is no happiness for him who does not travel" (135). So, she sets on her journey to Ithaca, the spiritual India and experiences a series of betrayals and

emotional trauma in the early days of her arrival in India. But her sincere devotion helps her to attain her goal and she reaches the ashram in the Himalayas and finds her true master there. She finds joy, peace and a harmonious environment there. There she continues her spiritual journey and devotes herself to the service of the ashram and her master who guides all the disciples towards truth and God. After the death of the master, Laila becomes the Mother of the ashram.

Desai, as a diaspora writer, satirizes the character of the actor Krishna, who sells Indian spirituality abroad to make his living. She does not give this man a name, but through his character and his troupe who organize shows travelling far and off all over Europe and America, Desai brings out how the fake masters misrepresent the Indian culture, religion and spiritualism. Desai portrays them as tricksters who for the sake of money misguide the natives of the other countries calling themselves Krishna. For quick professional gains they curtail the lengthy ballets to "brief five- and ten-minute sketches," that the people of the host country are never aware of (254). They experiment with variations in the Radha-Krishna dance putting in Eastern touches. The troupe mixes the local dance forms with the original form of Radha-Krishna and thus makes a farce of the original form. As Laila realizes this, her illusions about the actor Krishna are shattered. She has by now completely dedicated her life to the worship of Lord Krishna, and becomes, "stiff with self-consciousness, understanding that this dance had nothing to do with any religious beliefs or spiritual exercise, Indian or otherwise" (255). Through the character of the dancer Krishna, Desai points out the follies of such troupes who violate the originality of their culture and heritage and mint money in name of spirituality.

Desai critiques the orthodox and superstitions practised in the Hindu society. However, at the same time, she also highlights the magnanimity of Vedantic Hinduism. She also draws attention to the caste system prevalent in India. S.K. Biswas comments upon Desai's presentation of the caste system that, "controls spiritual behaviour of the Hindus in India" (10). Desai argues that her novels are written from an observer's perspective only and do not claim an authentic representation of the Indian society. James Vinson records Desai's argument in his book where he notes that Desai's, "novels are no reflection of Indian society, politics or character" but, they are her attempts to grasp and shape the common aspects of life (348).

Desai projects the real India where the Brahmins hold an upper position as compared to the other castes. She brings out an instance where a poor lady refuses to accept the orange juice that Sophie offers to her doubting upon her caste. Sophie is a modern girl and a journalist by profession; she does not appreciate the caste system and the superstitions that prevail in the Indian society. She has a progressive outlook about religion. She has been a critic of Hindu religion and spirituality in the early days of her stay in India, but she is also a critic of her own religion. Sophie returns to her parents leaving Matteo behind in India, and Sophie's mother wants her to follow their ways of practising religion. But Sophie refuses to do so and argues with her mother, "No, I did not leave India and all its superstitions and rituals to come here and submit to the tribal rites of Europe" (145). It shows that Sophie is not ready to give herself up to the religious practices that are irrational and regressive.

Desai portrays all the three major characters in *Journey to Ithaca* as victims of deceit and uncertainty in the beginning of their search for Truth, but they all find their fulfilment later on and continue their quest for truth and god. Matteo has a number of bitter experiences reposing his trust in fakirs and yogis who turn out to be fakes later on. Matteo ultimately finds solace in the Mother's ashram. Laila, the devotee of Krishna changes her name to Lila of Krishna saying, "Laila, Lila, Laila, Lila, Krishna, Krishna, Krishna Lila" (192). She also falls in the hands of the false teacher who calls himself the real Krishna and plays the role of Krishna for monetary gains. When his falsehood is revealed to her she expresses her disappointment by telling him, "You have shown me devotion to worldly success, to financial gain, to fame – not to the true light for which I came" (276). Initially, Sophie does not have a high opinion of the Mother, even though her husband regards her as guru. Through the eyes of a journalist, Sophie looks at the Mother and takes her to be a hypnotist or a magician. Sophie even sets her mind to bring down the Mother from the high pedestal that her disciples have set her on. Ironically, after her death, Sophie takes her place in the ashram and herself becomes the Mother of the ashram. Desai thus focuses on the vicissitudes of life.

Desai touches upon the issues of orthodox, superstitions and malpractices in Hindu society in *Journey to Ithaca*. She also brings in the positive aspect of religious practices which gives the message of joy and truth to the society. Desai

picks up a similar theme in her novel *Fasting, Feasting* (1999). The title finds its roots in the Hindu mythology where on many festive occasions, feasting is preceded by fasting. In Hinduism, fasting and feasting go along and together they have a religious significance. Thus, the novel bears a symbolic title and is associated with the religious and spiritual awareness of the Indians. Fasting stands for self-discipline and inner purification of the soul. Feasting represents sumptuousness, both physically and spiritually.

Desai discusses the novel in two aspects, the first part of the novel deals with fasting and the second with feasting. The first part of the novel is related to India where fasting has its religious importance and the second part stands for America where the focus is on feasting. Mira-masi is presented as a pilgrim who dedicates her life to the worship of God in her widowhood. She eats very little. She eats uncooked food only once a day and spends her time in visiting temples and performing religious practices. Apparently Mira-masi is fasting physically but, as she devotes her time in the service of God, she feasts spiritually. In contrast, in America, Arun has plenty of food to feast upon with the family he lives, but Arun and the host family actually are spiritually deprived, and fast in this way.

Mira-masi in her widowhood leads a religious life. Desai comments for Mira-masi, “Her day was ruled by ritual from the moment she woke to make her salutation to the Sun, to her ritual bath and morning prayer” (39). Uma is fascinated by Mira-masi’s devotion to religious rituals. Desai comments for Uma, “It was her passion to attempt this miracle that made her follow Mira-masi through the cycle of the day’s ritual” (40). Uma has been influenced by Mira-masi since her childhood. During Mira-masi’s visit to her home, Uma would like to listen to the ancient myths of Hindu religion from her who would narrate to her the tales of Lord Krishna and Mira – the poet saint. These tales had such a deep influence upon Uma that she even takes dip in the holy river at the command of Mira-masi. Gradually Uma starts longing for the company of her aunt Mira-masi and imagines her saying in her ears, “You are the Lord’s child – I see His mark on you” (132).

Uma has a desire for completing her school education, but she is not able to perform well in school. Uma has also been demeaned after the failure of her marriage twice. This forces her to shift her attention towards religion and delve into spirituality. Under Mira-masi's influence, Uma starts visiting an ashram to run away from the problems of her life and seek relief from social pressure. Mira-masi helps Uma to get her engaged in search of spiritual knowledge. Both of them visit the ashram and engage in spiritual talk.

The novel *Fasting, Feasting* is similar to *Journey to Ithaca* in the sense that in the latter novel too the protagonists struggle to achieve spiritual enlightenment despite several difficulties. In *Fasting, Feasting*, Mira-masi leads Uma to the path of spirituality which indicates that Mira-masi feels contented to evoke Uma's quest for spirituality. Thus, though physically she keeps fasting, however, she finds fulfilment in evoking Uma's interest in religious beliefs and spiritualism. Yet, internally she is not contented till the end of her life. On her first appearance in the novel, Mira-masi is introduced as a lively lady who brings happiness to people around her. She is presented as a happy soul who likes to "make the very best ladoos" for Uma and her family (38), but her last reference in the novel projects her as a 'gaunt, ill' (137). Mira-masi's life-long devotion to the service of God finally cannot bring her fulfilment, but leaves her shattered. Mira-masi and Uma both are presented as unsuccessful devotees whose attempts to quench their thirst for spirituality end up meaninglessly.

From the beginning Desai indicates the fact that the fulfilment Mira-masi seeks in the service of god is unrealistic. The ambience of the temple is described with bright colours, "pink stucco" and "lit with blue fluorescent tube" (41). These bright colours contrast with the serenity of the place of worship. Desai also uses rich imagery to describe the "sweets" and the "priest with...red powder and yellow marigold" (41). This elaborate depiction of the temple shows the materialism that has invaded the religion which Mira-masi is so much devoted to.

The second part of the novel depicts Arun's stay in America with his landlord, the Pattons. Mrs Patton makes every little effort to make Arun happy by offering him delicious food. She keeps abundant food stuff available in the refrigerator

all the time for all the members and Arun too, but Arun shows no interest in food, something in which he is uninterested since his childhood. Thus Arun prefers fasting where there is scope of sumptuous feasting. The family is also impressed by his refusal to eat non-vegetarian food since he is a Hindu. This aspect of vegetarianism brings a new consciousness to the family where Mr Patton cooks meat on most evenings.

Mrs Patton is excited to have an Indian guest who is a vegetarian; she also gets inspired by his vegetarianism to think of practising some religious rituals. But the family is not united, and argue over the trivial matters. Mrs Patton is so impressed by Arun's liking for vegetarian food that she herself refuses the specially prepared non-vegetarian meal by her husband. This indicates that even the Americans respect and adopt the religious values that the East teaches to them. Desai brings in the point that Mrs Patton represents the American society where westernised ideas and materialism can be united with spiritual consciousness. The novel gives the message that whether in the East or West, people long for religious and spiritual fulfilment.

Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices* carries the same message of people's longing for finding solace in religion and spirituality. The novel broadly deals with a woman defining her unique space in the contemporary world. Divakaruni blends folklore, myths and legends in this novel which are essential components of magic realist fiction. In *The Mistress of Spices* the protagonist Tilo possesses spiritual knowledge and supernatural powers which she uses for the welfare of humanity. The novel showcases the religious and spiritual beliefs of the Indians by portraying the powerful effect of the spices, and the faith and selfless sacrifice necessary to be able to harness the power of the spices. Divakaruni in an interview with Dharini Rasiah states that the novel, "deals with a past that is set in a mythical India, but the present is very much set in Oakland, California" (148). The allegorical fantasy depicts the magical powers of a woman of Indian ancestry.

Divakaruni presents Tilo, as a wise and committed girl who possesses intuitive powers since her childhood. Tilo's childhood and the adventures she experiences are a mixed blend of reality and magic. Tilo has a purple cowl over her face since her birth. Her first name Nayan Tara means the Star of the Eye. Tilo has

various adventures where she finds that she is blessed with the sixth sense of foretelling the future of people. She has an extraordinary power to see the things nobody else can see. Because of her exceptional powers she can find lost objects and has the knowledge of various fields that no one in her family possesses. Still, Tilo is not proud of her magical powers and openly discusses her adventures with her friends, "people travelled so I could change their luck with a touch of my hand...I sat on gold-woven cushions and ate from silver plates studded with precious stones" (8). Aware of her extraordinary powers, Tilo tells her friends, "I cured the daughter of a potentate, foretold the death of a tyrant, drew patterns on the ground to keep the good winds blowing for the merchant sailors" (8). Tilo is a noble person who is aware of her exceptional powers and has been using it to help those in need since her childhood. The tales of Tilo's incredible talent reach the pirates who kidnap her and change her name to Bhagyavati, Bringer of Luck. Tilo's spirituality helps the mythical sea serpents to rescue her from the pirates. Tilo then reaches an island where she is adopted by a nameless old woman called Old One.

The Old One trains Tilo and the other girls on the island in the magical art of treating sufferings of the people with the help of spices. Divakaruni in an interview with Morton Marcus states that the spices "are used for more than flavourings. They have magical powers all their own, and they provide remedies for physical maladies as well as cures for spiritual ills" (1). After having learnt the art of treating maladies using spices Tilo travels further and enters Shampati's fire and exits to appear in Oakland, California. Divakaruni blends her narrative with magic realism through "the fire of Shampati, bird of myth and memory who dived into conflagration and rose new from ash" (56). Shampati's fire can be considered an Eastern version of the phoenix. The disciples of the Old One must plunge into the Shampati's fire to reach a new land where they can fulfil their mission of salvation (58). Divakaruni chooses Oakland for the magic world of Tilo which itself is considered to be a land of enchantment in the south-west part of the world. Paula Gunn Allen states that Divakaruni selects Oakland for the setting of her novel which is, "magical, a place where mystery and myth are as factual and everyday as any other aspect of contemporary life in the United States." Allen further says that Oakland is a place which is, "filled which the quaint, the curious, and the paranormal" (343-44).

After reaching Oakland, Tilo opens a spice shop and helps the South Asian immigrants to overcome their sorrows using the magical effect of spices. Tilo performs spiritual and religious rituals sincerely and dedicatedly and performs the ceremonies she has promised to the First Mother. She takes the help of spices to find the causes of the suffering of her clients and offers them specific remedies. Thus, using the magical healing power of the spices, Tilo continues her traditional practices inside the spice shop.

Tilo is happy with her profession and continues to perform her religious rituals by serving the spices sincerely. She is proud to pronounce, "I am a Mistress of Spices" (3). She has a deep attachment for the spices and her duties as the mistress of spices and says, "the spices are my love...At a whisper they yield up to me their hidden properties, their magic powers" (3). Inderpal Grewal says for *The Mistress of Spices* that it is, "an exotic aesthetic." She is of the opinion that Divakaruni brings in Hindu mysticism and ancient wisdom from India allowing Tilo to "resist the colonial discourses of the victimized Indian woman" (75).

Tilo is proud to possess the purest spices which she says are the ones, "I gathered on the island for times of special need…I will chant. I will administer. I will pray to remove sadness and suffering as the Old One taught me. I will deliver warning" (7). Tilo is conscious of the fact that she can use the power of the spices to cure specific problems. Rajyashree Khushu-Lahiri and Shweta Rao discuss the importance of food metaphor in *The Namesake*: "Each spice has a unique speciality for medical purpose as well food in the kitchen. Divakaruni has named every chapter by the name of spices providing their origin and special quality. Spices is a joy and enlighten one's mind in a lucid manner depicting the farce and absurdity of life."

Tilo has a complete range of rare and precious spices. But she has a special fascination for the spice ginger. It is the magic of ginger which invokes Tilo the first time to leave the spice shop and go into the outer world – something that is completely forbidden to her. The reference of ginger occurs in chapter seven exactly in the middle of all fifteen chapters of the novel. The spice ginger provokes Tilo to venture into the outer world and thus brings a turning point later in her life. But Tilo

realises her mistake that she is not supposed to step out of her shop and turns back to her duties towards the spices and resolves to devote herself again to their service. As always, she behaves with her clients nicely and provides them the required treatment with the help of the spices to protect them from the "jinn's breath" (184). Anita Mannur comments, "It is instead arguable that Divakaruni uses such 'Orientalism' to position spices…as magical palliatives that counter the effects of racism and social inequity" (95).

Divakaruni does not raise Tilo to the stature of a goddess, but portrays her as an earthly creature. She presents Tilo not only as an ideal person of chastity, but also as a lady of desires. Tilo is a religious lady and worships goddesses, simultaneously she is also aware of her personal wishes and needs. Answering to the calls of her personal desires, Tilo gets gradually attracted towards Raven, an American. The spices warn her again and again that she may lose her control over them if she enters into a relationship with a man because she is not allowed to think of establishing bonds with any earthly person. When Tilo leaves the store first time to see Haroun's new taxicab, she believes she hears the store's disapproval: "Behind me a hiss like a shocked, indrawn breath" (31). And the second time she goes out, she feels that it is becoming easier for her to ignore the instructions of the spices, but finds it equally painful to violate the rules: "The first step wrenches, bone and blood, rips out our breath. The second too racks but already it is not so strong" (135). But Tilo ignores the frantic calls of the spices and also the warnings of the Old One though she knows that "the Mistresses must never use the spices for their own ends" or else she may lose her control over them (72). Raven appeals to her to run away with him and Tilo follows him in search of a new life.

Consequently, the spices show their wrath upon Tilo and refuse to obey her and Tilo starts losing her powers and finally turns into a mortal being with ordinary abilities. Tilo does not repent upon losing her supernatural powers and is happy to enjoy the earthly love of Raven. This transformation symbolises her journey from Eastern mysticism to the Western realistic world. *Booklist* praises Divakaruni's fiction which, "always possesses a mystical dimension…Now Divakaruni's signature fusion of the realistic and the cosmic achieves a new intensity in her most

riveting and politically searing novel to date" (*chitradivakaruni.com*). Divakaruni represents the characteristics of Hinduism through the worship of goddesses and the idea of reincarnation in the character of Tilo which ultimately culminates into a new western myth creating new values in the acceptance of the religious and spiritual beliefs of the two worlds. Shashi Tharoor praises the novel as "an unusual, clever, and often exquisite first novel that stirs magical realism into the conventions of culinary fiction and the still-simmering cauldron of Indian immigrant life in America" (10).

Magic realism is a genre which first finds its place in the twentieth century literature. Divakaruni uses it as a narrative technique in her novel *The Mistress of Spices* and *Queen of Dreams*. Divakaruni has acknowledged the influence of prominent postmodernist writers like Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Isabel Allende. In an interview with Erika Bauer, Divakaruni states that she is very much influenced with these writers and the, "whole magical universe that they create. Magic is very important in my work."

Divakaruni uses magic realism in *The Mistress of Spices* by representing Indian spices as the remedy for sorrows. Similarly, Divakaruni uses dream interpretation as the binding motif in her novel *Queen of Dreams.* Divakaruni chooses California a perfect land of enchantment for the plot of this novel as in *The Mistress of Spices.* Mrs Gupta, the mother of the protagonist Rakhi is a dream-teller. She uses the Indian mystic elements of myths and magic rooted in India to transform the alien and unfamiliar land of California into a living space of dreams. Divakaruni is renowned for assigning unusual skills to her heroines who are born as Indians and experience diverse challenges as immigrants. Mrs Gupta is bestowed with the unusual gift of interpreting other people's dreams. She warns them about the possible dangers that may befall them and suggests them solutions to escape danger.

Mrs Gupta's status is similar to that of the protagonist Tilo in Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices.* Dream interpretation in *Queen of Dreams* finds its origin in the Oriental belief-system of fortune-telling by saints and priests in India. As writer of Indian origin Divakaruni alludes to the practices of prophecy through palmistry and astrology. She endows Mrs Gupta with the virtue of dream-telling, which is

another form of prophecy. Divakaruni juxtaposes this genre with the Western belief in dream interpretation where it is considered a scientific phenomenon and is practised by psychologists. Thus, Divakaruni includes a new value system in the art of fortune-telling which has religious and spiritual origins in India and scientific connotations in the West.

Divakaruni uses the technique of symbolism in many of her novels. In *The Mistress of Spices*, she uses spices as symbols, and in *Queen of Dreams*, she gives symbolic and spiritual significance to the dreams. Tilo gets the status of the mistress of spices governing the spices in the novel *The Mistress of Spices* and Mrs Gupta attains an equivalent position of the queen of dreams, governing dreams in *Queen of Dreams*.

The opening episode of the novel has a mystic beginning. Mrs Gupta dreams of a snake which causes anxiety and fear in real life and symbolizes death. In subsequent episodes Mrs Gupta also dreams of a cave which symbolizes the feeling of insecurity. She interprets that the dream foretells the death of someone and prays that it should not be related to her family: “It was a death he was foretelling. My heart started pounding, slow, arrhythmic. An arthritic beat that echoed in each cavity of my body” (2). According to Freud’s theory, the snake symbolises the male genital organ and the cave symbolises the female genital cavity. As Mrs Gupta has restricted herself from sexual life with her husband, the dream symbolises her sense of guilt and the end of her relationship with her husband. J.A.C. Brown is of the opinion that, “both anxiety and fear are reactions in face of a dangerous situation. Fear is a response to a known and external danger, anxiety to an internal and unknown one” (32). Thus Mrs Gupta’s repressed sexual desires are reflected in her dreams.

The magic charm of dreams and their interpretation continues throughout the novel. In chapter four, Mrs Gupta interprets the dream of her female client as indicative of cancer. Mrs Gupta not only dreams the dreams of her clients, in chapter six, she dreams of a danger to Mr Raghavendra, a person unknown to her and goes to warn him that he should be wary of the people living in his house who are planning to kill him (39). Edward Said states in *Orientalism* that the West creates the

Orient as "exotic locale" (118). In *Queen of Dreams* Divakaruni gives the Oriental ideology its Western pattern. Mrs Gupta explains that she interprets the dreams through the objects she dreams of, which have a symbolic significance. She explains the traditional symbolic meanings of objects as, "a dream of milk means you are about to fall ill; a mirror stands for a false friend, a pair of scissors for a break of marriage" (38). Rakhi looks at her mother with admiration for her profession which is so typically Indian. Rakhi feels, "I saw it as a noble vocation at once mysterious and helpful to the world. To be an interpreter of inner realism is so Indian" (39). The Oriental concept of dream-telling in India finds a psychological basis in the Western context. Richard Wollheim records Freud's concept of dream-realism in his book *Freud*: "For the dream lacks which is most characteristic of a language, grammar or structure" (69).

Though dreams are irrational in nature, Divakaruni presents them as part of real-time stories of the immigrants that add an element of mystery to the narrative. Mrs Gupta is selfless in her service of dream-telling. She does not prophesize the dangers which threaten her own household, her family members or herself. She cannot foresee the failure of her daughter's tea shop nor can she predict a solution to recover the loss. Dream-telling is a God-gift to her, which is used only for public and not for personal gains. Mrs Gupta cannot even foresee the danger to her life. She cannot escape from her untimely death through her skills of dream interpretation. The unnatural death of Mrs Gupta is interpreted after excessive passion for dream-interpretation, where she keeps her professional matters only to herself and does not listen to her husband's advice to slow down the speed of the car. Theorists believe that neurosis often afflicts women who believe in spirituality and those who deny sexual relations to their husbands. But the skills they possess are not ever-lasting. J.A.C. Brown records Adler's comment, "Every neurosis can be understood as an attempt to free oneself from a feeling of inferiority" (39). Mrs Gupta's excessive surrender to her profession becomes the cause of her collapse. The mystery of Mrs Gupta's chasing the black car and meeting with a fatal accident indicates her inability to know her own future. She does not get a chance to escape from her sad fate, something which she has been doing for others all these years.

Unlike her mother, Rakhi does not possess spiritual abilities. Once she gets disturbed by observing a strange bird in the maple tree, a bird that she has never seen before. The bird is "large and grey, with bright orange mihidana eyes. It watches me instantly without any sign of fear" (185). Rakhi cannot infer the bird's fearless look. She seeks her father's help to know what the bird indicates, but before he can see it, the bird flies off. Rakhi is filled with an unknown fear. She wishes her father to detect, "Could it be an omen?" (185). Rakhi tries to infer the meaning of the appearance of the strange bird but she does not have the powers of premonition. For some time Rakhi is worried that something unusual might come her way, however nothing untoward happens and Rakhi too forgets this incident very soon. Divakaruni limits this extraordinary virtue to Mrs Gupta only. Rakhi struggles a lot to solve the mystery of the dream journal that her mother has left behind after her death. But Rakhi cannot comprehend the dream journal herself without taking the help of her father.

Divakaruni blends the myths and the spiritual elements of the Indian belief-system with the diaspora sensibility in her novel. Her focus is on the two worlds, the Indian immigrants and the American landscape. Through her protagonist's skills of dream-telling, Divakaruni converts dream India into a vocational reality. Thus, in her novel *Queen of Dreams* Divakaruni fuses the spiritual values of the two worlds explicitly well.

The diaspora writer Jhumpa Lahiri highlights in her novel *The Namesak*e, the affinity of the first generation Indian migrants with the religious customs of their mother country. The novel also shows the dilemma of the second generation immigrants in establishing equilibrium between the religion of their home country and that of the adopted country.

Lahiri portrays in *The Namesak*e, the Bengali diaspora community in Boston religiously celebrating Durga puja and Saraswati puja every year. While performing such rituals, the people of the first generation diaspora like Ashima feel rejuvenated. She is temporarily able to overcome the physical distance between America and India by observing religious practices and feels connected with the home left behind. Ashima performs such religious ceremonies at her home or her immigrant friends'

home and thus gives an outlet to her stress and worries. The Gangulis' get-together with Bengali families in America at the time of naming and annaprasan ceremonies, birthdays, marriages, and deaths reveal their wish to preserve the home culture there. Robin Cohen believes that their, "adherence to a diasporic community is demonstrated by an acceptance of an inescapable link with their past migration history" (ix).

Ashima teaches her son Gogol the names of the Hindu gods and goddesses. She shows him pictures of "the deities adorning the ten-handed goddess Durga during pujo: Saraswati with her swan and Kartik with his peacock to her left…" (54). Ashima and Ashoke follow all Indian traditions and festivals with fervour and enthusiasm. In addition to worshipping goddess Durga and Saraswati for Gogol and Sonia's sake, they also celebrate "with progressively increasing fanfare, the birth of Christ, an event the children look forward to far more than the worship of Durga and Saraswati" (64). The parents teach their children how to offer marigold petals at the cardboard effigy of the goddesses. The first generation immigrants try to pass on the eastern beliefs they have carried with them to their foreign-born children. Adesh Pal analyses that the first generation has strong attachment with the country of their origin. From the second generation onwards, ties with the homeland gradually get replaced by those with the adopted country. He states, "Food, clothes, language retention, religion, music, dance, myths, legends, customs individual community, rites of passage" constitute the markers of identity of the immigrants. These are retained, discarded or adopted differently at different times and places (xi).

Though Ashima is an accommodating woman and keeps a balance between the religious practices of the two countries, USA and India, she does not allow Gogol to hang a pencil sketch of a Greek temple on the kitchen walls alongside other drawings. She does not like the most pious place of her house to be decorated with the names and pictures of dead people (70). William Safran observes that the first generation immigrants living in a host country, live in a sandwich world. They do not easily give up their cultural roots and customs, but, "continue to relate personally or vicariously to the homeland in one way or another, and their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship" (85). Modern in her outlook, Ashima sends Christmas cards to all her

acquaintances in the town, Bengalis or Americans, written "Happy Holidays" or "Season's Greetings" instead of "Merry Christmas" upon them. But she prefers hand-made cards with the images of an ornamented elephant rather than those with angels or nativity scenes (160). John McLeod comments that first generation Bengali immigrants carry with them their "beliefs, traditions, customs, behaviours and values" along with their "professions and belongings to new places" (211).

Ashima gives all due respect to the religions of both the countries – one that they have come from, and the other they have adopted. She looks forward to celebrating Christmas when Gogol and Sonia would come from New York and San Francisco respectively, though they had not been able to come for Thanksgiving that year. Victor Ramraj comments for the diaspora that they, "may not want actually to return home, wherever the dispersal has left them, they retain a conscious or subconscious attachment to traditions, customs, values, religions, and languages of the ancestral home" (215). Ashima gets assimilated in the new culture, and accepts their religious practices, especially as far as celebrating Christmas is concerned. Following the custom of exchanging gifts on Christmas, she plans to gift her husband a cell phone on Christmas that year (167).

But the Gangulis' foreign-born children Gogol and Sonia, who are self-fashioned as Westerners cannot associate themselves fully with the religious practices which they do not observe in their local circle. They sometimes express their disinterest in following the Hindu rituals. They have their own doubts about considering their identity to be American or Indian. More often they adjust and follow their parents' desires but sometimes they express their dilemma and their ambivalent position as second generation immigrants in America.

On the death of his father Ashoke, Gogol performs all religious rituals and feels himself much connected to Hinduism. According to Hindu beliefs, it is not good to use a dead person's belongings. Ashima instructs Gogol to go and remove all the food and other possessions of his father from the apartment in Ohio and not to bring back anything with him as "It's not our way" (175). Gogol feels guilty while throwing the food into garbage bags. He recalls that his father "had abhorred waste

of any kind" even if Ashima would sometimes fill a kettle with too much water (176). Here, in spite of his upbringing in American ways, Gogol adopts his home country's customs to perform his father's funeral. He realises that it is the duty of a Bengali son to shave his head to mourn his parent's death and follow all rituals uncomplainingly (179).

Gogol watches his mother, now a widow, wash away the vermilion from her head. He observes her bare hands without bangles (180). According to their religion, they observe ten days of Ashoke's mourning period with meatless diets, eating plainly prepared rice, dal and vegetables. All this while Gogol remembers his father Ashoke when his parents passed away, Ashoke would sit silently, the "meals eaten in complete silence, the television turned off" (180). The silence in the house fills Gogol with a sense of emptiness, even the slightest sound of any activity in the kitchen and "the enforced absence of certain foods in their plates conjuring his father's presence somehow" (181).

His father's untimely death has a deep impact upon Gogol. He performs all ceremonies sincerely. He with other family members sits on the floor in front of Ashoke's picture listening to the priest chanting verses. Gogol crops his father photo from a family photo for the rituals, as Ashoke had never liked to face the camera and they did not have Ashoke's individual photograph. The enormous feast of the eleventh day is prepared enthusiastically, as per the taste of Ashoke, as he would have liked to cook it himself in past (181). Ashima, who has always been sending Christmas cards to her friends and acquaintances, now takes no interest in opening the cards that she has received from her friends instead, she throws them away (183). They scatter Ashoke's ashes in the Ganges, as a religious rite (188). Gogol learns to stand in front of his father's photograph with his family on his father's birth anniversary and death anniversary. He places a garland on it and anoints sandalwood paste on his father's forehead on the photograph (189). Ashima, despite living in America away from her home country follows all religious practices and lives like a widow with her hair grey, bare wrists and her forehead without vermilion.

The westernized interior of the other migrants as Moushumi's house reminds Gogol of his home where his mother would put "a Kashmiri crewelwork carpet on the floor, Rajasthani silk pillows on the sofa, a cast-iron Natraj on one of the bookcases" (208). Moushumi is deceived by her boyfriend Graham who apparently accepts Hindu customs and ceremonies, and agrees to a Hindu wedding with her. Until their engagement in Calcutta, Graham charms all her relatives, learning "to sit on the floor and eat with his fingers, take the dust from her grandparent's feet" (216). Graham shows his enthusiasm while performing Hindu rituals till only a few weeks before the wedding when he starts complaining: "Imagine dealing with fifty in-laws without alcohol" (217). It is an eye-opener for Moushumi, who realises that Graham is not as open-minded as he pretended to be. Moushumi's refusal to get married to him shows that the Indian diaspora carry their values with them that they do not like to be violated.

A year later Gogol and Moushumi marry according to the Indian culture – calling a Brahmin priest, making offerings to the pictures of Gogol's father and grandparents, and pouring rice into a pyre (222). The impact of displacement on the religious values adopted by the first immigrants is different to their foreign-born children. Moushumi, who is a modern girl, does not feel comfortable with her heavy wedding saree and jewellery and takes them off soon after the marriage ceremony is over. She even washes away the vermilion from her forehead (226). These ceremonies are merely customs for Moushumi, who performs them only for the sake of performing them, and has no superstitious fears of suffering any harm if the external markers of her status as a married woman are removed. However, the first generation immigrant Ashima, has followed these customs religiously all her life till her husband was alive and feels sad removing them after his death.

Ashima, whose Christmas Eve parties were always appreciated by their friends circle, however stops arranging them for a few years after her husband's death. It is only the last party that she organizes before leaving for Calcutta. Gogol and Sonia are excited to celebrate it the way they used to do in their childhood. They decorate the Christmas tree and invite their friends and acquaintances for a feast (284). Gogol teases his sister Sonia by telling her husband Ben about an event of her

childhood when she was taking Hinduism classes and refused to accept Christmas gifts protesting that "they weren't Christians" (285). Ashima, as she has always performed all rules of Christmas celebrations, collects the gifts the next day and keeps the record again, celebrating this festival for the last time in America.

Random House praises *The Namesake*, "Lahiri brings her enormous powers of description to her first novel, infusing scene after scene with profound emotional depth. Condensed and controlled, *The Namesake* covers three decades and crosses continents, all the while zooming in at very precise moments on telling detail, sensory richness, and fine nuances of character." The Ganguli family shows that newer diaspora generations in America gradually change their perspective in accepting and following the adopted country's religious beliefs. They celebrate Christian festivals which they perhaps would not have done if they had not migrated and thus, respect the religions of both the countries.

The nation, according to Ernest Renan, is a spiritual principle which binds all the people of a country together. The common share of memories of the historical past of the nation which the people possess enables them to relate to each other. The common will of the people to live together in the present, is another determining factor. Benedict Anderson calls a nation "an imagined community" because there is no specific physical manifestation of this concept especially when a community is so large that individual face-to-face communication between the people is not possible. The idea of the nation is imagined by the people as they share the image of their country in their thoughts and speech. The people of a nation have a feeling of solidarity and comradeship for their countrymen, and consider themselves as parts of one entity, even though they might have migrated to remote corners of the world. This feeling of loyalty for the nation is shared all over the world by the diaspora belonging to a particular nation since they share common memories about their home country and a spiritual relationship with all their countrymen. Religious beliefs, customs and traditions of their home country are followed by the diaspora to affirm their solidarity with the nation as well as to express their oneness with the people of their community.

Desai portrays the disillusionment of the immigrants in England in her novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird* where they compare the religious beliefs and practices of the two countries and strive for their spiritual identity. Their uprooted state causes a spiritual awakening in their minds and they long for the same religious customs to be practised in England.

In *Journey to Ithaca,* Matteo and Sophie travel to India initially for different purposes. Matteo longs for spiritual enrichment whereas Sophie accompanies him mainly as a tourist. However, their questing spirits find solace in the Mother's ashram where the Mother Laila has herself gone through the difficult process of acquiring enlightenment with the help of Indian spirituality.

The title of Desai's *Fasting, Feasting* itself is symbolic. Fasting represents self-discipline, renunciation and purification of inner soul and feasting indicates abundance of food. Desai brings in the point that whether it is India or America, an individual needs spiritual and religious anchors to sustain in difficult times. Desai also conveys through the narrative that not only the Indian immigrants indicate a flexible attitude towards the religious practices and traditions of the host country, the natives too, regard the religious and spiritual values of the East and show their affinity towards it.

Divakaruni presents Indian values and beliefs through her novel *The Mistress of Spices*. Spirituality acquires a different dimension as Tilo has to abstain from human contact if she wants to retain her powers as mistress of spices. In the American culture and setting, Tilo preserves the Indian heritage of the spices, and uses her spiritual powers to heal the sufferings of the Indian immigrants and the Americans through the spices.

In Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams* Rakhi is constantly haunted by India which she has never visited but tries to imagine the country through the stories and legends her mother tells her. The spiritual India for her is recreated through her mother's profession of dream interpretation. In Rakhi's imagination India resembles the place of the early navigators and explorers of distant lands for whom India was a place of magic and profound myths. Gradually, as the mysteries of Mrs Gupta's

dream journals and her parents' past in India are unravelled, Rakhi feels enlightened and more at peace with herself and is able to revive her emotional bonds with her family members.

In Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Namesake* the Gangulis celebrate all Bengali festivals like Durga puja and Saraswati puja along with the Indian diasporic community in Boston. For Ashima such celebrations help her to connect with her country through the observations of Indian religious festivities; however she also celebrates Christmas with equal zeal. The children Gogol and Sonia also follow Indian rituals and traditions despite their inclination for the American lifestyle. The families form new values to accommodate the religious beliefs of the two countries in their lives.

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Chapter Four

Adapting to a New Social System

Amitav Ghosh in his essay, "The Diaspora in Indian Culture" examines the relationship between India and its diaspora. Ghosh takes up different aspects of cultural and social relationships that usually connect the dispersed population to their homeland. Ghosh notes that it is not through the hold on their mother tongue, or their caste practices or religious rituals that the diaspora have maintained their links with India. He believes that the Indian diaspora show a remarkable flexibility and an ability to adapt. It is this trait of Indians – their social adjustment and ability to assimilate that helps them to be self-sufficient and progress in whatever land they choose to settle in. Ghosh points out: "the links between India and her diaspora are lived within the imagination" not so much in any concrete action or ritual (247). Adaptation of new influences is seen in Indian diaspora communities all over the world.

One of the important qualities according to Ghosh, that defines Indian culture is its tolerance for diversity. Ghosh states, "If there is any one pattern in Indian culture in the broadest sense it is simply this: that the culture seems to be constructed around the proliferation of differences….To be different in a world of differences is irrevocably to belong" (250). Therefore, whoever is tenuously linked to India is an Indian and is a mirror, in which his homeland is reflected. The diaspora, and those living inside India are thus not separated by the distance, but share a close emotional relationship.

Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird* is a narrative rich in depicting the cultural interactions of its protagonists Adit and Dev in England. Both Adit and Dev migrate there for the advancement of their career and fulfil their long-cherished dreams. They experience unease due to their position as Indian immigrants but they try their best to adapt to the new culture. Due to the difference in the culture of England and India they struggle to reconcile with the new culture, still at times it is not easy for them to feel accepted in England. Anita Desai's mixed parentage has provided her a double perspective, a great insight into the difficulties experienced by Indian immigrants to the West. Her stay in India, UK and in the US has helped her to present the issue of the cultural adaptation of the diaspora with sensitivity and understanding.

Desai presents a panorama of the cultural interactions and the resultant adjustment made by these immigrants in the alien land. Desai also explores how the Indian immigrants, in general, face the existential problems that are caused due to the cultural differences and result in loneliness and intense nostalgia. Jasbir Jain states: "The world of Anita Desai is an ambivalent one…the desire to love and live clashes…with the desire to withdraw and achieve harmony. Involvement and stillness are incompatible by their nature, yet they strive to exist together" (16).

In this novel Desai portrays the life and experiences of Indian immigrants in England where they are treated as the 'other'. Adit is more tolerant and considers the abusive remarks of the British 'small inconveniences' and tries to avoid unpleasant situations. He does not mind being called a 'wog', rather develops a liking for the western style of living, thereby forming his own values of adjustment in the foreign country. Unlike Adit, Dev is critical of the English ways of living. Since his arrival in England, he keeps comparing the Indian customs and life patterns with that of the English ways at every step. On his very first morning in London he compares the English kitchen with an Indian kitchen. He is surprised at Adit's habit of rising late in the morning and learns the lesson that, "he who wants tea must get up and make it" (8).

He observes Adit's assimilation in the English culture – neglecting his morning prayers, and entering the kitchen wearing his wife's "pink-fur-lined slippers" (9). Dev is amazed to see Adit helping his wife in frying eggs and making tea in the electric kettle, something which is rarely seen in Indian houses. He calls Adit the "destroyer-of-idols-iconoclasts" (9). He observes that Adit does not mind it when Sarah smokes a cigarette while washing the dishes. Dev compares it with an Indian kitchen where a lady would not smoke and would prefer washing the dishes with sand to maintain the sanctity of the place.

Whereas Adit takes the behaviour of the Englishmen for granted, Dev objects to the Londoners' abusive language. He does not adapt easily to the ways of the Londoners which most Indian immigrants do. Though Dev and Adit are open enough as friends to exchange mild abusive words like "paji" (9, 16), "pig" (18), "namak-haram" (31) with each other, Dev cannot accept the humiliating remarks passed on

them by the English. He is surprised that Adit ignores an English boy's comment upon him as "wog" and takes it casually (16). He finds that many other Indian immigrants have developed this tolerance for the comments of the English. Dev observes Samar, an Indian immigrant friend of Adit not reacting to the comment "Bloody Pakistani" by an Englishman (28).

Dev firmly determines not to adopt English mannerisms and sometimes wishes to hit the English back with his "Hunter brand umbrella" (28). Adit feels that Dev should grow up and not think of reacting in this way. Adit calls Dev, "the great new leader of the abused and the downtrodden!" because of his hostility towards the British (28). Dev is quick-tempered as compared to his friend and feels offended by an Englishman's remark that living in Clapham is impossible as it is, "Littered with Asians!" He observes Adit's indifference to the Englishman's insulting words. Adit believes, "It is best to ignore those who don't deserve one's notice" (18). But Dev feels insulted and unwanted in London where the docks have "three kinds of Lavatories – Ladies, Gents and Asiatics." Dev calls England a "fat little island" (19). Dev is amazed at the pragmatism of the Indian immigrants who would fight for their self-respect in India but in England they bear all sorts of humiliation quietly and respond softly and courteously to the English. Dev is also critical of the English language which he calls "a mad language." He mispronounces "immigrants" as "emigrants", "Ren-wah" as "Renoir" (61) and hates the representation of Indian and Pakistani children's pronunciation in a movie, calling "Pulleece" for "Police" (25).

Dev compares the familiar crowded life of Calcutta with the quietness of London. He longs to witness on the streets of London the common scene of Calcutta's streets where mothers are often seen carrying a little child tucked under their arms. He finds India's culture livelier than the cold culture of London. He compares the silence of London with the noisiness of Calcutta where every person is aware of the happenings and the people in the neighbourhood and their tastes. He considers London "a cold wasteland of brick and tile" where despite its heavy population the natives indulge into very little conversation and keep their country silent (65). Adit is critical of India and in contrast to his friend's tastes he calls his country, "bloody noisy and dirty and smelly" (58). Desai comments in James Vinson's book

Contemporary Novelists, "My novels are no reflections of Indian society, politics or character. They are a part of my private effort to seize upon the raw material of life – its shapelessness, its meaninglessness" (348).

Dev finds the Londoners quite open and unrestricted and compares it with the Indian culture where it is customary not to show off love towards their partners publicly. He does not approve of the boys and girls expressing their love for each other in the Hyde Park till late hours and calls them "a bunch of exhibitionists" and appreciates the Indian couples' attitude who usually do not exhibit their love in public places (67). He thinks that the English couples flaunt their love in the same way as the Indian beggars flaunt their filth. Adit has a different view on the issue. He believes that such things find place in India too, only that in India "too much goes on in the dark" (68).

Dev gradually develops a liking for the English culture. He starts admiring the informal attitude of the Londoners and condemns the Indians' defensive and arrogant attitude. Dev starts liking the easy and open surroundings of the society which once he was critical of, and gets allured by the ambience of the supermarkets with, "the frozen food packets", "the high prices and the easy trade" (16). He develops an admiration for English culture and courtesy. Dev appreciates the considerateness of Sarah's mother who puts up a sign-board 'Help yourself' on the apple tree to oblige the strangers due to the excess of fruition instead of letting it go waste (162). He also admires her English customs and open-mindedness for leaving money in the mailbox for bread and milk, thus showing trust in the vendor's honesty. Soon he grows fond of the English ways of contributing towards keeping their surroundings neat and clean. Dev observes Sarah's mother's habit of piling all the rubbish in neat paper bundles so that it may not litter. Not only with the high-class Londoners, Dev also gets impressed by the maid's cordial attitude who treats the landowner's house as that of her own, and not treating it as the Indian servants do.

Adit gets used to the English culture soon after his arrival in London. He finds London a perfect place to live in. He admires the English ways of living and thinks himself more suitable for it than for the Indian culture and atmosphere. He

feels charmed by the English girls in their western outfits and likes to watch them. He likes to dance with them whenever he gets a chance. He admires the economic and social freedom of the Englishmen. He admires everything that belongs to England, the Thames, the English rural and the English urban scenario. He enjoys the English culture of spending evenings in the pubs, the Covent Garden Opera and the Channel.

Adit likes the busy and modern life of Londoners and becomes critical of the slow and lazy life of the clerks in Calcutta. He hates Calcutta for the beggars and the filth swarmed with flies. Adit gets so adapted in the English culture that he feels it ideal for every common man. He now thinks it is not very easy for a person to accept the Indian ways of marrying an unknown girl of his mother's choice and rearing, "twelve undernourished children" (68). He wishes that those who are critical of London should go back to India and experience the dull life there. Adit has formed these new values to assimilate into and respect the culture of the host country. Adit and Dev mix with their other immigrant friends and enjoy parties with them. G. Sheffer comments upon the adaptation values of the immigrants, "Modern diasporas are ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin – their homeland" (3).

Desai brings in situations in the novel to indicate that it is not always the natives who should be accused of passing abusive remarks on the settlers. At times the immigrants themselves stand responsible for the maltreatment they receive from the natives. The immigrants flaunt their inability to pronounce certain words like Qownsbury in the presence of the Englishmen. They mock at a Bengali immigrant's wrong pronunciation of it and make fun of the sound he creates, "Qow-yow-yee-yee-yen-yes bury" (132).

Another situation that Desai portrays is when a few Indian immigrants who are the friends of Adit and Dev behave too informally at the home of Sarah's mother and spoil her kitchen by frying fritters and other food items. They sing loudly the Indian song 'Sundar nari, pritam pyari' without bothering about the inconvenience caused to their host (138). Their unruly behaviour creates such a poor impression

upon Sarah's mother that she refuses to offer them a good dinner. Once Mrs Roscommon-James is shocked at Adit's unsophisticated ways of catching a bird which he mistakenly thought was a lark. Watching his enthusiastic efforts to catch the bird, Mrs Roscommon-James thinks that the picture she bears in her mind about Indians being peace-loving and ethical perhaps needs to be revised.

Adit also is full of praises for the Englishmen's habit of performing all their routine and office work according to a fixed time schedule. He is impressed by their punctuality and the sincerity with which they work in their offices. He calls such an Englishman, "a clock watcher" (158). Adit respects their attitude only until he is an observer, when it comes to him personally, he is baffled. Adit has an unpleasant experience when he is invited for dinner by his mother-in-law Mrs Roscommon-James. Adit goes to the pub ignoring Mrs Roscommon-James's advice that he would not find it open at such late hours at night, and has to return dejected. Mrs Roscommon-James serves him cold dinner because he went to the pub against her instructions and did not care to return by dinner time. This is the only incident where he does not like the attitude of the English who follow a strict time-table for dinner for their guests too. He compares it with the lazy attitude of some of his acquaintances in India who are not so particular about their time schedule, and work in their offices according to their mood.

Adit's adjustment in the English life and culture and his wish to lead a life like a westernized individual does not last for long. His visit to Hampshire reminds him of the Indian landscape and of his distance from his home country. The sights he sees in Hampshire are not beautiful but dull and dry. He was expecting the landscape to be "sweep, sap-filled land of Hampshire." But to his dismay, it was like the landscape of India: "vast moonscape of dust, rock and barren broken only by a huddle of mud huts here." He feels a strong call of his land looking at a, "dead tree there, a tree that raised its arms helplessly, dead before it had ever borne bud or flower, leaf or fruit" as if it were any common Indian landscape (173). The landscape fills Adit with a longing to return to his home country.

Adit feels a strong pull of his motherland and experiences nostalgia and anxiety. He recalls the India he has left behind and feels unable to overcome the feeling of regret of having migrated to UK. He feels as though "some black magician had placed an evil pair of spectacles on his eyes which led to see what was before him, but what the black magician wished him to see distorted and terrifying" (173). Adit now feels alienated in the country which he had adopted thinking that it was the most appropriate place to live in. Adit is happy for the western values he has imbibed in England. But when he finds that the respect and love he feels for India is not shared by the British, he feels disillusioned. Adit starts disapproving of the stereotypical images that the people from the West attribute to the South Asians. B. Ramachandra Rao comments, "the English and the Indian immigrants do not see each other," and that "they only see what they want to see stereotypes of each other, coloured by prejudice" (49).

Adit feels hurt when Bella passes derogatory remarks indicating the lower-hand position of the Indians in England in comparison to the British, "it is all very well to laugh, you are Indians, you're foreigners, you've got to be that careful, you do, what's joke to you would have looked like a dirty Asian's cheek to the bobbies" (182). He realises that his position shall always be that of an outsider in England. He argues, "why does everything have to come to this that we're Indians and you're English and we're living in your country and therefore we've all got to behave in a special way, different from normal people?" (183). Adit longs to escape from England where he is labelled as an Indian immigrant. The false pretensions he had about himself of being half-English are shattered when he comes face to face with the reality of being a foreigner: "Our lives here – they have been so unreal, don't you feel it? Little India in London. All our records and lamb curries and sing-songs, it's all so unreal. It has no reality at all…I've got to go home and start living a real life" (198). Adit's dilemma can be understood through Erich Fromm's comment, "We are never free from two conflicting tendencies – from bondage to freedom and another to return to the womb" (27).

The Hampshire that diverts Adit, the admirer of England, to long for returning to India has a different effect upon Dev, the critic of England. Dev has no plans to settle in England when he arrives there. He has always wanted to go back to

India, but after this excursion he develops a liking for the landscape of England and feels oneness with it. He now likes to spend his time on the banks of a stream in Hampshire, watch the water and listen to the cows munch mouthfuls of grass, "at that moment England had ceased to be an aggressor who tried to enmesh, subjugate and victimize him with weapons of the Empire" (223). Dev keeps aside his earlier notions when he used to see the Englishmen as conquerors and himself as a member of a once-conquered race. Dev is filled with a new hope and decides to stay in London.

Now Dev does not think that his position is merely that of a visitor, "but of someone before whom vistas of love success and joy had opened" (223). R.S. Sharma in his book *Anita Desai* praises Desai for dividing the novel into three sections – 'The Visitor', 'Discovery and Recognition' and 'Departure'. Sharma comments, "Beyond assimilation and rejection, the novel deals with the temptation that the colonial culture has for the colonized." He further comments that by bidding bye-bye to the blackbird Adit and his wife Sarah, Desai suggests, "a pattern of action where each soul, after initial shock, puzzlement and anguish, discovers its own 'natural condition'" (93). Desai portrays this psyche of the immigrants in *Bye-Bye Blackbird* which varies from person to person according to their background, perspective and potential to adapt in the country. Each person migrates with a definite objective to a foreign country and undergoes different experiences that determine his point of view regarding the culture of the host country.

Desai depicts the Indian immigrants' lack of adjustment and a sense of alienation in the English culture in *Bye-Bye Blackbird*. In the novel *Fasting, Feasting* written much later, Desai focuses on the condition of Indian women in the traditional social set-up of Indian society and the Indian immigrants' efforts to adapt in the modern culture of America.

Gender discrimination has been a common practice in the Indian society due to which women have to suffer for their rights and position in their family and social circle. Anita Desai brings out various aspects of the Indian culture where women are the victims of undeserved miseries and are persecuted, vulnerable and helpless. Shyam M. Asnani comments upon the central theme of *Fasting, Feasting* which he

says is "the existential predicament of an individual which is projected through incompatible couples – acutely sensitive wives, and dismal, callous, un-understanding, ill-chosen husbands" (144).

A couple's desire for a son is the principal issue that Desai picks up in the early part of the novel. She highlights the traditional perspective of most Indians where they feel that the status of a family is raised with the birth of a boy. MamaPapa have a good reputation among their friends and family but they follow the conservative and traditional practices of their middle class society. They long for a son to make their family complete and attain a respectable position in society. Papa's enthusiasm and happiness is evident when Mama gives birth to a son and "Arriving home, however, he sprang out of the car, raced into the house and shouted the news to whosoever was there to hear" (17). Mama's daily routine and attention centre towards her son Arun. Mama teaches her daughter Uma all the time how to take care of a baby. Uma is too young to learn to baby-sit. However, she has to go according to her Mama's wishes and learn the correct way of folding nappies and preparing watered milk. Mama teaches Uma how to rock the crying baby to sleep. Mama comments, "Girls have to learn these things too, you know" (28). Uma learns how to pour a little oil on her fingertips and massage it into the baby's limbs.

Mama even expects Uma not to care for the homework assigned in school and come at her call to assist her in attending to Arun. Anees Jung comments in the context of Indian women, "She remains the still centre, like the centre in a potter's wheel, circling to create new forms, unfolding the continuity of a racial life, which in turn has encircled and held her acquire a quality of concentration" (26). Desai portrays a typical Indian mother through the character of Mama who wants her little daughter to give up her studies and her personal desires and look after her baby brother.

Desai brings out another social evil prevalent in the Indian middle class families – depriving a girl child of her right to education. Mama prevents Uma from continuing her studies after the birth of Arun, saying, "You know you failed your exams again. You're not being moved up. What is the use of going back to school?

Stay at home and look after your baby brother" (21). MamaPapa's partial attitude for their son Arun makes Uma feel lonely and helpless. Desai brings in the partial attitude of Indian parents where they give their sons priorities over their daughters. Rajeswari Sunder Rajan comments, "In the familial/dynastic aspects of identity that many third-world women leaders have embraced, as daughters, wives/widows, or mothers, gender is an inevitable component. It is invested with considerable affect" (110). Papa too is not interested that Uma should complete her education, instead he contacts his relatives to look for marriage proposals for Uma. He writes, "Uma is still young but may be considered of marriageable age and we see no reason to continue her studies beyond class eight" (75). Uma wants to complete her matriculation but is denied this right by the patriarchal values of the Indian society.

In contrast, Arun is sent to America for higher education. Uma has no other option but to follow her mother's instructions silently which Mama thinks are a pre-requisite for a girl so that she may adjust properly in her married life. Desai comments upon the need for freedom of a woman in her article "Indian Women Writers: The Eye of the Beholders", "Privacy and silence are unnatural conditions to Indian women, intensely social as they are. Without silence and privacy, no two consecutive and comprehensible lines can be written" (58). Mama also points out to Uma that the ladies always have a lower hand in the male-dominated society. She recalls an event from her childhood, "In my day, girls in the family were not given sweets, nuts, good things to eat. If something special had been bought in the market like sweets or nuts, it was given to the boys in the family" (6).

Mama's only concern after Arun's departure is to prepare Uma to learn to live according to the social norms Mama herself has been following all her life. She has no freedom to visit her neighbours, and she is not allowed to sit alone in the home either. Usha Rani comments upon the helplessness of Uma, "The biased and rigid attitude of parents, Papa always scowling and Mama scolding leave no room for Uma to fulfil any of her desires and dreams. Even a few moments of peace and tranquillity in her room are denied to her" (177). Even while living with her parents Uma has to learn to compromise at every step of her life.

Desai also discusses another important aspect of Indian culture where marriage is regarded as the only career for a girl. Uma suffers the failure of her two marriages and is considered a burden by her parents. Her father's lack of concern for Uma is apparent when he marries her off to Harish without bothering to find out that Harish already has a wife and four children. Harish marries Uma only because he needs money to save his ailing pharmaceutical factory and does not give her the love and respect a wife deserves. Uma's life is disturbed by the inappropriate selection of groom by her parents not once but twice in her life. She can neither share her thoughts with her parents nor does she have any friends who may suggest a solution to her problem. Meenakshi Raman and Sushila Rathore analyse Uma's position, "All her quests and her frustrations are restricted to her thoughts without any outlet" (136).

Uma's cousin Anamika also experiences gender discrimination as Uma does in the male-dominated society which is a deep-rooted evil rampant in the traditional Indian society. Anamika's parents consider marriage as the only destiny for women. They want an early marriage for their daughter who is beautiful, "as a flower is lovely, soft, petal-skinned...and with a good nature like a radiance about her" (67). However, Anamika has no interest in getting married at an early age. She wants to shape her career and be a self-dependent lady. She receives an offer of a scholarship to study in Oxford but her parents do not encourage her to avail the offer. They do not agree to send her to Oxford which they consider, "only the most favoured and privileged sons could ever hope to go!" (69). Instead, considering Anamika of, "an age to marry" they use the offer letter as a tool to procure a suitable match for their beautiful daughter (69). P.F. Patil comments that in Desai's novels marriages are, "more or less business transactions. A marriageable daughter is handed over to the male partner without considering the delicacy of her mind and feelings. She has to fulfil either the parents' responsibilities or the relatives' demands with different intentions" (128).

Desai portrays the misery that Anamika has to suffer in her too-hastily arranged marriage. This is a common practice in a typical joint family system in the Indian society where a lot many girls have to sacrifice their career because of their early marriage. Desai elaborately presents an account of the in-laws' behaviour

towards a newly-wedded bride as a general malpractice in the society. Anamika's position is none better than a prisoner's in her in-laws' house. She is ill-treated by her mother-in-law and does not get her husband's support either. P. Bhatnagar notes in the article "The Themes of Man-Woman Relationship in the Novels of Anita Desai" that commitment and concern is required in marriages for developing loving relationships between the partners, however in Desai's novels, "most marriages prove to be unions of incompatibility" (143). Anamika alone has to cook for the extended family which is so large that "first the men, then the children, finally the women" are served food (70). Anamika is not offered food as a respectable family member, she is asked to eat the remains in the pots and pans. Her mother-in-law makes her do the dishes again and again if they are not clean upto her parameters. She expects Anamika to massage her feet daily. She does not allow Anamika to go even to the temple except in the company of other women. Meenakshi Mukherjee comments upon the condition of such brides that it is unjustified to "surrender…to the whims of fate and the manipulation of the marital marketplace…What do they know of the needs of modern woman" (27). Anamika is helpless and suffers the unaffectionate behaviour of her in-laws and never raises her voice against them.

Desai's *Fasting, Feasting* highlights all these malpractices that are prevalent in the Indian society which need to be improved. Desai portrays a typical Indian woman through the character of Anamika's mother-in-law who ill-treats the newly wedded bride in their home, and beats Anamika regularly so much that one day she suffers a miscarriage. Anamika's husband never protests against the maltreatment of his wife by his mother and remains a mute spectator. Meena Shirdwakar observes that "A woman on way to liberation trying to be free from inhibitions is rarely seen in Indo-Anglican literature" (71). Through the character of Anamika, Desai portrays every such helpless bride who lives at the mercy of her in-laws when her husband doesn't support her. Anamika's mother-in-law is an inhuman person who one day sets fire to Anamika's body and burns her to death. However, the in-laws do not feel guilty of their sin and lay the entire blame on Anamika. It is ironical that Anamika's parents do not seek justice. In spite of knowing all the facts, they resist inquiring into the cause of the death of their daughter, "that it was fate, God had willed it as it was Anamika's destiny" (151).

Desai presents the true picture of a small section of the Indian society which still does not care for the individual freedom, self-respect and emotional needs of women. Amartya Sen comments that domestic violence against women is prevalent not only in the countries which have, "less developed economies, but also in wealthy and modern societies" (237). Desai's protagonists Uma and Anamika have a submissive personality and dare not rebel against the atrocities committed against them in their families.

In the second part of the novel Desai portrays the modern society of America through Mr and Mrs Patton and their daughter Melanie. In contrast to the conservative and male dominated society of India as depicted in the earlier part of the novel, the two American ladies have much freedom in the sophisticated culture of the West. The atmosphere in Mrs Patton's house is highly impersonal, and there is very little interaction among the family members and nobody intrudes into the personal matters of one another. Melanie feels deprived of parental care and affection and feels lonely in the house, "She looks sullen rather than tearful. It is her habitual expression" (164). The unconcerned attitude of her parents forces her to develop an aberrant approach to everyone in the house. She becomes quick-tempered, "I won't eat anything you cook. You can give it to the cook...I am not going to eat any of that poison. Everything you cook is – poison" (207). Desai presents the Pattons as parents who converse very little with their daughter due to which she feels unloved and insecure. Their indifference towards the rearing of their daughter is in contrast with the strict and controlled bringing up of their daughter by MamaPapa in the earlier part of the novel, where the daughters' lives are controlled by the parents and the daughters are not allowed the freedom to take any major decision on their own.

The excessive freedom in the West produces a negative impact upon Melanie which creates a different sort of suffocating environment in the home. The parents never care to find out the cause of Melanie's reluctance to eat a healthy diet and her preference for candy which she munches all the time. They do not realize that she munches candy not because she likes it but because it helps her to overcome her sense of loneliness. Mrs Patton lives her life independently. She has no restrictions or apparent social stress to bear. She has all freedom to switch over from being a non-

vegetarian to a vegetarian irrespective of her husband's preference for enormous non-vegetarian meals. Mrs Patton takes little interest in her daughter's health and does not care about the fact that she is a bulimic; however she is very much concerned about her tenant Arun and showers motherly affection upon him. Yet, neither Arun nor Melanie feels connected with Mrs Patton. Through the Patton family, Desai highlights the fact that the open and unrestricted environment of the West also does not create family bonding in the home. The nuclear family of the Pattons have their own reasons of staying unconnected and alienated in their home.

Desai brings out the dire reality of the society that whether it is East or West women have to face the pressure of their own society on their lives. Whereas the women in India suffer due to the shackles of their traditional lifestyle, the ladies in modern America bear stress due to the excessive impersonal approach towards life. Gerald Kaufman praises Desai's *Fasting, Feasting* as quoted on the back cover of the novel, "a most beautiful novel, very moving, very funny, terribly illustrative of what happens to women in different parts of the world." Desai's emphasis in *Fasting, Feasting* is upon the notion that whether the society is traditional or westernized, it needs ethical values and cultural anchorage to sustain mutual relationships among its people.

Anita Desai and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni have a close vision of the Indian culture. Their female protagonists tend to adjust and compromise whether they are in a domestic setup or have an immigrant status. Desai acclaims Indian feminists' sensitive portrayal of the situation of Indian women whether in India or abroad. Desai, in an interview with Lalita Pandit states, "Indian feminism is more practical than theoretical. It is expedient rather than ideological" (Hogan 168). The female protagonists Sudha and Anju in Divakaruni's *The Vine of Desire* are strongly influenced by Indian culture due to which they experience stress and dilemma as they try to adopt the values of the host country. But the women show remarkable will-power to overcome their self-doubts after their migration to America. Living in America they distance themselves from the social pressures of their homeland and try to find solutions to their problems.

Young-Eisendrath and Dawson remark that Divakaruni's *The Vine of Desire* is a, "childhood trauma in the formation of adult personality and neurosis – the so-called – seduction theory – and toward psychoanalysis as an interpretive discipline in which the subjective meaning of experience – whether real or fanciful – is the basis for understanding" (43). The title of Divakaruni's earlier novel *Sister of My Heart* depicts the sentimental love and feelings of two cousins, Anju and Sudha. Lakshmi Mani states in an article "Extraordinary Sisterhood" for *The Vine of Desire*'s title that it "is a paraphrase of the twelfth verse of Shankaracharya's *Bhaja Govindam*" (2).

Sudha has a sad past that harrows her regarding her disadvantaged position in society as a single woman. She feels the stress of living as a young lonely mother of a little girl in India. Sudha has no means of livelihood and after leaving her husband's home, she becomes economically dependent on her mother. In this mixed backdrop of partial securities and insecurities Sudha feels a need to stand for her dignity and define her position in the society. Eventually she gets an invitation from her cousin Anju from America to come and live with her.

Sudha accepts the invitation thinking that it will help her to find her place in an alien land when her own land has given her sorrow and shame for a failed marriage. Sudha resolves to take the step to remove the limitations imposed on her in the family as well as in the society and decides to go hoping for progress and peace. Sonia Chopra observes: "The tormenting emotions that result when the characters choose to throw the baggage of their culture and create a new identity…the choices they make and the interaction they have with the immigrant community in America and through contact with their family" (Antony 105). Sudha has suffered so much plight due to her failed marriage that she decides to leave for America with her fatherless little daughter Dayita in search of a peaceful life, "Best of all, no one would look down on her, for America was full of mothers like me, who had decided that living alone was better than living with the wrong man" (274). Sudha prepares herself to move to the land that calls her. Anju's invitation brings a ray of hope in her traumatic life. Sudha expects to attain a better space and position in the American culture that is not possible in India with her single status. Janet Todd comments that Anju and Sudha try to act, "benevolently in a malevolent world and to show in

themselves those virtues of compassion, generosity, and kindliness" towards each other. Todd further states, "These virtues are socially expressed most fully in their friendship, which yet remains in great part a potential one" (11).

Anju, Sudha's cousin is a modern girl who has migrated to America with her husband Sunil soon after her marriage. She has no in-laws or societal obligations to pay obeisance to. Yet, after her marriage, Anju has a strained relationship with her husband. Sunil is very upset due to his wife Anju's miscarriage and considers Anju herself responsible for the loss of the baby. Anju tries her best to escape from every situation that may sour her relationship with her husband. She looks forward to leading a normal and stress-free life in America which comes more easily to her because of her distanced position from India and its cultural pressure.

Anju finds American culture very suitable with no big family or interfering relatives to question every little happening in her life. Both the sisters experience sorrows of different kinds in their lives and at heart they know that they will find solace and happiness in each other's company. P. Bhatnagar in the article "Indian Womanhood," comments for Desai's novel, "The ethos in the novels is neither of victory nor of defeat but of harmony and understanding between two opposite ideas and conflicting selves. This is quite representative of the basic Indian attitude" (128). As a result even after a short gap in Anju and Sudha's relationship after their marriage, they come to live together again in America.

The pull of the native culture and societal pressure does not let Sudha live her life peacefully in America either. Her mother still abuses her for her act of walking out of her husband's life. Sudha's mother writes a letter to her to America, "Once a woman leaves her husband, she doesn't hesitate at anything. Even the most immoral acts come to her with ease. I shudder to think of the effect your behavior will have on your daughter's character" (272). Thus the cultural norms of India still impose a pressure on Sudha and create a sense of guilt in her heart.

Divakaruni rarely portrays marriage as the backbone of society. Her protagonists are willing to look for options outside marriage in many of her novels. Sudha, as

compared to the self-dependent female protagonists of Divakaruni's in other novels is just a homely lady with no distinct virtue or identity. Though she is raised with all Bengali customs and traditions, Sudha does not hesitate to reject the social norms which assert that marriage is the destiny for all women. Both Sudha and Anju move ahead to make their lives comfortable and happier, removing the negative influences from their lives. J. Bhavani observes, "This is not a negative but realistic end to the novels" (Reddy 157). Sudha liberates herself from the shackles of social pressures and restrictions and looks forward to a bright life in America. While liberating herself Sudha liberates her daughter Dayita too from all sorts of social humiliation she may have experienced while growing up in India. Sudha plans to provide convent education to her daughter so that she may grow up as a self-dependent woman and not be dependent on others, like her.

Sudha forms the values of the adjustment and assimilation in the new American culture and looks for advancement in life there. However, in America, Sudha cannot retain her chastity and enters into an illicit relationship with Sunil, her cousin's husband, and later on with Lalit, a surgeon. As she gets assimilated in the American culture, she feels no discomfort or shame living in a separate house from her sister Anju when she herself feels guilty of having illegal relationship with her sister's husband. Todd remarks, "Sudha could not remain with Anju after the ultimate treachery that she has committed to Anju. Aftermath, she — learns her error, she laments that she has added to her friend's sorrow, and she is deeply ashamed that her jealous love has cast out her reverence" (57). Sudha likes to live her life to the utmost. She feels comfortable in attending late night parties and enjoys dancing. Realizing the transitory nature of happiness, Sudha wants to live each day fully and enjoy it, "If this is going to be our last day here," Sudha says to her daughter, "Let's have some fun" (245). During childhood Sudha was taught not to get involved in a relationship with a boy, but in America she values her independence, and does not object to close proximities with some of her male acquaintances.

Divakaruni presents a love triangle which culminates into the shattered strands of the relationships of these three family members. In an interview with R. Lalitha, Divakaruni states that the force behind her writing "is the desire to put

women in the centre of stories, to have their voices be the voices of interpretation, their eyes the ones that we see through. There just hasn't been enough of that in the world, if you look back at literary history" (23).

There is already a distance between Anju and Sunil after Anju's miscarriage, now his attraction for Sudha who is a guest in their home hurts Anju. She is broken internally due to her husband's infidelity. Her intention in calling Sudha to America to live with her was to get rid of the sorrows and bring happiness in their disturbed life. However, Sudha, herself a tormented and dissatisfied soul, unintentionally falls into an extra-marital relationship with Sunil. Somewhere Sudha is reminded of her admiration for Sunil when she first met him at her mother's home before Anju's marriage. Sudha remembers the time just before Anju's marriage, when she was so sad to think that she would be separated from Anju, and wished they "could marry the same man, our Arjun, our Krishna, who would love and treasure us both, and keep us both together" (SMH 131). Sudha's step to migrate to America somehow turns her into a woman of a new world.

The memories of her infatuation with Sunil at first sight discourage Sudha from protesting against Sunil's advances to her, since she has longed for him before marriage too. When he sees Sudha in private, he cannot control himself and kisses her. Sudha remembers Pishi's words, "A woman's beauty can be her wealth, but also her curse" (69). Sunil explains to Sudha that he still loves her, but married Anju because it was the wish of their families and his proposal was for Anju. He tells Sudha that he married Anju thinking that love would develop between them after marriage, that which happens with many of his Indian friends there. Sunil and Anju were enjoying a good relationship as a married couple, but Sudha's arrival aroused the suppressed love in Sunil's heart again for Sudha.

Anju was aware of her husband's admiration for Sudha even while her wedding ceremonies were going on. Anju noticed that when the wedding dinner was over, Sunil bent down to pick up Sudha's handkerchief, "No-one notices Sunil bending to pick it up, to slip it into his pocket where he fists his hand around it. No one except me" (SMH 169). Even after calling Sudha to America to live with them,

she notices Sunil's increasing closeness with Sudha. Anju does not object to her husband's growing obsession for her sister, she is only upset to notice the changed behaviour of both of them who were close to her. She is puzzled to see them coming close and find herself as an unwanted person in the house. Anju is amazed at this new behaviour of her most loved cousin where she tends to be selfish in order to survive in a new set-up.

Anju is tormented by her husband's attitude towards her after losing the baby. She cannot reconcile with his callous behaviour when she herself needs his sympathy and love, as she is also experiencing the pain of losing a baby. Anju makes all her efforts to adjust to her husband's temper which she has learnt living in the Indian culture. But Sunil's attachment and infatuation with Sudha who is living as a guest in their house breaks her heart. She feels that the loss of her baby has not hurt her as much as her husband's betrayal. Anju tells Sudha in a bitter tone, "He wants a divorce, so he can start his life over. With you" (252). Young-Eisendrath and Dawson comment that as the sisterly love is more blissful, it is also, "the only relationship that is potentially equal within the rigidly hierarchical family; when this is marred by conflict, the family becomes indeed a place of warfare" (33).

Anju does not see any worth living with a man who has no feelings for her. She feels, "a dead love is like a dead body, starting to rot even while you're holding on to it" and shifts to another house away from Sunil (252). Sunil in turn, experiences self-awakening when both the ladies abandon his house and realizes his mistake. He now longs for his wife's return to him. He meets Anju after a long silence in Houston and makes all efforts to pacify his wife but Anju is not ready to forgive him for his infidelity. Although the meeting with Sunil makes her vulnerable for a moment but she does not reveal it to him that still she has a soft corner for him and remains adamant about her decision.

Divakaruni's protagonists Sudha and Anju face difficult situations in life and try to find freedom that comes more easily to them in the American culture which is quite different from the Indian culture. Both Sudha and Anju walk away from their family and society to avoid any interference in their lives. They find that America

offers them better opportunities for growth and survival, as compared to India and they form new values and adjust in the American culture. Once the testing times are over, life promises them happiness and better opportunities in the future. Sudha's ex-lover Ashok agrees to marry her. He apologizes to her for his indifference towards her when she needed it most. Ashok says, "I'm only sorry I wasn't here to take care of you" (334). Sudha now looks forward to a happier life with him after marriage and decides to return to Calcutta. Anju finally forgives her husband and comes back to him and engages herself in studying and creating her own identity as a creative writer.

There is a similarity in the portrayal of the women characters of Divakaruni and Shashi Deshpande in the sense that their protagonists do not sever their ties even when they experience difficulties with their partners. Shashi Deshpande favours liberation in the context of Indian feminism and she states in *The Times of India:* "Liberation means you refuse to be oppressed, you refuse to give up your individuality, you refuse to do things which go against your conscience." She further states that freedom and liberation fill women with zeal and encourage them to live life according to their will. Deshpande states in her interview with Sree S. Prasanna, "You know what you are worth. You take that into account, and this is liberation. This does not mean doing away with all ties" (91). Liberation for women, according to Deshpande, does not mean isolation and alienation from the patriarchal society but an assertion of one's rights and wishes.

Divakaruni explores a similar perspective of life in her novel *Queen of Dreams* where immigrants trapeze between and within two cultures. The setting of the novel is in America where the main protagonists Rakhi and her mother Mrs Gupta struggle to balance the two worlds – America and India they belong to and the values of these two different cultures. Mrs Gupta as a first generation immigrant has different expatriate experiences than her daughter Rakhi. Mrs Gupta has her past in India and lives as an immigrant in California according to the American ways of life. Rakhi is torn between the traditional values she has absorbed from her parents and the new values she has naturally acquired as she was brought up in America. Thus, Divakaruni portrays her characters' dilemma of cultural identity and search for their

true self. The diaspora writer Bharati Mukherjee states for Divakaruni, “Most of her works are about the Indian immigrants in the United States from the author’s native region of Bengal.” Mukherjee continues, “Living in the United States, Divakaruni becomes more aware of the differences in culture which urges her to explore it in all its essentials” (460).

Mrs Gupta, the queen of dreams, is depicted as a strong tie between the cultures of the two countries. Her art of dream interpretation is recognized in India and she migrates to America and earns her position in California as a dream interpreter. In India dream interpretation has received cultural acceptance and is supported by the followers who have belief in this art. But in California Mrs Gupta has to interpret her dreams alone and convince others about their credibility. She understands that she has to be sure of the validity of her predictions in the alien land. Mrs Gupta trains her students in the dream-telling technique. The students exaggerate Mrs Gupta’s methodology of dream interpretation and share their experiences with one another saying that they become horrified and feel as if they are in some other world. Mrs Gupta knows what her students think of her and describes their reactions for her: She says, “she looked at us as though she saw things we did not know about ourselves. We realised then that living here in these caves that were in the world but not quite of it, would change us without recognition. And some of us – including myself – were frightened and focused all our attention on holding back tears” (232).

One of the ways in which Mrs Gupta tries to maintain her Indian culture in America is by cooking Indian food for her husband and daughter. In Rakhi’s words, “At home, we rarely ate anything but Indian, that was the one way in which my mother kept her culture” (7). Divakaruni includes the names of Indian dishes in the novel like the ice-cream sellers’ song “pistakulfi chahiye, pistakulfi” (150), “Cha” (159), “pakoras” (160), “chaerdokhan” (165), “rasogolla syrup” (185). Thus shows that Mrs Gupta creates an Indian environment in her home in the distant land. David Seamon states, “home is an intimate place of rest where a person can withdraw from the hustle of the world outside and have some degree of control over what happens within a limited space. Home is where you can be yourself. In this sense home acts as a kind of metaphor for a place in general” (Cresswell 21). Mrs Gupta is aware of

her exceptional power of dream-telling and her distinguished position in California, yet she likes to dress up in an Indian way. She likes to wear Indian dresses like a salwar kameez or a saree. She does not have a large circle of friends, but only a handful of acquaintances who are mainly her clients. Mrs Gupta likes to stay confined in her house until she has to go out to warn anyone of the danger she has foreseen in her dream.

Mrs Gupta likes to use the words which have an Indian connotation in Bengali dialect while speaking in English. Rakhi's tea shop also serves Indian snacks along with tea. Mrs Gupta doesn't find Rakhi's tea shop as an authentic tea shop and tells her daughter, "This isn't a real cha shop." And explains that it is, "but a mishmash, a Westerner's notion of what's Indian" (89). Mrs Gupta's clear views about the culture of India and America show that she forms new values where she respects her Indian values and at the same time understands how to assimilate into the American ways of life. Sudhir Kakar explains the concept of Indian immigrants' assimilation in American life as, "In the process of convergence the impact of minority cultures on the mainstream can occur when elements of their culture are absorbed by Anglo-American community thus creating a composite culture" (25).

Mrs Gupta swings between the two cultures where she has to maintain Indian culture as well as adopt the western culture and provide her family all ease and happiness in life. Mrs Gupta herself suffers due to her choice of profession as a dream interpreter. She abandons her husband from making any physical bond with her and also becomes very particular about not discussing the subject of dream interpretation with her daughter, Rakhi since her childhood. She restricts herself from interacting with them so that her unusual skills of dream-telling are not affected, but ironically, her distancing with them actually disrupts her family life. Rakhi cannot understand her mother's behaviour and thinks why her mother, "with such meticulous motherness, kept her out of the place she wanted most to enter. That she denied her her birthright and doomed her to the bland life of suburban America" (43).

Rakhi is a modern girl and likes her American ways of life there. She is also attached to her family and wants her mother to be close to her like any other mother

and daughter. Since her childhood Rakhi has been asking her mother, "why don't you sleep with dad? Or at least with me, like Mallika's mother does? Don't you love us?" (6). Mrs Gupta replies, "I do love you." She explains the reason, "I don't sleep with you or your father because my work is to dream. I can't do it if someone is in bed with me" (7). Rakhi fails to comprehend how her mother may love her family when she stays apart from them not allowing anybody in her personal life and professional territory of dream interpretation. Erich Fromm's theory of love discussed in J.A.C. Brown's *Freud and the Post-Freudians* explains a mother's assertion of love for her daughter as, "Genuine love is an expression of productiveness." Fromm continues that, "It is not an 'affect' in the sense of being affected by somebody but an active striving for the growth and happiness of the loved person rooted in one's own capacity to love" (Brown 159). Rakhi longs for her mother's love that should come to her naturally and genuinely and she need not ask her mother again to clarify whether she loves her or not.

Rakhi has another desire to know more about India, the country which has so deeply influenced her mother. She longs to hear tales of India and Indian culture where her parents had spent their yesteryears. Rakhi says, "I hungered for all things Indian because my mother never spoke of the country she'd grown up in – just as she never spoke of her past" (35). It is something that Avtar Brah calls it a "homing desire" the wish to know about the home which is left far behind (192). The concept of homeland is only in the imagination of Rakhi having its roots in her mother's personal history. Brah sees "home" as a "mystic place of desire in the diasporic imagination" (193). So Rakhi finds no possibility of approaching India for though she may visit the geographical territory, but she will always be an outsider for her ancestral land.

Rakhi feels comfortable in the American culture which is manifested around her physically than the Indian culture which is distant and mysterious. Still Rakhi has a fascination for her mother's unusual profession. But Mrs Gupta is determined not to reveal about her profession to anybody even if it is her daughter. Mrs Gupta tells Rakhi the reason of her helplessness about not explaining anything about India, "By not telling you about India as it really was, I made it into something far bigger"

(100). C.V. Padmaja observes that the Indian immigrants cross the borders of their nation carrying their cultural baggage to the host culture. She states these, "People migrate to other countries with many dreams, hopes and aspirations. However, we see many of their hopes and dreams remain fantasies and unrealistic" (1). The more Rakhi's mother wants Rakhi not to hanker anything about the real India, the more Rakhi develops a hunger to know about the idyllic and exotic India.

Rakhi herself visualizes the scenes of India and paints pictures about India. She brings a tape of Bengali songs from the South Asian library which explains the Bengal monsoons in songs "how the skies grow into the color of polished steel, how the clouds advance like black armies, or spill across the horizon like the unwound hair of beautiful maidens" (81). Though Rakhi cannot understand half the words of these songs but she feels connected with the culture of her mother's birth country. Arnold Itwaru explains this sense of estrangement which, "touches upon the very notion of home, the land and place of birth. For that land there, that region, lives in us as memory and dream as nostalgia, romance of reflection, lives in us as different, […] that to which we think we belong but no longer do" (202). In her fascination Rakhi dreams about "the red-breasted bulbuls" in the banyan tree, "a dancing peacock" and other beautiful and mysterious things about India (81). But Mrs Gupta pulls back Rakhi to the real world of America and advises her to live happily in her American ways of life. She urges Rakhi to pay attention to her tea house instead of taking interest in the imagined India. Thus, Rakhi constantly swings in between the cultures of the two nations.

Rakhi wants to be like her mother and be a dream interpreter, but at times she is more attracted to the American culture, and the profession of dream-telling does not charm her at all. Rakhi is happy not to possess this skill which distances her family members from each other. Divakaruni shows Rakhi's dilemma between the two cultures till the end of the novel. Rakhi cannot decide which culture she belongs to – Indian or American. Rakhi concentrates on her business of the tea shop and tries to develop a cordial relationship with her customers who are a mixed group of Indian immigrants and native Americans.

Divakaruni fuses the cultures of the two worlds and explores the conflict of the first as well as the second generation immigrants in the formation of new cultural values in *Queen of Dreams*. The diaspora writer Jhumpa Lahiri in her novel *The Namesake* focuses on Indian immigrants' desire to preserve the Indian cultural heritage that she carries from her home country. Through her character Ashima, Lahiri brings out the dilemma among the Indian immigrants who initially do not feel comfortable with the Western norms, however as they interact with the natives and other peers, they learn to acquire western principles during their stay in America. They accept the Western values through cultural interaction and also gradually mould their Indian values through their contact with the American norms.

Jhumpa Lahiri presents the Gangulis in her novel *The Namesake* as the first generation immigrants who feel proud to carry their home culture to the country of adoption and pass their cultural legacy to their foreign-born children. There is a close resemblance in the characters of Divakaruni and Lahiri. The protagonists of both the writers are portrayed as socially and culturally acculturated Indian immigrants. Sheikh Showkat Ahmed comments for Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams* and Lahiri's *The Namesake* that both the novelists have chosen the same landscape California for these two novels where, "a lot of domestic and spatial elements are portrayed by them with great keenness. They have tried to deal with the problems which lie within the spheres of domesticity amid diaspora, and have tried their utmost to deal with cultural, linguistic and certain other important aspects "within" and "outside" the domestic space" (43).

Ashima herself follows all the Bengali traditions and thus tries to adjust in America, the newly adopted country. She teaches Gogol to speak and write Bengali, their mother tongue, and encourages him to read more and more literature written in it. Ashima acquaints Gogol with Bengali customs and beliefs during his childhood. Urmila Dabir states that Lahiri's *The Namesake*, "is a narrative that ricochets the cultural dilemmas and dislocations experienced by an Indian Bengali family from Calcutta and their American-born children in different ways: spatial, cultural and emotional, to create 'home' in a new land" (34). She celebrates all the Indian festivals and ceremonies with family and friends so that her children Gogol and

Sonia stay in touch with their own culture and are aware of the common manners, food habits and lifestyle of the Indians. Ashima and Ashoke move into the circle of Bengali immigrants and keep on expanding their relationship with the Bengali community. The families celebrate different occasions like the rice ceremony and the naming ceremony of their America-born children in a traditional manner. They follow all their customary practices during the occasions of marriages and important festivals like Navratras and Durga Pooja.

The immigrant families try their best to preserve their own native culture in their new homes in the country of their settlement. They adapt themselves according to the culture and traditions of the acquired country and train their children also to adopt the local culture of their host country and accept the terms used for them like immigrants and diaspora, thereby adding new values to their culture-system. Mcloughlin explains, "This loss of geographical mooring in which terms float free from their physical and social context, may also have led several years later to call for the re-grounding, re-materialization, and re-embodiment of theory. Such calls had relevance for the areas of Diaspora, race and identity as well as gender and body" (81- 82).

The first generation immigrants follow their own traditions but are open-minded enough to adjust into the new environment. They train their children to adjust in the culture of the country they live in, keeping the native cultural values alive in their hearts. Ashima gives complete attention to Gogol so that he may be familiar with the Indian customs, cultural practices and the Indian lifestyle and also grooms him according to the American ways of life. Ashima teaches Gogol "a four-line children's poem by Tagore." She makes him learn "the names of the deities adorning ten-handed goddess Durga during pujo: Saraswati with her swan and Kartik with his peacock to her left, Lakshmi with her owl and Ganesh with his mouse to her right." At other times she asks Gogol to watch "*Sesame Street* and *The Electric Company*, in order to keep up with the English he uses at nursery school" (54).

Thus Ashima presents herself as an immigrant who readily combines the cultures of the two countries in her lifestyle and that of her family. When they had arrived in America, Ashima and Ashoke celebrated Indian festivals only but started

celebrating Christmas and Thanksgiving in the due course of time. Gogol feels thankful to his parents that, "it was for him, for Sonia, and that his parents had gone to the trouble of learning these customs" (286). Helena Grice observes that the writers of ethnic fiction present cultural differences between two countries which are dynamic and ever changing. Grice comments that in *The Namesake* the Gangulis follow their custom codes, yet ethnicity, "never exists in its 'pure' form because it is always already shaped by the cultural forces surrounding it" (4).

Lahiri presents Gogol as a person who despite all his parents' wishes to make him follow the traditions of their native culture, expresses a reluctance to do so. As an obedient son, he follows their teachings but wishes to escape from being tied to the Bengali culture. He does not wish to accept the traditions and culture that belong to a country that he will never adopt. Thus Lahiri presents a cultural conflict that Gogol as a second generation immigrant experiences there. Performing the culture of not one but two countries, Gogol gradually develops the feeling of in-between-ness. It is this dilemma that affects Gogol throughout his life.

Gogol who has seen India only as a visitor, considers America to be his home and wants to live there like any other American. Born and brought up in America, Gogol does not have the feeling of being an outsider there. Gogol knows how the Americans sometimes treat the immigrants and also his parents with disdain. He also knows that this humiliating behaviour of the Americans towards all immigrants is a reminder to them of their immigrant status. Adesh Pal explains that the immigrants have varied experiences, "not merely a scattering or dispersion but an experience made up of collective and multiple journeys; an experience determined by who travels, where, how and under what circumstances" (14). But Gogol chooses to follow the culture and traditions of the physical place where he lives instead of those of the distant land which is only an image and unreal to him.

The immigrants adopt the lifestyle of the natives and form new values to accommodate in the culture of the adopted country. In Indian culture dating and pre-marital sex is not allowed and parents wish that their children should not enter into a physical relationship before marriage. But Gogol, as any other American boy has a

series of affairs with girls. After a long stay in America, his parents have developed a different perspective over a period of time and do not object his lifestyle. The Indian immigrant parents wish that their children should marry at the right age and within their community. But Gogol has no hurry to settle down in marriage even at the age of thirty which is a common feature of American youngsters. Arranged marriage is an important custom in India where a couple marries first and then learns to love each other like traditional Indians. Ashima and Ashoke's marriage is an arranged one and they carry it happily their whole life.

In contrast, their son Gogol is more open and modern in his outlook. He falls in love with Maxine, has a relationship with her before marriage but their marriage soon proves to be a failure. Ashima wishes that Gogol should remarry, a practice which is not very common in India. Ashima encourages her son to settle down in marriage with Moushumi, a Bengali immigrant girl. Thus the Indian immigrants reveal their changing mind-sets as they learn to accept the culture of the west and form new values. Bill Ashcroft refers to it as, "the fusion of many traits that belongs to the nature of any ethnic group: a composite of shared values, beliefs, norms, tastes, behaviors, experiences, consciousness of kind, memories and loyalties" (80). Gogol takes no time to separate from his second wife Moushumi as he comes to know that she has still not parted from her former lover Dimitri. However Gogol forgives her thinking "yet he can't really blame her. They had both acted on the same impulse" (284). It is in contrast with the Indian ways of protecting the marriage in all circumstances. Ashima also does not object to his quick switch overs from one girl to the other. It shows the impact of the native social values that the immigrants gradually accept and imbibe in their life as they grow accustomed with the culture of the land of settlement.

The two generations of the Ganguli family show enough similarities and differences with regards to the adaptation with new culture and formation of new values. Nelson observes that the immigrants jostle with the two worlds, one which is real and the other imaginary. The immigrants try to adopt both the worlds through their culture and traditions. Emmanuel S. Nelson comments that this trait is often portrayed by Indian diaspora writers showing, "the haunting presence of India – and

the anguish of personal loss it represents" in their fiction (15). Sometimes the first generation immigrants desire to live like Indians and miss the Indian food and eating habits. Ashima is fond of Bengali food and likes to prepare it with the available American ingredients. In the beginning of the novel, her love and longing for Indian food is evident when in her pregnant state she makes a spicy Indian snack 'Jhalmuri' "combining Rice Krispies and Planters peanuts and chopped red onion in a bowl." Ashima wishes "there were mustard oil to pour into the mix" (1).

Ashima though feels comfortable wearing western outfits as other Indian American ladies do, yet she likes to wear the Indian dress – saree at certain occasions. Wearing a saree gives her the feeling of closeness to her Indian culture. She also likes to put a bindi on her forehead, which is symbolic of being a married woman in the Indian context. Ashima does not call her husband, Ashoke by his name following the Indian tradition to show one's respect towards one's husband. It is in contrast to American tradition where by calling each other by name, the couple expresses affection for each other. In his essay "The Mind of Winter: Reflections on Life in Exile," Edward Said defines exile as, "'the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home" (49). Lahiri depicts the impact of displacement on the lives of the Gangulis and other immigrants in terms of culture, tradition, food, dressing sense and lifestyle of the host country. Lahiri also indicates through her novel that the immigrants accept the culture of the host country while maintaining the cultural values they carry from their homeland, thus, they form new cultural values to mingle with the natives in the host country and to make their life convenient and better in the new set-up.

Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird* depicts the Indian immigrants' desire to preserve the culture and traditions they carry with them from India as well as their charm for the English culture. Adit represents a modern educated youth of Indian society whose short sojourn in England and his return to his homeland India is a journey of self-realization and self-discovery. In her novel *Fasting, Feasting*, Desai presents the families in India and America as the products of their society who simply continue the very same traditions they themselves have been accustomed to throughout their lives. She portrays MamaPapa as parents who neglect their daughters,

restrict their freedom, and deny them the opportunity to continue their education. It is in contrast to the Pattons who impose no limitations on their daughter, however, in both the cases there is a communication gap between the parents and children suffer from an emotional lacuna in their lives.

Divakaruni's characters Anju and Sudha in *The Vine of Desire* try to accommodate in the western culture of America, and their dilemmas acquire new dimensions in the foreign land. Sudha illegitimate relationship with Sunil, Anju's husband, makes life difficult for all three of them. However, Sudha admits her mistake and takes steps to rectify it, deciding finally to return to India. Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams* focuses on the impact of the 9/11 events on the lives of immigrants in America. She mingling of the cultures of the East and the west through the character of Mrs Gupta, a dream interpreter, who helps people in the foreign land by interpreting their dreams and guiding them to take the right decisions. Her daughter Rakhi, experiences different kinds of problems with her business venture in America and in her personal life, especially after the panic created by the terror attacks in the country. The novel portrays the social adjustment of Rakhi and her family members in California, and their attempts to resolve their difficulties and lead a more fulfilling life.

Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Namesake* deals with the encounter between Indian and American culture through the family of Gogol, a second generation Bengali immigrant in USA. In the novel, Lahiri focuses on Bengali customs, rituals and language to express the cultural identity of the Indian immigrants in America. Gogol moves through various phases of social adjustment in America due to his complex relationship with his family members and American friends, and emerges a stronger and more confident person in the end, conscious of his Indian roots as also of his status as an immigrant in America.

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Chapter Five

Shaping a New Identity

Identity is a fragile part of human nature, but also its most significant part, for it defines the individual's place in society. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the word "identity" as "the fact of being who or what a person or thing is" and further describes it as "the characteristics determining who or what a person or thing is." Identity takes into account the personal and behavioural traits that define an individual as a member of a specific group. These groups themselves are distinguished from others on the basis of their ethnicity, race, religion, culture and language, and each group forms an understanding of what characteristics constitute it and takes pride in it. Cultural identity of individuals and groups however, may be shaped also by their geographical location, i.e., the country in which they reside, in addition to their ethnic origin, both of which are considered significant markers of identity in the contemporary age. The social mobility of individuals and groups, and their desires to belong to a particular community or to reside in a particular geographical location, thus influences and constantly redefines their identities.

The concept of identity as a fluid, incomplete process was propounded by Stuart Hall in the essay, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" in which he discusses the problematic nature of identity. He draws attention to the fact that the positions from which one speaks or writes carry a great significance and carry multiple resonances. Hall states, "Though we speak, so as to say 'in our own name,' from ourselves and our own experience, nevertheless who speaks, and the subject who is spoken of, are never identical, never exactly in the same place" (110). Hall argues that the history and culture, place and time at which one speaks form the context of what one speaks and positions oneself in society. Thus identity becomes a mutable concept, which is affected both by the present location as well as by the past affiliations of an individual. Hall avers, "Cultural identities come from somewhere, have history. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to continuous 'play' of history, culture and power" (112).

Identity thus does not only mean one's defining characteristics like the given name, nationality, language, religion or place of residence, but also the cultural baggage that one carries, the shared cultural norms and historical experiences which

provide frames of reference and understanding to individuals. The cultural identity of people determines their behaviour and choices and their world-view. Jonathan Culler explores the concept of identity taking into consideration both the present and the past of an individual and placing the individual in the context of the social group to which it belongs or in whose proximity it resides. Culler states, "Two basic questions underlie modern thinking on the topic: first, is the self something given or something made and, second, should it be conceived in individual or in social terms?" (108). Keeping in view the different strands that are generated on the basis of the combination of these categories, Culler puts forward four interesting ways to define the self – firstly, the 'I' as something fixed and unique, as given and predetermined, secondly, the 'I' as determined by its social characteristic and origin, as being a female or a male, and having a particular skin colour or nationality. The third definition takes into account "the changing nature of a self" which is reflected by the choices, reactions that one takes, and the fourth defines a person by the social positions one assumes – being rich or poor, a person of authority, or one who is controlled by some authority (108). These few variant definitions of a person's identity in fact comprehensively take into consideration the major markers of his/her identity.

Migrants' literature explores the issues of exile, migration and the formation of new identity in individuals who have migrated from their country of origin to a different land. This new identity is mediated by their adoption of a new culture and language, which nevertheless, cannot entirely replace their native beliefs and expression, and is constantly influenced by them.

Discussing the concept of identity with reference to the diaspora, Susanna Checketts in her essay, "Just Clothes and Ideas? Diasporic Awareness in K.S. Maniam's Fiction" focuses on two basic elements which demarcate the culture of an individual, both for himself and for others: "our outward appearance, the 'clothes,' and our inward beliefs the 'ideas.'" Checketts argues that clothes and ideas carry significance both for the immigrant and the native; and metaphorically speaking refer to the external appearance and the internal thinking of the individual. The immigrants according to the critic, want to retain their clothes and ideas because they are familiar possessions, but on the other hand, want to give up and escape from those aspects of

the ancestral influence which curtail their choices and limit their freedom. Checketts concedes to the fact that both clothes and ideas are impermanent and change with time, and the major influencing forces are "the environment and the interactions with other people which shape and change them" (260). The discontent and confusion an immigrant experiences in a new land is largely due to the difficulty in shedding one's former identity and adopting a new one. An individual's identity is not only external and superficial reflected by one's clothes and behaviour but is also related to the inner self – the thoughts and perspectives with which he views the world.

In *Bye-Bye Blackbird* Anita Desai delineates the plight of the Indian immigrants in England who are fascinated by the host country but feel marginalized as outsiders in England. Desai points out the fact that during their stay in England there is always a weight of colonial consciousness in the minds of Indian immigrants. Purnima Mehta states that there is a patriarchal pattern in Desai's works where her protagonists, "are constantly confronted with the stupendous task of defining their relation to themselves and to their immediate human context" (36). The protagonists Dev and Adit migrate from Calcutta to London to explore their future prospects. At every step they come across various circumstances where they experience the dominance of the colonial country on the Indian immigrants. Desai brings out the insecurity in the minds of the Indian immigrants who feel that they are not well-accepted in England and experience racial discrimination.

Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird* is influenced by her personal experience as an immigrant in UK and USA. Desai states in *The Book I Enjoyed Writing Most* that her mixed parentage and her own diaspora state: "brought two separate stands into my life. My roots are divided because of the Indian soil on which I grew and European culture which I inherited from my mother" (24). Through her protagonists Dev and Adit, Desai depicts her experiences as an Indian immigrant in England in her novel. Desai's protagonists suffer from cultural alienation which generates a sense of insecurity and the anguish of alienation and uprootedness in their minds. Desai deals with the issue of the dislike of the British for the Indian immigrants who come from the country which they once ruled. Desai herself experienced the colonial mentality and the behaviour of the British in England during her stay there.

In the beginning Dev and Adit have individual ambitions and aspirations when they migrate from Calcutta to London. They want to assimilate in the new set-up of the adopted land, and envision their future there. As they live in England they have different experiences and by the end of the novel they reconsider their decision to settle in the country or return to their homeland.

Dev comes to England with the plan to study and return to India as an England-returned teacher and pursue his career in India. After his arrival in London he suffers from loneliness and finds it difficult to adjust there. Dev is unhappy with the behaviour of the natives which he finds humiliating, and realizes that it is difficult to settle in a country where immigrants are not welcome. He observes that the English men do not have sympathy for the Indian immigrants and consider them strangers. As a result he turns into a completely disillusioned man. His very first experience in London is not amicable. He feels that not only immigrants but dead objects like watches also feel disillusioned and do not perform well in England. On the first morning of his arrival there, Dev is surprised when he notes the time in the watch showing, "it was barely five o' clock. He wondered if it had died in the night of inability to acclimatize itself" (5).

In the early days of his arrival in England, Dev finds that Londoners have a different lifestyle as compared to that of Indians. He finds them systematic and savvy with advanced technologies. He realizes he cannot keep pace with the mechanical and modern lifestyle of the Londoners. He feels uneasy in, "super-markets with their pyramids of frozen food packets, delicateness with their continental fruits and wines and cheeses, the clothes shops with their waxy, surprised-eyed models in windows starred with gloves and lace handkerchiefs, the pubs and fish-and-chips shops" (16). He becomes a bit uncomfortable with the high-tech railways and the tube stations which he has never seen in Calcutta before. He does not take pleasure enjoying these privileges; instead he feels suffocated while using these facilities. He compares everything in London with that of Calcutta and considers the lifestyle of the Indians a little inferior to that of the British. He feels claustrophobic in the Clapham tube station and feels trapped there. He thinks his condition in the Tube station is, "like a kafka stranger wandering through the dark labyrinth at a prison" (59).

As Dev explores England, the notion he had in his mind about England changes with his experience. He compares every event taking place in London with situations in India. Dev dreads the silent people and the silent streets in London. He cannot understand the Londoners' attitude of confining themselves to their affairs and not taking interest in their neighbours' life. The natives' silent and reserved nature puzzles Dev. The more he explores the Londoners' ways, the more estranged and alienated he feels there. As Kalpana S. Wandrekar notes that Dev goes to England with the ambition not to settle in England but to return to India after his studies. As he observes the lavish life of the Londoners he feels insecure and probably suffers an inferiority complex. Wandrekar comments, "Dev's experience in England makes him neurotic because he is unable to attach meaning to his experience. He is aware of this state of chaos and confusion in him caused by the outside pressure" (152). Dev compares the English and the Indian lifestyle at every step and becomes a victim of alienation.

The feelings of Dev's alienation intensify to such an extent that he dreams of the familiar Indian environment taking over the unfamiliar English environment in England. He desires that there should be a 'little India' in London where he may feel comfortable and the feeling of being a stranger may not disturb him. Dev wishes to lead the same kind of life in England that he leads in his country. He longs to have a friendly relationship with his neighbours. His loneliness is expressed in his words, "If this were India...I would by now know all my neighbours even if I had never spoken to them I'd know their taste in music by the sound of their radios..." (56).

He goes to the extent of dreaming that India now rules over England. He is amused to think how interesting it would be if Indians got the freedom to travel all around England unrestricted. Dev dreams of the Indians as the rulers of England and thinks, "Let them take over the city, to begin with – let them move into Cheapside and Leaden hall and Cornhill...Then let them spread over the country – the Sikhs with their turbans and swords and the Sindhis with their gold bars and bangles" (61). N. Jayaram comments that immigrants "find in their culture a defense mechanism against a sense of insecurity in alien settings" as Dev does (49). Dev wishes that the temples, mosques and gurudwaras should be built in England and the British high-

tech railways should be abolished. He envisages the propagation of Indian religious thoughts in England where the yogis and gurus would be teaching in the British public schools and only vegetarian food would be served at such places, an England where, "No one shall cook stews any more, or bangers and mash. Let us find them on chilli, pickles, tandoori chicken and rassum. Let all British women take to the graceful sari and all the British men to the noble dhoti..." (62).

Dev's neurotic state gets aggravated and he deviates from his target of completing his studies. Though he considers himself unsuitable for England and feels like a stranger there, he also wants to settle in England and get a job. Dev feels restless due to this double-consciousness. Olivia Espín believes that "identities expected and permitted in the home culture are frequently no longer expected or permitted in the host society" (20). An identity crisis starts dominating his psyche and his life. He starts searching for some job for the time-being but fails to secure one due to his Indian nationality. The interviewers reject him for being a non-Christian. They tell him, "We simply must have a Catholic, or at least a High Church man. It's public relations...I'm afraid it wouldn't do to have a Hindu gentleman in this job" (108).

Dev finds it very difficult to survive in England with no proper job. He even tries his best to become a salesman selling body soaps and perfumes, but does not succeed and this results in lowering his morale and spirits. He longs to return to his homeland, "however abject or dull, where he has at least, a place in the sun, security, status and freedom" instead of leading the life of an unwanted immigrant in England (86). But somewhere despite his inability to secure a job for himself, Dev feels a fascination for English life. He reconsiders his decision of going back to his country and decides to make even more efforts to secure a good job and settle in England. S. Sayyid comments, "A diaspora is formed when people are displaced but continue to narrate their identity in terms of that displacement" (38). Desai brings out the conflict in Dev's mind when he wavers between his decision of returning to India or staying in England. He finds it difficult to choose between the charming life of England and the apparently dull life of India.

A sudden transformation comes in Dev's life during his short stay in Hampshire where he feels connected with the beauty and surroundings of the landscape and feels at home. He feels, "at that moment England had ceased to be an aggressor who tried to enmesh, subjugate and victimize him with weapons of the empire" (223). In Hampshire, the soft and polite behaviour of a maid servant also motivates him to revise his opinion about the Londoners. He recollects his self-confidence and resolves to have an optimistic attitude. Dev forms values that bring in him a positive change in his outlook for England where he now wants to continue living. He changes his mind and thinks, "to seek, discover and win the England of his dreams and reading, the England he had quickly seen was the most poetic, the most innocent and enduring of England, in a secret campaign" (168). Dev finds England a place where he can enjoy his privacy and freedom which he cannot do in India. He drops his idea of going back to India and determines to stay in England.

Dev undergoes so much transformation that he does not consider himself and other Indians "of a once-conquered race, or of an apprehensive and short-sighted visitor, but of someone before whom vistas of love, success and joy had opened" (223). He adopts new values to adjust and respect the culture of England as he decides to settle there. Dev murmurs a prayer for himself and bids his friend Adit and his wife Sarah farewell: "Make my bed and light the light. / I'll arrive late tonight, / Blackbird, bye-bye" (224).

Through Dev's friend Adit, Desai presents how the same environment creates an opposite impact on different individuals. Adit is happy with his job as a clerk at Blue Skies at London and feels a cultural affinity with the English environment. He loves everything about England, "O England's green and grisly land, I love you and only a babu can" (130). He ignores the attitude of the British towards him and other Indians which is sometimes offending and hurtful.

Adit knows that he cannot imagine a little India in England as his friend Dev did, he is thankful for whatever he has been able to achieve there and admires the English ways. At times when he receives a setback by any disturbing situation he compares the quality life the people of England lead as compared to Indians and

resolves to make his stay more comfortable in London. He sees the bright side of London and compares it with the dark side of India. Adit tactfully drives away the thought of going back to India recollecting the kind of life there, "I only notice the laziness of the clerks and the unpunctuality of the buses and trains and the beggars and the flies and the stench – and the boredom...Then I'm mad to get back to England and the nice warm pubs and picks up a glass of Guinness and eye the girls and be happy again" (50). He feels elated considering himself as half-English. Adit wishes that he should create such a good impression upon the English through his behaviour, "dazzling everyone with my oriental wit and fluency" so that the British revise their opinion about Indians (154).

But Adit cannot retain his half-English and half-Indianness for a long time. In the last part of the novel, he longs for his return to India. His longing can be explained through Bhabha's interpretation in "DissemiNation" that the people at the margin, "disturb the ideological manoeuvres through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist identities" (300). The few bitter experiences Adit has at Mrs Roscommon-James' are an eye-opener which make him conscious of the fact that he will always remain an outsider in Britain. Adit regards Sarah's mother as his own mother, however he cannot tolerate being insulted by her. It is Mrs Roscommon-James who points out to him that he is an Indian and will never be accepted by the whites. Such harsh words of his mother-in-law make Adit unhappy. He says, "My mother-in-law hates and despises me. They make fun of the life I lead and the ideals I profess. Therefore I am angry. I am hurt" (176). Mrs Roscommon-James's resentment against her daughter for choosing an Indian husband disturbs him largely. He feels depressed by Mrs Roscommon-James's "sniffs and barks" and realizes that he will never be treated as an equal by her (176).

Adit's gradual understanding that he shall always be considered by the natives as an outsider in their country and never be accepted as a member of their community disturbs his happiness and peace of mind. In his article "Representation and the Colonial Text," Bhabha points out "the hybridity of the colonised and the diasporic is not a case of comfortable multicultural pluralism or gradual synthesis, but is marked by asymmetry, the edgy coexistence of incommensurable experiences and the unpredictable incursion of the uncanny" (105).

At every step Adit is forced to remember that he is not English, but only an Indian immigrant. Adit also recollects Dev's ridiculous remarks at his submissive ways of life and high ideals for the British. Adit feels nostalgic and longs to return to his home country. Adit suffers this sense of loss also because he has always loved England and wished to settle there, but the sense of being an outsider disturbs him to his utmost. This recent transformation in his perception compels him to reconsider his decision. Hodge explains this loss of identity in Adit in the host country where he feels his identity would be no more but that of a stranger only. Hodge says that the immigrants suffer a conflict, "between a state of alienation and a desire to return...a conjunction of past and present: the exotic and every day, in a radically destabilized form" (389).

The Hampshire landscape, the dirty, dusty grounds appear to Adit as if India is calling him back. A sudden transformation occurs in his thoughts and he starts longing for India. In his dreams he longs for Indian food and dresses. According to Sumitra Kurketi, Adit realizes that England can never provide him "liberty, eccentricity and individualism." She further states that Adit becomes conscious of his identity as, "Wherever he goes, he becomes a victim of racial discrimination and apartheid and is constantly regarded as…a second grade citizen…an intruder" (45). Adit feels no bond with England any longer and decides to return to Indian. He says, "Our lives here, they have so unreal, don't you feel it? Little India in London...I've got to go home and start living a real life" (198). Many critics have analyzed the internal suffering of Adit and his sudden detachment from the country he admires the most. Jasbir Jain in her article "The Use of Fantasy in the Novels of Anita Desai" remarks, "Desai uses fantasy not only for creating an alternative reality but also for contrasting the two or more visions of reality projected in a particular work of fiction" (227). Desai uses the narrative technique where both Adit and Dev experience the same circumstances however which influence the men in different ways.

Adit marries an English girl Sarah and by doing so he inadvertently becomes the target of the anger of the British. More than Adit, Sarah has to suffer on this account because by marrying an Indian she has transgressed the social norms of England, and she becomes the target of the taunts and jibes of her acquaintances.

Sarah is a clerk in a school and her colleagues Julia and Miss Pimm take interest in asking about her husband and his family in India. Sarah tries hard to escape personal questions about her Indian husband from her English colleagues.

Sarah feels as if she has no identity of her own and she is now only recognized due to her Indian husband. Sarah's colleagues observe Sarah's uneasiness in sharing the details of her married life with them and think, "if she's ashamed of having an Indian husband, why did she go and marry him?" (4). In B.R. Rao's opinion, "the marriage of English girl Sarah would be an excellent subject for the novel. But there is a brief reference of the first meeting between Sarah and Adit. There is no real attempt made to explain the irresistible passion that impelled an English woman to marry an Indian and break the scorn of English society" (50).

Not only the staff but the English students also taunt her. They intentionally ignore her instructions and pretend not to notice her at all. Sarah is painfully aware of the fact that the remarks, "Hurry, hurry, Mrs. Scurry," and "Where's the fire, pussy cat?" are meant for her (34). Sarah has to tolerate the stress of her interracial marriage which has disturbed her normal daily life. She avoids going to Laurel Lane for shopping which is near her residence because it indicates that she has links with India. Instead she prefers going to big departmental stores which are far off, where nobody will recognize her and she will be saved from the humiliation. Gradually she starts querying herself as to which nation she belongs to since she is tired of hiding from everyone. Sarah has no problems with her marriage to Adit but the social stigma attached to her interracial marriage forces her to avoid meeting her English friends.

She is humiliated by her native friends as she has married an Indian whose race was once ruled over by them. Sarah gets fed-up of putting on appearances and cries, "Where was Sarah? Where was Sarah?" (34). Sarah does not know how long she has to put on the mask of her dual identity. Since she loves Adit and knows that Adit loves her too, Sarah remains calm and does not react. Sarah adjusts with her countrymen and maintains her relationship with her husband and his family in India thereby forming new values of assimilating the cultures of the two countries.

Desai portrays each of her characters with much concern. Through her diaspora character, Desai reflects the deeper psychic strength of her protagonists dealing with an identity crisis in a foreign country. She says in an interview with Dalmia, "I am interested in characters who are not average but have retreated, or been driven into some extremity of despair and so turned against, or made a stand against, the general current" (1). Desai appreciates Sarah's ability to maintain her composure when she is undergoing an identity crisis.

It is the transformation in Adit when he longs to go back to India that makes Sarah to reconsider her position. She does feel irritated observing the new change in Adit and his wish to return to India. Desai notes that Adit's "whole personality seemed to her to have cracked apart into an unbearable number of disjointed pieces, rattling together noisily and disharmoniously" (200). Sarah is herself struggling with identity issues and is also aware of Adit's longing for homeland. Adit's desire to return to his home is intensified by his patriotism which increases with the news and updates he gets about the Indo-Pak war.

Sarah knows that Adit wants her support during this moment of crisis. She is conscious of the fact that if she refuses to go to India with him and decides to stay in England in order to make her identity, "its fragments would not remain jangling together but would scatter, drift and crumble" their married life (200). In Sumitra Kukreti's opinion, "Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird* depicts a circular journey of a soul searching for a perfect life, as she feels that all these immigrants are prone to a schizophrenic and predicament to live or not to live in England" (43).

Sarah is struggling not only for her own identity but also for that of the child in her womb. She wonders what identity he would acquire if she leaves England and goes to India with her husband. R.S. Pathak states that Sarah, "represents, in a sense, all immigrant wives who have their own problems of adjustment when placed in the contexts of cultures at loggerheads" (32). Sarah is afraid that her child would be deprived of his English identity if she chooses to go to India with her husband. However, when Adit declares his final decision, "My son will be born in India" Sarah lets go off all her doubts and decides to accompany Adit to India (204).

However, at the time of her departure, Sarah is sad to leave her place, "It was her English self that was receding and fading and dying, she knew, it was her English self to which she must say good-bye" (221). Thus the title of the novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird* sharply marks the contrast between the binaries black and white, between home and the world and between travel and stability. It aptly describes the different situations the characters Dev, Adit and Sarah experience in England. The title highlights the theme of immigrant experiences of South Asians in the modern western part of the globe.

Desai's characters are flexible in the sense that they show their interest and admiration towards one set-up in the beginning, while by the end of the novel, they find themselves more acculturated in another set of life and turn to it. Adit is presented as a person who adjusts with the ways of London life. In spite of his compromises he makes under given circumstances, he chooses to return to his home country in search of identity. Dev finds fulfilment in England where he has come only as a visitor and settles there. Sarah belongs to the advanced West but being a woman she surrenders to the decision of her husband and opts for settling in India and explore her identity there.

Anita Desai deals with the split psychology of the immigrants, where the immigrants struggle with the double loyalties towards the country of their adoption. They want to see a little India in England, eat Indian food, listen to Indian music and prefer to live in immigrant neighbourhood, however, at one time or the other the immigrants come across such circumstances when they question themselves as to what is their true identity and yearn to search for it. Critics acclaim the diaspora women writers who are contemporary and whose narratives cross geographical boundaries following India's independence. Inderpal Grewal admires such authors like Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni in her book *Transnational America* who were, "born just before or after Indian independence, a generation wrestling with the legacy of colonialism and the problems of decolonization" (40). The diaspora writer Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni also explores the issue of identity crisis as Anita Desai does in her work of fiction. Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices* (1997) focuses on the themes of alienation and self-

transformation by exploring the roots, family, origin, community and identity of the diaspora through her fiction.

The novel *The Mistress of Spices* deals with the struggle of the protagonist Tilo, where she attempts to resolve the dilemma of her true being and finally attains holistic growth. An individual's identity is defined by the nation he belongs to. However, Tilo comes to terms with her identity as a resident in a foreign country even after travelling from place to place. Divakaruni's protagonist is an adventurous and courageous lady influenced by the Western liberal outlook of life. Divakaruni presents a kind of compromise between the pressures of the past and the pulls of the present showing her protagonist's attempt to negotiate between her life in India and the new world after her migration there.

Indian diaspora writers often focus on the emotional conflict experienced by immigrants who have chosen to live in a foreign land but who are torn by the desire to return to their homeland. Diaspora women writers like Anita Desai, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Jhumpa Lahiri and Bharati Mukherjee present the emotional dilemma of people who have been displaced from their home country and who are in search of their true identity which takes into account both – their indigenous roots, as well as their adopted homeland. The protagonists in their novels struggle to acquire a sense of their true being as they are influenced by the culture and tradition of the foreign land while they cannot completely give up their old beliefs and way of life. This internal conflict is intensified by the attitude and the response of the natives towards immigrants, since the indigenous people are often hostile to outsiders.

Divakaruni in her novel *The Mistress of Spices* (1997) presents the psychological dilemma of the immigrants through an imaginative rendering of the problem. She sets the novel in the realistic landscape of America but constructs characters that are a blend of reality and fantasy. An Indian by origin, Divakaruni's protagonist Tilo has mystical powers and lives in America and uses her supernatural powers to heal people who are suffering. However, these powers deny her the choice to reveal her inner self to others as a result of which she has to live an isolated and secretive life. Tilo is aware of the fact that her wish to be free will take away her

extraordinary powers of conversing with the spices and she will also lose the ability to heal others with her intuitive knowledge. The narrative focuses on Tilo's emotional conflict and her quest for a more valued holistic identity which integrates her personal desires as well as her social responsibility to the world outside. Tilo's conflict is representative of the dilemma experienced by all the diaspora as they search for their identity in a foreign land.

Tilo lives her life as a diaspora, and travels from place to place early in her life. Initially Tilo sails upon a ship to the island of mistresses known as kalapani or 'dark water.' The term was used with reference to the indentured labourers or immigrants to other foreign lands, who today are also called diaspora. Ashcroft defines the term diaspora as "cultural and ethnic groups which while living outside the countries of their birth, are held together by shared cultural, social and religious commitments, and, who suffer from the common sense of exile from the place of their origin" (48). For Tilo the entire notion of the home means displacement, transformed into an intangible condition that is not based on a singular location but rather a movement across many places. Home is a place of belonging, of relationships, of comfort and happiness, whereas exile suggests distancing and alienation.

An exiled individual is separated from his homeland and has been dislocated from his culture and ventures free into a new country to lead his life. In *Reflections on Exile: & Other Literary and Cultural Essays* Edward Said says, "Such an intellectual is 'organic' because he or she operates as a focus of transformation and change in society" (18). Such a person has to incorporate two sides of life; to see things that are left behind and to think what he has to gain. Tilo's exile too does not mean her detachment from her mother country in true sense of the term. Rather she uses her skills for her survival and for attaining new values while upholding her culture in the country of adoption. Tilo's journey to America is a form of rebirth; it is a literal creation of the self. Tilo's journey in itself is a redefinition of the self and an extension of the conflict that the Indian women face in establishing their identity as an individual.

Edward Said in his article, *The Public Role of Writers and Intellectuals* asserts that a writer plays an integral role in "testifying to a country's or a region's experience, thereby giving that experience a public identity forever inscribed in the global discursive agenda" (27). Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices* has several fantastic strands mingled with the life story of Tilo, the protagonist, yet it highlights the issues related to immigrants and their status in a foreign land. The many immigrant experiences shared with the reader in the novel are representations of Divakaruni's interaction with the immigrant women at MAITRI, a referral non-profit organization run by her, based in the San Francisco bay area to help the women who suffer from domestic violence. Her novels often dwell on this social problem and many of her women characters are portrayed as the victims of domestic abuse.

In *The Mistress of Spices* Divakaruni brings out the intricate and multifaceted identity issues faced by immigrants with special reference to the Indian women living in USA. Tilo as well as the other characters in the novel seem to struggle for their individual and collective identities. Inderpal Grewal comments that some upper-caste South Asian migrants who were "born just before or after Indian independence, a generation wrestling with the legacy of colonialism and the problems of decolonization" migrated to the United States and produced such work of art that projected their diasporic experiences (40). Most of the characters in this novel are shown to have migrated from India to the bay area of California as she herself has done. Tilo's migration to Oakland, California stands for change and her struggle for identity. Through her character Divakaruni exhibits the complexity of the problem of identity crisis that the Indian immigrants undergo in an alien country.

Homi Bhabha discusses in "DissemiNation," the issue of cultural identity as the pivotal issue in postcolonial literature. He states, "From the margins of modernity, at the insurmountable extremes of storytelling, we encounter the question of cultural difference as the perplexity of living and writing" (313). Tilo, the mistress of spices, has to adopt many disguises to hide her extraordinary powers, and changes her name from Nayan Tara to Bhagyavati to Tilottama and finally to Maya. It reveals the multiple identities she is caught among and her desire to search for her true identity. Espin asserts that the migration creates stress and strain in the mind of the

immigrants and they start searching their identity, "Identity is subject to change throughout life. However, social forms of trauma, such as migration, shake its foundations like nothing else" (21).

In her childhood Tilo as Nayan Tara has suffered loneliness and a sad life. She acquires a little recognition when she is chosen by the First mother to render her services to the spices. Forbidden by the First Mother to enter into a close relationship with any individual, Tilo's life is devoid of excitement. She has been trained in the ancient craft of spices and initiation in the rite of fire. The First Mother instructs Tilo to open a spice shop in Oakland, California and establishes her as the healer, who is supposed to prescribe spices as the remedy for her clients' problems.

Divakaruni explores in the novel the conflict between belonging and distancing and the human need to integrate with the society and the milieu around. Tilo's commitment to her job comes in her way to live her life the way she likes to. She longs to grow young and beautiful and venture in the outside world. But her ties to her service forbid her to think for herself. Thus Tilo is fragmented between her past in the old world and future in the present world. Tilo's internal conflict is the representation of Divakaruni's personal conflict as a migrant settled in California. Sandra Ponzanesi comments that the diaspora women writers' "very quality of dispossession – a kind of haunting by otherness – is migrant literature's greatest strength" (11). Ponzanesi adds that because of the "separation from tradition and obligations, [immigration] is not a process devoid of pain and alienation" (12).

Tilo develops a friendly relationship with her clients through her honesty and concern and ventures out to share their feelings and anxieties. Tilo makes many compromises in the effort to deal with her clients and yet stays alienated, as the spices remind her repeatedly the rules and promises she is bound with. However, once Tilo takes a bold step to step out of her enclosed world she is unable to resist her urge to explore the new world. This is her first step to reinvent her identity despite the spices' warnings. Tilo resolves not to confine herself to the spice store that prohibits her from searching for her own happiness and contentment. She promises to herself, "I must step onto the forbidden concrete floor of America, leaving behind the stores as I am supposed to do" (226).

Once boldly entering the outer world in Oakland, Tilo meets and tries to help the other Indian immigrants who had been her customers. She breaks her shell and reaches Geeta's office to solve the conflict in her family. She convinces Geeta that her family members have given their consent to let her marry according to her own choice. Tilo again steps out of her tea shop to extend her help to Haroun by nursing him after he has been attacked by robbers. Violating the rules of the spices, she helps him regain his health so he may marry Hameeda, the sister of his neighbour. Tilo helps another lonely Indian immigrant woman Lalita who is tortured by her husband, by offering her not the spices, but a newspaper clipping mentioning the address of an emergency shelter for women. By encouraging Lalita not to surrender herself against her fate, Tilo herself gains the self-confidence to search for her own happiness.

The diaspora women feel themselves caught into multiple cultures. They are members of their ethnic group, as well as new members of the overarching culture of the host country. Margaret Abraham points out that "ethnicity, gender, class, race, and citizenship are all important aspects of the construction of self and community for South Asian immigrants in the United States" (198). Tilo in *The Mistress of Spices* wavers between India and America, her longing for the new world and the duties towards the old world. Tilo's growing attraction towards Raven tempts her to transform into a young woman. She does not wish to lose the love of Raven, a Native American who brings happiness in her life. Both Tilo and Raven struggle to balance between their original identity that they have left behind in their place of upbringing and their new undefined identity in the new land, thus try to explore new values that help them attain their selfhood.

Tilo is trapped between her responsibility as the mistress of spices and her inner desire for Raven's love and a normal human life. Trinh Minh-ha comments upon the writings of the postcolonial women writers, "An insider can speak with authority about her own culture, and she's referred to as the source of authority in this manner" (417). Minh-ha comments upon the dilemma that immigrants experience, "The search for an identity is…usually a search for that lost, pure, true, real, genuine, original, authentic self, often situated within a process of elimination of all that is considered other, superfluous, fake, corrupted, or Westernized" (415).

Tilo and Raven talk freely about their selves and their differences due to their cross-cultural ties. Initially, Tilo hides her true self as an aged woman. Raven also takes time to reveal that he presents himself as a native American but is not aware of his true identity as his mother had concealed his father's true identity from him. As Tilo and Raven become informal and close, they honestly reveal their true identities to each other. Tilo gets excited about Raven's ways, "Ah, my American, perhaps at last I have found someone with whom I can share how it is to live the Mistress life, that beautiful, terrible burden" (216). She rebels against the spices to venture into a world so far unexplored by her. She longs for a new identity, and she asks Raven to give her a new name, "My Tilo life is over, and with it that way of calling myself…One that spans my land and yours, India and America, for I belong to both now. Is there such a name?" (337).

Raven names her Maya which means, "illusion, spell, enchantment, the power that keeps this imperfect world going day after day" (338). Tilo's wish to get a new identity through a new name adds to the complexity of her identity. Deepika Bahri comments, "as a woman and an immigrant, her identity is constantly in negotiation" (149). Bahri continues that Tilo's complex identity can be taken as "a transnational hybridized identity" (152). Tilo has to struggle a lot to acquire the happiness and personal satisfaction she desires. Finally Tilo's multiple identities are merged together in her new identity as Maya. She overcomes all the limitations enforced upon her and attains her own self and decides to lead her life with Raven in America.

Divakaruni portrays the character of Tilo who is a genuine representation of diaspora identity. She is an embodiment of all diasporic paradigms. Tilo finally resolves the conflict in her mind and establishes her own identity which assimilates her traditional and the modern American ways of life. Since her birth in India, Tilo has travelled over the seas, has trained to be a mistress of spices on an island, but finally she settles down in America with her male counterpart. Tilo gives the message that Indian immigrants can attain a holistic growth and true identity when they learn to form new values of amicable living in a new place through a fine synthesis of Indian and American values.

The Mistress of Spices is a postmodernist novel that presents the survival strategies of Indian immigrants in America and their search for identity. From the voice of Tilo and other Indian immigrants, Divakaruni traces the nuances of the immigrants' formation of new values for their acceptance and assimilation in the country of their settlement. Divakaruni presents similar conflict of identity among the Indian immigrants in America in her novel *Queen of Dreams.* The characters in this novel suffer trauma in wake of the 9/11 events and are bound to reconsider their identity. Divakaruni also explores the emptiness, loneliness and the feeling of being an outsider, the first and the second generation experience in the country of their adoption.

Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams* deals with the racial trauma and violence after the catastrophic events of 9/11 in America. In this novel Divakaruni portrays the lives of Mrs Gupta's family who are Indian immigrants in California and struggle to find their identity in mainstream America without losing connection with their Indian roots. She discusses issues like racial violence and hate crimes against non-whites which erupted after the 9/11 events. Divakaruni also discusses the aftermath of the event when the Indian immigrants in USA were ill-treated due to the colour of their skin after the terrorist attack. Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams* receives praise from *San Francisco Chronicle*, "Magical. In lyrical, poetic prose, Divakaruni manages to be hopeful without offering false reassurances, showing how identity – both individual and communal – is equally shaped by loss and creation" (*chitradivakaruni.com*).

In *Queen of Dreams* Divakaruni draws on her own experiences and those of other immigrant Indian women. In an interview with Terry Hong, Divakaruni talks about her research that explores the mystery of the attacks and her study of the immigrants' reactions to the catastrophic event. Divakaruni states in the interview, "For Rakhi, the book's central character, and her mother, reality operates very differently. More than anything else I've written, the novel questions how we arrive at our notion of reality and whether there is just one reality." The novel is concerned with the challenging issues of identity and nationality confronting the second and third generation in today's Indian-American community.

Divakaruni brings in the concept of immigrants' conflict between acquired values and adopted ones in *Queen of Dreams*. The novel also deals with the theme of the identity crisis experienced by Indian immigrants post 9/11. Rakhi, the America-born daughter of the Indian immigrant Mrs Gupta, is a painter and owns a tea shop. Rakhi has already experienced ups and downs in her life as an emancipated, middle-class immigrant in California because of her single mother status. As the owner of a tea shop in her own right, Rakhi realizes for the first time in her life the difficulties of living without a husband, and tries to come to terms with the emotional lacuna in her life.

After the 9/11 attacks, she experiences the conflict of her being, about her roots, and explores questions of belonging. Rakhi has to reconsider her early opinion about the white natives who attack her Indian guests at her tea shop, and she is forced to introspect about her identity, when the Americans consider Rakhi and her friends terrorists due to the brown colour of their skin. Vijay Mishra feels that diaspora writers portray a sense of trauma and mourning for the homeland, "the traumatic moment may be seen as crystallizing that loss, as a sign around which memory gives itself to the past. And the loss, the trauma, persists because there is no substitution for it in the 'new object of love'" (35). Mishra explains that mourning is a continuous process where diaspora search for their roots and mourn the loss of their homeland.

When Mrs Gupta's family settles in Berkeley, they feel that they are living in an in-between condition as their position is that of the outsiders who have no land to call their own and have to struggle for their survival and acceptance in the American society. The diaspora writings reflect the feeling of dislocation as experienced by immigrants in a foreign country. In her book *The Diaspora Writes Home* Jasbir Jain states for *Queen of Dreams*, "there is the human interplay of terrorism, dark, somewhat sinister. The other more close to our positive feelings is the writers' capturing of the 'living' energy of the passengers as they make their way to India..." (148).

Divakaruni explores not only the question of identity of the diaspora but also racial issues through Rakhi. Rakhi encounters the crisis of identity as a second

generation diaspora in America. As the daughter of Indian immigrants and with her upbringing in America, Rakhi has to come to terms with her dual identity. She is fragmented in her hyphenated existence – an Asian American. Rakhi experiences the effect of this dual identity largely after the September 11 events in America. Her tea house which sells Indian food adapted to American tastes runs successfully where not only the Indian immigrants but also the whites come and enjoy the ethnic ambience of the shop. To make it more homely, Rakhi sets the menu with tempting Bengali snacks and thus, gets more attached and involved in her newly-started business.

Rakhi observes the Indian clients coming to her café and notices their dresses. She notes that, "While some wear western clothes and some are in kurta-pajamas" but they "share the same skin colour" (194). She further says that their lined faces show their age and give hints about "their living in alien land in many difficulties and less triumphs" (193-94). Rakhi feels that though they have adopted the western lifestyle, they still do not consider themselves Americans and prefer to dress up like Indians. Rakhi has the same skin colour as them but she prefers American ways of life. Rakhi is caught between two worlds of experiences, that of America and India, and cannot locate her identity clearly. In Avtar Brah's opinion, such variable identities are "constituted within the crucible of the materiality of everyday life; in the everyday stories we tell ourselves individually and collectively" (183). Rakhi constantly negotiates her identity, connecting on the one hand with the Indian community settled in California, and the adopted culture and lifestyle of America. All the Indian visitors who create an Indian aura in her tea house seek a sense of belonging in her café but at the same time, seem to feel insecure in the Indian café.

The hate crimes erupted after the 9/11 events shatter all humanity, and violence is unleashed in America. On account of the bomb blast on the World Trade Centre the immigrants fear a threat to their life. The owner of Java café, a part of a popular franchise which is running successfully just opposite Rakhi's tea shop, does not seem to appreciate the increasing number of Indian visitors at Rakhi's tea shop. He puts up the American flag behind the Java café thus announcing his American identity and advises Rakhi to close shop early. He advises her so that being an Indian by origin; Rakhi may escape any unpleasant situation which may arise due to

the unrest created by the terrorists' attacks. However, Rakhi keeps the shop open as usual, which is attacked by hooligans and she has to suffer a set back. It was a bad experience for Rakhi and her family. Jasbir Jain states in her article "Foreignness of Spirit: The World of Bharati Mukherjee's Novels" that some may consider the adopted country as a grave, "where we can place flowers as a fragrant presence of a memory, others which are mass graves, badly dug, in which bodies are lying over one-another…" (13).

Rakhi and her Indian immigrant friends are attacked in the tea house by the Americans who call themselves 'patriots'. The attackers shout at them for keeping the shop open and ask questions about their identity. They mouth foul words and disgrace the Indian immigrants by spitting on them. Their tone indicates that they condone violence under extenuating circumstances. The attackers are not biased with an Indian woman running the shop but as Caitrin Lynch considers the abuse caused by them is an, "immigration-related problems rather than by gendered inequities in the culture" (425). The attackers humiliate the Indians: "You ain't no American! Its fuckers like you who planned this attack on the innocent people of this country. Time someone taught you faggots a lesson" (267). Rakhi feels a sense of loss of her identity, "But if I wasn't American then what was I?" (271). Rakhi who has been born and brought up in USA in all American ways interrogates herself as to who she is and what her identity is. Thus, terrorism causes multiple stresses and Rakhi has to reconsider her identity and wonders about the location of her 'home.'

The portrayal of the situations Rakhi and other Indian immigrants face after the 9/11 attacks is influenced by Divakaruni's experience of living in America during the Hurricane Katrina devastation. Divakaruni in her interview "I Explore Complex Diaspora Identities," talks, "I observed lives threatened by catastrophes and a whole range of behaviours. What could people do during a crisis? And I wanted to explore people like us stuck with strangers during disasters, when their behaviour becomes extreme." In the same interview Divakaruni states, "there was so much distress in America that it led to an inter-cultural breakdown. Some of our communities were targeted. Many of our adults shut themselves off from other cultures. I tried to bring children of Indian and other cultures together in my literature."

Not only Rakhi's immigrant friends, the entire diaspora community in America also suffers the effects of the terrorist attack. There is an aura of hatred and fear mixed with a sense of insecurity due to the racial riots in the aftermath of 9/11. The natives are not violent basically; however through these actions they reflect their hidden distrust for the diaspora and the non-Americans. Rakhi becomes baffled to observe how she has suddenly become an outsider in a land that she was born and brought up in. Ranajit Guha asserts that "to be in a diaspora is already to be branded by the mark of distance" and as a result the immigrant becomes an outsider to his home country and also in his host country (155). After this harrowing experience Rakhi feels that the targeted people in such racial conflict lose their sense of belonging in this country.

Divakaruni presents the fact that the racial attacks paved way to restore survival values and initiated a quest for self among the diaspora in another sense. The immigrants display a sense of unity and coming together as a repercussion of the racial violence. In an interview with Uma Girish, Divakaruni brings the two facets of the immigrants especially in the alien country – the one where the first generation immigrants long for their homeland and the other where "the second generation is trying to connect back with the homeland." Rakhi reconsiders her notion about her husband Sonny and other well-wishers who help her and family from the attackers and protect them. She now considers them trustworthy people in her life.

Rakhi has had a break-up with her husband Sonny and lives separately from him. However, Sonny fights for Rakhi and her father with the attackers in the shop and protects his family. Thus, the terrorist attack on Rakhi's tea shop helps them to come close once again. She becomes grateful to her husband for extending his help when she needed it most. She forgives him for his indifference to the club event where he could not listen to her shouts and thus did not rescue her from the rapists.

Rakhi also comes much closer to her daughter, Jona after the attack. Rakhi is proud to observe that Jona inherits her grandmother Mrs Gupta's dream-telling talent. Rakhi knows what it means to possess this talent. Rakhi herself has suffered her parents' love because of this talent of her mother. However, Rakhi lets Jona go

her way and search for her talent, despite knowing the fact that the gift Jona possesses is also "a terrible weight she'll have to carry...by herself" (283). Rakhi allows her daughter to explore her abilities and create her identity as the third-generation immigrant in America.

Mrs Gupta, the dream-interpreter struggles all her life to find her identity in a world which is torn by violence and enmity like all other immigrants. Mrs Gupta has double strands about her identity. Through her Indian origin and the dream-interpreting talent, a virtue she owes to India, she has an Indian identity, whereas, her present home America creates her diaspora identity. Mrs Gupta does not caste away her Indianness. She has a great store of memories that she carries with her from her native land India. Divakaruni brings in the issue that the diaspora are influenced by the memory of their past life in their homeland. In the Introduction to the volume *The Diaspora Writes Home*, Jasbir Jain expresses the view that all these memories create their own clusters and individually or collectively contribute to interrogate her identity (7). Jain explains that memory finds a central place in the diaspora writings and the diaspora writers use the memories of their home country and present it in their works. In Jain's opinion Divakaruni though has a self-enclosed world of hers, but her writing reaches "a different category of readership, which perhaps occupies a different space, reality and history" (69).

Apart from her identity crisis Rakhi also suffers from an emotional conflict. Mrs Gupta neglects Rakhi as she engages in the quest to know about her past life in India and explore her dream-telling powers. Rakhi considers herself as an abandoned child when she is kept aloof from her mother's profession. She feels neglected and unloved as her mother's priorities lay with her profession rather than with her family. This attitude of Mrs Gupta creates a distance between her and her family.

Rakhi's relationship with her father is also superficial. Rakhi longs for her father's attention too but Mr Gupta confines himself to drinking and does not provide her the emotional support she needs. They exchange very little conversation when Rakhi is young. It is through the translation of the Bengali journals into English after the death of Mrs Gupta that the interaction between Mr Gupta and his daughter

Rakhi increases and both come closer. Rakhi is impressed by her father's ability to comprehend and interpret her mother's journals. She also vindicates him for being responsible for her mother's death. Rakhi is later helped by her father to run her tea shop. His advice and constant support in order to resolve the few problems in the setting up of her business strengthen the trust and understanding between them.

Apparently the Gupta family is divided in its loyalties, yet the aftermath of 9/11 racial riots brings Rakhi's broken family together. Rakhi's mother passes away in a road accident but her death opens the doors of their house to happiness and togetherness. Despite suffering in different ways, each member of the family moves towards success and stability in life. *Pittsburgh Tribune* comments for *Queen of Dreams*, "Rakhi's first steps to reconciliation come when a family member dies, and the horror of 9/11 creates another opportunity for resolving longstanding issues of alienation. This type of material can easily slip into melodrama, but Divakaruni resists easy solutions. Her prose is crisp, and the elegant rhythms of Divakaruni's native Indian tongue give "*Queen of Dreams*" an exotic – and yes, dreamlike – quality" (*chitradivakaruni.com*).

Through Rakhi's character Divakaruni tries to portray the struggle she had to face during her stay in the country where it became difficult for the immigrants to live as freely as they were living before the 9/11 events. In her interview with Terry Hong, Divakaruni states that she wanted a theme for her novel which might make the readers more compassionate towards other people, so she picked up the issues of immigrants' reactions and suffering post 9/11 attacks. Divakaruni explains, "If I could make the pain and the hope powerful enough in the book, then maybe I might stop some prejudices out there and have some sort of counter-effect to what followed 9/11."

Thus, while the terrorist attack for all Americans is a revelation of the destructive power of hatred, it also sparked in the Indian immigrants a new faith in their Indian values and inspired them to search for their past, for their roots. As Rakhi goes through her mother's dream journals after the latter's death, she discovers her mother's long-kept secrets and sacrifices, and her past in India. Rakhi is able to confront her fears and develops a new bond with her husband Sonny, her father Mr

Gupta and her daughter Jona. Krista Comer says that although, "the most politically effective way to relandscape the West of today is via an ethic of transnational, postmodern, feminist solidarity" yet it is not the immediate antidote to racism and abuse (240). The negative forces of terrorism in the adopted country do not deter Rakhi but motivate her to develop a survival instinct, by believing in herself and in her values. The other immigrants also review their faith in each other and emerge as stronger and more confident individuals.

In *Queen of Dreams* Divakaruni portrays independent and introspective women through the characters of Rakhi and Mrs Gupta who pass through many ups and downs in their life, however, accept their position as immigrants. They observe the host country with sensitivity and objectivity and form new values to adjust with their immigrant existence. As Divakaruni chooses America the background of many of her novels, Jhumpa Lahiri also sets her novel *The Namesake* in America and depicts the conflict of identity, the first and the second generation Indian immigrants face there. Lahiri was born in England and migrated to Rhodes Island, USA with her parents who were Bengali by origin. Thus Lahiri bears a diaspora identity. She depicts her diaspora experience in her debut novel *The Namesake.*

Lahiri has herself experienced the crisis of identity being the child of Indian immigrants. She portrays the same conflict in her protagonist Gogol, the son of Ashoke and Ashima, the first generation Indian immigrants in America in *The Namesake*. The plot of *The Namesake* has autobiographical resonances. She states in an interview with *Hinduism*, "The terrain is very much the terrain of my own life – New England and New York, with Calcutta always hovering in the background. Now that the writing is done I've realized that America is a real presence in the book; the characters must struggle and come to terms with what it means to live here, to be brought up here, to belong and not belong here." Her own experiences of living in America as an immigrant are transcribed in the novel.

Lahiri herself has seen her parents torn between their dual identities leading to a search for the self that has no end. The two cultures her parents are caught between are poles apart and they cannot maintain ties between them. Lahiri states in

the same interview with *Hinduism*, "My parents were fearful and suspicious of America and American culture when I was growing up. Maintaining ties to India, and preserving Indian traditions in America, meant a lot to them." Lahiri has closely observed her parents' dilemma caused by their allegiance to the country of their origin and the country of their adoption. In her interview with *National Public Radio* titled "Jhumpa Lahiri on Cross-Cultural Identity" Lahiri shares her parents' conflict because of their dual identities of India and America: "They always feel like they have a foot in two separate boats on the water, and each of the boats is floating and wanting to go in its own direction, and you're sort of stuck in between, not knowing which to go into."

Lahiri undergoes an identity conflict as she is considered a stranger in both the countries. In India she is a foreign born girl: an American. In America she is the daughter of Indian immigrants: an Indian. She has no place to call her own. Lahiri faces this perpetual dilemma that she presents in *The Namesake* where through Gogol's character; Lahiri portrays her experience as a diaspora. Jagdish Batra explains the difficulties the foreign-born children of the diaspora have to face. He explains that the first generation immigrants show their concern for, "adaptation and learning acculturing and also discovering new things about themselves." For the second generation immigrants Batra gives his opinion that they are "presented with two conflicting realities and cultures and sets of expectations – one of the host countries through the socio-cultural surroundings and the other of the home country through their parents" (50).

Gogol represents the foreign-born children of Indian diaspora in America who are not keen to adopt the cultural values of the home country that their parents want to inculcate in them. Gogol considers himself an American because of his birth there. However it is ironic that despite his birth in America he does not possess an American identity. He struggles for his cultural identity but he is torn between the two countries of belonging and cannot associate with any one of them. Gogol wants to mingle with his peer group and enjoy his identity as an American which he has assumed as his own. But his parents of Indian origin draw his attention towards their country and cultural values from time to time. Stuart Hall comments that this

situation is quite natural for the second generation diaspora. They undergo self-introspection about their identity and start considering "critical points of deep and significant difference which constitute what we really are; or rather – since history has intervened – what we have become" (112).

On a personal note, the trauma of identity that Lahiri herself has experienced in her life is due to her name which she presents through Gogol in *The Namesake.* Lahiri depicts through the novel that a name is what is given to a child as the first thing, in certain cases it becomes the cause for a crisis of his identity too. Lahiri contradicts the maxim which says, 'What's in a name?' in her novel *The Namesake*. Lahiri has herself suffered an identity crisis due to her first name. In her novel, Lahiri emphasizes the importance of the first name to highlight the notion that it is someone's name that signifies his first identity. It is a common practice in Indian culture to give a pet name to a child and it is different from the formal name given to him. Pet names are used by close acquaintances like family members and friends while the formal names are used for all official purposes. Pet names are often meaningless, funny words which are chosen only out of love for a child.

Jhumpa Lahiri was given the proper name Nilanjana Sudeshna after her birth. However, her parents call her by the pet name Jhumpa. Lahiri does not like to be called by her pet name. She cannot connect herself to her American peer group with this funny Indian pet name Jhumpa. The identity crisis that Lahiri underwent for her namesake reflects that 'it's everything that matters in a name." It is the same pathos that Lahiri depicts in the character of Gogol who does not like to be called by his pet name Gogol. The humiliation that Lahiri experienced in her life is reflected in the embarrassing situations Gogol finds himself caught in *The Namesake.*

Gogol feels isolated in the friends circle because of his unusual name. His mother Ashima was pregnant when she migrated to America. She had come from a joint family in India so she longed for her mother and other relatives' presence at the time of her delivery as it is a common custom in Calcutta. However she gives birth to Gogol in a hospital where there are no relatives or parents to attend to her and welcome her son. When she first sees her son after his birth, she feels: "she has

never known a person entering the world so alone" (24). Thus loneliness gets affixed to Gogol since his birth.

The crisis of Gogol's pet name begins since his birth which he suffers all his life. Ashima desires that her grandmother from Calcutta should suggest a name for the new-born baby as per the Indian culture. The grandmother suggests the name of her choice through a letter but the letter gets lost in transit and does not reach Ashima before that she can be relieved from the hospital. The hospital authorities urge Ashoke and Ashima to think of a name for their son which they have to keep on records before allowing them to leave the hospital. In this hustle, Ashoke cannot think of any other name but the one Nikolai Gogol, his favourite Russian author. Ashoke asks the hospital officials to record his son's name as Gogol which is the second name of his favourite writer. Ashoke thinks that as it is a custom to give a pet name to a newly-born baby, it is fine to call his son Gogol and plans to name him properly later on. By naming his son after his favourite author, Ashoke offers his gratitude towards Nikolai Gogol whose book is the savior of his life in the train wreck.

To Ashoke, Gogol is a lucky name which stands for his survival. However this pet name becomes the issue of identity crisis for his son Gogol himself. At the time of his admission in school, Ashoke and Ashima give their son the formal name Nikhil, but Gogol does not respond to his new name. His teacher suggests that if their son is comfortable with his name Gogol, let it be his first name. Thus Gogol's pet name becomes his proper name for which he suffers all his life.

In the same interview with *National Public Radio* titled "Jhumpa Lahiri on Cross-cultural identity" Lahiri shares, "I'm like Gogol in that my pet name inadvertently became my good name. I have two other names on my passport and my birth certificate (my mother couldn't settle on just one). But when I was enrolled in school the teachers decided that Jhumpa was the easiest of my names to pronounce" and gradually it became her formal name. In the same way, the protagonist Gogol does not feel any emotional bond with his pet name. The name Gogol appears to him neither Indian nor American but indicates a third identity, that is, Russian. His name Gogol "sounds ludicrous to his ears, lacking dignity of gravity" (76). Thus Gogol's

name raises the question of identity in front of him since childhood. Oliva Espín explains that not only the first-generation immigrants have to face the difficulties due to the migration, "Migration also produced psychological effects for the immigrants' descendants beyond the obvious fact that the younger generation was born or grow into adulthood in the new country" (16).

Gogol is not happy with his strange name which is an Indian pet name, rather wishes to replace it with a good name. He wants a proper name like any other American, so that he can feel connected to it. He does not wish that he should be given an American name, but the unusual pet name Gogol seems to him which does not define his real identity. After Gogol attains adulthood and enters Yale as a freshman, he gets baptized and replaces his name with Nikhil without informing his parents about this decision.

With the rejection of his name Gogol that his parents had given him, Gogol rejects his immigrant identity; and the adopted name does not make him complete and authentic either. Gogol stays disillusioned, "After eighteen years of Gogol, two months of Nikhil feels scant, inconsequential" (105). He transits between his two identities as he cannot detach himself completely from his past and his memories. Whenever he visits his home he is transformed into his older identity as nobody in his family calls by his new name Nikhil. At home, "Nikhil evaporates and Gogol claims him again" (106). Gogol struggles for a single comprehensive identity. He wishes that he should be absorbed and adapted in the American society and recognized by his new identity. However he finds that he will always be a second generation Indian immigrant there and cannot claim an American identity.

Though Gogol believes that his identity changes with the change of name, yet he does not respond as quickly and promptly to the name Nikhil, which he used to in response to the name Gogol. At Yale he likes it when others calls him by his new name Nikhil. But somewhere he longs for his pet name too. In the beginning, Gogol feels relieved of his inner conflict and stays happy and confident with the acquired namesake identity. Soon, he realizes that, "he does not feel like Nikhil" since he has changed his name (105). He feels that his identity is lost somewhere. He

longs to be called by his past name to feel himself associated with his past identity. As Peter Barry records, "Fanon argued that the first step for 'colonised' people in finding a voice and an identity is to reclaim their own past" (193). Gogol starts feelings a sense of loss of his original identity which his parents have given to him: "Without people in the world to call him Gogol, no matter how long he himself lives, Gogol Ganguli will, once and for all, vanish from the lips of loved ones, and so, cease to exist. Yet the thought of this eventual demise provides no sense of victory, no solace. It provides no solace at all" (289).

Lahiri brings out the diaspora condition of the second generation immigrants who are trapped in two identities through the character of Gogol in *The Namesake*. Howsoever Gogol longs for his friends to consider him an American native, his friends tell him, "But you're Indian" (157). The native American friends consider him 'ABCD' meaning "American-born confused deshi" (118). The crisis of a diaspora is very well portrayed by Lahiri when a foreign-born child of an Indian immigrant is not considered as a native American, moreover when he does not feel associated with his Indian identity either. Nikhil struggles to explore what is his position and who he is. He realizes that it is the name that contributes in the formation of existential values of his being somewhere. Nikhil feels himself a completely disillusioned person.

A great transformation comes again in Gogol's life after the death of his father. While performing the rituals according to the Indian customs, Nikhil realizes that because he is a second generation diaspora, he may never attain a single identity. He resolves to accept his dual identity. He determines to live his diaspora identity as he cannot completely adopt one culture and discard the other one. Hall comments that the second generation immigrants understand this self-realization and come to terms with their "identity as a production, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside representation" (10). Gogol resolves to try his best to assimilate into American culture and values, and simultaneously respect the culture of his parents' homeland.

Through the character of Gogol, Lahiri indicates that though the diaspora are always stuck in an in-between position of their past and present identities, they form new values of adjustment where they try to compromise with their immigrant status. Mabel Fernandes has a similar opinion. He states that the second generation immigrant finally comes, "to rediscover his roots, his self, his hyphenated identity and to revitalize the in betweenness of cultures, the alternate culture" (117).

Lahiri brings in the issue of naming as the theme of her novel. She gives all the major characters significant names that reflect their identity and personality. It is true in the sense that Ashoke stands for an Indian emperor, meaning, "he who transcends grief" (26). Ashoke wins over his tragic fate during the train wreck and justifies his name. The name Ashima means without boundaries, "she who is limitless, without borders" (26). Ashima justifies her name as she shows her immense adaptation to the western culture. Though she respects her native Indian culture, she quickly learns all the American ways preserving her Indian values and tries her best to pass them on to her children. Nikhil is a Bengali name, meaning, "he who is entire, encompassing all" (56). Nikhil incorporates in his name Indian, American and Russian identities. Gogol owes the first three letters of his name Nikhil to the Russian writer Nikolai Gogol's first name.

The meaning of Moushumi, Gogol's wife's name is, "A damp southwesterly breeze" (240). Moushumi is a free-willed girl who though loves him, is more of a career-oriented girl. After her marriage to Gogol, Moushumi refuses to change her surname to Ganguli and refuses to acquire a new identity. She prefers to continue with her second name Mazumdar because she feels she is known by this name and has earned her position with this identity. Her name Moushumi Mazumdar is on office records and all her letters, articles and journals bear this identity. Moushumi wants to live a settled married life but an offer for a week's trip to Paris for presenting a paper there makes her reconsider her decision. She decides to look for opportunities to create her own identity by exploring more avenues beyond marriage. She finds that Gogol is not her ultimate destination in life and breaks her marital ties with Gogol and ventures into the world to explore her identity. Thus, Jhumpa

Lahiri's *The Namesake* projects the problems of people who migrate to America and explore their identity in the adopted land.

The identity of an immigrant is a constant variable. It changes with the change of location because it is associated with the immigrant's collective psyche. Wherever the Indian diaspora shifts, it experiences alienation and through the process of negotiations the immigrants suffer identity crisis. Different diaspora writers have depicted this phenomenon in their writings. Anita Desai focuses on the exile, self-alienation and torturous estrangement her characters experience in *Bye-Bye Blackbird*. The individuals find themselves uprooted and constantly suffer identity crises. The behaviour and angst of the whites make the Indian immigrants feel themselves isolated in England and starve for their identity.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni mostly centres her work of fiction around women. In *The Mistress of Spices*, Divakaruni brings out the crisis of identity Tilo and the other Indian immigrants face in California. The protagonist Tilo herself keeps on changing her names in quest for attaining her identity. The novel presents Tilo helping the other immigrants to form new values to find fulfilment and contentment in the country of their settlement and create their identity. Divakaruni's novel *Queen of Dreams* presents the difficulties the Indian immigrants in general and the Indian women immigrants particularly, face in establishing their identities in America where they have to confront the issues of racial discrimination and natives' wrath after the events of 9/11.

Jhumpa Lahiri brings out Gogol's crisis of identity for his namesake in her novel *The Namesake*. Gogol craves for attaining American identity because of his birth there and this fact pushes him through immense mental conflicts. The other immigrants like Moushumi and Mexine also undergo several adjustments in life where they sacrifice marital relationships over the preference of their career advancement and desire to have their own identity.

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Chapter Six

Conclusion

The term "diaspora" refers to the widespread movement of people from different parts of the world. The Greek word *'diaspeirein'* virtually was used in the context of sowing seeds by dispersing them around. The current usage of the term is used for the people who migrate to other countries voluntarily or otherwise, and make the countries their new home. During the last three hundred years when many countries were colonized by the more powerful ones, people from colonies were forcefully sent to the imperial countries to work as slaves or as indentured labour. In the modern times, many people choose to leave their home country and settle in a country that offers them greater opportunities for economic or educational growth or intellectual freedom. Ethnic minority groups who were displaced for several reasons and are settled abroad often maintain strong sentimental and material ties with their home country. Their identity becomes hybridised since they belong to two nations – the nation of their origin and the host country.

Contemporary Indian diaspora writers Anita Desai, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri have expressed through their writing a conflict between their native culture and the culture of the country of adoption, between the old Indian values, and the modern values that favour materialism, individualism, luxury and bodily pleasures. Values relate to something's degree of significance with the aim of determining what is the best action to be done, or to explain the importance of different choices or actions. Values influence individuals to consider different choices and act in a manner that conveys respect for other individuals and do the least harm to society or nature. Personal values allow people to choose to perform actions that are good, significant, beneficial, desirable, useful etc. Cultural values endorse a set of common values which support social expectations and a collective understanding of what is good, desirable, beneficial, etc. Cultural values provide a reference against which personal values are measured and endorsed.

This thesis examines the influence of displacement and migration or the personal and cultural values of the individuals portrayed in the works of the three writers Anita Desai, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri. Writing since the age of nine, Anita Desai's fiction has made a mark in the literary world, and has made her an outstanding point of reference for contemporary women writers in

India. Desai travelled to England for the first time in 1965, and since 1986, has been living abroad, earlier in England and presently at Massachusetts, United States. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has lived in Illinois and Ohio but currently lives in Houston in Texas, United States and writes about immigrant experiences and the challenges of living in a multi-cultural world. Jhumpa Lahiri has lived in Rhodes Island, USA, and has focused on the lives of immigrant clans and US-raised children in her novels and short fiction. Writer of distinguished literary awards, Lahiri is acclaimed for the subtlety and poignancy of her prose and for presenting the emotional world of her characters.

Critics and theorists have discussed significant aspects of immigrant literature including race, identity, memory, nationality and cultural difference and the complex emotions which inspire immigrants to express themselves through creative writing. Salman Rushdie in *Imaginary Homelands* highlights the fact that while writing *Midnight's Children*, what he was writing was actually a novel of memory, and the India portrayed in the novel was just 'his' India. Paul Gilroy observes that educational institutes and family structures tend to reproduce race differences which are displayed in culture. As a result, following the concept of ethnic absolutism, the non-whites are excluded from the national community. Edward Said in *Orientalism* points out that cultural texts play an important role in the political processes of colony and empire, and thus support and strengthen the structures of imperialism.

Homi Bhabha in the *Location of Culture* focuses on the concept of identity as a complex process that takes into account the cultural differences through which the idea of nationness is created. Stuart Hall in "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" draws attention to the significance of the positions from which one speaks or writes and agrees that all expression bears the imprint of the place and time, the history and culture of which one is a part. Hall suggests that the immigrants from a common origin share a common structure of experiences and seem to possess oneness of cultural identity, which however, is influenced by minor but critical points of difference based on the culture and ethnic origin of the diaspora. Vijay Mishra in "Diaspora and the Art of Impossible Mourning" feels that diaspora writing is afflicted with a sense of trauma for the homeland. He explains the mourning is a

condition where the immigrant does not want to replace his memories of the old home with those of the new one for fear of the loss of the purity of the memories. C. Vijayasree in "Survival of the Ethic: South Asian Immigrant Women's Writing" discusses the female experience of migration and women's feeling of being doubly exiled when they are displaced to a foreign country.

The fiction of South Asian diaspora writers has received much critical attention. Writers have focused on the portrayal of the strong feelings of nostalgia and alienation experienced by the immigrants, ethnic bonding, cultural shock, a double identification with their original homeland and the adopted country, the fantasies of returning home. Critical studies of diaspora literature have also examined the portrayal of the racial documentation, gender bias and identity crisis as experienced by immigrants in the country of migration. However, the impact of displacement and distancing from their home country or the personal and cultural values of the immigrants has not been studied so far. The present work focuses on selected novels by the Indian diaspora women writers Anita Desai, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri and examines the portrayal of the characters as individuals with hybrid identities and the creation of new values due to their divided affection and loyalties towards the home country and the adopted one.

Chapter two titled "Love and Family Bonding" explores the relationship of the migrants within their family and the people of the host country. The second half of the twentieth century has observed the movement of masses from one country to another. The people migrate for various reasons, ranging from acquiring education to socio-economic gains. The migrants, who settle down in the adopted country are also open to inter-racial marriages. Thus, migration gives rise to hybrid identities which brings before them and the future generations the conflict of being and belonging. The settlers' bonds with their home country and the new values formed to assimilate in the country of settlement often bring before them double perspectives of vision, and the relationship of the migrants with the natives is not always amicable. In the novels discussed in the thesis, some protagonists establish friendly and amiable ties with the natives, and accommodate in the culture of the

adopted country. However, some who strongly experience nostalgia and alienation, surrender to their will, and return to their mother land.

Desai brings in the issue of the immigrants' close ties with the natives in *Bye-Bye Blackbird* resulting in marriage as in Adit's case. His interracial marriage does not create any personal problems in their marital life, however, his wife Sarah has to face moments of awkwardness as her British friends are curious to know more about her Indian husband. Desai presents Sarah as a devoted wife who resists the colonial outlook of society by marrying an Indian. Sarah's decision to lead her life with Adit in India when he decides to return, shows the strong bond of love between the couple. On the other hand, Adit's friend Dev, charmed by England, decides to settle in the country for good, envisioning a more progressive future there.

In *Fasting, Feasting* Desai presents MamaPapa and the Pattons as the parents who continue practising the traditions and values of patriarchy where they do not bother to care for their daughters and neglect their responsibility of providing them emotional security and love. Thus lack of parental support causes psychological stress upon Uma and Melaine and they develop a feeling of being unwanted. Their growth is marred resulting in an undeveloped self and they are left to live a fragile existence bereft of parental care and love. Desai also presents through her novel that in contrast to the case of Uma and Melanie, excessive concern of parents in the case of Arun also makes him insecure and unhappy.

Divakaruni presents the story of love and friendship between Sudha and Anju in *Sister of My Heart.* Both the protagonists contrast each other in many aspects like beauty, ambition, attitude towards life, nature and their background. Despite all these differences they love each other dearly. They share the experiences of their childhood and youth and married lives. Their close relationship helps them to know each other very well, and this intimacy provides them mutual support throughout their life. In many situations the protagonists come together and understand each other's problems and dilemmas better than their mothers can.

The close emotional relationship between the two sisters becomes more complex in *The Vine of Desire*, the sequel to *Sister of My Heart*. The novel begins where *Sister of My Heart* left off in Calcutta, India, and continues the saga of the sisters in San Francisco, America. After their marriages in Calcutta, the spirited and independent Anju had joined her husband, Sunil in San Francisco, while the beautiful Sudha remains behind in India with her husband. The novel is the reunion of the sisters in America. The sisters Anju and Sudha both come forward to support each other at the time of need. Their search for alternatives is centre of the story. They experience some unpleasant situations and difficult choices, however, they struggle to find a viable path and cope with the losses and revive their relationship. Divakaruni conveys the point that physical displacement from India does not affect their relationship and the protagonists show extraordinary balance of mind and resolve the tensions coming their way during their stay in America. Through her novels *Sister of My Heart* and *The Vine of Desire* Divakaruni demonstrates that female bonding is a major support system for immigrant women in living abroad.

Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams* focuses on the Indian immigrant family, the Guptas who live in the USA. Mrs Gupta abstains from making any physical bond with her husband, so that it may not disturb her powers of interpreting dreams. Her America-born daughter Rakhi inherits this authoritative attitude of her mother, and has a strained relationship with her father, Mr Gupta husband, Sonny and daughter, Jona, and does not hesitate to live separately from them. Post 9/11 events, and after the death of her mother Mrs Gupta, when her family members come to support her, Rakhi's misconceptions are cleared and she renews her emotional bonds with all of them. The novel also explores Rakhi's relationship with the Americans and the Indian immigrants who are clients at her tea shop.

Tilo, the protagonist of Divakaruni's novel *The Mistress of Spices* is displaced from her homeland India as she is kidnapped by pirates in her childhood and spends her childhood on an island. Tilo receives motherly affection from her First Mother, who trains her in the magical art of spices that would help her to remove sorrows of the immigrants in California. After her migration to California, Tilo establishes a strong bond of love and compassion with the female clients of

Indian immigrant community there, and offers her help to calm down their pains and sufferings in life with the help of the spices. *The Mistress of Spices* depicts a close association of the immigrant women and Tilo who provides emotional and mutual support to them when their own families do not provide them the love and respect they deserve.

In *The Namesake* Jhumpa Lahiri explores the lives two generations of a family in diaspora spaces. Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli, Bengali immigrants in America, mingle with the local society and keep themselves busy raising their America-born children. Their children Gogol and Sonia grow up under the impression that they are American in every way, a misconception that is removed very soon. After a series of affairs and annulled marriages with several American girls, Gogol finds that true relationship and love rests with his parents. After the death of his father he realizes the value of his family and supports his mother's decision when she wants to return to Calcutta.

All the three distinguished diaspora writers Anita Desai, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri emphasize the importance of family relations as the source of emotional support in the country of migration. The unconditional love and acceptance in their families provides the immigrants the security that they need. The writers indicate that although the protagonists face challenges of various kinds due to their migrant condition, they come out stronger due to the love and support of their family members.

Chapter three titled "Changing Religious and Spiritual Beliefs" focuses on the formation of new values by the diaspora by adopting the religious practices of the host country in addition to those of their home country. The first generation immigrants tend to continue the traditions and customs they practice in their home country, whereas their foreign-born children prefer to adopt the native culture and habits.

In *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, Anita Desai focuses on Adit and Dev's fascination with England and Dev's sense of awe as he observes huge buildings and structures

there, and imagines them to be a temple in which prayer ceremonies are going on. Adit wants his Anglo-Saxon wife Sarah to follow Indian traditions and is impatient with her when resists. Dev feels that his friend Adit can follow the Indian tradition of rising early in the morning and paying obeisance to the rising sun on the banks of river Thames.

Desai's *Journey to Ithaca* deals with Italian immigrants in India who adopt Indian religious and spiritual values. Desai brings out the point through her novel that irrespective of the God one worships, it is the process of the single-minded search for divine truth which makes one worthy of respect rather than following fake religious leaders who fool the common folk. Matteo and Sophie do not deter from their quest for truth and God, despite many difficulties. In Desai's *Fasting, Feasting* Desai focuses on the point that fasting and feasting are concepts related to spirituality and the soul. For Uma and Mira-masi in India, fasting and prayers gives them solace and happiness while for Arun in America, the abundance of food and other luxuries, also does not provide him the satisfaction he craves for. Arun inadvertently influences his American hosts to adopt a vegetarian diet, a value which has religious connotations in the Indian context.

Divakaruni in her novels, explores the mythical elements of Indian culture, folk beliefs and fortune-telling through dream interpretation and healing the sufferings with the help of Indian spices. Divakaruni weaves these mythical and magical elements in her novels incorporating them into modern times and settings. In *Queen of Dreams* Divakaruni presents the age-old Indian practice of fortune-telling by means of interpreting dreams, which fascinates the Indian immigrants in California. Rakhi is keen to learn this unusual skill of dream interpretation of her mother Mrs Gupta which is an Indian heritage. Divakaruni also presents mystic elements through the dream journals of Mrs Gupta which are difficult for anyone to decipher. Rakhi is also keenly interested in learning about India the mythical tales her father shares from the Indian epics – the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Divakaruni presents India as a mysterious land of myths and magic which attracts the second generation immigrants in America.

Divakaruni presents the narrative of *The Mistress of Spices* as a blend of prose and poetry and gives the novel a touch of fantasy and magic realism. The novel presents the Indian values of self-sacrifice and self-control through the character of Tilo. The mistress of spices in Oakland, Tilo has the power to make the spices sing and heal the people who are suffering. Religion and spirituality takes new connotations in the novel as Tilo's devotion and loyalty to the First Mother includes the promise that she will use her powers only to serve humanity without developing personal bonds with people. She decides to give up her vocation as the mistress of spices only when she finds her true love Raven, and feels she will no longer be able to harness her extraordinary powers due to her fascination for him.

Jhumpa Lahiri depicts the Gangulis as a religious family in her novel *The Namesake*. The family follows all Indian practices ranging from naming a child as per Hindu custom to the celebrations of all Indian and American festivals with equal zeal. Thus indicates the immigrants' assimilation in the host culture and an acceptance of their ways of worship. The America-born Gogol learns to follow the Hindu rituals like tonsuring his head after the death of his father. The American couple, the Ratliffs also offer hospitality to the immigrants and take interest in discussions about Hindu beliefs, Indian carpets, miniatures and Buddhist stupas with them.

Chapter four titled "Adapting to a New Social System" deals with the social adaptation of the migrants in the culture of the host country. Diaspora is related to cultural memory and diaspora writing encompasses a real or imagined past of the immigrants in their works. The diaspora writers use linguistic forms of loss or dislocation, such as recollection of the languages of the home country and cross-lingual idioms to create new definitions of the community in exile. The novelists show in their works that memory is fragmented between the personal recollection and historical account. The immigrants suffer from nostalgia, however, they carry the traces of multiple cultures within themselves. The novels of the diaspora writers depict that the immigrants experience a double consciousness as they attempt to adjust with the different social codes in the adopted country.

Anita Desai is a major Indian diaspora writer, who has focused on the east-west cultural encounter in their works. Desai's novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird* written during the seventies depicts that the racial prejudice against Indians in England alienated the immigrants and aggravated their sense of displacement. Desai presents the clash of ideas, tradition and culture that her characters experience living in England. In *Fasting, Feasting* Desai presents the status of women in a traditional Indian family both in India and America. Through Uma's character Desai presents the age-old practices in certain section of Indian society, where the girls like Uma and Anamika have a bleak future after their annulled marriages. Such girls are marginalized in their parents' home because they fail to live up to the norms imposed by society on women. The novel also presents a harsh picture of American culture, where there are no such restrictions, yet the lack of emotional bonding among family members leads to emotional and health problems amongst youngsters.

Divakaruni is one of the outstanding voices of the immigrant writers. Her novel *The Vine of Desire* focuses on the conflicts experienced by the first-generation immigrant women caught between cultures and traditions of two countries. Her novel *The Vine of Desire* focuses on the Indian immigrant women Sudha and Anju as they adapt to the life and culture of America and deal with their personal dilemmas which acquire new dimensions in a foreign country. Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams* presents the struggles of the first generation immigrant woman Mrs Gupta who makes several adjustments with the traditional social norms to maintain her identity as a dream interpreter in the new surroundings in America. In this novel Divakaruni features the social and political events which affect the second generation immigrants like Rakhi and others, and awaken their postcolonial consciousness. The novel also focuses on the immigrant communities in America which are marginalized and constantly threatened after the attacks.

The different families in Lahiri's *The Namesake* inherit multiple cultures that have a direct impact on their values and identity. Gogol, the second generation immigrant, however follows Bengali traditions as sincerely as his parents Ashoke and Ashima. Lahiri highlights food habits, which are considered as means of cultural gathering among members of the Indian diaspora in the United States. She depicts

Bengali rituals and ceremonies related to birth, marriage and death which mark the Indian origin of her characters. She also portrays the use of Bengali language which helps the immigrants to assert their cultural moorings to their nation. The other families, the Mazumdars and the Americans, the Ratliffs are open to inter-racial marriages with Indians, yet follow their own culture too.

Chapter five titled "Shaping a New Identity" explores the identity crisis of the immigrants in the alien setting, where they long for their own identity which is neither purely foreign, nor purely Indian. The diaspora writers Anita Desai, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Jhumpa Lahiri deal with the issues of home, belonging and identity in their novels. The immigrants portrayed in their novels are assaulted by self doubt as they question their own identity and status in a foreign land. In fact, identity is seen to be a fluid and complex phenomenon, which is continuously reshaped especially in the case of immigrants.

In Desai's novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird* the Indian immigrants strive to make a position for themselves in their adopted country England. Desai explores the different yearnings, dreams and dilemmas of the diaspora and their quest for the land where they may be able to achieve holistic growth. The protagonists Dev, Adit and Sarah all suffer from an identity crisis and ponder over the idea of settling in England or migrating once again to India.

Divakaruni's novels deal with a minority class living in America whether they are the first and the second generation Indian immigrants. Though these protagonists are settled in America and have adopted the American way of life, however, they feel the loss of their own identity and their existence in the host country. Divakaruni is praised for her literary creativity and diaspora sensitivity in dealing with the issue of identity crisis. Also, through the organization Maitri, Divakaruni has been showing her concern for the Indian immigrant women in America who are targets of domestic abuse and violence. The East-West encounter that she depicts in her novels is also related to her own experience as an expatriate who has carried Indian values with her and has also adopted Western values as an immigrant.

Divakaruni in her novel *Queen of Dreams* portrays an intuitive Indian lady, Mrs Gupta who had the choice between her talent for dream telling and the love of the man she marries. Though she marries, she prefers to continue her talent of dream telling and defining her own identity. Mrs Gupta is a benevolent woman who helps her clients through difficulties despite her own inner challenges. Her daughter Rakhi too, faces several problems in her personal and professional life and searches for peace and contentment. She tries to survive by running a tea house and selling her paintings in order to be financially independent and create an identity.

Jhumpa Lahiri explores the conflict of identity of her protagonist Gogol in her novel *The Namesake.* As a second generation immigrant in America, Gogol considers himself disconnected and unrecognized because of his unusual name among his peer group in America. After the death of his father he realizes that it is not the name, but his family and the people he loves that make him who he is. Gogol gradually comes to terms with the name his father has given him and changes his outlook about life.

The thesis argues that works of Indian diaspora women writers who have themselves immigrated to foreign lands, open up a space where identity and values may be altered for the better. The three women writers discussed in this thesis are subjects of a postcolonial world of diaspora migrations and portray characters that are influenced and shaped by the culture of the host country which they have adopted. The life style, perspectives and values of these diaspora individuals are strongly influenced by those practiced in the adopted nation. The characters in these novels are portrayed as strong-willed people who improve their individual circumstances and begin a journey of self-discovery and value formation. The characters share the characteristic insider/outsider perspective of immigrants, but in the course of the narrative they develop new values and inner strength due to their double consciousness as diaspora individuals.

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PUBLICATIONS

Papers Published

1. Published and presented a paper 'The Immigrants' Quest for Identity and Holistic Growth in Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices*' in the *4th National Conference on Holistic Growth: Symbiosis of Theory and Practice*, from February 12-13, 2015 at St. Xavier's College, Jaipur.

2. Published a paper 'The Question of Identity, Post 9/11: Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams*' in the international journal *Contemporary Discourse* in the Vol. 6, Issue 2, July 2015.

Paper Presentations: Conferences/Seminars

1. Presented a paper 'Developing Fluency through Activity-based Learning' in the *9th International ELT@I Conference*, VIT Jaipur from Aug. 21-23, 2014.

2. Presented a paper 'Terrorism and Trauma in Divakaruni's *Queen of Dreams*' in the *National Conference on Interrogating Terrorism: Role of Media and Literature*, from August 1-2, 2014 at S.S. Jain Subodh P.G. College, Jaipur.

3. Presented a paper 'Task-Based Teaching in the Language Classroom' at the *International Conference on Empowering the English Language Classroom* organized by the Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, MNIT, Jaipur from Jan. 18-19, 2013.

4. Presented a paper 'Improving Communication through Task-based Activities' in the International Conference on *'Speak Volumes: Promoting Communication in the English Language Class'* from Nov. 20-21, 2009 at MGD Girls' School, Jaipur, organized by ELT@I Rajasthan: Jaipur Chapter.

Workshops Attended

1. Participated in the Two-Day Workshop on *Professional Communication* organized by the Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, MNIT Jaipur from July 10-11, 2014.

2. Participated in the Two-Day National Workshop on *Modern Approaches to English Language Teaching* organized by the Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, MNIT Jaipur from August 16-17, 2013.

3. Attended a one-day workshop on 'Getting Started with Your Research' conducted by ELT@I Rajasthan: Jaipur Chapter at MGD Girls' School, Jaipur on May 18, 2011.

4. Attended a one-day workshop on 23rd Feb, 2010 on 'Plagiarism and Academic Writing' organized by ELT@I Rajasthan: Jaipur Chapter in association with Govt. PG College, Dausa.

Conferences/Seminars Attended

1. Attended the UGC sponsored National Seminar on '*New Directions in Literary Studies*' held at the IIS University, Jaipur from Jan. 29-30, 2010.

2. Attended a Short Training Programme on 'Interfacing Social Sciences with Engineering & Technology Education' held at the Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, MNIT, Jaipur from Dec. 7-9, 2009, organized by the Centre for Management of Innovation & Technology (CMIT) & International Management Institute (IMI).

3. Convened a seven-day Staff Development Programme at SBTC as Head, English Department on *Enhancement of Teaching Standards through the Development of Instructor's Personality* from July 23-28, 2012.

Book Published

English: A Textbook for B.Tech. I Semester students

Publisher: Vayu Education of India, New Delhi, 2010.

Co-writers: Ravindra Kumar Sharma, Manish Jain and Lalit Gahlot.

BIO-NOTE

Kalpna Vijay has earned her Master's in English Literature from Jai Narain Vyas University, Jodhpur in 1993 and M. Phil. from the same university in 1994. She has been a former Head of the Department, English in Sri Balaji College of Engineering and Technology, Jaipur. She is presently working as an Assistant Professor in the Department of English and Humanities, JECRC, Jaipur. Ms. Vijay has eighteen years of teaching experience. Her research papers have been published in reputed journals and conference proceedings.